Month-long Gramotsavam brings rural sports & culture to the fore

Over 10,000 People From 4,300 Villages Participated

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Coimbatore: From 14-year-old Madan Kumar to 78-year-old Marudammal, everyone from Devarayarapuram village was on Sunday seen dancing to the beats of ‘tharai’ (a drum) at the final day of Gramotsavam on Coimbatore grounds here.

The event, organised by Isha Foundation, offered a rare platform for villagers from across the state to indulge in fun-filled activities.

Folk performances by villagers from across the state were one of the highlights of the event. More than 300 artists performed nearly 50 different forms of folk art. Another attraction was traditional games, including ‘Varappil Oyaru Nadai’ where people had to walk barefoot on wet soil carrying a basket and reach the other end by stepping only on bricks or bamboo logs. The wet red soil would make people slip and lose balance. And, if a person tumbles of the path, she/he would be disqualified. People were seen cheering contestants.

R Divya, 20, who managed to clear almost half the path, said, “It is something new that I tried for the first time. I had Seen things like this on television, but trying it on my own was a different feeling.”

Another eye-catcher at the Gramotsavam was the volleyball match organised for disabled men. All the 12 participants belonged to Paralympics Association of Coimbatore. With the volleyball court reduced to half the normal size and the net lowered to 3ft, the players with locomotor disorders were seated on tarpaulin sheet. They served and passed the ball, and sometimes dived to hit the ball. The players cheered themselves at bagging a point and also whenever they missed one, a spirit of true sportsmanship. “I play volleyball every Sunday and it has helped me find new friends. I also find it a rejuvenating experience,” said 30-year-old Ibrahim.

More than 10,000 participants from nearly 4,300 villages across the state took part in the month-long Gramotsavam. From small kids to elderly, it had enough avenues to keep everyone engaged.

Rathore, Bedi laud the event

Coimbatore: Union minister for state for information and broadcasting Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and Puducherry lieutenant governor Kiran Bedi on Sunday graced the Gramotsavam venue with their presence. The duo was invited as chief guests for the valedictory function of the event.

Addressing a gathering at Le Meridien, Rathore spoke about the importance of sports in today’s life. A silver-medallist (shooting) himself in Athens Olympics 2004, Raithore said, “Sports is one of the fastest ways of making new friends. Today, corporates also have their sports meets. It breaks all caste, creed and religion barriers and connects people.” He said events like Gramotsavam was an example of efforts to bond people. “It is not necessary that people should be cheered only when they participate in Olympics. We can have gujju or mohalla (area) events,” said Rathore, who hails from Jaisalmner.

Kiran Bedi also appreciated the efforts of Isha Foundation in organising Gramotsavam successfully for 12 years. “I am planning to introduce this initiative in Puducherry too,” she said, adding, “This will create a Swasth (healthy) Bharath, and with the Prime Minister’s vision of Swachh Bharath, we will attain a Swachh Swasth Bharath.”

Founder of Isha Foundation Jaggi Vasudev said Gramotsavam has tried to preserve some lost art forms of Tamil Nadu. TNN