

Nat'l banana fest turns a crowd puller

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Thiruvananthapuram: The five-day National Banana Festival at the Vellayani Temple Ground in Kalliyoor Panchayat is drawing people from various parts of the district. The venue has witnessed turn out of around 60,000 people from the city and rural suburbs when the festival completed two days.

The visitors include families, foreign nationals, researchers, scientists and the local farmers.

The exhibition offers a wide range of value-added products from banana. Stalls displaying baby beds and pillows made out of banana fibre are the other attractions.

The exhibition also puts forth products that could help housewives and small entrepreneurs tap the income-generation potential that the banana plant offers. For instance, products like banana wine, banana pickles made from the core of the banana plant and flower, footwear made out of banana fibre, doormats and mobile pouches found many takers among the visitors. The exhibition is being organized by Centre for Innovation in Science and Social Action (CISSA) in partnership with Kalliyoor gramapanchayat and a host of national and state organisations.

C Suresh Kumar, general secretary, CISSA, said that the expo is keen on exploring the



Around 60,000 people have visited the venue in two days

financial possibilities of banana and related products. "Banana fibre is becoming a global sensation, however we have been unable to tap the potential," said Suresh Kumar.

Another highlight of the festival is 101 recipes from banana. A feast with 18 side dishes cooked exclusively using banana and plantain products is also arranged at the venue. Traditional dishes like pulissery, elissery and pickles are all made with different parts of the plantain. Snacks such as banana vada, banana therali and banana unniyappam are also prepared by the team led by chef Parassala Rafeeq.

The five-day festival plays host to a buyer-seller meet, training programmes, documentary screenings, photography contest etc. The festival also includes a national seminar, exhibition, training programmes, farmers' meet and a host of other activities.