

# Extending a green hand

**EVENT** Rural Olympics will be a highlight of Isha Gramotsavam to be held tomorrow

**R**ural Olympics - Doesn't it sound novel? This sports event for rural people is one of the major attractions at 'Isha Gramotsavam'. This programme, organised by the Isha Foundation, which is in its silver jubilee year, is for people from 3,200 villages. Over five lakh people are expected to attend 'Isha Gramotsavam', which is being put together with the help of 5,000 Isha volunteers. Through this event, which will take place on September 23 (Sunday) at the Anna University Grounds, the Isha Foundation, turns the focus on its "Action for Rural Rejuvenation (ARR)".

## Planting trees

Project Green Hands, one of the sub-projects of ARR, set a record for the number of trees planted by an organisation in a year. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, 8,52,587 saplings were planted by Isha volunteers. The tree-planting programme for this year will be set in motion on Sunday, when Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi will plant the first sapling. Project Green Hands has set itself a rather ambitious target - "25 million trees to be planted by the end of December". The Foundation's Tamil magazine *Isha Kattu Poo* will be launched.

"The tree planting drive will cover various areas of the State, including Erode, Coimbatore, Namakkal, Karur, Salem, Vriddhachalam, Pudukkottai and Cuddalore," says Sekar, one of the coordinators for Isha Gramotsavam.

Isha Foundation's work in the sphere of environment is a manifestation of its belief that Nature could exorcise the ghosts of the mind. The Isha Yoga Center is situated in a scenic location, in the foothills of Velliangiri, Semmedu (Coimbatore). Apart from its brand of yoga, all its efforts are aimed at disposing the human mind of ele-



**KABADDI KABADDI** Games being organised as part of Isha Foundation's ARR project

ments that prevent it from functioning in a manner that could contribute to individual and societal happiness.

"In villages, caste and communal feelings run high. These negative attitudes could be dissolved if people from different communities often come together to organise sporting activities. Engagement in sports will keep youngsters from alcoholism and drug abuse," says Sekar.

The ARR project promotes rural sports. So, the 'Rural Olympics' will feature 'greasy pole' (CVazhukku Maram), a popular rural sport in which the competitors belly up a slippery pole to smash a pot kept on top. 'Slow cycling' contests are common to our villages. So are silambam and bullock cart events. These two are also expected to be conducted at the Rural Olympics, in which 600 teams participate. "The teams were selected after preliminary rounds held in 600 villages," says Sekar. Throwball, volleyball and track and field events are among the mainstream sports which will be conducted.

Rural cuisine has more variety than we give it credit for. Forty stalls at the "Rural Food Festival" are expected to offer at least 250 culinary preparations.

"Food items unique to places like Dharmapuri, Gobichettipalayam, Coimbatore and Karaikudi will be up for grabs," says Sekar.

## Folk arts

'Rural Cultural Show'<sup>1</sup> will showcase the treasures of rural Tamil Nadu such as Karagattam, Oyilattam and Tapattam. Various folk groups from the State have been invited to give performances. Handicrafts that are the pride of various regions will be on display.

In the evening, "Sounds of Isha", constituted by a group of volunteers at the Isha Foundation, will play a form of music believed to calm and motivate the mind at the same time. 'Isha Gramotsav' will culminate in Mahasathsang with Sadhguru.

For more details, call 42123185/ 9444358106/ 9843375451 or log in to [ishafoundation.org](http://ishafoundation.org).

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