

Sethrichem Sangtam wins inaugural Rohini Nayar Prize

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NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery hands over 'Rohini Nayar Prize 2022' to Sethrichem Sangtam, in New Delhi



NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 21: There was a time when the village hero was the one who brought an enemy's chopped head home; a fun activity was to shoot and kill any fauna that moved, and fruits were grown only to be distributed for free.

From those days of tribal pastimes, a part of eastern Nagaland has come a long way with villagers harvesting bumper bounties from fruit orchards, thanks to a pioneering programme by a local youth who returned home, spurning a career in the US.

Sethrichem Sangtam (40) was honoured on Tuesday with the first Rohini Nayar Prize for an outstanding contribution to rural development by an individual of 40 years or under in age. The prize ~ which comes with a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh, a citation and a trophy ~ was handed to the winner by Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery.

Sangtam works with 1,200 marginal farmers and their families in eastern Nagaland. He started the Better Life Foundation to concentrate on issues of rural livelihood security, environmental sustainability and education for change.

Among his many achievements is encouraging farmers in the region to abandon wasteful slash-and-burn cultivation and move to permanent farming.

The winner was selected by an eminent jury from civil society consisting of Ashok Khosla (founder of Development Alternatives), Rajesh Tandon (founder of PRIA) and Renana Jhabvala (national coordinator, SEWA).

Sangtam went to the National Law School of India (Bangalore) before dropping out to go to New York as a member of the Global Youth Advisory Panel of the United Nations Population Fund in New York.

Rohini Nayyar was the woman behind MNREGA and that it's one of the few prizes named after a woman. She spent much of her professional life working on issues related to rural development in India.

Speaking at the event, Bery remembered that he was introduced to Nayyar by former RBI Governor Bimal Jalan. "It is a very noble endeavour that the Nayyar Foundation for Social and Economic Purpose has taken such initiative", he noted.

Bery said that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will help to integrate various aspects of the good life. Niti Aayog is the nodal agency for pushing sustainable development goals down to the State level, he added.

The prize will be given out annually by the Nayyar Foundation for Social and Economic Purpose, set up by her family to contribute to social and economic development in India. The Directors of the Foundation are Deepak Nayyar (Emeritus Professor of Economics, JNU) and Dhiraj Nayyar (Director of Economics and Policy, Vedanta Resources).

(PTI)

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