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Himalayan seed vault established to preserve biological wealth

Special Correspondent

A world class seed vault has been established on the Siachen Glacier to preserve India's biological wealth for future generations, Dr. Ajay Parida, Executive Director, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation confirmed on Saturday.

The vault, which has a natural temperature between -20 and -40 degrees Celsius, will hold samples of rice, pulses, peas and beans and can be used for building food programmes across the nation.

Dr. Parida, who was speaking to reporters ahead of an international conference on biodiversity, said that Research and Development Controller W. Selvamurthy, Defence Research and Development Organisation had written to Chairman M.S. Swaminathan with the details.

"This is of significant benefit in preserving long term biodiversity. Conservation under natural conditions is an advantage," he told *The Hindu*.

The M.S. Swaminathan Foundation is preparing to host an international conference next week on "Biodiversity in relation to Food and Human Security in a Warming Planet" in memory of Dr. Norman Borlaug, who won the 1970 Nobel Peace prize for his contributions to world food supply.

The conference, which will bring together scientists, public policy makers and research organisations from 23 different countries, hopes to develop a road map to ensure that biodiverse resources are properly harnessed in the attempt to achieve a hunger free world.

Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food Lars Peder Brekk, representatives from the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, Borlaug Institute and Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh are among the guests.

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