

CORRESPONDENCE

pseudostem fibre for the purpose of handicraft¹². The use of pseudostem as a vegetable was also reported from Meghalaya⁹. Medicinal uses of the plant were reported among the tribes of Paderu division of Visakhapatnam; the flower juice was used in dysentery and excessive bleeding during menstruation in young girls¹³. Tangjitman *et al.*¹⁴ also reported the uses of *E. glaucum* as a medicine for diarrhoea and food poisoning among the Karen people of northern Thailand. The Irulas tribe of Kerala burns the leaves of *E. glaucum*, and the ash obtained is inhaled for treatment of asthma and to get relief from wheezing and chest congestion¹². Several studies reveal the presence of tannins and other polyphenolic compounds such as saponins, triterpenoids, coumarins, flavonoids and a host of other secondary metabolites which contribute to its anti-diarrhoeal properties¹⁵⁻¹⁷.

E. glaucum is under threat largely from habitat destruction and deforestation. The wide-scale practice of jhum cultivation, plantations of crops like rubber, orange and pineapple have caused habitat loss where wild *Ensete* was found. Conservation measures have

largely been minimal; the need of the hour is to survey wild populations and identification of suitable habitats for potential future re-establishments. Research on more methods and storage of seeds for future use is also needed.

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Genetically modified organisms

I find myself in rare agreement with Padmanaban. Indeed there is nothing ‘new in Kesavan’s arguments’. How can there be?

We have the same tired non-regulation of GMOs in India that is replete with the most serious conflicts of interest that make their regulation impossible; a 3-in-1 embodiment of promoter, funder and regulator. And to provide the required support structure to this corrupted process, our agri-institutions with a group of public-sector scientists (retired and current), together, a powerful lobby-

ing force, underpin the push for the wholesale introduction of GMOs and their emerging ‘Avatars’ into Indian agriculture. It is a measure of their mindset that *Bt* cotton is promoted as an ‘outstanding success’ in order to justify other *Bt* crops. That ‘outstanding’ success is based on a deliberately flawed analysis of total production data instead of the proper statistic of ‘yield’ expressed in kg/ha. The fact is a tenth grader would not make this mistake. Two PSC (Parliamentary Standing Committees) have recognized the grave regulatory insuffi-

ciency and deficiency governing GMOs. Will things change? If not, we will be subjected to the same story of historical repetition, because there is ‘none so deaf as those who will not hear’, even PSCs in a parliamentary process. In this ‘polarized’ situation, Kesavan and others may be moved to speak again.

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