

# Meet on cocoa farming begins

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
KASARAGOD

A five-day international meeting of the Asia-Pacific Cocoa Breeders Working Group (APCBWG) began at the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) here on Monday.

The meeting is being held with the objective of evaluating the strength and weakness of the cocoa sector in the Asia-Pacific countries, discussing and developing action plans to manage existing as well as emerging pests and diseases of cocoa and reviewing the collaborative evaluation trials in the region and in the country, a

press release issued by the CPCRI said.

## Technical sessions

Technical sessions of the meeting include presentation of country-wise status papers and of regional research activities, discussions on existing and emerging pests and diseases, interactions on socio-economic development programmes of public/private sectors, deliberations on cocoa processing, value-addition and marketing and also visits to research stations, the release added.

The current demand of cocoa beans for the Indian

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chocolate industry is 40,000 tonnes against a production of 18,000 tonnes. The huge potential for increasing the domestic cocoa area and production will result in import substitution.

The meeting was inaugurated by N. Kumar, Vice Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore.

Stressing the need to evolve cocoa hybrids with higher yields and resistance to pests and diseases, Dr. Kumar suggested exchange of such hybrids among the countries to multiply locally for distribution to the farmers.

Venkatesh N. Hubballi, Director, Directorate of Cashewnut and Cocoa Development (DCCD), Kochi, presided.

He called for close linkage of research and development departments to enhance area under cashew and cocoa.

Smilja Lambert, cocoa research manager (Asia/Pacific), Mars Inc., briefed the gathering regarding the activities and breeding programmes of the APCBWG.

S.N. Bhat, vice president, CAMPCO, was present at the inaugural session of the meet.