

Saras Mela scores with goods

**SHUCHISMITA
CHAKRABORTY**

Patna, Dec. 12: Wooden puppets, silk outfits, pickles, toys and decorative pieces — welcome to Saras Mela where you will be spoilt for choice.

Organised by District Rural Development Authority at Rajvanshi Nagar to celebrate rural craftsmanship, Saras Mela is playing host to craftsmen from various districts and states, who have come to wow the residents with their wares spread across 47 stalls.

Among the items are products made of woven sikki grass, popular in Madhubani, or toys and items made of Dudhi Sundari wood found in the forests of Chitrakoot in Allahabad.

Thirty-three-year-old Kamal Kishore is holding fort at stall number 17 with decorative pieces and toys made of the Dudhi Sundari wood. For *bani*, a chewable toy meant for infants, residents have to shell out just Rs 10.

On his products, Kishore said: "Dudhi Sundari wood comes from the jungles of Chitrakoot Dham. According to mythology, Lord Ram was in Chitrakoot Dham during exile. Making products with this wood is common in Chitrakoot Dham. It has become a part of our tradition now."

Not just in Chitrakoot, the demand for Dudhi Sundari goods are high up the ladder in Bihar too. Although Saras Mela started on the grounds opposite to DAV BSEB on De-

cember 9, Kishore joined the fun on Sunday. His sales figures at the end of the first day stood at Rs 3,600. "I am very happy with the response at the fair," said Kishore.

The visitors are thrilled, too. For the women, Kishore's bangle stand comes for Rs 220 and vermilion case at Rs 40. For kids, toy telephone is priced at Rs 70, while piggy banks come for Rs 180 and a set of Russian dolls costs Rs 220.

Homemaker Kshamash-eela Rai, who stopped by to buy toys for her three-month-old baby, said: "The toys on sale at his (Kishore's) stall are very attractive. I have never come across such kind of toys in the market. These fairs are the place to be as we find so many rare products

under one umbrella."

The state's craftsmanship is also making the visitors proud at the latest edition of Saras Mela.

Stall number 33 of Runa Devi and Savitri Devi from Rayyam village in Madhubani offers products made of sikki grass, which grows on marshy land.

The products at the duo's stall start at Rs 20 and go up to Rs 1,000 with items ranging from decorative items of elephant, tortoise, fish to dolls, vase or Ganeshmukh.

Paridhi, a 14-year-old student of DAV BSEB, picked up a few decorative pieces from the stall. She said: "I went to almost every stall at the fair. But at this stall, the items made of sikki grass attracted me a lot."