

Great demand for spiders from Kerala

By Our Staff Reporter

KOCHI, SEPT. 18. You may be in love with the web, but what about the spider? If you think this invertebrate is a creature everyone would like to keep at bay, you are mistaken.

There are hundreds in Europe who breed them and keep them as lovely pets. Of course, it is not the ordinary spider that are commonly found in the tropics and moves on menacingly.

There are very special and rare species of spiders having spectacular features. Some of the bigger ones, as big as the palm, known as 'tarantulas' have attractive and colourful stripes and spots and are hot favourites of the pet lovers in the West.

There is a regular illegal traffic of these species from Kerala to the Western countries, according to a few zoologists who have been keeping track of the spiders.

These species are found in the forests of Kerala and fetch a price of around \$200 in Europe.

A recent international workshop on tarantulas held at Parmabikkulam had established that two rare varieties known as 'Poecilotheria kirki' and 'regalis' are found in Kerala.

Another rare variety known as 'rufilata' has been found in Thiruvananthapuram, according to studies in Arachnology (which includes study of spiders) conducted by a team of zoologists headed by Dr. P. Sebastian of Sacred Hearts College, Thevara, Mr. Sunil Jose and Mr. Sudhi Kumar.

'Poecilotheria striata' species of the tarantulas are also found in the State.

According to the zoologists, though there is a common notion that these species are venomous, there is no evidence to prove it.

In fact, it is because of infection from other sources that the bitten person gets symptoms of various ailments, according to these researchers.



Poecilotheria striata species of tarantula found in Kerala.