

## **India: 'Warming' likely to open up more area for rubber in North-East**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 31: More areas in the North-East of the country may become suitable for cultivation of natural rubber as the regions warms up under 'climate warming' effect. This is because cold stress has been a limiting factor to natural rubber plants in this region, which has relatively colder climatic conditions. A rise in temperatures, especially minimum temperatures, would have a positive impact on natural rubber plantations in the North-East, say James Jacob, Director, and Satheesh P. R., Research Fellow, at Kottayam-based Rubber Research Institute of India. Jacob and Satheesh co-authored the paper, 'Climate warming in the plantation belt of Kerala and its impact on natural rubber productivity.' Jacob presented the paper at the Kerala Environmental Congress 2012 which concluded recently here.

Jacob said here that it was now understood that the traditional plantation crops regions are experiencing 'climate warming.' "This will have a profound impact on natural rubber productivity," he added.

**FIRST STUDY** But the above-mentioned caveat was applicable in the case of non-traditional regions of natural rubber cultivation, of which North-Eastern India was one. Jacob said the study presented in the paper was the first of its type to assess the direct impact of variations in weather parameters on daily yield of rubber.

**CLIMATE CHANGE** Climate change is obviously much more complex than daily variations in weather parameters. How different variables, including long dry spells, break-monsoon or extreme weather events, pests and diseases, impact various aspects of rubber cultivation is being investigated, he added. On a different plane, James said that merely planting of trees may not alone suffice in reducing and stabilising concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

**PLANTING TREES** The realistic approach is to intentionally reduce its emission on ground. The ecosystem services provided by the natural rubber plantations in terms of carbon sequestration are substantial. But the build-up of carbon in the atmosphere is determined more by the amount of global carbon emissions rather than by the sequestration by the planet. Planting trees, including natural rubber, is good for the environment. Afforestation need to be promoted for various other services that it offers, including carbon sequestration.

"But it also should be borne in mind that planting trees all round the entire plant is not adequate to sequester the huge amount of carbon that the world emits today," Jacob said.