

Demand for natural rubber growing: ANRPC

KOCHI: Global opportunities for the production of natural rubber and the demand growth are encouraging in view of the improvement in the economic indicators of the US, China, Japan and Europe, said Kamarul Baharain Basir, secretary general, Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC). He was inaugurating the India Rubber Summit and Dinner 2012 (IRSD 2012), held in Kochi on Saturday. Basir predicted that there would be a 4.7% rise in natural rubber supply to 10.83 million tonnes in 2012 while the consumption would rise by 4.8% to 11.59 million tonnes. "Of this, China would consume 3.67 million tonnes and India one million tonnes," he noted.

To bridge the demand-supply gap, the governments should extend incentives to the farmers to step up production and the industry needs to be encouraged to set up captive natural rubber plantations, he said. He called upon natural rubber producers to strengthen their scientific and technological efforts towards developing alternative sources of natural rubber such as Russian dandelion, guayule, sugar and glycol.

In his keynote address, James Jacob, director of the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII), Kottayam, said with the aid of Indian satellites in orbit the RRII has successfully developed the capability to identify potential areas for new rubber cultivation in any part of the world and to study impact of global warming on rubber productivity. From satellite images, it is estimated that Tripura has about 58,637 hectares of rubber plantations as of March 2012 and has a potential to cultivate rubber in 100,000 hectares. Northeast India as a whole has the potential to grow rubber in 450,000 hectares while only less than one-fourth of the actual potential is now achieved. "It is estimated that for every one degree rise in temperature, there would be about 15% fall in productivity. During the past 50 years, the maximum temperature at the RRII campus in Kottayam has rise by 2.60C and minimum temperature by 1.50C while the annual rainfall decreased by 375 mm," Jacob said.

Rajiv Budhreja, director general of the Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA), said there has been unprecedented capacity creation in the tyre sector during the last four or five years in view of the rise in demand from the automobile sector. "The new thrust being given by the government for the development of road infrastructure has led to a 33% increase in bus production in two years. Besides, the depreciation of the Indian rupee has provided strong impetus for tyre exports, which went up by 46% during the period," he observed.

Vinod Simon, president of All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), P C Cyriac, former chairman, Rubber Board, India, Anil Misra, managing director, National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE), Kurian Abraham, editor and managing director of Rubber Asia, also attended the function.