

‘Centre promises Kerala to peg import duty on rubber at 20%’

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAR 6:

The Centre has promised Kerala that it will peg import duty on rubber at 20 per cent in view of the states’ concern over crash in prices of the domestic produce, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said on Wednesday.

The current rate of import duty on rubber was Rs 20 a kg or 20 per cent, whichever is less. This was fixed when the domestic rubber prices were soaring, he said.

The producers of natural rubber in India are now hit by crash in price with the industrial users importing huge quantities from abroad. This scenario could be overcome to an extent by enhancing the import duty, he told reporters.

Chandy, who was in New Delhi yesterday to take up Kerala’s pressing issues, said the Union Commerce Ministry had already forwarded this proposal to Finance Ministry for clearance.

The Chief Minister said he also voiced the state’s concern over the Nafed’s move to give up copra procurement.

Kerala wanted Nafed to continue the procurement scheme as it was vitally important to support the coconut farmers in Kerala, who already suffer from price fall of their produce.

Chandy and his colleagues were in Delhi in the last two days to take up a host of issues ranging the neglect of Kerala’s demands in the Railway Budget, to additional allocation of electricity from the central pool to tide over serious power crisis in the state.

He said the response from the Central ministers had been positive and the results would be known in the coming days.