

Problems faced by rubber farmers

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMTHITTA): Madam, I rise today to bring to your attention the grave concerns of rubber farmers who are yet to receive the subsidies announced by the Rubber Board of India. Before the last Lok Sabha elections, a subsidy of Rs. 4,000 per hectare for rubber rain cover and spraying was promised. However, despite thousands of farmers applying before the deadline of 31st December 2023, their applications remain unprocessed. The Ministry concerned has also not issued any notification for fund release, leaving the farmers in distress.

Similarly, the announced increase in subsidy for rubber replanting remains unfulfilled. The farmers who planted saplings last year and applied for subsidies, have not seen an inspection from the officials concerned, nor have they received the payments. Moreover, the arrears of Rs. 15.5 crore from 2022-23 remain unpaid, and the funds of Rs. 740 crore that were promised during 2023-24 have seen no follow-up action. Adding to their financial struggles, the rubber farmers have long demanded the implementation of a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for rubber, ensuring stable income and protection against fluctuating market prices.

Furthermore, the rubber replantation subsidy in Kerala must be increased. Presently, the Government is giving Rs. 40,000 per hectare to the farmers in Kerala. At the same time, in the North-East Region, it is Rs. 1.5 lakh. Kerala contributes over 75 per cent to the country's natural rubber. It must not be left behind. It needs support from the Government.

As this year's tapping season ends, the financial burden on rubber farmers is worsening. I urge the Government to immediately release the pending subsidies, instruct the Rubber Board to expedite application processing, and increase replantation subsidies to the farmers.