

an>

Title: Need to review decision to close the Regional Soil Testing Laboratories under Rubber Board.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): The Regional Soil Testing Laboratories were established by the Rubber Board during 1980s incurring huge capital expenditure to cater to the needs of small growers. These labs are functioning under bare minimum manpower and earning revenue through testing fees. The Dry Rubber Content Estimation (DRC) facility available in these labs is an essential service for ensuring fair market price to small growers. The labs handled 75.00 lakh DRC samples and 65,000 soil / leaf samples for the past one decade. The soil / leaf samples analyzed in these labs account only 1 % of the total sample size.

There is a secret move to close down these labs to justify the expenditure incurred for recently launched Rubber Soil Information System (RubSiS) by the Board. The RubSiS has not been launched in local languages and it is only in the trial stage. As the soil samples handled by the labs are meagre, the closure is not a substitute for RubSiS. The proposed winding up of labs is, therefore, not in larger public alternative.

The Board has not consulted the stake holders in this regard and no alternative arrangement has been made for the estimation of DRC samples. Hence there is no justification for closing the labs which are rendering an essential service to the stake holders. Therefore, I urge the Government not to close down these labs in the larger interest of small and marginal rubber growers.