

Imports of natural rubber are needed, say country's tyre makers

fe Bureau

Kochi, March 17: Imports of natural rubber are critical to bridge the widening gap between domestic production and consumption, says the apex bodies of tyre manufacturers and rubber-based industries.

Refuting the charge of rubber planters' association regarding alleged excessive natural rubber imports, the associations say that there is hardly any rubber stocks available in the country. Citing Rubber Board figures, they claim that imports of natural rubber in the first 11 months of current fiscal match the gap between domestic NR production and consumption.

Manufacturers refuted the charge of rubber planters' association on alleged excessive natural rubber imports

"Natural rubber is the primary raw material for manufacturing tyres. With domestic rubber production sliding down, the industry has no other option but to import rubber even though there is a stiff import duty of 25%, perhaps highest in the world. Ironically, the industry is also being blamed for

imports," said Rajiv Budhraja, director-general, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association (ATMA).

"Production consumption gap in natural rubber during the April-February of the current fiscal period has been a substantial 3.67 lakh tonnes. And imports are to the tune of 3.93 lakh tonnes, which cannot be termed 'excessive'," he added.

ATMA claims that high import duties on natural rubber and much lower duties on tyres is leading to indiscriminate surge in import and dumping of tyres in India. "According to the data on tyre imports, for the first nine months of the fiscal more than one lakh truck &

bus radial (TBR) tyres are being imported in India each month. This accounts for 40% of the replacement demand for TBRs in India. Over 90% of the import of TBR is from China," ATMA officials said.

Mohinder Gupta, president of All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA), the apex body of rubber MSMEs in the country, said that the government has already put curbs on NR import making it difficult for the rubber MSMEs to source the key raw material.

He added that the industry cannot be penalised for rubber imports when domestic rubber production is so short of consumption.