

BUSINESS LINE N.D 26/5/18

Mixed trend in spot rubber

Kottayam, May 25

Spot rubber market was in a mixed mood on Friday. RSS 4 improved to ₹129 (128) a kg, according to traders. The grade firmed up to ₹128.50 (128) and ₹124.50 (124) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers. Spot rubber rates (₹/kg) were: RSS-4: 129 (128); RSS-5: 126.50 (126); ISNR 20: 125 (125) and Latex (60% drc): 91 (91). OUR CORRESPONDENT

Rain-guard estates or lose the price party, Rubber Board tells growers

FE BUREAU

Thiruvananthapuram, May 25

THE RUBBER BOARD has cautioned that unless rubber growers get rain-guarding measures implemented for plantations, rains could spoil the party even before it begins. Despite rubber price starting to show signs of recovery, surging to ₹127 per kilogram, farmers are yet to be enthused enough to make any investment in their holdings.

The southwest monsoon is expected to make an early entry through the country's traditional rubber belt soon, even though cyclone Mekunu has spared this belt in Kerala from its havoc.

"Since continuous rain is expected with the onset of monsoon, growers are urged to give rain-guard cover to maximum num-



ber of rubber-trees, at the earliest," says Dr MK Shanmukhasundaram, chairman, Rubber Board, in the editorial to the Board's journal *Rubber*.

"Last year, most plantations could start tapping latex, only after the rainy season was over. If rain guarding is not done, there could be production losses to the tune of 15 to 500 kilo per hectare," he warns.

Domestic price of rubber had been making slight gains last week, thanks to the narrow gap between international price and domestic price. Crude price rally and the subsequent surge in the price of synthetic rubber also helped to make natural rubber (NR) dearer this week. Meanwhile, because of poor price realisation in the last few years, most rubber growers have scaled down operations.

"Cost of tapping (taking latex from tree) alone accounts for 40% of the income from rubber. Once you add costs like rain-guards on trees, de-weeding, fertilisers, formic acid (for converting latex to sheet), the whole activity leaves a pittance of ₹70 per tapping-day. And tapping is done, only once in two days," says Krishna Pillai, president, Rubber Producers' Society, Kanjirapally.