

Tripura steps in to prop up sagging rubber production

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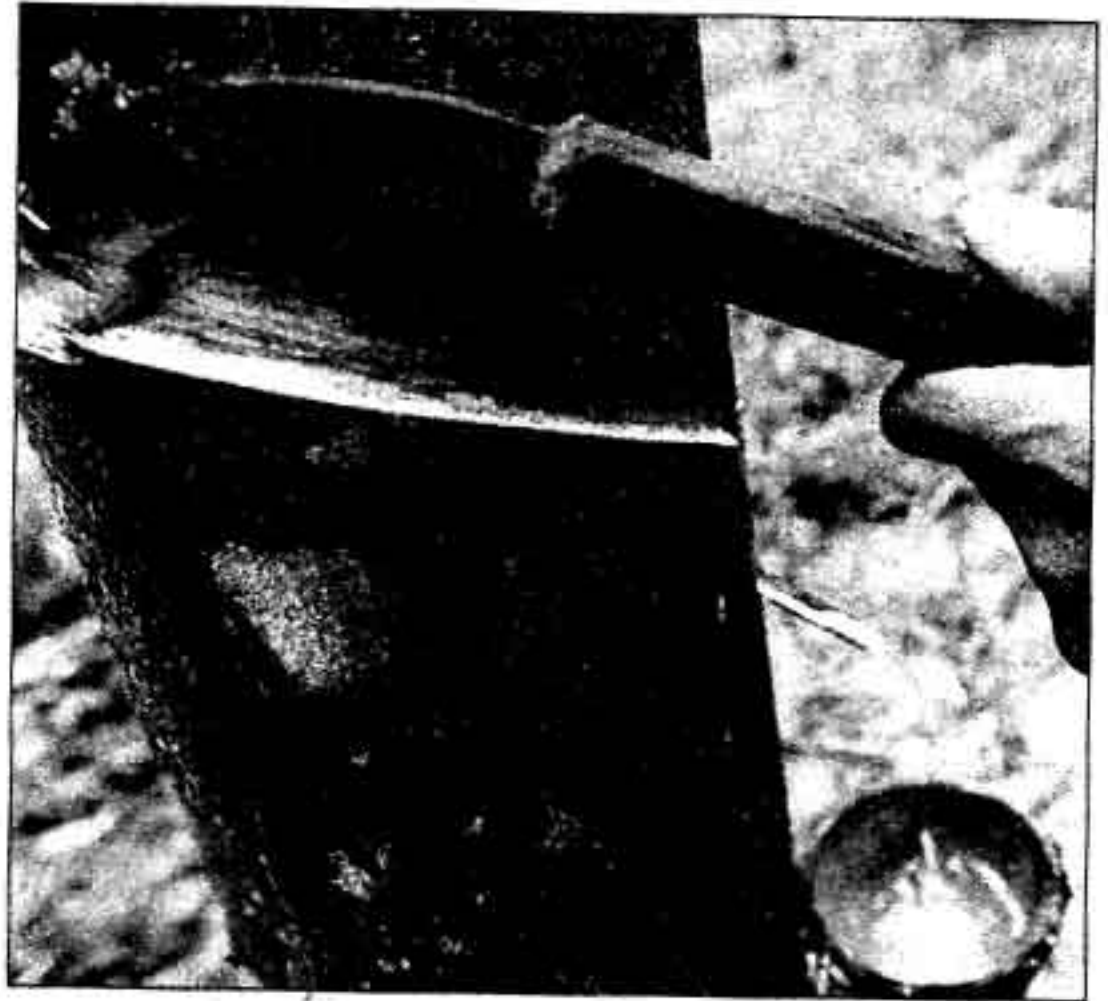
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JUST AS THE Centre's outlay for rubber has shrunk by 18% from the current fiscal, the Tripura government has made a pitch to prop the country's sagging rubber production. The northeastern state enjoys a firm base in rubber wood production for building material and furniture.

"What emboldens the foray is that the Bangladesh government had recently liberalised its policy to allow rubber cargo through the Agartala-Akhaura land port station. This would ease logistics and pep up rubber trade in the area," said SK Barua, chairman, CII North East Council.

Currently, Tripura accounts for only 9.4% rubber production, but it is India's second largest rubber producing state. In the north-east region, it accounts for 58% of the rubber production.

Early this week, Tripura chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb had also exhorted farmers to pick a leaf from Kerala's rubber production technology. "During the rainy and odd weather seasons, we must be able to collect the entire production of latex and other produces without any loss," he is reported to have said at a seminar in Agartala.



Adding to Tripura's enthusiasm, Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII), after extensive consultations with National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, had evaluated that about 4.5 lakh hectare of land in Tripura is suitable for rubber cultivation. This could be a big bonanza as currently the country's total area under rubber is approximately 6 lakh hectare.

The flip side is that the Centre's budgetary outlay for rubber has never fallen as dismally as present, by nearly one-fifth. From ₹172 crore in the current fiscal, the outlay for 2019-2020 has fallen to ₹146 crore.