

BUSINESS LINE N.D 19/10/19

Board hopeful of rubber being kept out of RCEP purview

OUR BUREAU

Mangaluru, October 18

A top official of the Rubber Board is hopeful that the crop will be kept out of the purview of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement.

Replying to the queries of rubber growers on RCEP's impact on the crop at a meeting organised by the Karnataka Rubber Planters' Association (KRUPA) here on Friday, KN Raghavan, Executive Director of the Rubber Board, said natural rubber has been kept out of the purview of all trade agreements till now.

Noting that natural rubber attracts an import duty of 25 per cent, he said the Rubber Board has been asking the government to ensure that the crop is kept outside the purview of the RCEP.

Quoting the example of the ASEAN agreement, he said four major rubber-growing countries — In-



Natural rubber has been kept out of the purview of all trade agreements till now since it can impact 13.2 lakh farmers

onesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia — are part of it. There was sufficient pressure to bring rubber under the purview of the ASEAN deal when it was signed. But the Indian government did not succumb to it.

The RCEP negotiation is not in

the public domain and therefore nothing can be ascertained, he observed. "But the stand that has been consistently taken is that any measure that includes rubber will cause a lot of financial strain and even penury for 13.2 lakh rubber farmers who depend on this crop. That is

very clearly brought to the notice of the government. I am sure that the government will consider that," he said.

Stating that the negotiators from India always ensured that rubber remained outside the purview of talks, he said: "We are confident that this time also it will be so. So far there has not been any problem on that front. I would say — don't worry about that right now."

KRUPA's demand

Referring to the demand of the Karnataka Rubber Planters Association (KRUPA) to extend minimum support price for rubber growers in Karnataka, Raghavan said the Board will try to follow it up with the Karnataka and Central governments. Though the Board had made an effort earlier in this regard, it did not materialise. "We will again take up this matter with the government," he said.