

Commerce ministry proposes repeal of decades-old tea, coffee, spices, rubber Acts

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THE COMMERCE MINISTRY has proposed repeal of decades-old laws pertaining to tea, coffee, spices and rubber, and introduce new legislations with a view to promoting the growth of these sectors and creating a conducive environment for businesses.

The ministry has sought views of the stakeholders on the drafts of the Spices (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022; and Tea (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022.

The public/stakeholders can send their comments on these four draft Bills by February 9 this year.

In four separate office memoranda, the Department of Commerce has said it is proposing repeal of the Tea Act, 1953; Spices Board Act, 1986; Rubber Act 1947; and Coffee Act 1942.

“It is proposed that” these Acts are “repealed and a new legislation is enacted to reflect the present realities and objectives,” according to the draft Bills, posted on the website of the commerce ministry.

It said that the principal reason for proposing the repeal of Tea Act is that there is a paradigm shift in the recent decade with respect to the way

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tea is grown, marketed and consumed and this necessitates amendment of the existing Act.

“The legal regime has to be enabled to address several areas of modern functions of the tea board namely, support for production, quality improvement, promotion of tea and skill development of tea growers. Many of these activities were originally not included in the mandate of the tea board, but now need to be incorporated into its functions and powers,” it added.

According to the draft Spices (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022, there is a need to enable the Spices Board to provide focused attention across the entire supply chain of spices.

Considering the emerging quality, food safety requirements in spices sector and the modern applications of spices in nutraceuticals, natural colours, it is essential to orient the research support to spice industry to address these aspects, the draft bill said.

“Further, some of the never used/redundant provisions in the Act need to be removed and

offences are to be decriminalized for facilitating ease of doing business in spices sector,” it added.

Explaining the rationale behind the proposal to repeal the Rubber Act, the draft bill said that in recent years, there have been widespread changes in the industrial and economic scenario especially with regard to development in rubber and allied sectors.

“Therefore, it has become imperative to remove archaic provisions, create an environment conducive for easy conduct of business, reorient functions of the (Rubber) Board with equal focus on upstream and downstream sectors and to contribute towards making world class rubber industry,” the draft Rubber (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022, said.

The functions of the board are also required to be expanded in a holistic manner.

According to the draft Coffee (Promotion and Development) Bill, 2022, a substantive portion of the existing Act dealing with pooling and marketing of coffee have become redundant/inoperative.

It added that the legal regime also has to be enabled to address several areas of modern functions of the Coffee Board, such as support for production, research, quality improvement, promotion of coffee and skill development of the growers.