

## **RS 738-CR RUBBER, COFFEE FARMING IN TRIBAL DISTRICTS PLANNED**

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**With a view to promoting cultivation of rubber and coffee as an attractive income proposition for tribals, the State Government has chalked out ambitious plantation programmes in 85,000 acres of land in tribals-dominated districts with an investment of Rs 738.49 crore.**

This would be a decade-long drive from 2013 to 2022, during which 85,000 tribal families would be benefitted.

Chief Secretary BK Patnaik discussed both the programmes at a meeting here on Saturday along with Development Commissioner JK Mohapatra.

Secretary of ST & SC Development Department Santosh Sarangi presented a roadmap on both the cash crops of rubber and coffee, which would provide ample job opportunities to tribals and help them gain financial benefits.

At least 45,000 acres of land would be covered under rubber plantation in five Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) in Mayurbhanj and Gajapati districts to benefit 45,000 tribal farmers.

While the Indian Rubber Board has agreed to share Rs 16.92 crore, fund to the tune of Rs 255.73 crore would be sourced from the Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) and MGNREGS.

Rubber plantation has already been undertaken in the ITDAs of Baripada, Kaptipada, Rairangpur and Parlakhemundi in 1170 acres, for which Rs 1.21 crore has been allocated. As part of the programme, nurseries have been raised for planting material of 3.5 lakh brown budded stumps, said a senior officer of the Department of ST & SC Development.

For coffee plantation, a massive programme has been chalked out for Koraput and Rayagada districts, which hold much larger scope for commercial coffee cultivation. The Indian Coffee Board officials are extending their support for it, said the official.

The Government would take up coffee cultivation in 40,000 acres to benefit nearly an equal number of tribal families during the decade. In the current year, coffee and shade tree plantation would be undertaken in 6,380 acres, for which Rs 13.64 crore would be required.

In the meantime, agriculture graduates have been selected for placement in the ITDAs of Koraput, Rayagada, Mayurbhanj and Gajapati to provide technical support to all stakeholders. Technical NGOs have also been empanelled to take up rubber plantation, apart from setting up nurseries in the five ITDAs of Mayurbhanj and Gajapati districts.

Facilitating NGOs would be engaged in each of the ITDAs to mobilise tribal families and ensure handholding support during various stages of plantation and post-harvest activities, said the official.