

'Govt. focused on clearing tea subsidy dues'

Special Correspondent **COIMBATORE 27 SEPTEMBER 2021 22:39 IST**

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The Centre is focusing more on clearing the subsidy dues to the tea sector and has made provisions for ₹298.76 crore for the same, Anupriya Singh Patel, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, said on Monday.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the United Planters' Association of Southern India, on the virtual platform, the Minister said the Tea Development and Promotion Scheme had been extended till 2025-26.

The outlay for the entire tea sector was ₹967 crore, she said. Though the orthodox tea incentives had been discontinued, the focus was on clearing the pending subsidy claims. The aim of the Tea Board mandating sale of 50% of tea through auction is to bring transparency and give relief to small growers, Ms. Patel said. On concerns over tea imports, she said the Tea Board was monitoring it.

The Union Government is looking at expanding area under natural rubber in the non-traditional regions. The aim is to promote domestic production to meet 75% of requirements by 2025, the Minister said.

The Ministry of Commerce had taken up with the Ministry of Agriculture a proposal to classify natural rubber as an agricultural product, which was under the latter's consideration. India's export of spices and its value-added products were on the increase and 50% of these were value-added products. The Expenditure Finance Committee had approved ₹ 4,112.29 crore for 2021-22 to 2025-26 for the plantation sector, she said.

Prashant Bhansali, president of United Planters' Association of Southern India, said the government should intervene to restructure loans for the plantation sector, revise the interest rates, have a relook at the RoDTEP rates for plantation crops, increase the financial support to commodity boards, and allocate subsidised fertilizers for the plantation sector linked to acreage under cultivation.

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