Rubber industry pivotal to industrial development:
Vikram Kirloskar

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Rubber industry in India has a pivotal role in the future of manufacturing industry, particularly automobile industry, said Sri. Vikram Shreekant Kirloskar, President of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM). He was inaugurating India Rubber Meet 2014(IRM 2014), at Le Meridien Convention Centre, Kochi, today. Though the automobile industry in India is now going through a difficult phase, its future appears to be quite promising, he added.

India Rubber Meet is conceived as a forum for all stakeholders in the rubber industry value chain in the country for exchange of information and networking among themselves and their counterparts from other parts of the world, said Smt. Sheela Thomas, Chairman, Rubber Board in her welcome address. The event is proposed to be held on an annual basis, the chairman added.

The theme of IRM 2014 is “Indian Rubber: New Horizons”, which intends to pave way for an expansive survey on new frontiers of the Indian rubber industry. The first day of IRM 2014 was remarkable with a combination of invited talks and panel discussion. Sri. Sunny George Verghese, Group MD and Chief Executive Officer, Olam International, Singapore, gave the first talk on the subject ‘Global economic outlook and future of commodities’. He presented an in-depth analysis of the short term and long term trends in the global economy and the future of commodities giving special emphasis to agricultural crops. In the backdrop of increasing urbanization leading to resource limitation and global contestation compelling competitiveness, productivity enhancement must be focused, he said.
The second speech by Dr. Stephen Evans (Secretary-General, International Rubber Study Group, Singapore) was on ‘Short and medium-term outlook on global rubber industry’. He presented the analytical picture of the global as well as Indian natural rubber (NR), synthetic rubber (SR), tyre and automobile sector with ample support of statistical data and predictions about the immediate future. The next talk in the morning session was on ‘Prospects for India to be a Global Power in Rubber Industry’ by Sri. Sunil Kumar, Former CEO & President, International Specialty Product (ISP), USA. He said that the automobile industry in India is growing very fast, thanks to the democracy, diversity, vibrant demography and development. This demands catalyzing huge investments in manufacture of tyres as well as synthetic rubber in India. Today's last talk was by Sri. David Shaw, Head of Research, Tire Industry Research, UK on ‘Current Trends and Emerging Developments in Global Auto-Tyre Industry and the Future of India in the Global Map of Auto-Tyre Manufacturing’. He stressed the importance of maintaining quality, fuel efficiency and sustainability in product manufacturing.

Interactive panel discussions were held on the subject ‘Present & near-term global scenario of NR in the perspective of NR producing countries’. Dr. Kamarul Baharain Basir (Secretary-General, Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries, Kuala Lumpur) was the moderator of the discussions. The panelists were Dr. Pongsak Kerdvongbundit (Honorary President, Thai Rubber Association), Ir. Daud Husni Bastari (Chairman, Rubber Association of Indonesia), Smt. Sheela Thomas, Chairman, Rubber Board, India, Dr. Tran Thi Thuy Hoa (Vietnam Rubber Association, Hi Chi Minh City), Ms. Sunny Song (Director, China Rubber Industry Association, Beijing), Sri. Lakna Paranawithana (Senior Adviser, Sri Lanka Society of Rubber Industry). The panellists stressed on the need for comparable pricing for natural and synthetic rubber. The quality of raw material can be ensured, if the consumers insist on it and compensate the producers adequately.
The deliberations and panel discussions will continue on 21 February also. Major speakers will be Sri. Sandana Dass (CEO, R1 International Group, Singapore), Smt. Sunny Song (Director, China Rubber Industry Association, Beijing), Smt. Fazilet Cinaralp (Secretary-General, European Tyre and Rubber Manufacturers’ Association, Brussels), Sri. James L. McGraw (MD & CEO, International Institute of Synthetic Rubber Producers Inc., Texas) and Dr. P.S. Ravishankar (ExxonMobile, Texas, USA).

Rubber sector stakeholder associations have been keen on having a regular forum for bringing together rubber industry interests on an annual basis. IRM is visualized as an annual gathering of rubber industry stakeholders for facilitating networking and information sharing for furthering business relations for mutual benefit.

Dr. C. Kuruvilla Jacob
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Sri. Vikram Shreekant Kirloskar, President of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), inaugurating ‘India Rubber Meet 2014’ at Kochi. Sri. Vinod Simon, Vice Chairman, Organizing Committee, ‘India Rubber Meet 2014’ and Smt. Sheela Thomas, Chairman, Rubber Board are also seen.