

## Bamboo processing centre to generate job avenues

Establishment of Bamboo Processing Centre at Poma is a unique initiative of the Raj Bhavan, Itanagar and the Arunachal Pradesh Forest Corporation Limited in providing necessary infrastructural support to the Poma villagers to develop expertise in production and marketing of bamboo-based industrial intermediates, which are in much demand by the bamboo-based industries in the north-eastern region. It would be appropriate to bring out the context to this developmental initiative.

**Jobless Growth:** A review of the Ninth Plan by the Planning Commission had indicated jobless growth. During the Tenth Plan, declining trend in creation of jobs had continued while the economy showed 8-9% growth in Gross Domestic Products. Cane, bamboo and medicinal plants were identified as new sectors of development having the po-

tential to create jobs in rural and farm sectors, while having the capacity to bring about economic transformation of the entire north-eastern region. In a forest resources rich State like Arunachal, bamboo could be the drivers of the rural economy.

**The Shukla Commission Report and After:** This report is a watershed for the development of the north-eastern region. But this is particularly weak in suggesting appropriate strategies for harnessing the potential of the bio-resources for economic empowerment of the people in the region. Arunachal Pradesh boasts of 82% forest cover, while not much had been done to harness this potential for development. Forests in Arunachal Pradesh have approximately 1/5<sup>th</sup> area under bamboo, which can be used as a resource for sustainable development.

**National Bamboo Mission:** The Government of India started the National Bamboo Mission in the early part of the Eleventh Plan. The National Bamboo Mission is implemented by all States and supposed to be carried out in mission mode. The National Bamboo Mission, part of the Ministry of Agriculture, provides 100% financial assistance for raising bamboo, while the National Mission on Bamboo Application (NMBA), under the department of Science and Technology, provides funds and technical expertise in developing bamboo-based industries enterprises.

**Bamboo Processing Centre at Poma Village:** The idea to develop a bamboo processing centre at Poma was mooted by Gen. J J Singh, Governor, which was further developed and elaborated by this author in the AP Forest Corporation Ltd. The project envisaged establish-

ment of Bamboo Processing Machinery for production of bamboo-based industrial intermediates in bulk by the Poma villagers and the technical expertise is supposed to be provided by the Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre, Guwahati, Arunachal Pradesh Forest Corporation Limited and the State Forest Research Institute, Itanagar. The Governor had intended that this project should not be a government-run affair. Therefore, the AP Forest Corporation Ltd has helped the Poma villagers to constitute the Poma Village Development Society which shall own all the capital assets and will also oversee the enterprise right from growing of raw materials to production and marketing.

The Bamboo Processing Centre at Poma was inaugurated by Governor Gen J J Singh on August 17, 2009. The

project comprises of installation of bamboo processing machinery, training of unemployed youths, distribution of tool kits and 100 per cent buy back guarantee is available from the bamboo-based industries. Main thrust of the Poma project is that people should actually acquire necessary expertise and develop entrepreneurship to carry out any developmental venture on their own unlike most of the government schemes where responsibilities are not on the people but on the government officials. This project, therefore, envisages churning out motivated and energetic entrepreneurs responsible to enter into businesses and sustain them without further spoon-feeding by the government.

**Bamboo as reproducible natural resource:** Bamboo is being regarded as one of the most useful resources to propel

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sustainable economic development. Because it is a reproducible resource with strong fertility different from non-reproducible fossil fuels such as coal, petroleum and natural gas. Bamboo grows more rapidly than other plants. Therefore, massive extraction of bamboo will not cause environmental disruption like loss of forests. We can also easily dispose bamboo products without heavy burden on the environment. When trees are cut for various purposes, the function to absorb carbon dioxide emission by forests falls down. As a result enormous volumes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be discharged into the atmosphere causing global warming. Petroleum and plastic products require large quantity of energy for their disposal.

**Bamboo and climate change mitigation:** India is planning to emerge as a regional player in promoting climate change mitigation strategies. With the Union Environment Ministry in the hands of a charismatic leader like Jairam Ramesh, India can be hopeful to lead the Copenhagen summit slated this month. Global efforts are under way to reduce our planetary carbon emissions below 1990 levels. That still leaves a lot of CO<sub>2</sub> being put into the atmosphere each year by human activities. Bamboo offers perhaps the quickest way to remove vast amounts of that carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Building houses with bamboo means sequestering the carbon for hundred years. At the same time, bamboo usage will also mean creating lots of jobs in rural and farm sectors