Restructured National Bamboo Mission

What is the issue?

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The proposed “Restructured National Bamboo Mission”, can capitalise on the immense bamboo potential for the north-eastern states.

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What hindered the development of the Bamboo Industry in India?

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- Bamboo is a multi-utility grass and more than 300 ethnic groups in the northeast have traditionally been using it as food, housing and other needs.
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- It is essentially a type of grass, but was classified as a tree in India for over 90 years till recently.
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- This prevented the northeast, which grows 67% of India’s bamboo, from exploiting it commercially until recently.
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- While forest bamboo was out of bounce, till recently, the lack of policy support also didn’t allowed commercial use of non-forest bamboo.
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- Notably, China is the only country with a richer bamboo genetic resource than the north-east and exports a significant amount of bamboo.
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How does the scenario look presently?

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- Bamboo’s commercial journey began when it was struck off the list of trees by amending the Indian Forest Act last year.
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- The recent budget has allocated of Rs. 1,290 crores for a restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM).

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- This has raised hopes for a range of bamboo-based industries — from food processing to construction and the holistic development of bamboo industry.
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- But the restructured NBM needs to be more focussed on value-chain management and value-addition of bamboo at the community level.
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- Such an approach is what will bring more income to the bamboo farmers and bamboo processors.
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What have been the controversies associated with bamboo?

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- Flowering of bamboo happens every 50-55 years, and this leads to dramatic increase in the population of rats that destroy crops and triggers famines.
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- Notably, once such famine (Matuam famine) in 1966 led to the creation of the Mizo National Front and a subsequent violent uprising.
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- There have also been instances of bamboo cartels shedding blood while competing for limited commercial opportunities.
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- But Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur governments have signed agreements for supplying bamboo to the upcoming bio-refinery at Numaligarh.
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- Such initiatives will offer a permanent source of revenue generation to bamboo growers and enhance commercial options for producers and marketers.
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Source: The Hindu

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