

would be imposed which would be spent only on education. I would like to know from the Government through you, whether any date has been fixed for the next meeting. Till that meeting is convened and the position is evaluated, what decision has been taken by the State Governments and the Ministry of Finance in this respect.

KUMARI SELJA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, no date has been fixed for the meeting so far.

[English]

Tobacco Growers

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*528. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA:
PROF. UMMAREDDY
VENKATESWARLU:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the financial assistance and incentives provided to the tobacco growers in each State during the last two years;

(b) whether the incentives and financial assistance being provided to the Indian farmers are much below in comparison to other tobacco growing countries; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI ARVIND NETAM): (a) Tobacco Board provides incentives/financial assistance to needy farmers by supplying subsidised inputs, curing materials and free training. Statewise financial assistance provided

to the tobacco growers by Tobacco Board during the last two years is as under:

Financial assistance (Rs. in lakhs)

	1992-93	1993-94
Andhra Pradesh	21.05	27.02
Karnataka	18.91	20.35
Orissa	—	0.80
Total:	39.96	48.17

(b) Out of the ten major tobacco growing countries in the world only in Greece (6th largest producer) and Italy (8th largest producer); Government subsidy is reportedly higher compared to India (3rd largest producer).

(c) Indian tobacco is already price competitive in world markets.

[Translation]

SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Mr Speaker, Sir, tobacco is cultivated through-out the world and Andhra Pradesh is the main producer of tobacco in the country and Union Government earns Rs. 3500 crore as excise duty thereon. But the Government spends very little money on the tobacco growers, which is an injustice to them. The Tobacco Board, in my Constituency, Guntur, sometimes encourages and sometimes discourages the farmers. In this way, they are being treated differently. Last time, crop-holiday for 75 thousand acres of land in nine districts of Andhra Pradesh was declared but when I submitted representations to the Commerce Minister and the Prime

Minister, a minor relaxation was announced. I want to submit that if the crop holiday is announced by the Government, the farmers will have to be compensated for it because by then, each farmer will have already spent three thousand rupees per acre. Therefore, I had asked for a compensation of Rs. 5000 per acre if no cultivation is to be allowed. In other countries too, if crop holiday is declared, the farmers are compensated for it and we had demanded the compensation on the same pattern. It has been a tradition crop for the last 50-60 years and if the Government wants to change it, then a new crop should be suggested to them and it should be ensured that they get the minimum guarantee price.

SHRI ARVIND NETAM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is true that the tobacco growers have some problems in the tobacco growing States. You may be aware that after the disintegration of the former USSR—the country to which our export of tobacco was the maximum—the farmers are facing some problems in its export. We are encouraging the farmers, specially the farmers of Andhra Pradesh, to grow more tobacco and it depends much on its export also. Side by side, the farmers should think about the alternative crops so that they may earn as much as they were earning from tobacco crops.

SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: We have also written a letter to Jakhar ji and the hon. Prime Minister that in foreign countries the farmers are given compensation, when a crop holiday is announced. Crop holiday was announced in nine districts of Andhra Pradesh. The farmers in 7500 acres of tobacco growing area of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been affected. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, through you,

whether in future the farmers will be compensated when a crop-holiday is declared.

SHRI ARVIND NETAM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, there is no such scheme under consideration of the Government at present.

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, traditionally tobacco is grown in Madhya Pradesh also but today the situation is that the production of tobacco is almost nil. Whether the Government have any scheme to encourage the farmers to grow tobacco in Madhya Pradesh.

SHRI ARVIND NETAM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is done by the State Governments and the Union Government does not have any such incentive scheme separately for the production of tobacco. Efforts are being made by the Tobacco Board in this regard.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR): We must charge with the time. From the health point of view, various programmes are going on throughout the world. Therefore, the farmers should be encouraged to grow some alternative crop and continuous efforts should be made in this direction. It is right that the farmer should not suffer economically. We must do it in the same way as an acrobat does in a circus while performing trapeze.

SHRI SATYNARAYAN JATIYA: Please suggest some way for it.

SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR: We will inform you after taking concrete steps.