

Control over Opium Production

853. SHRI BHOY KRISHNA HAN-DIQUE: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to have more effective control over opium production and sale of precursor chemicals used in the conversion of opium into heroin; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) and (b). Production of licit opium in India is regulated under strict licensing control and supervision by the Central Government. The elaborate system of control involves 100% measurement of each plot, test measurement, constant monitoring of the crop conditions, daily weighing of produce and intensification of enforcement and vigil during cultivation, lancing and collection of opium. To further tighten enforcement in and around the poppy growing areas, 3 new preventive cells have been set up in Udaipur, Kanpur and Dehradun equipped with adequate vehicular support and communication network.

The export of acetic anhydride which is an essential precursor chemical used in the conversion of opium into heroin has been banned. In order to check its illegal export, acetic anhydride has also been notified under the Customs Act so as to attract special controls on its movement within the specified areas along the Indo-pak and Indo-Burma borders.

Bank Branches Damaged in Andhra Pradesh

854. PROF. UMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some branches of nationalised banks were damaged during 1991 in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the estimated loss suffered branch-wise; and

(d) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to prevent recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). 28 branches of public sector banks are reported to have been attacked/burnt in the year 1991. Branch-wise details of damage suffered and estimated loss are given in the statement attached.

(d) Reserve bank of India/Banks have taken following preventive measures.

- (i) Reduction of cash holding in vulnerable branches;
- (ii) Daily records to be duplicated and transferred to Regional Offices;
- (iii) Pledged gold/valuables to be shifted to Regional Offices/safer branches;
- (iv) One set of keys to be kept with the police station after working hours;
- (v) Joint custodian advised to stay away from Head-quarters; and
- (vi) Effective alarm system fitted in the branches.