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Title: Need to revoke the ban imposed by Russia on purchase of Indian Tobacco.

SHRI RAYAPATI SAMBASIVA RAO (GUNTUR): Sir, I wish to bring to the attention of the hon'ble Minister of Commerce and the Government that in January, 2008 Russia has banned the import of Indian Plant Products. It is a matter of grave concern to the tobacco sector in Andhra Pradesh and the Karnataka, who are the major exporters of tobacco to Russia. This decision of Russia has hit Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, two major tobacco producing States in India.

Andhra Pradesh, my home State, is a traditional exporter of tobacco to Russia. In 2006-07, 20,663 tonnes of tobacco valued at Rs. 139 crores, were exported to Russia.

Production of tobacco in Zimbabwe and Brazil, India's major rivals, has declined steeply and Indian tobacco is expected to rule the roost in the world market, Russian ban has come as a bombshell.

As tobacco is not a food crop and that it is a plant product, there is absolutely no danger of any Indian pest invading Russia through tobacco. Hence, the ban on Indian Tobacco is unwarranted and irrational. It should be lifted immediately. Moreover, Indian tobacco has excellent reputation in Russia its quality is admired by Russian smokers.

Under the circumstances, I would request the Government and the hon'ble Minister of Commerce, on behalf of the Tobacco exporters of Andhra Pradesh, to make efforts to ensure that Russia lifts the ban on Indian tobacco.