

an>

Title: Regarding problems being faced by Tobacco farmers in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI R. DHYUVANARAYANA (CHAMARAJANAGAR): Madam Speaker, thank you.

I want to raise an important issue regarding tobacco farmers. Tobacco is an important commercial and dry crop grown in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. About 45.7 million people are involved in this, including farmers, farm labourers, workers, retailers, etc. Thirty lakh farmers are dependent on this industry.

Now, the Union Government has decided to put pictorial health warning covering 85 per cent of the space on both sides of the packet, which is up by 40 per cent. The Parliamentary Committee concerned had recommended that the pictorial warning could occupy only fifty per cent of the packet. But that recommendation has not been taken into consideration. Now, the cigarette factories are on the verge of closure.

I would request the Union Government to take adequate steps to go for alternative farming system and provide adequate money for this purpose. Also reduce the coverage of pictorial warning so that the tobacco industries could resume production. Thank you.

माननीय अध्यक्ष : कुँवर पुष्पेन्द्र सिंह चंदेला को श्री आर. धुवनायराण द्वारा उठाए गए विषय के साथ संबद्ध करने की अनुमति प्रदान की जाती है।

THE MINISTER OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF HOUSING AND URBAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU): I would like Shri Kharge also to hear this seriously. This is a serious problem. The entire House, at one time or the other, has to discuss this issue. In seven districts of Karnataka and seven or eight districts of Andhra Pradesh, tobacco crop is the main livelihood. But the WHO and other agencies are all saying that smoking is injurious to health, which is also a fact.

Keeping that in mind, world public opinion is growing stronger day by day to discourage smoking – whether it is cigarette or *bidi* also. The point raised by the hon. Member is about the livelihood opportunities of *bidi* workers – whether it is Sholapur or Adilabad of Andhra Pradesh or in Karnataka or in Kerala. There is a problem between these two. One is the public opinion worldwide and the health experts advise to dissuade people from smoking. Pictorial warning is one such step in that direction. The court is also monitoring the case. At one stage or other we have to evolve a broad consensus because the Government alone taking a decision unilaterally again lead to other consequences also.

This morning, I met farmers from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. We have been meeting earlier also. We have to slowly encourage farmers to go for alternate crops. That is the only way. Otherwise, we cannot continue with this situation. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI R. DHYUVANARAYANA: Is the Government thinking of announcing a special package?

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: I would be discussing with the Ministers of Commerce and Agriculture about this problem. The Health Minister is very serious because he has been receiving inputs from the WHO and other organizations. We have to find out some solution to this problem. I would like to discuss informally with the Congress Leader of the House and other hon. Members also. We would try to find some solution. In the last one or two years, we have been agitating but we were not able to find out any meaningful and practical solution. If somebody has got good suggestions and ideas, they are welcome; we would discuss the same.