

coming closer and closer to the Earth's orbit hence affecting the astronomical and climatic conditions of the planet. This is a historical event of the twentieth century. The Comet's current appearance is of particular significance. After years of studying it from a distance, man, thanks to the advanced technology, will today be able to resolve the mystery associated with it. The world scientists are doing day and night research work on Halley's Comet. Our scientific installation, observatories and satellite system should also study its effect on the Indian climate. The erratic rains, hailstorm, snowfall and failure of monsoon could be due to its presence in the earth's orbit. So, I would like to request the Minister of State for Space and Science and Technology to make a statement in the House in this regard.

- (vi) Need to take steps to ensure remunerative prices to tobacco growers and sanction more money for research on tobacco.

**SHRI V. SOBHANADREESWARA RAO** (Vijayawada) : The tobacco growers throughout the country are the worst sufferers. Though the cost of cultivation has increased considerably, the per acre output has decreased due to adverse seasonal conditions. The Central Government has not increased the minimum support prices for flue cured vergenia tobacco this year which is quite disturbing. The Government should reconsider its stand and increase the minimum support prices, which should be remunerative to farmers. The Government should see that foreign export orders are decided soon to enable the farmers to get higher prices. The Government should also set up a tobacco corporation to deal with Beedi Tobacco, Natu Tobacco and Suncured Tobacco just on the lines of Tobacco Board which is dealing with FCV Tobacco. The Government should fix minimum support price for Beedi Tobacco as well as Suncured Tobacco used for cigars and take all necessary steps for prompt payment to the farmers. Though tobacco is the highest contributor to the exchequer, the Government is not spending enough money for agricultural extension as well as research concerning tobacco. Government is spending very meagre amount as subsidy to farmers on technical programmes. So, the Government should spend adequate funds on these items

and help the tobacco growers as well as increase the per acre yield.

[*Translation*]

- (vii) Need to give adequate compensation to the owners of thousands of cattle which died recently in an epidemic in Bihar and take immediate steps to save the sick cattle.

**SHRI KALI PRASAD PANDEY** (Gopalganj) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to draw the attention of the House to the following matter under rule 377.

I would like to draw the attention of the Government to an epidemic which broke out in the capital of Bihar and other parts of the State resulting in the death of at least ten thousand cattle heads in February last. Majority of the dead cattle are cows, calves and buffaloes. The people whose villages and houses have already been affected due to erosion by the river Ganga have been left with no source of livelihood. Several pens in Patna, where previously hundreds of cattle heads used to be kept, now wear a deserted look. Thousands of cattle heads are lying sick in the private and collective pens and about Rs. 3 crores to Rs. 5 crores worth of cattle heads have perished. The expenditure incurred on their treatment is exclusive of this. The farmers and the pen owners of Patna and its eastern parts are facing starvation.

A number of social organisations have sent memoranda to the State Government and the Centre for taking action on the untimely death of such a large number of cattle. But no help has been provided to the people in distress and neither action has been taken to provide effective treatment to the cattle.

The Government is, therefore, requested to take effective steps immediately to check the epidemic among the cattle, secure compensation for the dead cattle, provide proper treatment for the sick cattle and to solve the problems concerning the livelihood of the milk producers.