

Rural Development Fund

†*389. SHRI KRISHAN LAL BALMIKI: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are going to create a Rural Development Fund; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the manner in which Government would mobilize financial resources for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Unfair treatment to Virginia Tobacco at WTO Negotiations

*390. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have noted that cash crops like Virginia tobacco are not receiving fair treatment during WTO negotiations;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Free Trade Agreements between India and neighbouring countries is harming Indian tobacco farmers' interest;

(c) in what way will Government bring about equity and fairness in interantional trade policies to help farmers of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; and

(d) the steps proposed to reduce such aspects of FTAs which harm Indian farmers?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) In the WTO negotiations, steps are being taken to address the structural distortions in agricultural trade caused due to subsidization and protection of agricultural products, including cash crops like Virginia tobacco.

(b) to (d) Under India's Regional Trade Arrangements (RTAs), tariff concessions on imports into India, with duty free access subject to fulfillment of value addition criteria, on tobacco have been offered only under the Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Sri Lanka has retained tobacco in its negative list of imports. The Government has requested Sri Lanka to provide parity with India's tariff concessions on tobacco. Matters

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.