

Air Cargo smuggling racket

*120. SHRI NARASINGHA PRASAD
NANDA: DR. V. P. DUTT:

SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI;

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a major air cargo smuggling racket has been unearthed at the Delhi Airport recently involving the officials of the Air India and the Customs Department;

(b) if so, what are the names of the officers of the two Departments involved in the racket;

(c) what are the details of the goods seized and what is the value thereof; and

(d) what action has been taken against the officials found guilty?

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

(c) Watch parts, watches and sarees, of a total value of about Rs. 2.27 lakhs.

(b) and (d) The matter has been referred to the CBI for investigation. It will not be in the interest of proper investigation to disclose at this stage, further details, including the names of the persons involved.

Export Minimum Prices to Virginia Tobacco Growers

*110. SHRI KRISHNARAO NARAYAN DHULAP: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Virginia tobacco growers in the country are paid export minimum prices by the main categories of buyers

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namely (i) domestic cigarette manufacturers-cum-exporters (ii) only exporters and (iii) speculative dealers;

(b) whether these prices paid to the growers are related to the cost of production; and

(c) if so, what steps Government have taken or propose to take with a view to ensuring remunerative prices to the Virginia tobacco growers in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES AND COOPERATION (SHRI ARIF BEG): (a) and (b) The minimum export prices are the prices below which exports are not allowed. These are not the prices at which tobacco is purchased by the trade from the growers. Cost of production is also one of the factors taken into consideration by the Tobacco Board in recommending minimum export prices for tobacco to the Government.

(c) Introduction of new farm grades and Tobacco Leaf Purchase Voucher Scheme and regulation of production of Virginia tobacco are some of the measures which have been taken by the Tobacco Board so that tobacco growers may get remunerative prices. The Tobacco Board is also working out a scheme for setting up of auction platforms for sale of Virginia tobacco and establishment of auction platforms will greatly help the growers to get remunerative prices for their produce. During periods of excess production of Virginia tobacco, the Central Government also intervened in the market to avoid any abnormal fall in tobacco prices. Excess production of Virginia tobacco in Andhra Pradesh is also expected during this year and the Government has already directed the STC to purchase 10,000 tonnes of VFC tobacco, on Government account from the growers and growers' co-operatives in addition to 5,000 tonnes which the STC is to purchase on their commercial account.

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