

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (JAYANT SINHA): (a) At present, refunds only up to ₹ 50,000/- are being directly credited to the bank account number, as mentioned by the taxpayer in his Income Tax Return (ITR), through ECS/NEFT facility. Refunds exceeding ₹ 50,000/- are being issued by paper cheques through the State Bank of India (SBI), which is the Refund Banker to the Income Tax Department.

(b) The ceiling of Refund amount of ₹ 50,000/- has been fixed for direct credit of refund to the bank account so as to avoid possible inconvenience to the taxpayers, which may arise in the event of any mistake in mentioning bank account number in the ITR, or due to change in bank account number subsequent to filing of the ITR. Since the bulk of refund claims are of amounts below ₹ 50,000/-, the majority of refund claims are paid by direct credit to bank account. During Financial Year 2014-15, 99% of all refunds were issued through Refund Banker, either by way of ECS/NEFT or by paper cheques. Out of this, more than 73% of the refunds were issued directly into the bank account through ECS/NEFT.

(c) The details of refunds processed for electronically filed ITRs by the Centralised Processing Cell during the last three years are as under:

Financial year	No. of Refunds processed (in Lakhs)	Average time for issue of Refund (in days)
2012-13	47	83
2013-14	83	97
2014-15	115	85
2015-16	140	54

Circle-wise or State-wise details of refunds issued are not centrally maintained.

(d) Interest is paid by the Government in respect of any delay in issue of refund in accordance with the provisions of Section 244A of the Income Tax Act, 1961 and the same is mandatory and compensatory in nature.

Legal production of opium in the country

1850. SHRI RAVI PRAKASH VERMA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the India is the only country legally allowed to produce gum opium;

(b) if so, whether Government is considering to increase the country's opium production in the cultivation year 2015-16;

- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the reasons therefor;
- (d) the names of the States which are authorized to cultivate opium;
- (e) whether Government is aware of the fact that some States have been cultivating opium illegally; and
- (f) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JAYANT SINHA): (a) As per the reports of the International Narcotic Control Board (INCB), there are 4 countries including India in the World which legally grow opium poppy for production of opium gum.

(b) and (c) Licit cultivation of opium poppy is carried out in designated tracts of the country every year considering the total requirement of opium for medical and scientific purposes for domestic use as well for exports. Based on such demand General Conditions for issuance of opium poppy cultivation licence during the crop year 2015-16 have accordingly been notified in Gazette of India *vide* Notification No G.S.R 757(E) dated 5th October, 2015 and amended *vide* Notification No G.S.R 904(E) dated 26th November, 2015.

(d) In India, licit cultivation is carried out only in three States *i.e.* Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. Government is aware that opium is reportedly cultivated illegally in some parts of country. Such illicit cultivation is eradicated by various enforcement agencies of Government of India and the State Governments concerned.

Contribution of banks to NSDF

1851. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether is it a fact that several banks have stopped contributing to National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) since 2004-05;

(b) the amount of money contributed by various banks, bank-wise in the NSDF since the Funds inception or during the last three years;

(c) whether the Banks have been regularly contributing, if not, the reasons there for; and

(d) what steps have been taken up by the banks to promote sports in areas where there are lead banks?