

Issues of tobacco farmers raised in Rajya Sabha

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Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said the World Health Organisation has highlighted evil effects of consuming tobacco. (Photo: PTI)

The problems being faced by tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh figured in the Rajya Sabha on Monday, with a BJP member asking the Centre to help the distressed growers.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour, G V L Narasimha (BJP) said the quality of tobacco crop, including in the West Godavari district, was poor due to consecutive five-year drought in the area and farmers were not getting reasonable price for their produce.

He said during a similar situation in 2015 a compensation package was given to farmers, and urged the Union Commerce Ministry to "extend a similar helping hand" to growers in the times of distress.

The BJP also suggested liberalisation in Licensing norms for growing tobacco.

He further said if tobacco farmers are to be encouraged to switch to alternative crop, a stable policy needs to be devised.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said the World Health Organisation has highlighted evil effects of consuming tobacco.

He said the Health Ministry and other wings of the government were trying to impress upon people to see that area under cultivation of tobacco gets reduced and progressively farmers go for alternative crops.

Naidu cautioned that if the government is liberal in giving licence for tobacco cultivation, there would be glut in the market and farmers may go for distress sale.

TMC member Manish Gupta raised the issue of an alleged threat issued by a BJP leader to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Earlier, Naidu had not approved a notice by Gupta for suspension of Question Hour to take up the issue. The Chairman said the notice was based on a newspaper report.

Making a special mention in the House, Binoy Viswam of the CPI raised the matter of death of poor people due to heat wave.

He said about 500 people have died due to heat wave and expressed apprehension that many would die during the cold wave in winters.

The CPI member said even after 70 years of Independence the country has to witness such deaths.

This situation needs to be changed, Viswam said and demanded adequate shelter homes for poor people.

He said as India would be celebrating 75 years of Independence, "no Indian should die anymore due to heat wave or cold wave".

Senior Congress member Husain Dalwai highlighted the poor condition of Muslims in the country.

He said illiteracy level was highest among members of the community. He also said child labour was also very high among Muslims.

Elamaram Kareem (CPI-M), in his special mention highlighted the poor financial condition of BSNL and demanded both short term as well as long term fund infusion in the state-owned telecom firm.

Meanwhile, the Chairman asked members to raise issues related to latest issues and not general issues during the Zero Hour.

He said members get chance to raise general issues on several occasions, like discussions on Budget and Motion of Thanks on President's Address.

Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/issues-of-tobacco-farmers-raised-in-rajya-sabha-1559665-2019-07-01>