

India: Finance Dept. (Central Revenues). : Opium - internal  
policy. Y:413:5:2:N3 . F6

FINANCE DEPARTMENT (CENTRAL  
REVENUES).

RESOLUTION.

EXCISE OPIUM.

*Simla, the 17th June, 1926.*

*Opium—Internal Policy.*

**No. 4.**—The Government of India have been giving careful consideration, for some time past, to questions of Opium policy, both internal and external. In regard to external policy, in order to fulfil, both in letter and in spirit, the international engagements into which they have entered, and to lend as much assistance as lies in their power to the solution of the problems attending the use of 'prepared' Opium (that is, the smoking of Opium) in the Further East, they have recently announced their decision progressively to reduce, and finally to discontinue altogether within ten years, all exports of Opium from India for purposes other than scientific and medicinal.

2. The regulation of the internal traffic in Opium is under the reformed Constitution a Provincial 'Transferred' subject, in which the Government of India have no financial interest. Internal Opium policy is governed by considerations entirely different from those that arise in relation to the export of Opium to other countries. Opium smoking is the dominant factor determining external policy. In India, as was stated by the Royal Commission of Opium of 1893, Opium smoking is little practised, and is generally regarded as a disreputable habit; and the policy of the Government of India, based upon the findings of that Commission, has been, and is, one of non-interference with the moderate use of raw Opium, whether the object of the consumer be some real or supposed physical benefit, or merely the indulgence of the almost universal desire of human beings (particularly those whose occupations involve exposure, or severe bodily exertion), for a stimulant or a narcotic. Excessive indulgence it is, and always has been, the desire of the Government to suppress.

3. In the autumn of 1924, after a careful examination of various criticisms directed against their internal Opium policy, the Government of India addressed a circular letter (No. 5383, dated November 17th, 1924), to all Local Governments and Administrations. The object of this letter was to bring to the notice of Local Governments and Administrations certain special aspects of the internal policy in regard to Opium in India, and to afford an opportunity of reviewing the principles on which that policy was based. The Government of India expressed the view that, while no grounds had been disclosed for any radical change, there were three matters to which it was desirable to invite special attention. Local Governments and Administrations were accordingly requested to consider, and to favour the Government of India with their opinions in regard to (1) the possibility of closer inter-provincial co-ordination of policy, with reference to the determination of the selling-price of Opium, since marked differences of price in contiguous areas were likely to encourage illicit dealings in the drug; (2) the necessity, and possibility, of taking special

measures to reduce consumption, and prevent abuse, in those exceptional areas, of which examples were given, where the recorded consumption of Opium per head of the population was markedly in excess of the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations; and (3) the desirability of investigating the extent to which the practice of giving Opium to young children prevailed in each Province, or other area concerned, and to which—where prevalent—it was productive of evil results; the need for, and practicability of, special measures to check this custom, and the nature of the steps to be taken, should such action be found to be necessary and feasible.

4. This letter, and the replies to it, are printed as an Annexure to this Resolution. The replies show that Local Governments are fully alive to the advantages of that closer co-ordination of policy recommended by the Government of India. Some Provinces have referred to the policy of adjoining States as a more serious source of embarrassment to them than the policy of neighbouring Provinces. The Government of Bombay have pointed out that there may be difficulties in the way of securing absolute uniformity of price even throughout the same Province, owing to the variety of local conditions.

5. In regard to the reduction of consumption in tracts where it is abnormally high, the replies point to the great decrease in consumption that has already been secured, and to the special measures taken to reduce it further; such as the introduction of registration in Burma and Assam. Here again emphasis is laid upon the difficulties caused by smuggling from Indian States, and reference is made to the danger that, unless such illicit sources of supply can be cut off, more harm than good may result from the too-hasty application of severer measures of restriction.

6. Finally, in regard to the administration of Opium to children, the replies show, as was anticipated, that the extent to which this practice prevails varies widely in different parts of the country, though it can hardly be said to be unknown anywhere except, perhaps, in Burma, and in parts of Assam and Bengal. There is a general consensus of opinion that, whether or not the ill-effects of this habit have been exaggerated, it should be discouraged; but that the problem is not one that can be solved by legislation; nor—in view of the very small doses administered—is any improvement to be expected as a result of the enhancement of the sale-price of the drug. Education, health-propaganda, and the activities of organizations for the promotion of child-welfare are indicated as the means upon which reliance must be placed for the ultimate eradication of this custom.

7. The Government of India have carefully considered the correspondence summarized above. They recognize that circumstances make it difficult, if not impossible, to secure complete uniformity in the sale-price of Opium throughout India. In accordance with a suggestion made originally by the Government of the United Provinces, they propose to convene at Simla in the near future an inter-provincial Conference of Ministers charged with the administration of Excise, at which certain out-standing problems relating to the co-ordination of Excise policy in

India will be discussed. This Conference will offer a convenient opportunity for the examination of questions relating to Opium policy.

The Government of India have also under their consideration measures to check the smuggling of Opium from Indian States, and to secure both the co-operation of the States for that purpose and a greater degree of uniformity between the Opium policy of the States and that of British India.

8. In regard to the areas where consumption appears to be excessive the Government are again addressing Provincial Governments, in order to impress upon them the importance that the Government of India attach to unremitting endeavour to cleanse these 'black spots' upon the map of India. Much has been done to reduce the consumption of Opium in the country as a whole, with the result that the Rev. W. Paton, whose pamphlet entitled "Opium in India", written in 1924, is referred to in the correspondence with the Local Governments and Administrations annexed to this Resolution, found himself able to write in a more recent pamphlet entitled "India and Opium—The present Situation" (1926)—on page 13—that "for the larger part of the country the opium evil does not exist". The success attained is a subject for legitimate satisfaction; but there must be no slackening of effort so long as the statistics show that in these exceptional areas there may be room for considerable abuse.

9. In regard to the administration of Opium to children, the Government of India accept the conclusion, (which was also arrived at by the Corporation of Bombay, who appointed a special Committee to consider the subject) that education and health—or child-welfare-propaganda are the only expedients that promise any satisfactory results; and that the problem is one with which legislation is powerless to deal.

10. The Government have anxiously deliberated whether they should accept the suggestion that has been put forward from many quarters, that the time has come for a fresh enquiry covering the whole field that was traversed by the Royal Commission on Opium of 1893. There is no support for this proposal in the views expressed by the Provincial Governments. To review the conclusions of so authoritative and impartial a body as the Royal Commission no agency other than that of another Royal Commission would be competent. The Government of India are satisfied that there is no aspect of the internal Opium problem in India to-day that requires for its elucidation the machinery of a Royal Commission, and they have decided definitely that there is no necessity for any such investigation.

11. In their opinion, the conclusions of the Commission, with a single exception, hold good at the present day. The exception relates to the value of Opium as a remedy for malaria. When the Commission wrote their Report, the true causation of malaria was not known. It is not surprising that they should have mis-interpreted the indirect benefits that sufferers from malaria, as from other diseases, undoubtedly may derive from the euphoric virtues of Opium—its power, that is, to relieve suffering, and to counteract the depressing effects, physical and mental, of

pain. The Government do not propose to enter into a technical discussion of this subject. That Opium is a drug of great medicinal value is a proposition that few will dispute. Its medicinal value has been recognised by the International Conference held at Geneva. Critics of the present policy of the Government themselves admit it when they demand that the use of opium should be confined to "medical and scientific purposes. Its use as an anodyne is of special importance to persons placed, as large sections of the population of India inevitably still are placed, beyond the reach of skilled medical assistance.

12. A policy aiming at the prohibition of the use of Opium in India for purposes other than medical and scientific would be clearly impracticable, in the circumstances, even if it were desirable. But, as has been shown above, there is no evidence that there is any serious and widespread abuse of Opium in British India, whatever the purposes for which it may be consumed, and the Government of India would regard as entirely unjustifiable a departure from their present policy of non-interference with moderate use. The statistics show a progressive reduction in consumption in British India as a whole, and the Government are convinced that a continuance of the existing policy, accompanied by special efforts to deal with those comparatively few areas where the average consumption is unduly high, is far more likely to produce beneficial results than any attempt to suppress altogether, by measures that the Government regard as indefensible in principle and doomed to prove infructuous, or actually harmful, in practice, an age-long habit, the temperate exercise of which has been pronounced by the highest authorities to be free from injurious effects.

## ANNEXURE.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,  
FINANCE DEPARTMENT (CENTRAL REVENUES),  
TO ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ADMINISTRATIONS,  
No. 5383, DATED THE 17TH NOVEMBER  
1924.

*Opium—(1) Sale price—Enhancement of—  
Joint action by local Governments to minimise  
smuggling—(2) Consumption—Abuse—Measures  
to check in areas of high consumption—  
(3) Children—Administration of opium to—  
Measures to check.*

I am directed to invite the attention of the Government of Madras, etc., to certain points relating to the consumption of opium in India at the present time, and to put forward certain suggestions for the consideration of His Excellency the Governor acting with his Ministers. As the Governments of Madras, etc., are no doubt aware, the opium policy, both internal and external, of the Government in India has lately been subject to a certain amount of criticism both in this country and elsewhere.

2. The Governments of Madras, etc., have possibly seen a pamphlet called "Opium in India" published by the Rev. W. Paton, under the auspices of the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon. This has been very carefully examined by the Government of India, and in their opinion it discloses no grounds for any general reconsideration of the internal opium policy in India which was

framed in the light of the evidence before the Royal Commission, to which Mr. Paton, drawing upon much less ample and in every way less satisfactory materials, has contributed little or nothing that is new.

3. At the same time there are three matters that, I am to suggest, may merit consideration.

The first is the desirability of closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments, and particularly between the Governments of adjacent provinces, in regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium. The Government of Assam, in their letter No. X.-240-3370-G.J., dated 19th July 1924, pointed out that the measures that it had taken with the object of reducing consumption, by increasing the retail price of opium and decreasing the quantity issued, were hampered by the fact that prices in Assam are now considerably higher than in some other parts of India, and that consequently opium is being smuggled into Assam. The Government of Assam remarked that they would welcome joint action regulating the issue price of drugs.

4. Secondly, while there are large areas in India where the consumption of opium per head of the population is considerably lower than the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations, which is 600 milligrammes per head per annum (equivalent to a little over 6 seers per 10,000 of the population per annum), the consumption in different parts of India, and in different areas in one and the same province, shows very large variations, and there are places where the consumption per head very largely exceeds the League's standard.

5. As examples I am to mention the following:—

- (1) the whole of Burma where of course smoking is rife—both among the Chinese and among the older Burmans. Consumption is as high as 15 to 20 times the standard of the League of Nations in districts full of Chinese like Rangoon, Tavoy, Mergui, and about 5 times that standard in the whole of Burma on the average,
- (2) the Brahmaputra Valley in Assam. where, there is both smoking and eating. Consumption is as high as 30 times the League of Nations standard in the frontier districts, and averages 8 to 9 times the League's standard for the whole of Assam,
- (3) Orissa and Midnapore. Consumption is about three times the League's standard,
- (4) the Northern Circars of Madras. Consumption is about four times the League's standard (but ten times the standard in one district),
- (5) Sind—where consumption is about six times the League's standard,
- (6) the Central Provinces and Berar. Consumption is about three times the League's standard on the average and 5 times in Berar,
- (7) the districts peopled by the Sikhs. Consumption is about four times the

standard on the average, and in some districts 8 to 10 times the standard,

- (8) Areas adjoining Rajputana, *e.g.*, the Northern districts of Bombay where consumption is about 6 to 8 times the League's standard,
- (9) big industrial centres like Calcutta (7 times), Bombay (7 times), Cawnpore (5 times), Lucknow (3 times), Madras (4 times), Sholapur (6 times), Ahmedabad (7 times), etc., and
- (10) a few places in the Deccan, like Poona, Ahmednagar, etc. (4 to 6 times the standard),
- (11) isolated places like the Nilgiris (over 3 times) and Benares (over 5 times the standard).

It seems clear that in areas where the consumption is so high there is a likelihood of abuse; and it appears to the Government of India that it would be well to consider whether any special measures are necessary and practicable to reduce consumption and prevent abuse in such areas. In Assam and Burma, of course, special measures of restriction have already been taken, and there it would only be necessary to consider whether anything further can be done either in the province as a whole or in particular parts of it.

6. Thirdly, there seems to be no doubt that the practice of administering opium to babies and children is very widespread. This is of course nothing new. Abundant evidence on the subject was recorded by the Opium Commission and they discussed it fully in their report. They pointed out that the practice dated in Malwa, at all events, from so long ago as the 16th century. There is much to be said for the view expressed by Sir William Roberts in his memorandum annexed to the report of the Royal Commission, that if serious physical results frequently arose from so common and so ancient a practice a very large proportion of the children in some parts of India would be affected, and the results must have been long ago detected and generally recognised by medical writers and practitioners in India.

7. It is also quite true, as observed by one of Mr. Paton's witnesses, that "through ignorance and neglect so many influences combine against a healthy childhood that one cannot estimate the results of opium alone." This is precisely what was remarked by the Royal Commission. They said that "children suffering from atrophy as the result of insufficient breast milk in the mother or for other reasons, would in India as a matter of course be dosed with opium, and even cautious observers might be misled as to the true causal sequence" and they mention other cases that "might prove similarly deceptive" and which "might easily be misinterpreted."

8. At the same time there is little doubt that the best modern medical opinion would deprecate the practice of giving opium to children. It therefore appears to the Government of India that it would be well to investigate the extent to which this practice prevails in each province, and to which, if prevalent, it is productive of

evil results ; and to consider whether it is necessary and practicable to take any measures specially designed to check it, and if so, what those measures should be. No doubt this is a matter in regard to which much may be done by the organizations that are already in existence for the purpose of instructing Indian mothers in regard to child-welfare. Some of Mr. Paton's witnesses mentioned that such instruction had proved very effective in inducing mothers to abandon the practice of giving opium to their children.

9. I am to request in conclusion that the Government of India may be favoured with an expression of the views of His Excellency the Governor acting with his Ministers in regard to these three aspects of the opium question.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB, REVENUE DEPARTMENT, No. 1087-L.S.G., EXCISE, DATED THE 15TH JANUARY 1925.

In reply to your letter No. 5383, dated 17th November 1924, regarding the opium policy in India, I am directed by the Punjab Government (Ministry of Agriculture) to say that they agree with the Government of India's conclusion that Mr. Paton's pamphlet discloses no grounds for any general reconsideration of the opium policy in India and contains little of any value.

2. The Punjab Government (Ministry of Agriculture) also agree that it is very desirable that there should be much closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments. In the Punjab the retail sale of opium has recently been made subject to a maximum retail price of Rs. 1-4-0 per tola, while the wholesale price has been fixed at Rs. 70 per seer of 80 tolas ; it was found impossible to fix a higher retail rate than this as the Province is already swamped with illicit opium, smuggled in from the Rajputana States, the consumption of which in the Sikh districts is, in some cases, probably greater than that of licit opium.

3. The Punjab Government (Ministry of Agriculture) are willing to co-operate with other Provinces in any measures deemed necessary and practicable to reduce consumption, but consider that no measures which do not deal with the production and export of opium from the Rajputana States are likely to be effective.

4. As regards the administration of opium to children the Punjab Government (Ministry of Agriculture) think that there is possibly a good deal of exaggeration, but at the same time there is no doubt that the practice is much to be deprecated. Propaganda work in the Punjab can probably best be done by the Director of Public Health, Punjab. The Ministry of Education will be consulted on this point.

LETTER FROM THE AGENT TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN BALUCHISTAN, No. 257-R., DATED THE 23RD JANUARY 1925.

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, in which this Administration is asked to submit an expression of its views in regard to the following three aspects of the consumption of opium in India at the present time :-

- (1) closer co-ordination of policy between Governments of adjacent provinces in

regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium,

- (2) measures necessary and practicable to reduce consumption and prevent abuse in areas of high consumption, and
- (3) measures necessary and practicable to check the administering of opium to babies and children.

2. As regards (1), the following statement shows the rates of sale price of opium current in Baluchistan as compared with those prevalent in the adacent provinces :-

Name of the province.	Price per seer charged by vendors.
Sind-Karachi	.. Rs. 90 to 120.
Punjab	.. Rs. 120 to 160.
North-West Frontier Province.	Rs. 90 to 140.
Baluchistan	.. Rs. 140 to 200.

In view of these figures, the Honourable the Agent to the Governor-General considers that no useful purpose would be served by further enhancement in these prices.

With regard to (2), I am to say that the average consumption of opium in Baluchistan per 10,000 of population in recent years has been as shown below :-

1921-22	.. .. 19 seers.
1922-23	.. .. 11 seers.
1923-24	.. .. 8 seers.

From these figures it is evident that the high sale rates already prevailing in Baluchistan, which have reached the existing figures after gradual periodical enhancements, have contributed materially towards a steady decrease in the consumption of this drug and the Agent to the Governor-General therefore sees no cause for alarm that the drug is liable to abuse. The standard of legitimate consumption is no doubt slightly higher but in view of the orders which have recently been issued to courts in the Province to apply rigorously the provisions of the Penal Law to offences relating to opium, the Agent to the Governor-General anticipates that consumption will soon be reduced to the prescribed level and no further special measures appear therefore to be necessary as far as this province is concerned.

In respect of (3), I am to say that there are no possible means of giving any opinion with any pretension to even approximate accuracy on this point.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES, SEPARATE REVENUE DEPARTMENT, No. 334-292|XI, DATED THE 4TH FEBRUARY 1925.

I am directed to acknowledge receipt of your letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, on the subject of the consumption of opium in India.

2. The Government of India desire to put forward three matters for the consideration of this Government in connection with their opium policy, namely :-

- (1) The desirability of closer co-ordination of policy between local Governments

in regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium.

- (2) Whether it is necessary and practicable to reduce consumption of opium in the Central Provinces within the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations.
- (3) Whether it is necessary and practicable to take measures specially designed to check the practice of administering opium to babies and children.

3. In regard to the first of these suggestions, I am to say that this province is peculiarly situated. It is almost entirely surrounded by Indian States whose opium policy is of far greater importance to the Central Provinces than that of other Provincial Governments. The Central India States in particular, with their long frontier adjoining the Central Provinces and their low selling rates present a special problem. This Government would welcome any concerted action by these States to raise the price of opium to a figure approximating that prevailing in the Central Provinces; but, as the Government of India are no doubt aware, there are great difficulties in securing any such joint action. As regards local Governments, full enquiries are already made from other provinces before any alteration is made in the issue price of opium and no inconvenience has been caused by any discrepancy between the Central Provinces rates and those adopted by other local Governments. At present the rates in the United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces are all between Rs. 70 and Rs. 75 per seer. If any local Government proposed a sudden rise in its rates, in its own interests, it would consult adjoining administrations and attempt to secure their support.

4. Turning now to the second suggestion, I am to observe that this Government has already taken substantial measures to restrict the consumption of opium. During the last six years, the issue price has been raised from Rs. 37 to Rs. 75 per seer; the limit of individual possession has been reduced from 2 tolas to 1 tola and the number of shops has been reduced in the last six years from 1,072 to 1,016. As a result of these measures, the consumption of opium has fallen from an average of 46,035 seers in the three years 1916-17 to 1918-19 to an average of 30,092 seers in the last three years for which statistics are available.

5. The Government of India may rest assured that this Government will take all practicable steps towards reducing the consumption of opium. It will, however, be readily understood that having already effected a reduction of 34 per cent. in the consumption of this drug in the last few years, any further restriction presents grave difficulties. Indeed so long as the price of opium in the adjoining Indian States remains so low, any further substantial enhancement of price cannot but result in an outbreak of smuggling which it will be difficult and perhaps impossible to check. This Government is not aware of the method by which the League of Nations has calculated its standard consumption, but I am to suggest that in a malarious province, where epidemics of all kinds are common, the medicinal use of opium would justify a considerable departure from a standard arrived

at—possibly on a consideration of European conditions. It is true that such medicinal or semi-medicinal uses may in some cases be misguided; but so long as the bulk of the people of India are beyond the reach of adequate medical relief and so long as they regard opium as an invaluable specific for all kinds of ailments, it is impossible to introduce measures restricting such use without inflicting grave hardship. It appears, therefore, to this Government that any further substantial reduction in the use of opium can only be effected gradually by education and public health propaganda, and that any sudden and arbitrary measures designed to this end will in fact defeat their own purpose. The matter will be brought to the notice of the Director of Public Health in connection with his public health publicity campaign.

6. It is suggested in paragraph 8 of your letter that special enquiry should be made as to the extent to which the practice of administering opium to children prevails in this province. In regard to this proposal, I am to say that in the opinion of this Government such an enquiry would serve no useful purpose. The fact that opium is widely administered to children is well known. In Berar, for example, it is administered as a matter of course to the children of all classes from within a few days of birth till they are two or three years of age—a fact which in part explains the higher consumption of opium in Berar. In the Central Provinces the extent of the practice differs with different classes. The forest tribes do not give their children opium, but it is commonly done by others. As regards special measures to check the practice, it appears that no enhancement of price or fiscal restriction is likely to have the desired result, as an infant only consumes about 2 tolas in a year. Legislation appears out of the question; no social stigma attaches to the consumption of opium, and a law prohibiting its administration to children even if it could be enacted, would not only be unpopular, but also impossible to enforce. The matter is obviously one which should be taken up in connection with child welfare, and Indian mothers should be instructed as to the harmful results of the drug. For publicity purposes, it is desirable that some enquiry should be made into the harmful results of the drug on children and the Director of Public Health will be asked to take up this matter. The local Government considers that any further measures taken to discourage this practice are not likely to prove effective.

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF COORG, No. 331/111-05, DATED THE 4TH FEBRUARY 1925.

In reply to your letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, I am directed to say that Coorg already closely follows the Governments of Madras and Mysore in fixing the issue price of opium. Cases of smuggling of this drug in Coorg are unknown.

2. The consumption of opium in Coorg is comparatively low, the average being 2.41 seers per 10,000 of population or something below half the standard fixed by the League of Nations. The drug is mainly used by quacks for medicinal purposes. Opium is smoked only by Muhammadan fakirs.

3. As regards the administration of opium to children, Major F. C. Fraser, I.M.S., Civil Surgeon, Coorg, who has had a considerable experience in the treatment of children, is of opinion that the existence of such a practice has been greatly exaggerated at least so far as the Madras Presidency is concerned.

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER, DELHI,  
No. 1538-COMMERCE, DATED THE 12TH MARCH  
1925.

In reply to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, I have the honour to state that the issue price of opium in the United Provinces, the Punjab and Delhi is uniform at Rs 70 per seer. The present retail price appears to be uniform in all these Provinces at Rs. 1-8-0 per tola but for 1925-26 the Punjab has fixed Rs. 1-4-0 per tola as the maximum rate and I have issued similar orders. This is a matter for discussion between the Punjab and United Provinces Governments as this Administration follows the Punjab practice.

2. The consumption of opium was returned in the Excise Report for 1923-24 at 2 seers per thousand of the population in Delhi as compared with 6 seers per thousand adopted as the League's standard. The circumstances of Delhi are very special and predominately urban. The excess of consumption is attributed to the very large influx of cold weather visitors many of whom, especially those who come from the Indian States consume a considerable amount of opium. It does not seem possible to suggest any measures which would be likely to have any real success in reducing consumption in Delhi.

3. The practice of giving opium to infants up to the age of 2 years is not very common now among the higher and educated classes but is still not uncommon amongst the poor and illiterate. It is reported that evil results can only be directly traceable to the practice in very few cases though accidents do occur. The most hopeful means of checking the practice lies in the education of the poorer class women in hygiene through the Lady Health Visitors and the members of the medical profession who practice in the town.

LETTER FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER, AJMER-MERWARA, No. 358/589-X., DATED THE 9TH MARCH 1925.

With reference to letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, from the Government of India in the Finance Department (Central Revenues), I have the honour to forward herewith for the information of the Government of India, a copy of a note containing the views of the Collector of Excise Revenue, Ajmer-Merwara, with which I and the Commissioner, Ajmer-Merwara, agree.

NOTE BY THE COLLECTOR OF EXCISE REVENUE,  
AJMER-MERWARA.

The three questions to be considered are :—

- A. The desirability of closer co-ordination of Excise policy between local Governments of adjacent Provinces in regard of fixing the price of opium.

B. The possibility of reduction of consumption and prevention of abuse where consumption exceeds the standard laid down by the League of Nations.

C. The practice of administering opium to babies and children.

(i) The extent to which this practice prevails.

(ii) The extent to which it is productive of evil results.

(iii) The practicability of initiating measures calculated to check the practice.

2. *In regard to A.*—The co-ordination of Excise policy is as manifestly desirable as it is difficult of attainment.

The difficulty has long been recognised in British India and the question becomes infinitely more complex where (as in the case of this administration) the 'Adjacent Provinces' consist of no less than five Indian States, i.e., Jodhpur, Jaipur, Udaipur, Kishengarh and Shahpura.

Before co-ordination of policy can be considered, a definite form of policy must exist in the territories of the parties to such co-ordination and hitherto a definite form of policy cannot be said to have existed in the States in bordering on Ajmer-Merwara.

Were such policy to exist in each State, co-ordination of policy with their neighbours would not, I think, present serious difficulty.

The present position in regard to the issue price of opium is as follows, as far as can be ascertained, but prices in the States vary considerably from time to time :

Locality.	Price.
Ajmer-Merwara .. ..	2 tolas per rupee.
Jodhpur .. ..	2—3 tolas per rupee.
Jaipur .. ..	2 tolas per rupee.
Udaipur .. ..	3½—4 tolas per rupee.
Kishengarh .. ..	3½ tolas per rupee.
Shahpura .. ..	3½ tolas per rupee.

The present appears to be a favourable opportunity to reopen the question and invite the States to set up a definite and stable Excise policy with a view to making co-ordination possible not only with Ajmer-Merwara but with all their neighbours whether States or British Territory, and so to assist in the attainment of an All-India Co-ordination which appears to be the final result foreshadowed in the Government of India memorandum.

3. *In regard to B.*—The average quantity of opium issued for sale at present in Ajmer-Merwara is 68 maunds per annum.

This represents an excess of 9 times the Standard laid down by the League.

This appears high but Ajmer-Merwara is surrounded by tracts where the consumption of opium is widely prevalent.

It is impossible to gauge with any accuracy the amount of opium consumed over and above the quantity issued by authority but there can be no doubt that this is considerable.

The normal remedy for decreasing consumption is to raise the issue price.

In the present circumstances outlined in paragraph 2 this is not feasible since to raise the price further would inevitably lead to an increase in smuggling, and reduction in consumption would not necessarily result.

Moreover, unless it were possible for the complete eradication of smuggling to go hand in hand with the increase of issue price the check on consumption would tend to pass out of the hands of the Excise Department and the last state would be worse than the first.

An example of this is provided in the failure of the Excise policy of the United Provinces and Punjab in regard to Country Liquor for the year 1923-24.

At present the balance may be said to be fairly evenly held.

Both smuggling and consumption are kept within reasonable bounds.

More cannot be done until Co-ordination of Policy exists between Ajmer-Merwara and her neighbours both in regard to price and active measures against smuggling of contraband opium.

As long as low prices obtain over the border, smuggling will continue and the larger the profit to be made the bolder will the smugglers become, assisted as they are by the nature of the country and hampered as is the Excise Department by paucity of Staff.

Abuse of opium that is to say consumption in excess of the general average is confined to individuals only and its prevention would not, I think, be possible.

The confirmed opium taker will by some means or other continue to obtain excessive supplies.

Even were the general average reduced, these individuals would still consume more than their fellows and relatively speaking "abuse" will always be present.

In short, if consumption of opium is to be reduced the price must be increased and any such increase must be brought into force simultaneously in the bordering States.

Also concerted measures against smuggling must be taken by all the States in conjunction with Ajmer-Merwara and with each other.

4. *In regard to C.*—That the practice of administering opium to babies and children exists in Ajmer-Merwara in common with all other parts of India is well-known but it is doubtful whether an investigation as suggested in paragraph 8 of the memorandum would lead to much result.

To be of any real value accurate statistics are required.

To arrive at the extent to which the practice prevails would entail a long and laborious investigation if, as is presumed, definite statistics are to be formulated and it is difficult to see what benefit would result from such statistics, when arrived at.

Equally to ascertain the extent to which the practice is productive of evil results would entail a minute and searching enquiry by competent medical men over a prolonged period if definite facts (to the exclusion of possible error outlined in paragraph 7 of the memorandum) are to be collected.

The time taken up in these investigations would be better spent in taking measures to check the practice.

Social organisation could do much in this direction supported by systematic lecturing in the villages by the subordinate medical staff or specially appointed lecturers.

One thing, however, is certain that the eradication of the ancient and deeply established practice will take a long time and will call for unceasing effort.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM, GENERAL AND JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT, No. EX-175/2006, DATED THE 4TH APRIL 1925.

I am directed to reply to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383 of the 17th November 1924, in which the opinion of the Government of Assam was asked on three aspects of the opium question.

2. The first question is the desirability of closer co-ordination between provinces in regard to the fixation of the sale price of opium. The Government of India are already in possession of the views of the Government of Assam on this question, and these views have been quoted in paragraph 3 of the letter under reply. Strict rationing and a steady reduction of issues are already enforced, but the Governor in Council desires to repeat his conviction that these measures can be but partially successful so long as marked differences exist between the issue prices of opium in Assam and elsewhere. I am to enclose an extract from the proceedings of the Legislative Council of Assam containing the debate on a resolution which was moved and adopted at a recent session. It may be possible for this Government to arrange with the Governments of Bengal and Burma for concerted regulation of issue prices, and the Governor in Council trusts that the Government of India will urge other provinces and any States concerned to initiate steps in this direction.

3. As regards the reduction of consumption the Government of India recognise the special measures already taken in this province and ask that the possibility of further measures should be considered. The effect of the action already taken will be apparent from the undermentioned statement and the Governor in Council is content to allow these figures to speak for themselves. It must be remembered also that the population of the province is steadily increasing year by year, so that the proportionate reduction is even greater than the figures indicate. It has now been decided to extend to the whole province the system of restriction of issues to registered consumers who hold passes granted by the District Officer, and as this is an important change of excise policy the decision has already been reported in detail to the Government of India in my letter No. 1989-G.J., dated the 4th April 1925.

	Issues. Consumption per 10,000 of the population of 1921.			
	Mds.	Srs.	Mds.	Srs.
1920-21 ..	1,614	35	2	5
1921-22 ..	1,048	14	1	17
1922-23 ..	992	37	1	13
1923-24 ..	910	21	1	8

4. Finally with regard to the practice of administering opium to children, I am to say that careful enquiries show that the custom is not prevalent to any extent. In the Brahmaputra Valley, where the consumption of opium is heaviest, the Commissioner reports that the practice is not followed and would in fact be repugnant to Assamese feeling. The practice is said to be not unknown in parts of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills district, but these are difficult of access and lie not in British India but in territory subject to Siems or Chiefs of Khasi States. His Excellency in Council does not consider that any special measures of prevention are required, and relies for the extinction of the practice on the gradual reduction of the general supply of opium by the policy of restriction already adopted, and on the educative effects of, for instance, the child welfare movement.

EXTRACT FROM THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF ASSAM.

*Price of Opium.*

*Srijut Nilmoni Phukan.*—Sir, the resolution which stands in my name runs :—

This Council recommends to the Government of Assam to move the Government of India to take necessary steps for uniform all-India price of opium.

The object of my moving this resolution, Sir, is that all the restricted measures that have been adopted by the Government from time to time have failed to a great extent in lessening the consumption of opium especially in this part of the country because in my opinion the different prices obtaining in the different provinces are responsible for this state of things. I know of my own district where smuggling is going on briskly. I ascribe the whole cause to the one fact that Malwa opium can be smuggled at a very cheap rate to any part of the country where opium sells at Rs. 150 per seer. It is a notorious fact that every Excise officer in the Lakhimpur district, also Government officers and outsiders know that opium smuggling is going on every day. The opium that is consumed by the opium eaters is always smuggled into the district the reason being that the smuggler can smuggle opium at a price one-fourth or one-third the actual price that is obtaining there. So that there must always be an inequality in the price of opium. If we suggest to the Government that registration is necessary Government in its turn will reply 'What do you think of this smuggled quantity of opium?' Quite so. If we only look to the registration and all other restricted measures that are possible for the Government, but if we overlook this fact that smugglers may be tempted to bring in larger quantities of opium—then we can imagine that all these measures will go for nothing. To my mind at least this uniform all-India price will greatly remove this difficulty. If the same price obtains in the province from which the smugglers obtain their opium I do not think it will be encouraging for them to do so. It might be argued that the opium which comes from native States are not under the control of our Government. It is true. But knowing that full well I move this resolution because opium has already become an international question. And as such I feel that our Government is in a position to

move the Government of India for taking the necessary steps to make this a sort of inter-State question in India. If we receive opium from those native States under certain terms I believe the Government of India can also move in this very matter so that smuggling may be stopped. Smugglers may have less temptation for doing that on account of the same price that might obtain in all the provinces. This is my main idea, namely to stop smuggling and to enable the Government to move in the matter of restriction more efficiently. The question therefore does not require further elucidation. I move my resolution with this main objective and I hope that the Government will see their way to accept it and that the House will also support me.

*The Honourable Sir William Reid.*—Sir, the honourable mover has very rightly pointed out the encouragement to smuggling necessarily given by the price in one area being considerably higher than the price in another. That is what we have to face in Assam. We have not as he feared overlooked this danger. In fact I may tell him that last year we addressed the Government of India and pointed out that the measures we were taking to diminish issues and to reduce consumption were being hampered by the fact that the sale price of opium varied so much throughout India. We know that the Government of India are considering our suggestion. We know in fact that they are consulting other local Governments and we can only await the result. Therefore, Sir, we have already in fact taken the action which the honourable member urges on us, and subject to the reservation that we cannot of course control the action of other Governments we readily accept this resolution.

The motion was put and adopted.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BURMA, DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, EXCISE AND FORESTS, No. 546-X-24, DATED THE 4TH MAY 1925.

I am directed to reply to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924. The Government of India suggest three matters relating to the consumption of opium in India which appear to merit consideration. The first of these is the desirability of closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments and particularly between the Governments of adjacent provinces, in regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium. It is mentioned that the Government of Assam has pointed out that the measures which it has taken with the object of reducing consumption by increasing the retail price of opium and decreasing the quantity issued are hampered by the fact that the prices in Assam are now considerably higher than in some parts of India, and that consequently opium is being smuggled into Assam. In this connection, I am to say that the Government of Burma (Ministry of Excise) would welcome the adoption of joint action concerning the issue price of opium. The price in Burma is considerably higher than in India, and any increase in the price in India would make the smuggling of Government opium from India into Burma less profitable. A table is attached to this letter (Enclosure A) showing over the last ten years the average wholesale and retail price per seer of excise opium. It will be observed that the

prices have nearly doubled during that period. As the Government of India are probably aware, there is a considerable traffic in contraband opium, both by sea and by land, between India and Burma. The main contraband zone for Indian opium is the Irrawaddy Division, and the Hanthawaddy, Insein, and Prome Districts. There is, however, also organised smuggling of Bengal opium into Arakan. To what extent this traffic is due to the difference between the price at which excise opium is sold retail in Burma and the price at which Indian opium can be acquired for the purpose of smuggling into Burma cannot be accurately determined, but it seems clear that, so long as the price in India is low enough to make the traffic profitable, it will be difficult to check it effectively. The gradual enhancement of the price of excise opium in Burma is in accordance with the policy of progressive reduction in consumption; and the Government of Burma is averse from reducing the price, although it recognises that such reduction might be a step towards closer co-ordination of policy between this and other Local Governments in regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium. It would prefer that this co-ordination should be achieved by a gradual raising of prices in the other provinces. It must, however, be admitted that the problem of contraband opium in this province is felt most acutely in connection with the importation of cheap Chinese opium, and with this the Government of India are not concerned in connection with the present reference.

2. The Government of India next raise the question whether any measures are necessary and practicable to reduce consumption and prevent abuse in areas where consumption per head very largely exceeds the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations. At the same time it is recognised that in Burma special measures of restriction have already been taken, and it remains only to consider, therefore, whether anything further can be done in this direction either in the province as a whole, or in particular parts of it. A statement is attached to this letter (Enclosure B) showing the amount of opium in seers issued from treasuries in Burma in the last ten years. It will be observed that there has been a decrease from 41,083 seers in 1914-15 to 29,832 seers in 1923-24. In other words, the issues of opium are steadily diminishing, while the population is increasing. It is impossible, in the opinion of this Government, to carry the process much further, because the demand will certainly be met by illicit opium if licit opium is not forthcoming. There is a widespread opinion among officers responsible for the Excise administration in Burma that too rapid progress has been made in the matter of reducing issues. The incidence of consumption per hundred of the population was .449 of a seer in 1919; by 1924 this was reduced to .267 of a seer. Many officers in this province question the propriety of the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations. It is argued that a standard rate for all races in all climates and under all conditions is impracticable. The standard normal monthly consumption was estimated by a recent Excise Commissioner in this province at 2.5 tolas for Indians, 4.5 tolas for Burmans, and 7.5 tolas for Chinese. Within these normal limits, however, monthly allowances may vary widely. The Government of Burma,

as stated in paragraph 5 of Mr. Sundaram's letter, has already taken special measures of restriction with a view to checking the practice of opium smoking. I am to say that the Government of Burma is not at present disposed to take any further steps towards restriction, as it is anticipated that the only practical result of such steps would be an increase in the consumption of illicit opium.

3. The third point referred to in this Government in Mr. Sundaram's letter is the practice of administering opium to babies and children. I am to say with reference to this that though this practice cannot be said to be extensively prevalent in Burma, cases, in which Indian and Burmese nurses have doped children without the knowledge of parents are occasionally met with, and it is also believed that opium is frequently administered by indigenous physicians and by unqualified practitioners generally in the form of soothing syrups and pills in the treatment of infantile ailments. The Government of Burma concurs in the view that much may be done by the organisations that are already in existence for the purpose of instructing Indian mothers in regard to child welfare, but would suggest, the possibility of further more stringent legislation in regard to dangerous drugs.

## ENCLOSURE A.

Year.	Average price of opium (per seer).		
	Average whole-sale price (per seer). Rs.	Average retail price of opium (per seer). Rs.	
1914-15 ..	83½	94½	Raw.
1915-16 ..	85	120¼	Cooked.
1916-17 ..	89	121	Raw.
1917-18 ..	94	112	Cooked.
1918-19 ..	99	121	
1919-20 ..	99	122	
1920-21 ..	98	122	
1921-22 ..	118	125	
1922-23 ..	142	153	
1923-24 ..	152½	165½	

## ENCLOSURE B.

Year.	Amount of opium issued from Treasury (in seers).	
1914-15 ..	..	41,083
1915-16 ..	..	42,001
1916-17 ..	..	47,203
1917-18 ..	..	46,707
1918-19 ..	..	46,519
1919-20 ..	..	43,687
1920-21 ..	..	39,824
1921-22 ..	..	33,563
1922-23 ..	..	31,926
1923-24 ..	..	29,832

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR AND ORISSA, No. 453-L.S.G.R., DATED THE 15TH MAY 1925.

I am directed to refer to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924,

and to convey the views of the local Government in the Ministry of Local Self-Government on the questions raised therein as follows:—

(i) There can be no doubt about the desirability of a co-ordination of policy between the Governments of adjacent provinces in fixing the sale price of opium and so far as this province is concerned it has always been the practice of the Excise Department to consult the adjoining provinces before making any modification in price of opium.

(ii) The local officers of the Orissa Division were consulted as to what could be done to check consumption in Orissa. Some of the district officers recommend a decrease in the limit of possession from three tolas to one or one and a half tolas of raw opium and from half a tola to one-fourth tola of preparation for smoking. Some suggest prohibition of smoking except at the smokers' own residence and others recommend the continuance of the policy of raising the retail price, the adoption of which has led to a gradual reduction in the consumption of the drug. The Collector of Cuttack observes that the opium question in Orissa is dependent on the policy adopted in the Feudatory States of Orissa and unless that policy can be brought in line with that adopted in British India any drastic restrictions made in the latter will be partly nullified and will lead to greater smuggling of opium from States. The retail price of opium has just been raised in Orissa as well as elsewhere by Rs. 10 a seer and no further enhancement of the price can be made until the results of this are known. The Commissioner of Excise is of opinion that the proposed reduction in the limit of possession is sound and proposes to submit proposals in this connection which will be considered by the local Government when received. In the opinion of the local Government in the Ministry of Local Self-Government the continuance of the present policy of enhancement of price seems to be the best remedy.

(iii) The practice of administering opium to children is reported from 13 districts of the province, viz., Gaya, Saran, Champaran, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Purnea, Kuttack, Balasore, Puri, Sambalpur, Hazaribagh, Ranchi and Palamau, being common only in five districts, Gaya, Monghyr, Kuttack, Balasore and Sambalpur. The opium is administered in very small quantities with a view to keep the children quiet while the mothers are at work. There is a practical unanimity of opinion that no legislation can stop this and that the proper remedy is to be found in the education of public opinion and propaganda work and that it is desirable to seek it through the Education and Public Health Departments. The only other course possible seems to be penalisation but any legislation imposing penalties would be most difficult to enforce until public opinion is educated on the subject sufficiently.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED PROVINCES, No. 133-XIII-136, DATED THE 20TH MAY 1925.

I am directed to refer to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November, 1924,

in which the Government of India have consulted this Government on:—

- (a) Co-ordination between provincial governments in fixing the sale price of opium.
- (b) Measures to reduce consumption in areas where it is higher than the standard fixed by the League of Nations.
- (c) The practice of administering opium to children and the possibility of checking it.

2. (a) The Governor acting with his Ministers is prepared to co-operate with other provincial governments enforcing their excise policy. At present, however, little can be done. The smuggling of excise opium out of the United Provinces into other areas, which was a serious problem some years back, has now almost ceased because the issue price has been raised so much. It has been replaced, however, by more dangerous malpractices, viz., the smuggling of crude opium, from, and its illicit consumption within, the United Provinces. The Governor acting with his Ministers considers that these evils can only be stopped effectively by better control of cultivation and of the raw produce. The Opium Department can best carry out such control, and this Government have already addressed the Government of India in their letter No. C-1425, dated the 23rd March 1925.

3. (b) Paragraph 5 of Mr. Sundaram's letter states that the consumption of opium in certain important centres such as Cawnpore, Lucknow and Benares is considerably higher than the standard of 6 seers per 10,000 of population laid down by the League of Nations. I am to append a statement showing the incidence of sale per 10,000 of population in the 19 largest cities of the province. These sales vary from 19.4 seers per 10,000 of population per annum in Fyzabad to 98.7 seers in Benares.

4. I am however to observe that:—

(i) The figures represent the sale of urban shops, not the consumption in urban areas. Urban sales and urban consumption do not correspond. In the province as a whole there is only on the average one opium shop to 129 square miles; whilst relatively there are far more urban than rural opium shops. Round every city there are rural tracts for which the most convenient source of supply is not a rural but an urban shop. Every town shop includes amongst its regular customers not only people of the town but also people of a certain rural area around that town. Moreover, in industrial towns like Cawnpore and in pilgrim centres like Benares, the sales are further swelled by the purchases of visitors and pilgrims who come from farther afield.

(ii) Since urban sales are not equivalent to urban consumption, there is no means of ascertaining the latter accurately. It can only be estimated. The total sales in these provinces average 5.3 seers per 10,000 of population, which is decidedly below the standard of the League of Nations; though if allowance is made for illicit consumption it probably reaches that standard. Urban consumption no doubt exceeds rural consumption partly because town folk are

better off than country folk and can afford more luxuries; and possibly also because town life conduces more to the various ills that opium is supposed to cure. But it is most improbable that the urban consumption is even twice the League's standard, let alone the three times that is assigned to Lucknow in Mr. Sundaram's letter or the five times that is assigned to Cawnpore.

The Governor acting with his Ministers does not consider therefore that any special measures to check consumption are necessary, though he thinks it probable that when the Opium Smoking Act recently passed by the local Legislative

Council comes into force, less opium will be used in towns.

5. (c) Regarding the drugging of children, the Governor acting with his Ministers consulted the members of the Excise Conference on this matter, and a copy of paragraph 56 of their report is enclosed. Amongst Indian mothers of the lower classes the custom is undoubtedly common. This Government agree with the Excise Conference that legislation cannot stop the practice and that Child Welfare Societies should take up the matter. The only cure in their opinion is education.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE INCIDENCE OF SALE OF OPIUM PER TEN THOUSAND OF POPULATION IN CHIEF TOWNS OF UNITED PROVINCES.

Name of City.	Population.	Consumption of opium in the city.	Incidence of consumption per 10,000 of population.
		Seers.	Seers.
1. Dehra Dun .. .. .	47,511	246	51·7
2. Saharanpur .. .. .	60,905	283	46·4
3. Meerut .. .. .	1,22,609	566	46·1
4. Aligarh .. .. .	68,347	416	60·8
5. Muttra .. .. .	52,840	178	33·6
6. Agra .. .. .	1,85,532	539	29·0
7. Bareilly .. .. .	1,29,459	339	26·1
8. Moradabad .. .. .	82,671	240	29·0
9. Shahjahanpur .. .. .	72,616	185	25·4
10. Farrukhabad .. .. .	69,825	240	34·3
11. Etawah .. .. .	41,551	177	42·5
12. Cawnpore .. .. .	2,16,436	1,623	74·9
13. Allahabad .. .. .	1,57,220	876	55·7
14. Jhansi .. .. .	74,861	167	22·3
15. Benares .. .. .	1,98,447	1,959	98·7
16. Mirzapur .. .. .	88,366	357	40·4
17. Gorakhpur .. .. .	57,985	438	75·5
18. Lucknow .. .. .	2,40,566	1,140	47·3
19. Fyzabad .. .. .	56,620	110	19·4
Total town area .. .. .	20,24,374	10,079	49·7
Total rural area .. .. .	4,33,51,413	14,049	3·2
Total Provincial area .. .. .	4,53,75,787	24,128	5·3

EXTRACT PARAGRAPH 56 FROM THE REPORT OF THE UNITED PROVINCES EXCISE CONFERENCE, 1924-25.

56. Measures to prevent grave abuses of opium. Two particularly serious aspects of the use of opium have been before the Conference. The first relates to the use of prepared opium for smoking, more particularly in chandudens. The effects of prepared opium are, of

course, notoriously worse than the effects of raw opium. A Bill for the suppression of opium-smoking has been introduced very recently into the Legislative Council. It has our strong support.

The other aspect relates to the practice of administering small doses of opium to infants and young children. Undoubtedly the practice exists, and undoubtedly it is desirable to end

it. We consider that legislation penalising the practice would not be a practical remedy at the present stage. Reliance must be placed on education, and some of us think that the practice is already dying out among the enlightened sections of the community. The subject is one which should receive special attention from those organising and conducting child welfare and maternity centres and projects. It would also be valuable to call together a conference, with a sufficient number of medical men and of representatives of the classes interested, to consider the question fully.

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LETTER FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER AND AGENT TO THE GOVERNOR GENERAL, NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, No. 285-N. (REV.), DATED THE 2ND JUNE 1925.

I have the honour to refer to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, in which an expression of my views on certain aspects of the existing opium policy is invited, and to reply as follows:—

2. In paragraph 3 of the Government of India letter under reference, attention is invited to the desirability of closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments, and particularly between those of adjacent provinces. As regards this matter the North-West Frontier Province Administration already closely follows the Punjab Government in all matters of Excise Policy, and amongst other matters has adopted the same sale price of opium, while on the other hand every effort is made to prevent the smuggling of opium from Afghan Territory.

3. The consumption of opium per head of the population in this Administration is not high and although the practice of opium smoking exists, its extent is not such as to be a subject for concern. In any case the provisions of the Punjab Opium Smoking Act which has recently been extended to the North-West Frontier Province should check any tendency to increase in this direction.

4. Opinions received from the District Officers in this Province indicate that the practice of giving opium to young children exists to a very appreciable extent but that it is an ancient practice which nothing but the gradual education and uplifting of the poorer classes and especially the female population can ever hope to eradicate. I concur with the practically unanimous opinion that the remedy lies not in the enactment of stringent rules and regulations, but in moral persuasion—a matter which falls more within the purview of the Educational Authorities and Child Welfare Societies than of any other agency.

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LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT, No. 2981, DATED THE 22ND JULY 1925.

I am directed to refer to Mr. Sundaram's letter No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924, and to communicate the following views of the Government of Bengal on the three aspects of the opium question discussed therein.

2. *Joint action by local Governments to minimise smuggling and enhancement of sale price of*

*opium.*—The Government of Bengal accept the general principle of closer co-ordination of policy between local Governments and particularly between the Governments of adjacent provinces, in regard to the fixation of the sale price of opium. This principle has hitherto been actually followed in Bengal in fixing the retail price of opium in the shops along the border of the province of Bihar and Orissa. In order to ensure co-ordination of policy between the Governments of adjacent provinces, the Government of Bengal are of opinion that there should be a free exchange of opinion between the Excise Commissioners concerned regarding any proposed changes and when they have arrived at a basis of agreement, they should move their respective Governments to issue the necessary orders.

As regards the observations of the Government of Assam that the measures it had taken with the object of reducing consumption by increasing the retail price of opium and decreasing the quantity issued, were hampered by the fact that prices in Assam are considerably higher than in some parts of India, and that consequently opium is being smuggled into Assam, I am to point out that in the districts of Bengal bordering on Assam the percentage of actual consumption is considerably lower than the standard of legitimate consumption laid down by the League of Nations. This consideration leads to the conclusion that there is little scope for smuggling of opium from these districts into Assam. Nor have any complaints been received from the Government of Assam as to smuggling from the border districts in Bengal. Owing to the facilities of transport the practice of smuggling is not confined to local areas in the mufassal. Calcutta and its neighbouring districts where consumption of opium is remarkably high and where it is possible to evade detection afford ample facilities for smuggling. In the circumstances and in view of the already low consumption of opium in the districts of Bengal on the border of Assam, the Government of Bengal do not consider it necessary to raise the present level of retail sale price in those districts unless it be found desirable to make a wholesale enhancement of the sale price throughout the province on other and more general grounds.

3. *Measures to check consumption in areas where it is high to prevent abuse.*—I am to forward, for the information of the Government of India, a statement showing the percentage of actual consumption of opium in the districts of Bengal as compared with the standard laid down by the League of Nations. The attention of district officers has been drawn to the striking variations as illustrated by the figures, and they have been asked to examine all proposals for an alteration in the facilities for the supply of opium to the public in the light of these figures. It is needless to mention that it is not the intention to work up to the League of Nations' standard in the 19 districts in which the consumption is below that standard. On the other hand, in the 8 districts in which consumption is higher than the standard of legitimate consumption all fresh proposals in regard to the supply and sale of opium will be carefully scrutinised with a view to affecting reduction.

The Government of Bengal have been impressed with the abnormally high rate of consumption in Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly, and the best method of dealing with the problem is engaging their anxious consideration. They are of opinion that further restriction in the allotments to the retail shops in these districts will not be effective. Even at present stocks in some shops run short before the end of the month, and a further restriction will probably result in illicit sale by purchasers hoarding small quantities. The Government of Bengal are, therefore, inclined to the opinion that a check on consumption can only be effectively secured by a substantial increase in price which would drive the less urgent demand out of the market altogether. It is recognised that an increase in price is not altogether free from objection in that an undue increase might place the drug beyond the reach of those who really need it for medicinal purposes, but at the same time it is evident that a determined effort must now be made to reduce the excessive consumption of opium which prevails in Calcutta and in the neighbouring districts. The proposal involves a return to the system of varying prices which formerly prevailed in this province; but as no other measures are likely to produce an immediate and tangible effect and as the necessity for action is imperative, the Governor in Council has decided as an experiment to raise the treasury price of opium from Rs. 71 to Rs. 91 per seer in Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly, with a corresponding increase in the retail price from Rs. 130 to Rs. 150 per seer.

In the districts of Burdwan and Midnapur the consumption has also reached an abnormal level. But these districts are on the border of the Province of Bihar and Orissa and it is, therefore, not proposed to effect any change in the price of the drug in these districts, as a

substantial increase would probably lead to illicit practices and smuggling across the border. These factors would nullify the value of any results which might otherwise be obtained, whereas in the more compact area selected for the proposed experiment the effect on consumption both within the experimental areas and in the neighbouring districts can be watched and, if necessary, steps can be taken to control any objectionable developments.

4. *Measures to check the administration of opium to babies and children.*—An enquiry into the allegation made in the pamphlet called 'Opium in India' that opium was habitually administered to babies and children was instituted by the Commissioner of Excise and Salt, Bengal. From reports received it appears that the practice is practically unknown in Northern and Eastern Bengal, while it prevails to a limited extent among the up-country population in mill areas. Traces of the habit are also found among small groups of aboriginals in Midnapore and in the adjoining districts. It has not, however, been possible to make any statistical estimate of the actual extent of the evil.

As regards the question of adoption of measures specially designed to check the evil, it appears to the Government of Bengal inadvisable for the Excise Department to take any action in this direction. Any attempt on the part of the excise staff to trace out consumers and to enquire into their domestic affairs will be regarded as a punitive measure and will be strongly resented by the public. The Governor in Council is of opinion that the only hope of eradicating this evil lies in the spread of education and the gradual enlightenment of those who resort to the practice. I am to say that the feasibility of initiating propaganda work on the public health aspect of the evil is receiving the consideration of the Local Government.

*Statement showing the percentage of actual consumption of opium in the Districts of Bengal as compared with the standard laid down by the League of Nations.*

Divisions and Districts.	Population.	Consumption permitted on L. of N. Scale at 6.4 seers per 10,000 population.	Actual consumption of opium 1923-24.	Percentage of 3 to 4.
BENGAL.		Seers.	Seers.	
<i>Burdwan Division.</i>				
Burdwan .. .. .	1,438	920	2,022	+119
Birbhum .. .. .	933	597	560	—6
Bankura .. .. .	1,138	728	579	—20
Midnapur .. .. .	2,821	1,805	3,909	+116
Hooghly .. .. .	1,080	691	2,892	+318
Howrah .. .. .	802	513	1,622	+216

Divisions and Districts.	Population.	Consumption permitted on L. of N. Scale at 6.4 seers per 10,000 population.	Actual consumption of opium 1923-24.	Percentage of 3 to 4.
<i>Presidency Division.</i>		Seers.	Seers.	
24-Parganas .. .. .	2,628	1,682	5,351	+218
Calcutta .. .. .	1,350	864	12,274	+1,320
Nadia .. .. .	1,487	952	720	-24
Murshidabad .. .. .	1,262	808	620	-23
Jessore .. .. .	1,722	1,102	490	-55
Khulna .. .. .	1,453	930	708	-24
<i>Dacca Division.</i>				
Dacca .. .. .	3,131	2,004	1,006	-49
Mymensingh .. .. .	4,526	2,897	650	-77
Faridpur .. .. .	2,249	1,439	419	-70
Bakarganj .. .. .	2,623	1,679	1,262	-24
<i>Chittagong Division.</i>				
Chittagong .. .. .	1,611	1,031	980	-5
Tipperra .. .. .	2,743	1,755	390	77
Noakhali .. .. .	1,472	942	203	-73
<i>Rajshahi Division.</i>				
Rajshahi .. .. .	1,489	953	349	-63
Dinajpur .. .. .	1,705	1,091	492	-55
Jalpaiguri .. .. .	936	599	316	-47
Rangpur .. .. .	2,507	1,604	637	-60
Bogra .. .. .	983	629	181	-71
Pabna .. .. .	1,428	914	247	-73
Malda .. .. .	998	639	832	+30
Darjeeling .. .. .	282	180	206	+14

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRIES DEPARTMENT, No. 3252, DATED THE 26TH AUGUST 1925.

I am directed to refer to paragraph 3 of my letter No. 2981, dated the 22nd July 1925, and to forward, for the information of the Government of India, a copy of (1) Notification No. 3248, dated the 7th August 1925, (2) Notification No. 3250, dated the 7th August 1925, issued by the Local Government, raising as an experimental measure, the treasury price of Excise opium from Rs. 71 to Rs. 91 per seer in Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly with a corresponding increase in the retail price from Rs. 130 to Rs. 150 per seer.

NOTIFICATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, No. 3248-EX., DATED THE 7TH AUGUST 1925.

In supersession of the order contained in Notification No. 636-EX., dated the 6th February

1923, it is hereby notified for general information that in exercise of the powers conferred on him by section 5 of the Opium Act, 1878 (I of 1878), as amended by the Devolution Act, 1920 (XXXVIII of 1920), the Governor in Council has fixed the selling price of excise opium at the rate of Rs. 91 per seer in the districts of Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly and at the rate of Rs. 71 per seer in the rest of the Presidency of Bengal, with effect from the 1st September 1925.

NOTIFICATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BENGAL, No. 3250-EX., DATED THE 7TH AUGUST 1925.

In exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Opium Act, 1878 (I of 1878), as amended by the Devolution Act, 1920 (XXXVIII of 1920), the Governor in Council is pleased to direct that, with effect from the 1st September 1925, the following amendment be made in the

rules published under the Bengal Government Notification No. 562-S.R., dated the 2nd March 1918, as subsequently amended, namely :—

For rule 19A of the said rules, *substitute* the following :—

“ 19A. Excise opium shall be sold by retail vendors thereof at the rate of Rs. 150 per seer in the districts of Calcutta, the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hoogly and at the rate of Rs. 130 per seer in the rest of Bengal and at no other rates in the whole of the Presidency except for the following shops of the District of Midnapore, for which the rate shall be Rs. 120 per seer, *viz.* :—

- (1) Aikona, (2) Panchrole, (3) Durgapore, (4) Mirgodaganj, (5) Ghutia, (6) Parihati, (7) Baitalpara, (8) Gopiballavpur, and (9) Baligeria.”

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY, REVENUE DEPARTMENT, No. 2665-C.24, DATED THE 12TH OCTOBER 1925.

With reference to the letter from the Government of India, No. 5383, dated 17th November 1924, I am directed by the Government of Bombay (Transferred Departments) to state as follows.

2. With regard to the question of establishing closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments in the matter of fixing the sale price of opium, the Government of Bombay would welcome such action in the direction of fixing the issue price of the drug not only in adjacent provinces but also in the adjoining Indian States, since the present disparity in the issue price in Sind and the adjoining States of Jodhpur and Jesalmer is a serious obstacle in the way of controlling the consumption of the drug in Sind by raising taxation to the fullest extent desirable. In regard to selling prices however they are of opinion that the suggested action will not be feasible, as such prices must be determined in accordance with the different methods of disposal of shops, *e.g.*, fixed fees or auction, and different local conditions.

3. With regard to the question of taking special measures to reduce consumption and prevent abuse in areas where the present consumption is in excess of the standard laid down by the League of Nations, I am to state that the measure hitherto adopted, *viz.*, increase of taxation, has resulted in a considerable degree of success, as will be seen from the undernoted figures of consumption in the Presidency proper during the last six years. As regards Sind the annual consumption of licit opium in that Province works out at about 18 seers per 10,000 of the population or about three times the standard of consumption suggested by the League of Nations, not six times that standard as stated in the Government of India's letter; and has fallen to this figure from 22 seers per 10,000 in 1918-19. In this connection it may be mentioned that Sind includes a large tract adjoining Rajputana inhabited by people having the same strong opium habits as the people of the latter area. The Government of Bombay are however of opinion that the decline in consumption which has occurred in recent years in Sind

and the rest of the Presidency is satisfactory and that no further action is required in this behalf for the present. The present restrictions on sale and possession are sufficiently severe and any addition to them would probably only lead to increased smuggling :—

Years.		Sales of opium in seers.
1919-20	..	.. 46,680
1920-21	..	.. 42,649
1921-22	..	.. 30,908
1922-23	..	.. 28,292
1923-24	..	.. 26,866
1924-25	..	.. 26,311

4. In regard to the third point regarding the administration of opium to children I am to observe that this question has been carefully considered by this Government and they have taken the necessary action by licensing the sale of balagolis and limiting the opium contents of the pills to 1/40th of a grain, *vide* letter from this Government No. 3996-C.24, dated the 30th May 1925. The Government of Bombay do not consider that any further action in this direction can be taken at present.

LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS, REVENUE DEPARTMENT, No. 1990, DATED THE 22ND DECEMBER 1925.

I am directed to send the following reply to the several points raised in the letter from the Government of India, No. 5383, dated the 17th November 1924.

(1) *Closer co-ordination of policy between Local Governments, particularly the Governments of adjacent provinces in regard to the fixing of the sale price of opium* :—This Government agree that a uniform rate of issue price of opium in the several provinces of India will tend to minimise interprovincial smuggling. They have therefore no objection to taking joint action with the Governments of other provinces for regulating the sale price of opium. I am to state that, whenever any change in the issue price of opium is made in this Presidency, the practice is to take into account the prices prevailing in other provinces and also to intimate to the Governments of neighbouring provinces and administrations alterations made in the issue price.

(2) *Special measures to reduce consumption and to prevent abuse in areas where consumption of opium is higher than the limit fixed by the League of Nations* :—The Government of India point out that the consumption of opium per head of population in the Northern Circars, Madras Town and the Nilgiris in this Presidency is much higher than the standard fixed by the League of Nations. The result of a detailed investigation into the cause of this excessive consumption is as follows :—

In East Godavari district the consumption of opium during 1924-25 in the 8 plains taluks amounted to 9,119 seers or 0.62 seers per hundred of population, while in the 5 Agency taluks the consumption was 757 seers or 0.37

seers per hundred of population. The climatic conditions—a long wet season followed by severe cold—cause all classes of people in both the plains and the agency of this district to use opium as a remedy against Malaria and other fevers and where residents are addicted to the habit from childhood, it may be said to be a domestic necessity.

In Ganjam opium is consumed mostly by Uriyas, in Vizagapatam (ordinary tracts) by the old and the infirm among all classes, especially the lower classes; and in the Agency tracts by all classes of people. In West Godavari, Kistna and Guntur it is consumed by the old and infirm among all classes and by labouring classes. Opium is generally used in these parts as a medicine and preventive for fever, cold, asthma, rheumatism, stomach disorders, beriberi, lung disease and dysentery; old and infirm people suffering from chronic diseases use it mostly as a sedative.

In Madras Town the chief consumers are from the floating population, such as the crews of vessels calling at Madras, and people who come from up-country, and among local residents, Marwaries, Mendicants (so-called Biragis) and a certain section of the labouring classes. In the Nilgiris opium is consumed mostly by the labouring hill tribes, Badagas, Kotas and Todas as an antidote against Malaria and as a narcotic. The local officers report that there is not much abuse of opium in these areas. Mal-practices are not prevalent to any appreciable extent. The Commissioner of Excise has however directed the local officers to pay special attention to prevent smuggling and is also considering the question of adopting measures for reducing consumption in these areas.

(3) *The extent to which the practice of administering opium to infants and children is prevalent in the Madras Presidency and the adoption of measures to check it* :—It is exceedingly

difficult to get direct information regarding the extent of the use of opium in private houses among children and infants.

The Government have reason to think that it is used in houses of certain communities especially Muhammadans for the purpose of quieting children and infants. The matter is not an easy one to deal with and the Government consider that health propaganda among the uneducated classes is the best method of attacking the question.

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LETTER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF BIHAR AND ORISSA (MINISTRY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT), No. 2574-L.S.G., DATED THE 15TH MARCH 1926.

In continuation of my letter No. 453-L.S.G.R., dated the 15th May 1925, I am directed by Government in the Ministry of Local Self-Government to report, for the information of the Government of India, that the local Government have sanctioned the proposal of the Commissioner of Excise and Salt, Bihar and Orissa, to reduce the limit of possession of opium from three tolas to one and a half tolas in all the districts of the province except Champaran, Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga, Bhagalpur and Purnea which border on Nepal.

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R. Dis. No. 4|47-E.O.|25.

ORDERED that the foregoing Resolution, together with its Annexure, be published in the *Gazette of India*.

Ordered also that a copy of the Resolution, together with its Annexure, be forwarded to all Local Governments and Administrations and the Opium Agent, Ghazipur, for information.

A. TOTTENHAM,

*Joint Secy. to the Govt. of India.*