

17 receive Tobacco Farmers' Awards

B.N. Jayaram from State gets Lifetime Achievement Award

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
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Seventeen farmers received the Tobacco Farmers' Awards, in recognition of their farming practices and crop achievements, here on Thursday.

This was the 20th edition of the awards instituted by the Tobacco Institute of India (TII). The award recognises farmers for adopting contemporary farming practices for improving yield, producing better varieties, and making Indian tobacco competitive in the global market, the organisers said.

B.N. Jayaram, a tobacco grower from Karnataka, received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Syed Mahmood Ahmed, director of TII, said that no other country in the world has such a heavy and widespread dependence on tobacco crop for livelihood. Mr. Ahmed, in a release, said the increase in taxation and the resultant drop in legal cigarettes have also had an impact on Indian FCV tobacco



Pratap Simha, MP, H.P. Manjunath and Mahadev, MLAs, and other dignitaries with the recipients of the Tobacco Farmers' Awards in Mysuru on Thursday. • M.A. SRIRAM

farmers, who are under pressure owing to the fall in domestic demand for tobacco.

Since 2013-14, earnings of FCV tobacco farmers have dropped substantially, he said. "High taxes have made legal cigarettes in India unaffordable, pushing consumers to cheaper traditional tobacco products and illegal cigarettes. The share of legal cigarettes in tobacco con-

sumption in the country has shrunk and the consumption of other forms of tobacco products, including the duty-evaded cigarettes, grew by 70%," he stated.

Mr. Ahmed suggested that any policy development on tobacco must have the active involvement of tobacco farmers and wide-ranging consultation with stakeholders in the sector.