

Title: Plight of tribal people in the country.

SHRI KHAGEN DAS (TRIPURA-WEST): Sir, I thank you very much for giving me an opportunity.

More than five decades after Independence, the plight of the tribal people has actually worsened. The tribal people of the country, numbering more than eight crores, are poorest of the poor.

The rule of the successive Governments at the Centre has led to their land being snatched away, their access to forests obstructed, villages were displaced to make way for developmental and industrial projects.

The tribal areas are the most backward, deprived of the fruits of development. A major section of the tribal people is comprised of the landless rural poor and the most cheap labour.

The tribal people and *adivasis* have close and natural bonds with the forest and its produce. But the Forest Act and its successive versions treat them as encroachers and interlopers in the forest instead of being an integral part of it. The draconian circular of the Central Government issued in May, 2002 must be withdrawn and eviction of tribals from forest land must be stopped.

The land being tilled and used as house sites by millions of tribals all over the country must be recorded in their names. For ensuring this, suitable amendments must be made in the Forest Conservation Act of 1980.

The tribal people are faced with the threat of losing their identity as their languages and cultures are endangered. Positive aspects of tribal culture, particularly their collective and egalitarian ethos should be protected and encouraged.

SHRI R. PRABHU (NILGIRIS): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with that.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.