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Title: Need to take measures to improve the socio-economic conditions of SCs & STs in the country.

SHRI L. RAJAGOPAL (VIJAYAWADA): In India SCs and STs have been depressed and suppressed classes for thousands of years. They did not have even a piece of land of their own. When our country became Independent, there were only two classes – landlords and landless. Dr. Ambedkar, under Constitution, abolished untouchability and discrimination and introduced reservations for SCs/STs. In 70's Indira Gandhiji ushered in land reforms/land distribution to bring depressed and suppressed classes at par with others. In spite of several social security schemes , SCs/STs are still living in poverty and even today are not treated as equals in society.

This shows that Central and State Governments, banks, financial institutions have to show some more magnanimity and extend helping hand to SC/ST, so that they can come up in life and become independent. So, I would like to suggest following measures for serious consideration of Government:

(1) At least 25% of loan has to be mandatorily disbursed to those companies/units owned by SCs/STs.

(2) Government purchases various items for consumption of its own Ministries

and departments, etc. At least, 20% of such purchases have to be made from companies/units owned by SC/ST.

(3) Since SC/ST are economically weak and not able to compete with others in getting Government contracts, at least, 20% of Government contracts should be awarded to SCs/STs.

(4) A Committee may be set up to monitor strict implementation of above measures.

The above measures, I am sure, would help to ameliorate the present condition of SCs/STs and also help to make them economically independent and stand as equals in society.