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Title : Problems faced by lakhs of Bengali refugees with regard to citizenship right.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I am raising an issue pertaining to lakhs of people who came as refugees to our country from erstwhile East Pakistan and Bangladesh because of their persecution as minorities.

These refugees have settled and are staying in different parts of the country and in different States like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Orissa. They are staying in these States for years together. In spite of staying here for many years, these refugees have not been granted citizenship in our country.

Sir, an assurance was given by no less a person than the Prime Minister himself that the granting of citizenship of these refugees would be considered favourably but the Central Government, till today, have not considered granting citizenship to lakhs of Bengali refugees.

Sir, when the Citizenship Act was brought before this House in 2003, an amendment was moved and that amendment was supported by all political parties. In spite of the support from the political spectrum of this House, the amendment was not accepted by the Government to grant citizenship to these hapless people. As a result of this, there are Namashudras living in Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand. They are recognized as Scheduled Caste in the State of West Bengal but they are not recognized as Scheduled Caste in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. I have already introduced a Private Member's Bill in this regard....(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is another issue. Please speak about the refugees.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, it is the same issue pertaining to the refugees. They are belonging to the Namashudras who are recognized as Scheduled Castes in the State of West Bengal. Although the Government of Uttar Pradesh recommended them for inclusion under Scheduled Caste, that has not been considered. The problem has been accentuated when these people are being excluded by other identification. Now, uncertainty is prevailing in the country.

I demand that Citizenship Act should be suitably amended. Sub-Section 1(b) of Clause 2 of the Act should be amended accordingly to recognize and grant citizenship to the Bengali refugees who migrated from erstwhile Pakistan even before Indira-Mujib Agreement. They have been staying in the country for years together without having a right of citizenship. This uncertainty should be ended. The persecution of lakhs of Bengali refugees should be ended.

I demand that Citizenship Act should be amended to grant citizenship to these Bengali refugees.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

Shri P.L. Punia and

Shri Khagen Das are allowed to associate with the issue raised by Shri Basudeb Acharia.