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Title: Need to protect the traditional rights of Tribals in their habitat.

*SHRI P.LINGAM (TENKASI) : Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring to the notice of this august House a move of the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests to take away the traditional livelihood rights of the Scheduled Tribe people in the Sathyamangalam forest area of Tamil Nadu in the name of saving tigers. In 2006, this House enacted a law moving a bill to protect the rights of Scheduled Tribe People living in the forest areas. Later on Wildlife Protection Amendment Act came giving exception to the tribal habitats in the forest areas. But a contrary move is resorted to now. No move should be made to take away the traditional livelihood rights and inhabitation rights of the Scheduled Tribe people. But the Union Government has announced that the Sathyamangalam forest area in the Western Ghats would be notified under the Wildlife Protection Act. This must be rescinded. Even today there are 19 tribal villages in Sathyamangalam forest area. As this tiger sanctuary that would be set up there would affect the livelihood of those tribal people, all the village Gram Sabhas have opposed this move. Right to life and right to live will be taken away from them. Because of this even the 100-day job guarantee scheme is denied to them. Their village panchayats cannot get the funds for building their infrastructure and other civic needs. Their movement from one place to another is cut. They cannot move their agricultural produce to the marketing centres and nearby places.

They cannot go to their traditional worship places. These tribals have lost their entire life and livelihood. It is not a right move to go in for a Tiger Sanctuary at the cost of the traditional livelihood and habitation rights of the Scheduled Tribe people. Through this august House I urge upon the Union Government to drop the move to bring Sathyamangalam forest area under the Wildlife Act and help save the traditional livelihood rights of the tribal people.

*English translation of the speech Originally delivered in Tamil.