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Title: Need to conduct an enquiry into the deaths of tribal in Attapadi, Kerala and to provide better health facilities.

SHRI P.K. BIJU (ALATHUR): The recent spate of deaths of children and women in Attappadi tribal area of Kerala is evoking trepidation. Four tribal children and a woman have died of malnutrition in the Attappady hills during the past month, and two children are undergoing treatment in hospitals. Malnutrition and low blood count are found to be the reasons for the deaths. A large number of tribal children are born underweight and are affected by malnutrition. Poor health facilities and the ineffective functioning of the Health and Social Welfare departments and the Government hospitals are the main reasons for the deaths. The maternal mortality rate in this tribal area is seven per 1,000 compared with the State figure of 1.3 and the infant mortality rate is 66 per 1,000 as against the State figure of 14.1. Programmes impacting on under-nutrition such as ICDS, National Midday Meal Scheme, the National Rural Health Mission, and the Public Distribution System (PDS) have been affected due to cutting of funds and poor coverage. The present Government of Kerala has also started leasing out the PHCs in the tribal areas, citing non-profitability, to the private parties which is also causing deaths of the elderly and children in tribal areas.

I urge the Government to take urgent steps to conduct an enquiry into the deaths of children in Attappadi. Also, steps should be taken to provide better health facilities and nutritious food in the tribal area and for this purpose more budgetary provisions should be made.