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Title: Regarding pathetic life condition of SC/ST community in Kerala.

PROF. RICHARD HAY (NOMINATED): Hon. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to you for giving me this opportunity to raise an important issue. I would like to bring to the notice of this august House about the tragic life of the SC/ST community in Kerala.

There is not a more lamentable sight in the habitats of the SC/ST than to witness the large numbers of squalid and dehumanised people who live in inhuman conditions in Kerala.

Lamentable sight of homelessness and the destitute poor in these locations is heart-rending. But the Government of Kerala is apparently turning a deaf ear to the cries and pleas of SC/ST community.

Inequality and poverty are visible to any person, who visits these ghettos in a modern India. Added to the woes, there is rampant stigmatisation and social alienation encountered by these hapless sons and daughters of India. Indeed it is a blemish on the psyche of a developing India. Their dismal living conditions always perpetuate untold misery and they are victims of isolation and marginalization.

Sir, I visited habitats at Attappadi, Wayanad, Kasaragod and Pathanamthitta Districts in Kerala. The quantum of hardships they suffer, are beyond perception of human mind in these places. What do they do in the end? Frustrated and isolated, they take to drinking and smoking of *ganja*. They beg and live in abject poverty. Their innocence is exploited by the town dwellers. Their respectability, honour, dignity, freedom from exploitation, appropriate living conditions etc., are to be regained and retained so that posterity will not put the blame on us.

The culture of these *vanavasis* has to be preserved as they belong to an ancient sect of people, who believed in the beauty of nature, aesthetic settings, harmony with nature, simple life, respectability, mutual help, democratic principles and fear of natural objects. They are the original inhabitants of our country and they deserve respect, decent living conditions, educational opportunities, proper healthcare, jobs, conservation of the habitat, property rights, skill development and access to resources so that their economic conditions improve. They also deserve better housing facilities, better roads and infrastructure, and good drinking water. They are to be protected from the impact of climate change too.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: All right. Thank you.