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Title: Request to review and bring suitable amendments to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) to make provision for other Traditional Forest Dwellers considering that they are living for 25 years.

SHRI B. Y. RAGHAVENDRA (SHIMOGA): Thank you, hon. Speaker, Sir. I would like to draw the attention of this august House to a very important issue with regard to the protection of rights and interests of the other traditional forest dwellers, who are mainly dependent on the forest for their livelihood.

Sir, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act was enacted to recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation of forest land in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, who have been residing in such forests for generations, but whose rights could not be recorded. The main intention was to guarantee the land right, thereby to reduce the interference of the Forest Department in utilization of the land for their livelihood.

Sir, the forest accreditation and appropriation of forest tribes and other indigenous tribes in respect of forest land and their habitation in any State or Union Territory, all such tribes or tribal communities shall be granted, subject to conditions prior to 13h December, 2005 as per the foregoing provision.

Sir, the applicants of 'other traditional forest dwellers' have been granted forest land under the Forest Rights Act on producing witness

documents of three generations prior to 13th December, 2005 – considering 25 years as one generation, leading to 75 years for three generations.

Sir, I am from Shimoga parliamentary constituency, wherein more than 50 per cent of the land is covered by forest. A major stretch of Western Ghats falls in my area. More than thousand villages and hamlets are in the forest or at the edge of the forest. There exists a symbiotic relationship between villagers, forest and wildlife. In fact, they have a tradition to worship and to protect the forest for their livelihood.

It is evident from the Karnataka State's Social Welfare Department data that 1.89 lakh applications were rejected out of 2.94 lakh application received across the State. In my constituency, that is, in Shimoga District alone, 32,245 applications were rejected out of 97,000 applications received, and only 2,400 title deeds have been distributed so far. The rejection is largely due to difficulty in providing the authentic documents by Other Traditional Forest Dweller applicants to prove that they have been living there for three generations prior to 13th December, 2005. I think, many of my friends also expressed the same difficulty.

Hence, I earnestly appeal to the hon. Union Minister for Tribal Affairs, through you, to review this and to bring suitable amendment to the Act to make provisions for Other Traditional Forest Dwellers considering that they have been living there for 25 years – which means one generation - on the date of submission of their applications.

Thank you.