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Title: Need to accord tribal status to six communities in Assam.

SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL (DIBRUGARH): Madam, I would like to draw the kind attention of the Central Government to a very important issue of Assam regarding granting of tribal status to six communities. This has been an issue for the last so many years since 1993. The State Government had recommended the inclusion of these six communities in the ST category on several occasions. Even a Parliamentary Select Committee was also constituted in 1996 under the chairmanship of Shri Amar Roy Pradhan. It presented its report on 14th August, 1997 to Lok Sabha recommending inclusion of Rajbongshis, Tai-Ahoms, Mattaks, Moran, Chutias Koch and various tribes belonging to Tea and Ex-Tea Garden tribes of Assam, after several field visits to Assam and after in-depth study of the subject. The Select Committee of the Parliament also recommended to the Government of India for inclusion of these communities. The Government of India, however, has not taken any concrete step so far. That is why, I would submit that this is a very serious issue and even in the Assam Assembly also a unanimous decision was taken on this issue. An all Party-Delegation came under the leadership of the Speaker, Assam Assembly to meet the hon. Prime Minister and other concerned Ministers and represented this particular issue to be sorted out immediately. But there is a point that it should be done without affecting the interest of the existing tribals in the State. It is because the condition of the existing tribals is very pathetic. Even tribals are also not enjoying their proper rights in many fields of their activities. Though the State Government of Assam have granted Autonomous Council to the tribes like Missing, Deori, Sonowal Kachari, Tiwa, Rabha, and Thelang Kachari, but the State Government of Assam has not given full-fledged administrative and financial powers to these tribes. That is why, these tribal communities are still backward. So, naturally they should be taken care of. Even in the case of 40 State Government Departments backlog of ST/SCs is amounting to more than 29,375 posts which are still vacant. They are yet to be filled up. That is why, this issue should also be taken care of. Granting tribal status to the six communities. It was a unanimous decision. When all sections of the people of Assam support it, it should be done without any further delay. So, this is my humble submission to the Government of India as both the Governments centre as well as state govt. have promised many times for granting the tribal status to six communities. Even the Prime Minister also promised it and Assam Chief Minister also promised it. Many Central Ministers when they visited Assam, they promised to these six communities. These communities are still suffering from world of uncertainty. That is why, day before yesterday, they came all the way from Assam to Jantar Mantar and staged a *dharna*. So, this matter should be considered very seriously and this matter should be sorted out immediately.

DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA (LAKHIMPUR): Madam, I associate myself with what Mr. Sonowal has spoken.