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Title: Reported deaths due to malnutrition in village Melghat, District Amravati, Maharashtra.

*SHRI ANANDRAO ADSUL (AMRAVATI): Madam Speaker, I would like to draw your attention and attention of the House to an important issue. Melghat is a part of Amravati District of Maharashtra. I myself represent this district in the House. I myself and my colleagues toured Melghat area on 14th and 15th November. In the past 62 years after independence, both the Central and State Government set up Tribal Welfare Departments and chalked out several schemes worth crores of rupees for tribal welfare. But despite spending crores of rupees adivasis have remained adivasis, their backwardness was never removed. In fact, the extent of death of adivasi children due to malnutrition has increased. In Malghat 303 children died during 2008-2009. This year 46 more children, *i.e.*, 349 children died. From this one can understand that in Malghat and in other tribal areas of the country, instead of their development, corruption is being indulged in. Corruption is taking place. Myself and some of my colleagues along with two MLAs did on the spot inspection and came to realize certain things.

For the health-care of adivasis primary health centers and district sub centers are there. We inspected these centers. In our inspection we found that necessary facilities are not available in these centers. The funds granted by the Government are not properly utilized. Operation theatre here was in very poor shape. The responsibility of registration of births and deaths rests with *Grampanchayat* and *Gramsevak*. But registration of only those infants who are born in hospital is being done. Registration of 46 children to whom I referred just now, was done because they were born in hospital. But those infants who are born at home registration of their birth or death is not being done. This shows us in the true sense how neglected the adivasis are. Another issue that I want to raise is that funds are available for construction of roads, supply of drinking water and electricity and setting up schools and residential schools in adivasi area. But

* English translation of the speech originally delivered in Marathi.

what we find is that the funds have not been used for the purpose in adivasi areas. In Melghat alone there are 42 villages which do not have approach roads, drinking water or electricity. So one cannot even go there to find in what condition they live. But we tried to go there and found to our dismay that whatever machinery is available there for this welfare is totally inactive. As I said even their births and deaths are not registered.

The Central Government has started Tiger Project in this area. There are 22 villages under this project. Rehabilitation of the villagers in these villages is the responsibility of the Government. But instead of rehabilitation, the villagers are harassed on account of the rules of this project and the villagers and their cattle are detained. If they are properly rehabilitated it may help them to move with their cattle. But the project officers are harassing them.

Under "Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana" some roads which are proposed to be taken up for conversion into tar roads are being objected to under Tiger Project. When we propose concretization of these roads, the State Government is not keen to bear additional expenditure required for the purpose. Even though there are many schemes which can be implemented for the welfare of adivasis and for which funds are available, many technical problems which are being cited come to the way of their implementation and these people are deprived of the benefits of these schemes.

Madam, I want to make just two more points. There is residential Government school for girls in this area where 950 girls study. We saw kitchen and dining room of this school. Such is the appalling condition there that any person would fall sick. For 950 girls there are only 35 bathrooms. That is why many girls have to take bath in the open on the river. At least two uniforms should be provided to them. But even in the month of November uniforms have not been provided to them.

Madam, I would like to bring one more thing to your notice. NGOs in this area and officers are acting in connivance which is leading to corruption. That is the reason why welfare schemes are not being properly implemented.

I would like to make one suggestion for remedying the situation. Provisions of Hindu Marriage Act should be implemented there and it should be ensured that marriages should take place when bride and bridegroom are 18 and 21 years of age respectively. But nobody is paying heed to these rules. Girls are married off at the age of 12 or 13. Girls at this age give birth to weak infants who become victims of malnutrition and infant mortality. But nobody is paying attention to this. It is necessary to take care of this aspect.

There are certain facilities which need to be created so that it can check malnutrition and infant mortality. That is why I

request the Central and State Government to pool their resources and bring the adivasis in the mainstream by ensuring their development.