

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : This is the figure of what we have distributed. Out of the land we have got, we are able to give this percentage of land to the Scheduled Castes. Our aim is that these people should be uplifted. Minimum wages for agricultural labourers to which category the majority of the Scheduled Castes belong, have been fixed. Mr. Samar Mukherjee and Prof. Madhu Danavate have pointed out that out of these agricultural labourers 66% mainly belong to Scheduled Castes and there are also bonded labourers. We accept this. But we have at least fixed the minimum wages for them and we are always in constant touch with the State Governments to implement this. Recently also, our Home Minister has sent letters to this effect.

SHRI SAMAR MUKHERJEE : That is why they have demanded that.

SHRI NIHAR RANJAN LASKAR : We are in constant touch with the State Governments to implement this sort of Act and try to help these people and save these people from the land owners. While those have benefited the masses of the Scheduled Castes, we know that much more requires to be done. These gains have also served the purpose of awakening and stirring their legitimate expectations and demands.

Thus we understand that the atrocities on the Scheduled Castes are not merely on account of their weak socio-economic conditions, but also the product of the benefits, however limited they might be, or development that they have been the recipients of so far and the legitimate aspirations and demands that they have stimulated. It is not difficult to understand that if the Scheduled Castes had continued to be as socio-economically weak as they were and they had not had

the benefit of post-Independence development and advancement, there might have been no question of any demands from them and, therefore, of counter-repression by some people who have not yet understood and adjusted to the changing situations. Whenever any down-trodden group, has shown the stirrings of advancement, history has shown that some other sections have tried to hold them down. But we have to see that these things are checked. We have to see to it that these people are paid the minimum wages. The Government of India have not only issued comprehensive guidelines to the State Governments for dealing effectively with atrocities or crimes against Scheduled Castes but are also in close touch with the State Governments to see that they are implemented fully.

15.25 hrs.

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

WELCOME TO PRESIDENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

MR. SPEAKER : Hon. Members I have to make an announcement.

On my own behalf and on behalf of the Hon. Members of the House, I have great pleasure in welcoming H. E. Dr. Wahid Ali, President of the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago who is on a visit to India as our honoured guest.

He arrived here this morning. He is now seated in the Special Box.

He will be in India for about nine days. We wish him a very happy and fruitful stay in our country. Through him we convey our greetings and best wishes to the Senate, the Government and the friendly people of Trinidad and Tobago.