

[Shrimati Wansuk Syiem]

I urge the Government to proceed anyhow with the passage of the bill in Parliament for early enactment of law.

Concern over neglecting the plight of agricultural labourers in the country

MS. DOLA SEN (West Bengal): A closer look at the National Crime Records Bureau data shows that the number of farmer suicides in the country has not dropped to nearly half of 2013, as initially reported. The fall in these numbers comes not from an actual decrease in farmer suicides, but because the NCRB has chosen to not include suicides by agricultural labourers in its data on farmer suicides.

This telling exclusion, artificially, halves the number of farmer suicides in our country, ignoring those who work in agriculture but do not own land. In 2014, the official number of "farmer suicides" was 5,650. However, the number of suicides by those "engaged in agriculture" was 12,376. Suicides by more than 6700 agricultural labourers have not been counted in the NCRB's farmer suicide data. This glaring omission hides the fact that suicides by farmers have risen by more than 5 per cent this year even though the total number of suicides in the country has fallen.

The Government must start taking suicides by farmers, including labourers who don't own land, much more seriously, starting by collecting and releasing accurate data. Renaming the Ministry of Agriculture to 'Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Ministry' will mean nothing if landless labourers in need of support are not even recognised as farmers by the Government.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Shri Derek O'Brien - not present. ...*(Interruptions)*...
Shri D. Bandyopadhyay. Please say that you are laying it on the Table of the House.
...*(Interruptions)*...

Demand to include Cooch Behar and other districts of the country with more than 50 per cent SC/ST population under Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) scheme

SHRI D. BANDYOPADHYAY (West Bengal): Sir, Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) Scheme covers 250 districts in 27 States. It is a unique Central Fund as it puts the panchayats and municipalities at the forefront of planning and implementation, and gives them free rein to use the funds, as long as it fills a development gap and the identification of the work is decided with people's participation. In rural areas, 56 per cent Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes, 40 per cent OBCs are beneficiaries of this scheme.

One of the parameters of identifying a district as 'backward' is based on the number of SC/ST population. The district of Cooch Behar in West Bengal has a population of which 50.11 per cent comprise of people from Scheduled Castes. However, Cooch Behar has not been identified as a Backward District. The district is basically agrarian, but modern agricultural techniques have not been adopted on a large scale. Hence, this