

### **Regarding issues pertaining to Tea garden workers**

**DR. JAYANTA KUMAR ROY (JALPAIGURI):** Thank you, Madam Chairperson, for giving me this opportunity to speak in this august House.

Madam, I rise to highlight the dire condition of tea garden workers and small tea growers in North Bengal, including my constituency, Jalpaiguri. Many workers face irregular wage payments with some tea estates, such as Manabari Tea Estate in Malbazar sub-division defaulting on five wage cycles. In several tea gardens, wages are as low as Rs. 150 per day. Adding to their plight, although the provident fund contributions are deducted from their salaries, they are not being deposited in their PF accounts, leaving the workers with financial insecurity. While only a few major companies have seen a substantial growth and continued to regulate the entire market, many others are struggling. As a result, several tea estates are being leased out to other private entities, which often neglect workers' rights, and this further aggravates the crisis. Meanwhile, the West Bengal Government's move to commercialise tea estate land threatens to displace thousands of workers and destabilize the industry.

I urge the Central Government to take immediate steps to ensure timely wage payments, mandate cost audits for transparency, address the issue of PF non-deposit, and explore the feasibility of a Minimum Support Price for tea leaves.

We must remember that protecting the livelihoods of workers and small tea growers is crucial. ? (*Interruptions*)