

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1765
ANSWERED ON:10.12.2004
WELFARE OF TEA GARDEN WORKERS
Sen Smt. Minati

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

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- (a) whether over the years, tea garden owners in North Bengal have deprived the workers of their legitimate rights of Provident Funds, gratuity, deposits on Insurance scheme;
- (b) whether tea industry in North Bengal have not deposited about Rs. 100 crore deducted on the above accounts to the Government Departments;
- (c) whether on the plea of the tea prices not being profit earning, the tea garden owners mostly are depriving their workmen even of their rights to get ration, fuel, medical treatments etc.;
- (d) whether most of the tea garden owners have fallen back upon the tri-partite agreement arrived at as back as 1999;
- (e) if so. the details thereof:
- (f) whether the State Government in spite of their financial stringency: have been helping the workers with supply of rice and wheat at cheaper rates through their Zila Parishad and also with financial assistance of Rs. 500/- per month to each worker of the closed tea gardens; and
- (g) if so. particular when the State Government has also decided to exempt the tea gardens from payment of cess, and whether Government plans to take steps in this regard ?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K S. ELANGO VAN)

- (a)&(b): As per the information furnished by the Government of West Bengal, 118 tea gardens have reportedly defaulted in payment of Provident Fund dues to the tune of Rs. 43.26 crores approximately. There were also complaints of non-payment of gratuity to the workers in the tea gardens of North Bengal. Total number of complaints received regarding non-payment of gratuity is about 80.
- (c): The conditions of work including provision of medical facilities is governed by plantation Labour Act 1951. State Governments are appropriate authorities for administering the provisions under this Act. According to the Government of West Bengal, in some cases adequate ration, fuel and medical treatment facilities have not been provided.
- (d)&(e): As per the information furnished by the Government of West Bengal, it is not true that most of the tea garden owners have fallen back upon the tripartite agreement arrived at in 1999.
- (f): The measures taken by the State Government of West Bengal for providing relief to the affected poor families of tea gardens, particularly those of the closed tea gardens, include provision of food grains at cheaper rates under Antodaya Anna Yojana and grant of Rs. 500 per month to the workers of some locked out tea gardens.
- (g): Government of India has no proposal to exempt tea from payment of cess payable under the provisions of the Tea Act 1953.