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Title: Need to fix minimum Support Price for Tea and also to set up a Central Wage Board for Tea Plantation Industry.

SHRI MANOHAR TIRKEY (ALIPURDUAR): The Union Government is contemplating to declare Tea as National Drink of our Country. I congratulate the Government for this step but I want to bring to the notice of the Government the hardships being faced by the workers who are engaged in this Industry. More than half a century have passed since the formation of last Central Wage Board for Tea Plantation Industry and till date a lot of changes have taken place in Tea Plantation Industry. More than 1.2 million workmen are engaged in this very important growing sector of the economy. As you know that in the absence of any consistent, uniform and resolute approach and intervention on the part of Government, the structures as well as rates of wages of the workmen of this industry have failed to evolve to a fair standard in all counts keeping pace with the developing economy of the country. As a result presently the wages of the workmen are lowest in tea industry in comparison to any other organized sectors, that too varies to a great extent in regions and within region even. The stand & intentions on the part of employers could succeed to frustrate and negate the declared motto of the last Central wage Board from evolving a structure of fair wages. Having no proper & dynamic link with the rising consumer price index or no link at all, the real wages of the workmen of this industry have significantly been eroded over last 50 years leading towards growing distress, malnutrition, backwardness, migration and unrest. Besides there is no Minimum Support Price or Minimum Retail Price of Tea and the prices of Tea is always decided by auction and in the absence of any effective policy the Tea Garden Owners gave the excuse of huge loss in the name of auction and other unrelated things. Sir, through this August House, I would request the Hon'ble Minister to intervene in the matter as deemed appropriate and to fix MSP or Minimum Retail Price for Tea and also to form a Central Wage Board for Tea Plantation Industry at the earliest.