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Title: Regarding the welfare of labourers engaged in tea plantation in Assam.

SHRI GAURAV GOGOI (KALIABOR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

The tea garden community in the State of Assam comprises of around 17 per cent of the State's population. Their origins are from various States namely, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar etc. and they are a vibrant part of Assam's culture and economy. They are roughly concentrated in around 798 tea gardens. But their welfare conditions have to be supervised by the management. But, their welfare conditions have to be supervised by the management. These welfare conditions are to be governed by the norms of the Plantations Labour Act, 1951. Yet we have found that often these private companies, whose gardens are in Assam but whose headquarters are in Kolkata, are not adhering to the norms of the Plantations Labour Act. These private companies and this industry is under the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. Therefore, through you, I request the Government of India and the Ministry of Commerce to instruct these private companies to adhere to the Plantations Labour Act and improve the conditions of drinking water, health, sanitation and hospitals.

The youth of this community and the women of this community are very talented. They were initially working on the tea gardens as labour but now they are part of aspirational India. They want to be the future generation of Army officers, doctors, engineers. Yet, we have to give them the necessary infrastructure. For this, the following things are essential.

Hostels must be there in each sub division of a tea-dominated district for students and young professionals.

Residential vocational training schools must be there so that they can get proper education. In this regard I would like to mention that the hon. Minister of Human Resource Development, Smriti Irani ji visited Assam a few months ago and promised that there would be 14 new Navodaya Vidyalayas in the State of Assam. We hope to see that in the Budget on 29th.

Thirdly, coaching centres must be there to provide counselling for students preparing for exams related to police, medical, APSC and UPSC.

Women working in tea garden community have a long problem of anaemia. They do not get the necessary maternal guidance. Therefore, nutritional and maternal counselling centres for pregnant mothers must be there.

There are so many languages because they come from different States. There are so many folk languages, dialects and literature but this is all oral in tradition. Therefore this needs to be properly archived and documented. Therefore, a programme to promote indigenous literature, folk stories and languages of tea tribes/communities is very important.

I request the Central Government to introduce a programme like UDAAN which they announced in Jammu and Kashmir, a similar programme of Rs. 1000 crore package for youth and women of the tea garden communities of Assam.

In this regard, the State Government has already requested close to Rs. 5,500 crore for the overall socio-economic development of tea garden workers, amendment to the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and specially the headquarters of Tea Board, which is now in Kolkata, to shift to Guwahati. Assam produces 30 per cent of India's tea; yet the headquarters are in Kolkata. Tea gardens are in Assam but the officers are there in Kolkata. Therefore, we request the headquarters to be moved to Assam and a provision of 12,590 million tonnes of additional food grain monthly to tea garden workers at subsidised rate may be made. This is the request of the State Government in addition to my earlier request of Rs. 1000 crore special package for the welfare of tea garden community specially women and young workers. Thank you very much.

HON. CHAIRPERSON : Shri Bhairon Prasad Mishra is permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Gaurav Gogoi.