

Plight of Tea Plantation Workers

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Madam, I am trying to raise a Special Mention which concerns millions of plantation workers throughout the country. I will be confining myself to West Bengal only. Its caption is "Tea Plantation Workers in Peril".

Madam, the tea industry of West Bengal is the second largest in the country. There are around 343 gardens spread across the Dooars, Terai and Darjeeling hills. A majority of the tea plantations in the region are large production units of more than 400 hectares, covering an average area of 61.6 per cent and managed and owned by big tea corporates.

The plantations are not just economic units, but, to a large extent, control and regulate lives of a workforce of almost 3 lakhs, most of whom are from tribal regions of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

These workers live and work exclusively for their respective plantations, without any freedom of choice in terms of work and place of living. They are completely dependent on plantation management for food, water, shelter, education, health and sanitation.

The tea industry is in an unprecedented crisis for years. At present, in West Bengal along nearly 23 gardens have been closed or abandoned rendering nearly 25,000 workers jobless and exposing them to severe misery and completely collapsing their basic amenities for living.

Even the children of these workers are forced out of schools and being engaged as child labours in available hazardous jobs without any choice. Malnutrition deaths have been rampant. A spectre of uncertainty is looming large. The social fabric is in peril in that particular zone.

The State Government alone cannot manage such gruesome situation.

Hence, I urge upon, through you, Madam, the Government of India to immediately resort to well-meaning measures to save the lives of nearly a lakh of poor people, most of them belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Such action should be undertaken on war footing.

Madam, once again, with your permission, let me make an appeal to you. There are 30 Special Mentions which have been made today. But,

unfortunately, the Departments concerned, except one or two, are not taking corrective actions immediately. At least", some information should reach the Members concerned. Thank you very much.

SHRI R.S. GAVAI (Maharashtra): Madam, I associate myself with what Shri Manoj Bhattacharya has stated.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is there. Shrimati Bhavanaben Chikalia, you can take a note of them and convey them to the concerned Ministers.

संसदीय कार्य मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री और पर्यटन और संस्कृति मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती भावना बेन देवराज भाई चिकलिया): महोदया, जो विषय उठाया गया है, मैं संबंधित मंत्रालय को अवश्य सूचित करूंगी।

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: What he has suggested is this. उसके बारे में तो उन्होंने कहा ही है पर उन्होंने जनरली बात की है कि स्पेशल मेशन जो यहां होते हैं उनके लिए चेयरमैन साहब परमिशन देते हैं। उसके बाद बहुत कम मिनिस्टरीज से उनको जवाब आता है।

श्रीमती भावना बेन देवराज भाई चिकलिया : महोदया, मैं अवश्य सूचित करूंगी कि जवाब ठीक तरह से मिले।

GOVERNMENT BILL

The Indian Council of World Affairs (Amendment) Bill, 2003

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, we shall take up the Indian Council of World Affairs (Amendment) Bill, 2003 for consideration.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): Madam, I beg to move:

"That the Bill to amend the Indian Council of World Affairs Act, 2001, as passed by Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration."

उपसभापति महोदया, इंडियन काउंसिल ऑफ़ वर्ल्ड अफेयर्स 1943 में बड़ी उम्मीद और अरमान से बनाया गया था और जिन लोगों ने इसे बनाया था, वे राज्य सभा के निर्माताओं में से थे। अगर मैं उन लोगों का नाम इस सदन में सुनाऊं तो ऐसा लगेगा कि जहां एक ओर राष्ट्रीय आज़ादी की लड़ाई लड़ी जा रही थी वहीं दूसरी ओर उनके सामने देश को बनाने का सपना भी था। उस सपने में, यह देश कैसा बनेगा, आगे चलकर उसके दुनिया में क्या रिश्ते होंगे, इस सारे सवालों को लेकर इसकी स्थापना की गई थी। स्थापना करने वाले लोगों में पंडित जवाहर लाल नेहरू से लेकर