

Assam's Tea Workers' Health Crisis, with Average Body Weight Below 50 kg



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Guwahati: The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) has accused the BJP-led state government under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma of driving tea garden workers into a severe health crisis, with the average worker's body weight dropping below 50 kg due to malnutrition and anemia. In a press conference on Wednesday at Rajiv Bhawan, APCC Working President Roselina Tirkey, joined by tea tribe leaders Raju Sahu, Etowa Munda, and Pranjal Ghatowar, condemned the government for neglecting workers' welfare and plotting to dismantle Assam's tea industry.

Raju Sahu emphasized the alarming health decline, stating that malnutrition and anemia have rendered many tea workers unfit to donate blood. He accused the government of allowing 10% of tea garden land for non-agricultural use, enabling ministers and MLAs to acquire these lands for personal ventures. Sahu cited the sale of 6,000 bighas from Sukanpukhuri and Kachujan tea gardens in Tinsukia, allegedly bought by individuals close to the Chief Minister for commercial projects worth ₹1,800 crore.

Roselina Tirkey slammed the BJP for failing to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to tea tribes and Adivasis, a promise made by the Modi government. She highlighted the lack of healthcare, education, and safety in tea garden areas, with rising violence against women and girls. Pranjal Ghatowar accused the government of denying tea tribe youth education and jobs, forcing migration, and using election-time cash transfers as mere tokenism.

Etowa Munda contrasted Congress-era welfare schemes with the BJP's unfulfilled promises on wages, scholarships, and water. Sahu also referenced a Tinsukia case where a Class VIII girl was allegedly raped by BJP leader Samudra Roy, who remains unarrested, and the victim's mother, Budhuni Prasad, was reportedly driven to suicide.

Health and Nutritional Status Study ([PubMed, 2006](#)):

A community-based survey in Dibrugarh district found that 69.9% of adult tea garden workers were underweight, with widespread anemia and a 59.9% prevalence of underweight among children. Worm infections, skin problems, and respiratory issues, including tuberculosis, were significant health concerns, underscoring the critical health and nutritional challenges faced by this population.

Water Crisis and Health Issues ([Dialogue Earth, 2021](#)):

A report highlighted chronic water shortages in Assam's tea gardens, with workers relying on contaminated pond water, leading to diseases like cholera and typhoid. The lack of clean water exacerbates health issues, particularly during pandemics, as workers cannot afford sanitizers and rely on unfiltered groundwater.

Organized by APCC Media Department Chairman Bedabrata Bora, the press conference highlighted the critical health crisis among tea workers, with body weights below 50 kg, and raised alarms over the government's alleged exploitation of Assam's tea industry.

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