

Govt launches web portal on tea gardens

Website Will Track Welfare Of Community's Children

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Guwahati: The state planning and development minister, Ajanta Neog, launched 'Tea Atlas of Assam', a web portal to compile comprehensive data on Assam's tea gardens, on Saturday. The portal aims to present a true picture of the tea gardens and the condition of the children growing up there.

The web portal, devised by the office of the labour commissioner with technical support from Unicef, will focus on key performance indicators of the gardens. It will also turn the lens on implementation of the Plantations Labour Act, 1951, in the state.

The event also marked the beginning of a two-day national conference of the five tea-growing states of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal, organized by National Law University, Assam, in collaboration with the state de-

partment of labour and employment and supported by the Unicef office for Assam and Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP).

Speaking at the session, Neog described the event as a shared opportunity for all to address fundamental issues pertaining to children and women in tea gardens. "Of the 27 districts of Assam, tea is grown in 24. Sixteen districts are tea-intensive and the state government is com-

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mitted to working for the rights of the tea garden community, especially children," Neog said.

The tea community of the state comprises around 17% of its total population of 3.21 million and is one of the most socially backward, excluded and marginalized communities of Assam. It has a substantial number of children; both wards of plantation labourers as well as child work-

ers.

Henriette Ahrens, deputy representative (programmes) of Unicef India insisted on the need for nutritional balance for mothers to bear healthy children. She also talked about the need for exclusive breastfeeding, pre-natal care for pregnant mothers and inclusive, quality education for boys and girls.

Tushar Rane, chief of Unicef Assam, opened his speech by stating that one out of five children born in the state belongs to the tea community. Hence, the community has been identified as Unicef Assam's Social Inclusion and Equity Programming.

The two-day conference aims to develop a shared understanding of the provisions relating to children in the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, and explore the scope of drafting a set of recommendations for better implementation of, and amendment to, the said act and Assam Plantation Labour Rules, 1956.