

Govt to implement Plantations Act

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Nov 14: Asserting that the State Government was committed to implementing the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 in letter and spirit, Ajanta Neog, Minister for Planning & Development, Law and PWD, today said that various departments such as Social Welfare, Health and Education needed to act in tandem for this purpose.

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the UNICEF-supported national level conference on protection of child rights in tea plantations of India with special reference to the implementation of the

Plantations Labour Act, organised by National Law University, Assam, in collaboration with the Department of Labour and Employment, Neog said that of particular importance were issues concerning health and education of the children of tea workers.

“The State Government is aware of the prevailing situation and interventions are being directed for ensuring that the rights of the workers – especially children – are protected. It is in acknowledgement of the situation that the Chief Minister announced a Rs 200-crore package for the welfare of the tea tribes in the last

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Budget Session of the State Assembly,” Neog said.

“The Government is committed to implementing the Plantations Labour Act in its totality, among other measures for the welfare of tea tribes. The State Government has also submitted recommendations to the Centre over various issues concerning the welfare of tea communities,” she added.

Prof Mool Chand Sharma, former Member, Law Commission of India, in his address, stressed the need for foolproof protection of child rights in tea gardens, saying that any agenda of development and human rights was inconceivable without protection of children’s rights.

Dhiren Goswami, former Chief Inspector of Plantations, Assam, said that there

was an acute shortage of doctors and paramedics in Assam’s tea gardens. He said that there were only 300-odd doctors and 600-odd pharmacists in over 1,000 tea gardens of the State.

Drinking water, Goswami added, was another area of concern, with over 60 per cent gardens not having adequate drinking water facilities for workers.

Henriette Ahrens, Deputy Representative, Programmes, UNICEF India Country Office, New Delhi, in her address as the guest of honour, gave an account of the UNICEF’s engagement in tea gardens. She urged the State governments to act in close collaboration with UNICEF.

Prof Vijender Kumar, Vice Chancellor, National Law University, also spoke among others.