

Where was Rs 15 crore spent?

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WELFARE OF SMALL TEA GROWERS

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, July 25: Raising a question as to where the Rs 15 crore fund spent for the welfare of small tea growers in Assam during the previous Tarun Gogoi regime has gone, BJP MLA Padma Hazarika became vocal in the House today, saying he knows of small tea growers who haven't received a single penny of that 15 crore fund.

In his reply during Zero Hour, State Industry and Commerce minister Chandra Mohan Patowary said, "A proper enquiry into the issue by a senior officer would be conducted by the government," adding, "Some sops would be announced for small tea growers in the State in tomorrow's budget and another Rs 54 crore would be provided for their welfare."

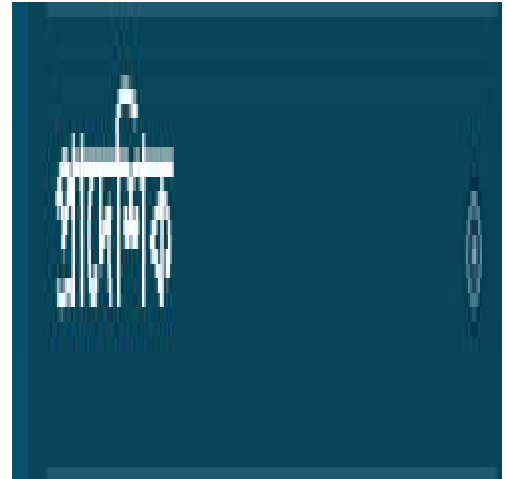
Patowary further informed, "Rs 163 crore collected by the State government on green leaf from small tea growers over the years will also be spent for the welfare of small tea growers." The State government is presently collecting 25 paise per kg of green leaf tea as cess from small tea growers.

Padma Hazarika stated that majority of the 10 lakh small tea growers are unable to reap the benefits provided by Tea Board of India, as these growers don't have rights over the land.

The Industry and Commerce minister, in his reply, said he would take up the issue both with the Tea Board and the Government of India accordingly.

However, political observers have noted adversely the sheer waste of time during Zero Hour in taking up this important issue affecting lakhs of small tea growers in the State, with the minister concerned repeating himself over and over again. Only three questions were discussed during Zero Hour today, taking up 1 hour 52 minutes of the assembly's valuable time. The debate between treasury and opposition benches, which is against the rules during Zero Hour, was also instrumental in time wastage, pointed out observers.

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Yesterday's Weather

	Maximum	Minimum
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C
●	°C	°C

Today's forecast for Guwahati City

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