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Dispur to take up Tea Board issue with Centre

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Assam alone produces 52% of the country's tea, so demand for shifting Tea Board headquarters from Kolkata to Guwahati is fully justified," says Chandramohan Patowary

BY OUR STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Aug 9: Dispur will very soon take up with the Centre the issue of shifting Tea Board headquarters from Kolkata to Guwahati.

State Industry and Commerce minister Chandramohan Patowary said this in the Assembly today, while replying to a question raised by AGP legislator Ramendra Narayan Kalita during Zero Hour of the Assembly session.

Patowary said that the State government will hold talks with Union Industry and Commerce minister Nirmala Sitharaman in this regard, who is scheduled to visit the State shortly.

"As Assam alone produces about 52 percent of the country's total tea, the demand for shifting of the Tea Board headquarters from Kolkata to Guwahati is fully justified. The Assam government in principle agrees with the demand," he said.

Patowary said that the country has around 5,63,980 hectares of land under tea production, of which 3,19,041 hectare is in Assam.

"In 2015, India produced 120.86 crore kg tea, of which 63.23 crore kg was produced in Assam. This means Assam contributed as much as 52 percent of the country's total tea production," he pointed out.

"Besides, there are a total 1,421 tea estates in the country of which Assam alone has 767 big tea estates. Not only that, Assam has over 1 lakh small tea growers," Patowary said.

He further said that except tea, all other statutory commodity boards - coffee, rubber, spices and coconut - have their headquarters in states where the products are mainly grown.

"Rubber cultivation in India has been traditionally confined to Kerala and the Rubber Board is headquartered in Kottayam. Karnataka produces highest coffee in India and the Coffee Board is headquartered in Bengaluru. Likewise, the spices and coconut boards are headquartered in Cochin in Kerala," Patowary said.

The Industry and Commerce minister added that a tea auction centre is being constructed in Jorhat.

Earlier, raising the issue, MLA Ramendra Narayan Kalita said, "It is a long pending demand of AASU and AGP that Tea Board headquarter be shifted to Guwahati from Kolkata. It is a justified demand."

He said that Assam is much richer in tea compared to West Bengal. "There are only 309 tea estates in West Bengal whereas the number of tea estates in Assam is three times more," Kalita said.

The AGP legislator further said that as there is only one tea auction centre in Assam, three more tea auction centres - one each in Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Tezpur - should be set up.

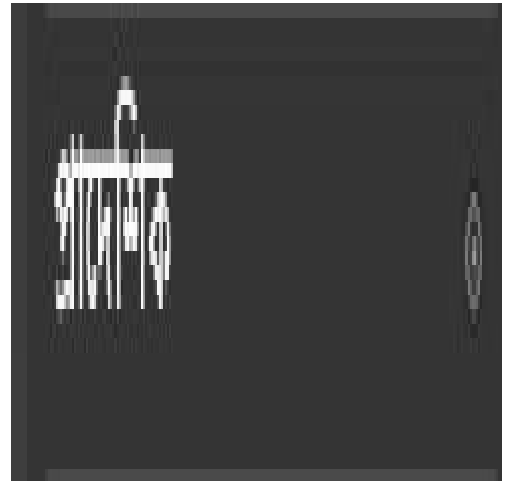
West Bengal Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs in Parliament last week had opposed the proposed attempt to shift the head office of the Tea Board of India from Kolkata to Guwahati.

Raising the issue during Special Mention in Rajya Sabha, Trinamool MP Vivek Gupta said that tea is one of the industries, which by an Act of Parliament, comes under the control of the Union government. "The genesis of the Tea Board of India dates back to 1903, when the Indian Tea Cess Bill was passed. The present Tea Board, set up under Section 4 of the Tea Act, 1953, was constituted on April 1, 1954," he had said.

"Since its inception, the Tea Board has been located in Kolkata. But recently, what we are seeing is that the employees are being harassed; they are being shifted in batches to other offices; they are being made to wait compulsorily. This is the alleged move because a new party has come to power in Assam; the Centre is trying to favour Guwahati," Gupta had alleged.

Earlier, the matter was vociferously raised by TMC MPs Saugata Roy and Dinesh Trivedi in Lok Sabha.

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	Maximum	Minimum
•	°C	°C
•	°C	°C
•	°C	°C
•	°C	°C
•	°C	°C
•	°C	°C

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