

Wage hike, insurance for tea garden workers

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GUWAHATI: The Assam government on Saturday hiked the wages of tea garden workers in the state by Rs 30 and also brought them under insurance coverage.

Talking to the media here, labour and tea tribes welfare minister Pallab Lochan Das said the wage hike is an interim measure as the the one-man committee headed by additional chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna is yet to give its recommendations. With this move, tea garden workers in the Brahmaputra Valley will now get Rs 167 every day and those in the Barak Valley will get Rs 145 every day.

The minister added that the government will pay the insurance premium for workers who will be brought under the Prime Minister's Jeevan Jyoti Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana. "The total cost of premium for the two schemes is Rs 342 per person every year. The government will transfer the amount to the respective accounts of workers," he said.

Das added that the committee will also try to bring parity in the daily wage structure for both the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys. He added that the government will fix a daily wage rate for workers in small tea gardens of the state which contribute about 40% of the state's total tea production. There are about five lakh workers in such tea gardens.

The bilateral wage agreement between the workers' union and the industry expired in December last year. On the other hand, Congress on Saturday criticized the state government's interim wage hike saying that the ruling BJP had actually promised to

increase it to Rs 350 per day. Senior party leader and former minister Pradyut Bordoloi said the BJP-led government did not do anything to fulfill its promise in the last two years.