

## Insurance for 8 lakh workers



**Guwahati:** Over eight lakh tea garden workers in Assam will be brought under two central insurance schemes, Pradhan Mantri Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, with the state government bearing the premium cost.

The two schemes will provide insurance cover up to Rs 2 lakh in case of permanent disability or death.

"The government will transfer the annual premium of Rs 330 for Jivan Jyoti Bima Yojana and Rs 12 for Suraksha Bima Yojana to the accounts of insurance holders. This will go a long way in ensuring social security of garden workers whose families struggle to make ends meet after the death of the bread-earner," minister for welfare of tea tribes and labour Pallab Lochan Das said here on Saturday.

He said the insurance would be also applicable in case of normal death. "At present, around eight lakh garden workers have bank accounts but we will cover all workers once they open their accounts," he said.

The minister said a meeting of the minimum wage board on June 14 decided to increase the daily wage by Rs 30 as interim hike, taking the total wage to Rs 167 in Brahmaputra Valley and Rs 145 in Barak Valley gardens.

"The hike will be effective from March 1 this year and garden owners have agreed to pay the arrears as early as possible. This wage will be paid till a decision is taken to fix a new daily wage by the one-man committee of additional chief secretary Kumar Sanjay Krishna after discussion with all stakeholders. The committee will decide a single wage for gardens in the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys," he said

Many tea workers' organisations and students' unions are demanding Rs 350 as daily wage, as paid in states like Kerala.

"Since the daily wage includes ration, housing and leave wage, the committee will look into those issues as well," he said.

Das said a draft is being prepared to implement the agriculture workers' wage for nearly five lakh workers in small tea gardens, which produce 42 per cent of the tea in the state.

The minister said the government has also attached properties of some gardens to clear provident fund dues to their workers.

"We are also working on an online system to track provident fund payment to garden workers to ensure it is paid regularly," he said, adding that the government also sanctioned Rs 99 crore to clear pending PF dues for workers in closed or sick gardens of the state-owned Assam Tea Corporation Limited (ATCL).

More than Rs 300 crore in PF dues of ATCL workers is pending, Das said.

**Source:** <https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/north-east/insurance-for-8-lakh-workers-243246>