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THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

35,000 tea garden children deprived of edn facility

From Our Correspondent

SRIMANGAL, Sept 24:—Thirty-five thousand children of 158 Tea gardens of the country are deprived of primary education facilities in spite of the compulsory primary education prevails in the country.

According to a survey made by International Labour Organisation (ILO) there are about 35,000 children in the 158 tea gardens in Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Sylhet and Chittagong H.T. district of the country between 7 to 12 years age. But out of the total number only 30 per cent children are enrolled as student of primary schools.

According to the Labour Laws of the nation applicable to tea garden it is mandatory to arrange primary education facilities for the children of tea garden workers in all the tea gardens by the management and to engage one teacher for every 40 students. But ignoring the labour laws 33 tea gardens have no primary school where the number of school-going children are 3100. In all, there are only 140 primary schools with 225 appointed teachers in the tea garden. Among these schools only 8 are government and the rest managed by respective tea garden management.

Out of 140 listed primary schools located in the tea garden areas normal class works are held in a very few schools specially which are adjacent to towns. It is alleged that the teachers are usually engaged in the work of totally clerk of the garden by the management. As these schools are being managed by the garden management the Education Department have no control or supervision over these schools. As a result, even 10 per cent of the total primary students cannot cross the half-way of the primary education.

Mr. Rajendra Prasad Bunarjee, the President of Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union told this Correspondent that though it is obligatory by the Labour Law and the agreement between the Bangladeshiyo Cha Sangsad and the Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union the tea garden authority gives a very little importance to the education facilities of tea workers' children. He said that the education department has proposed nationalisation of the primary schools of the garden but the respective tea garden showing their negative attitude. He also alleged that the Union has complained to many tea garden authority where there are no teachers to attend in the classes or no free books are distributed to the students, but it gave no fruit.

The local authority of Labour Welfare Department for Tea Industry informed that they have no separate responsibility of education welfare of the tea workers excepting health, medical and housing facilities.

The Project Development Unit of

Bangladesh Tea Board source said that there was no programme of educational development of the tea workers in the 150 crore Taka tea rehabilitation programme ended in 1992. But the PDU source informed that in a survey conducted by the

Bangladesh Management Development Committee (BMDC) it is learnt that the tea workers are enjoying best living standard among the agro-based industries in the country while the tea workers are worst deprived of the educational arena.