

Gauhati HC seeks written reply from Assam government on COVID-19 situation in tea estates

By Bikash Singh, ET Bureau May 26, 2021, 12:26 AM IST

Gauhati High Court has sought written reply from the Assam government on the COVID-19 situation in the tea estates of the state before May 31.

Anjan Nagg has filed a PIL. Chief justice Sudhanshu Dhulia and Justice Manash Ranjan Pathak stated “Nevertheless, we want a written reply from the State, which must come on record before the next date. As far as the Mobile Medical Units (MMU) and their use in these Tea Gardens is concerned, we have absolutely no doubt that since the Government already have the resources, these Mobile Medical Units must be put in use for testing and other purposes in the Tea Gardens as well, if not already being done. The Government in the counter affidavit must also show as to the test being done and what kind of test is being done, for determination of COVID-19 infection.”

A. Phukan, learned counsel for the petitioner. Also heard R.K.D. Choudhury, learned Assistant Solicitor General of India and D. Saikia, learned Advocate General, Assam.

This PIL addresses issues relating to the present situation under the Covid-19 pandemic in the Tea Gardens of Assam. There are about 800 tea Gardens and 434 Tea Estates in Assam. The condition of workers in these Tea Gardens is an issue which has been raised before this Court.

The concern of the petitioner is that in these Tea Gardens, the Guidelines of the Government of India relating to management of COVID management are not being followed and the Plantations Labour Act, 1951 and the Rules framed therein are also not being followed inasmuch as the COVID Care Centres within the Tea Gardens are taking care of only asymptomatic patients. There are other concerns raised as well.

Another issue raised before this court is the creation of a Post COVID Clinic for treatment of patients, who have suffered from COVID and need to be advised on various aspects after their recovery from COVID.

D. Saikia, learned Advocate General, Assam, on the other hand, would argue that the Government has been conscious of the health of workers in these Tea Gardens and out of 800 Tea Gardens, vaccination has already started in 208 of these Tea Gardens, out of which 28000 workers have been vaccinated and out of these 2000 have also received their second dose. There are other figures also given by Saikia, which shows that the situation may not be as alarming as is being made out.