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India tea workers live in 'appalling' conditions on \$2 a day: Report

Women working on tea plantations in northeast India earn a "pitiful" \$2 a day and live in "appalling" conditions with almost no toilets, according to a report released on Tuesday. The investigation by the British charity Traidcraft Exchange found workers in the tea-growing state of Assam were paid 137 rupees (\$2) a day, far below the minimum wage of 250 rupees. More than half are women. Assam is the largest producer of tea in India and its estates supply top brands including Britain's Twinings and Tetley. Both are working to improve conditions for workers, the report said. "The women who pick the tea we drink live in appalling conditions and are paid pitifully low wages by tea estates in Assam," said Fiona Gooch, a policy adviser for Traidcraft Exchange.

Tamil Nadu protests: Sterlite plant non-operational after 9 dead in clashes

At least nine people were killed and another 20 injured on Tuesday on the 100th day of protest against the expansion of Vedanta's Sterlite Copper unit in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin, also known as Thoothukudi. Later in the day, Sterlite Copper said it is unfortunate of what happened on Tuesday and called itself to be non-operational, ANI reported. Protesters have alleged that the plant was polluting groundwater in their area. Sterlite Copper represents the copper unit of Vedanta Limited which operates a 400,000 tonnes per annum-plant in Tuticorin. Chief Minister Palaniswami said in a statement in Chennai that the protesters took out a procession towards the collectorate in defiance of the prohibitory orders clamped in the specific area in Tuticorin. Hurling stones and setting government vehicles and public property on fire, the agitators went on the rampage in the town, about 600 km from Tamil Nadu capital Chennai.

Workers hit McDonald's with new sexual harassment claims

Ten women who work at McDonald's restaurants in Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and six other cities have filed sexual harassment complaints in the past few days with the federal government against the company and its franchisees, which they said ignored or retaliated against them for such complaints. The complaints, filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), are the latest effort by the union-backed Fight for \$15 to have McDonald's designated a "joint employer" of workers at McDonald's franchises and thereby liable when its franchisees violate labour laws. The claimants, including a 15-year-old from St. Louis, said in a conference call with journalists that they were ignored, mocked or terminated for reporting the behaviour. The accusations included claims that co-workers or supervisors sexually propositioned, groped or exposed themselves to the women.

French unions lead more protests against public service shake-up

French police and protesters clashed in Paris on Tuesday after unions, angered by years of public sector pay curbs and President Emmanuel Macron's economic reforms, urged state employees to stop work on and join nationwide street protests. It is the third time that labour unions have sought to stage a nationwide show of strength in such a way since Macron began his five-year term in May 2017. Reuters television images showed riot police charging at protesters with batons in central Paris, firing stun grenades and tear gas. Some protesters destroyed two shops and a bus stop. Police said 20 demonstrators were arrested. Around 15,000 people demonstrated in the capital, compared with 49,000 during a similar protest in March, authorities said.

Muslims shouldn't work during Ramadan, 'it's dangerous for all of us': Danish politician

A Danish minister known for her strong anti-immigration views on Monday called for Muslims to take time off work during the fasting period of Ramadan, saying the practice is "dangerous for all of us". The comments from immigration and integration minister Inger Stojberg, a member of the centre-right Liberal Party, come after Ramadan, one of Islam's most revered holidays in which Muslims around the world fast from dawn until dusk, began last week. "I want to call on Muslims to take leave from work during the month of Ramadan to avoid negative consequences for the rest of Danish society," Stojberg wrote in a column for the BT tabloid. "I wonder if a religious order commanding observance to a 1,400-year-old pillar of Islam is compatible with the society and labour market that we have in Denmark in 2018." She also said she feared the fasting could affect "safety and productivity," giving as an example bus drivers who have "neither had a drink nor eaten for more than 10 hours".

Ministry approves EPFO office in Guwahati

The union labour & employment ministry has approved the opening of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation's (EPFO) zonal office for the Northeast region in Guwahati. The step was taken to ensure a greater degree of effectiveness in benefit service delivery to EPF members of the region, and for overall efficiency in the administration of the Employees' Provident Fund & Misc Provisions Act, 1952. The decision to upgrade the institutional apparatus in the region comes in the wake of the organizational and cadre restructuring exercise which received its final seal of approval from the Centre in December, 2016. Under the restructured organizational setup, the new zonal office will have jurisdiction over one regional office in Guwahati; three regional offices, in Agartala (Tripura), Shillong (Meghalaya), and Tinsukia (Assam); four special state offices, in Aizawl (Mizoram), Imphal (Manipur), Dimapur (Nagaland), and Naharlagun (Arunachal Pradesh); and five district offices, in Bongaigaon, Jorhat, Tezpur and Silchar (Assam), and Dharmanagar (Tripura), according to an official release.

MSMEs have a bigger role in India's vision of producing 300 mn tonnes of steel by 2030: Steel Minister

Acknowledging the role and contribution of small and medium steel manufactures in achieving the India's vision of producing 300 mn tonnes by 2030, the Union Minister of Steel, Chaudhary Birender Singh said that MSME steel industry plays a crucial role in growth and development of economy. He said "MSME steel industry offers direct employment to 5 Lakh people and indirect employment to 25 lakh individuals, which is a notable contribution to Indian economy." Speaking at the MSME Steel Conclave 2018 organized by the Steel Re-rollers Association of Maharashtra (SRAM) in Mumbai, he highlighted the role of MSME steel sector in conserving energy and natural resources.

