

GJM tea labourers' union threatens stir regarding Panighata

The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha-affiliated Darjeeling Terai Dooars Plantation Labour Union (DTDPLU) has threatened to launch an aggressive movement if there was no headway by the last week of this month regarding the Panighata tea estate.

Joint Labour Commissioner Sunil Kumar said the tripartite meet, which was scheduled for today to decide fate of the closed plantation, could not take place as the owner Shankar Sharaf sent a letter requesting for some more time and the said letter was later sent to the Darjeeling district magistrate.

With the next meeting's date decided on May 25, the participating unions and the government decided to give the owner time till May 20, Kumar said.

Harihar Acharya, the Terai chief of the DTDPLU, said if the owner failed to attend that meeting too and the tea estate did not reopen by May 25-26, they will start a massive agitation in support of the hapless workers of Panighatta, which is in its seventh month of closure now.

Besides DTDPLU, the Himalayan Plantation Workers' Union (HPWU) of the Gorkha National Liberation Front was also present at the deliberations.

"Despite several rounds of meetings for reopening the tea estate, the owner has not shown any interest to that effect. Now that we have given the May 25 deadline, he will stand responsible for the outcome of the agitation we have threatened to launch," warned Acharya.

Panighatta Tea Estate is spread across an area of about 1,200 acres and lies adjacent to forest area.

Since October 10, 2015 when the garden was shut down indefinitely, 13 labourer deaths had been reported till date by the unions. - PTI