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Tukvar garden closed amid management-worker disagreement on timing

Darjeeling
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The management of Puttabong Tukvar Tea Estate, about 12km from Darjeeling town, today announced suspension of work citing non-compliance of work hours by the workers, leading to unnecessary problems in production. Meanwhile, the workers and trade unions maintain that the working period required by the management was not feasible for them.

Darjeeling Tea Association principal advisor Sandeep Mukherjee said, "The Tukvar tea garden management today served a notice of suspension of work in the garden stating the workers were not adhering to the norms and work timings laid out. Many workers did not report for work on March 29 and they gherao-ed the management the following day. All this is leading to a considerable financial loss for the estate."

Tukvar Tea Estate, which has five divisions, was established in 1852 by Dr. Campbell. It is now run by Jay Shree Tea and Industries Ltd. The tea garden is a DTA member and has a workforce of 1,646 employees working in 436.72 hectares of plantation area.

The notice by the management says that the workers of the tea garden continue to defy orders joining and leaving work on their own accord. The notice also states that the workers were not following the directives of the operating trade union due to which the management is unable to run the tea estate in a proper manner.

The notice further states that due to the absence of discipline, the management was left with no alternative but to suspend operations, which would continue until the rule of law is established and the management allowed to run the estate in an appropriate manner.

Meanwhile, Prashant Pradhan, assistant secretary of the GJM-affiliated Darjeeling Terai Dooars Plantation Labor Union (DTDPLU), said, "The main problem in Tukvar tea garden is the present timing for weighing the plucked tea leaves, which starts from 11:15am to around 1:00pm. The management wants weighing to start from 11:45am, but the workers argue that if this is done, they will not get enough time for lunch as the weighing process takes time because there are hundreds of workers queued up for their turn. The workers need to go home and cook their lunch and rush back immediately. This is why the new timing is not feasible for them and they prefer the old timing."

He added, "We are trying to negotiate with the management for reopening the garden and a tripartite meeting has also been called by the ALC regarding the matter on Wednesday."

This is the second time that Tukvar Tea Estate has closed down. The garden remained inoperative from December 25 to January 18 after the management alleged that some workers had threatened the manager over the issue of yearly working days. (EOIC)



