

Jalpaiguri: Representatives of the North Bengal Tea Auction Centre here met Rachna Bhagat, the district magistrate, on Wednesday and sought her intervention to resume tea's auction at the centre.

The centre has been closed since September, 2015, because of a number of reasons, the primary being abysmally poor inflow of tea.

Bhagat held a meeting with members of the committee that runs the centre and instructed them to elect a new secretary. The secretary's post has been vacant since the demise of N.K. Basu.

Sources said three employees of the centre, who had not been getting salaries for the past few months due to some technical issues, met the DM in the afternoon. She then called the committee and held a meeting.

"The discussion was effective. The DM, who is also the chairman of the committee (ex-officio), has instructed us to elect the new secretary. She has also promised certain steps to ensure that tea auction starts here again," Purajit Purkayastha, the vice-chairman of the NBTAC, said.

A section of stakeholders, particularly tea planters and brokers, are sceptical whether the centre can actually function in a consistent manner.

"The infrastructure is in a shambles. Even basic services like telephone and internet connectivity are not there. Also, as the centre has remained close for over two years, it is tough to get tea here as estates either sell their produce through private channels or sent it to the auction centre in Siliguri," said a broker.