

## **Revival push for five tea gardens**



**Jalpaiguri:** Jalpaiguri District Administration has taken the initiative to reopen five tea gardens closed for the last few years.

Three of the gardens - Red Bank, Surendranagar and Dharonipur Tea Estate - have had their leases cancelled. Some businessmen have met the Jalpaiguri DM and have showed interest in reopening the gardens within two months.

The three gardens have been closed since 2013 and two others, Manabari and Kumlai, for more a year. There are 2,068 workers in the five tea gardens.

According to a trade union leader, at least 27 people have died in Red Bank in the past four years, most of them from alleged malnutrition.

Khushbin Minj, a Red Bank worker, said: " We are getting FAWLOI from the government but there is huge scarcity of pure drinking water in our garden. Our children have been unable to continue study. Many youths have left the garden in search of job in other states. We want the to be reopened at the earliest."

John Barla of Bharatiyo Tea Workers Union said: " Most of the workers are not ready to work in return of Rs 135 as daily wag. As a result 30 to 35% workers have left gardens."

Rachana Bhagat, the DM of Jalpaiguri, said: "A few traders have showed interest to reopen few close tea gardens of the district. Hopefully, two gardens will reopen within next couple of months."