

# Hill tea loss in November too

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

**Siliguri:** Tea production in the Darjeeling hills continued to remain low in November, the second month after the withdrawal of the 104-day long shutdown.

A recent data published by the Tea Board of India indicate that in November, only 0.27 million kilos of tea was produced in Darjeeling, which is over 61 per cent less than the production of the same month last year.

“As the winter begins in on October, tea production starts coming down. But even then, around half-a million kilos of tea (0.44 million kilos) were produced in November last year. This year, however, it has come down to 0.27 million kilos, which indicates that the tea estates in the hills are yet to get over the cascading effect of the shutdown,” said a senior tea planter based in Siliguri.

The data further show that the annual production has also been severely affected. This is primarily because production of tea had come to a halt in all 87 tea estates in the hills from the middle of June to the end of September. These

are the four months when tea production in the hills reaches at the peak.

In the current year, the total production of Darjeeling Tea is only 2.70 million kilos, which is 66 per cent less than the annual production of 2016.

In 2016, 8.13 million kilos of tea were produced in the hills.

“It seems the loss will eventually touch the 70 per cent mark. In December, the production has always remained low. Last year, only 0.09 million kilos of tea was produced, which is around one per cent of total production. This means the annual production this year is likely to be around 2.80 million kilos or even less,” said a tea expert.

During the shutdown, planters had said they would lose the entire year.

“Even though the strike was lifted, production has been less in October and November. This is because most gardens are yet to have their plantations completely ready to produce quality tea. We are keeping fingers crossed and waiting for the first flush of next season. There is not much left for the industry in the current season,” said a planter.