

PLEA FOR TEA PAY DURING STRIKE

Siliguri: An umbrella organisation of over 20 trade unions of tea garden workers, except those of Trinamul and the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha, has demanded that a portion of wages for the 105-day strike period in the Darjeeling hills last year be provided to labourers.

"Government employees and those working in most other sectors received salaries and wages for the Gorkhaland strike period in the Darjeeling hills. Tea garden workers in the hills had also suffered during the shutdown and more importantly, the strike had not been called by them. Hence, we want the Bengal government to intervene and see that workers are compensated with a portion of the wages of the strike period. It would be of help if the money is paid along with the bonus ahead of Durga Puja," said Ziaul Alam, the convener of the Joint Forum.

On Sunday, leaders of constituent unions of the forum held a meeting in the Darjeeling district office of the CITU here to discuss the outcome of the minimum wages advisory committee's meeting in Calcutta on August 23.

The forum has been demanding a minimum daily wage of Rs 239.

"The government has shown a positive approach towards our demand. We have also decided to apprise workers in the Dooars, Darjeeling hills and the Terai of the development and will convene three public meetings at Chalsa (in Jalpaiguri district), Darjeeling and Bagdogra next month," said Alam.

By "positive approach", he was referring to the government's willingness to discuss the demand to fix the minimum wage at Rs 239.

As of now, the forum doesn't want to get on the agitation mode on the minimum wage issue so that Trinamul or the Morcha doesn't seize the issue and attack the Opposition.

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