

## Management gives up garden again

**Jalpaiguri:** The management of Grassmore tea estate in Nagrakata block abandoned the garden again on Tuesday, leaving around 1,200 workers jobless. In the current month, this is the second time that the garden closed down, much to the disappointment of workers and their families..



On July 3, all managerial staff had left the garden. It was reopened on July 6 following the intervention of the state labour department..

“ On Tuesday morning, as the workers went to join duties, they could not find any managerial staff member. It was later learnt that all of them had left the garden on Monday evening. We fail to understand why the management is acting in such a manner, ” said Anup Toppo, a leader of the Trinamul Cha Mazdoor Union in the garden..

According to him, the management was supposed to clear some of the due wages of workers and sub-staff on Tuesday. The workers and their families walked up to NH31C and raised a blockade at 10am. They shouted slogans against the management and demanded an immediate intervention of the district administration. “ Production is at the peak now and yet, the management abandoned the garden twice this month. Situation was perfectly normal in the garden and there is no justification for the closure. All 1,240 workers have turned jobless,” said a worker.

Due to the demonstration and blockade, traffic came to a halt. Nagrakata police and the block development officer reached the spot. They spoke to trade union leaders and persuaded the labourers to withdraw the blockade around 11.30pm.

Such a move by the management has also left some planters surprised. "It is a rare incident that a garden has closed down twice a month, that too, when was no incident of violence. So far as the production is concerned, July is one of the months when maximum plucking is done in the tea sector. It seems the management is facing some other problems like cash crunch," said a planter in Siliguri.

None from the management of the Grassmore estate was available for comment. R.A. Sharma, the secretary of the Dooars branch of the Indian Tea Association, of which Grassmore is a member, said: "It is a fact that the management has some financial problems. But we have taken up the issue and are trying to solve the impasse. We hope discussions would be held on reopening the garden when the labour department calls a meeting." Officials of the district labour department are also surprised.

"We could manage to facilitate the reopening of the garden through tripartite talks earlier this month. We have no idea why the management took such a decision. Another tripartite meeting would be called soon," said Partha Biswas, the deputy labour commissioner of Jalpaiguri..

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