

Tea strike threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Alipurduar: Leaders of tea trade unions other than those backed by Trinamul have threatened a strike in May if the state fails to fix and implement minimum wages.

Representatives of the Joint Forum — an apex body of non-Trinamul tea trade unions — have also decided to stage demonstrations in gardens and outside state government offices in blocks and subdivisions from the end of this month.

The decision, made at a meeting of the forum in Siliguri on Tuesday, can pose a fresh challenge to the state government, which has been working to resolve the issue of

minimum wages for the past three years.

“The minimum wage advisory committee was formed three years back but the state could not declare any rate so far. Instead, it has tried to placate tea workers by announcing an interim hike of Rs 17.50 over the current rate and another hike of nine rupees as interim payment of ration. Tea workers are not satisfied with such announcements. That is why we have decided to renew our agitation,” said Ziaur Alam, convener, Joint Forum.

“If the state fails to finalize and implement the minimum wage by April 30, we intensify our movement and can even think of launching strike in the tea industry,” said Alam.