

**Commerce Secretary holds meeting with senior officials of West Bengal Govt.
regarding tea sector in the state**

Kolkata, May 10: Smt. Rita Teatia, the Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, along with Shri R.R. Rashmi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, Shri Santosh Sarangi, Chairman Tea Board, and other senior Tea Board officials, met the Chief Secretary and other senior officers of the Government of West Bengal at Nabanna to discuss issues concerning the tea industry and tea workers in North Bengal today.

In the said meeting, all issues concerning the tea industry and tea workers, more particularly the following issues were discussed:

- Closed, sick tea gardens in West Bengal
 - Extension of welfare schemes to tea garden workers
 - Monitoring of Plantation Labour Act
 - Issues of closed tea gardens of Duncan's industries
 - Siliguri Tea Park
 - Modern tea park in Falta
 - Regularisation of tea plantations which came after 2001 in North Bengal
1. Discussions were also held regarding the process of renewal of tea garden land leases and the West Bengal authorities informed that the same is being expedited. All the concerned district administrations have already been instructed to start the process of renewal.
 2. A revival package for the sick and stressed tea gardens of North Bengal shall soon be finalized and shall be forwarded to the Central Government so that a complete package can be finalized for revival of the sick and stressed tea gardens of North Bengal.
 3. Discussions were held regarding the scheme of FAWLOI and other welfare schemes and it was suggested that the scheme could be revisited so that the workers of the stressed gardens can be included in the said scheme.
 4. The Chief Secretary, Government of West Bengal, asked the Labour Department to review the vacancies in the Labour Department and take steps to fill up the positions so that the provisions of Plantation Labour Act are enforced.
 5. Close liaison between Central Government, State Government and Tea Board to resolve all pending issues.
 6. Emphasis will be given on strengthening the R&D facilities meant for tea industry.
 7. Steps shall be initiated by the State Government soon to implement the recommendations by the Group of Ministers which was constituted by the State of West Bengal to look into the issues relating to tea sector in the state. Issues pertaining to small tea growers will also be addressed.