

# Munnar Tea Plantation Workers End Nine-Day Strike

[Kerala](#) | [Press Trust of India](#) | Updated: September 13, 2015 22:57 IST



Kerala Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Labour Minister Shibu Baby John during a meeting over the Munnar strike issue at Ernakulam Guest house in Kochi on Sunday. (Press Trust of India photo)

**Kochi/Munnar:** The nine-day agitation by women tea plantation workers in Munnar ended today with the management of Kanan Devan Hills Plantations company agreeing to the agitators' major demands in a marathon discussion chaired by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy.

Talking to reporters after the parleys, Mr Chandy said that though the management had raised "certain technical and economic issues" regarding the agitators' demand for 20 per cent bonus, they had agreed with the government's position on the matter.

"The management said it would accept it as a special case if the government declares that 8.33 per cent bonus and 11.67 ex gratia (total 20 per cent) will be given to the workers.

"Based on this understanding, all the stakeholders, including approved trade unions, representatives of the agitating women and elected representatives of the people, reached an agreement," Mr Chandy said.

Regarding the plantation workers' demand for a hike in wages, the chief minister said that "a meeting of the Plantation Labour Committee will be convened on September 26 and the issue will be addressed through that mechanism".

State Labour Minister Shibu Baby John will attend the meeting, Mr Chandy said.

Several rounds of separate discussions were held in Kochi since morning between the government, the company's management and representatives of workers after which a final, consensus decision was arrived at in the presence of the Chief Minister.

The discussions in the morning were led by John and Electricity Minister Aryadan Muhammed.

As soon as news came of the government's decision, the male workers broke into celebrations which saw them lifting up the police personnel in their arms and thanking everybody who had helped them achieve their demands.

Earlier, the agitation had received a shot in the arm this morning as nonagenarian CPI-M leader VS Achuthanandan joined the protesters in Munnar.

After his arrival from Kochi, the 92-year-old CPI-M veteran addressed thousands of workers who were squatting on the roads unmindful of the scorching sun. He sat with the protesters till the government's announcement at 8.30 pm.

"Do not test the patience of the workers any further. Till the government and the company take a decision on settling the issue, I will be sitting with the agitating women," he had said.

Mr Chandy said the management has agreed to give 8.33 per cent bonus and 11.67 per cent ex-gratia by September 21.

Steps would be taken to provide better medical facilities like scanning for plantation workers, the Chief Minister said.

"Government will implement the Plantation Labour Act, Factories and their Rules very effectively," he said.

Dismissing suggestions that the mainstream political parties failed to settle the issue, Chief Minister said major political parties -- both ruling and opposition -- and trade unions were together on the issue.

"...And that was the reason why the government pressed for a 20 per cent bonus for workers during its discussion with the company management," he said.

The agitators, mostly Tamil speaking women, had been keeping politicians and trade union leaders at bay.

Today, however, they clapped and greeted Mr Achuthanandan and told him about their woes and said they would continue the stir till they get Rs. 500 as daily wages and 20 per cent bonus.

The strike has sent jitters through the tourism industry as the tourist season is about to begin next month.

Munnar is a popular destination visited by holidayers, both domestic and international.

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