

# Business Standard

## VS in Munnar to express solidarity with striking women workers

Press Trust of India | Munnar (Ker) September 13, 2015 Last Updated at 14:02 IST

The agitation by women tea plantation workers here, which entered the ninth day today, received a shot in the arm with nonagenarian CPI(M) leader V S Achuthanandan declaring that he would support their agitation till their demands are met.

92-year-old Achuthanandan, who arrived here this morning from Kochi, addressed thousands of workers who were squatting on the roads unmindful of the scorching sun.

"Do not test the patience of the workers further. Till the government and company takes a decision on settling the issue, I will sit with the agitating women," he said.

"The company has unilaterally decided to reduce bonus. It cannot be justified", he said, adding thousands of women workers are agitating to make two ends meet. Government should immediately take steps to bring normalcy in Munnar, he said.

So far, the agitators, mostly Tamil speaking women, had been keeping politicians and trade union leaders at bay. Today, however, they clapped and greeted 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.

Achuthanandan attacked the Kannan Devan Hill Plantation management, alleging that they had treated the workers "like cattle". The company was not giving them medical benefits even though it is bound to provide clean home and working environment.

The government should ensure that that the company management gives them just wages, failing which action should be taken, the opposition leader said.

Meanwhile, in an effort to find a solution to the agitation, government is holding talks with trade union leaders and management at Kochi.

The Kannan Devan Hills Plantation company is the first ever employee-owned plantation company in the country.