

Women workers strike in 4 tea estates of Harrisons Malayalam

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Women workers in four plantation estates of Harrisons Malayalam here began a strike today, demanding higher wages and bonus, close on the heels of the successful stir by their counterparts at nearby Munnar.

Workers in these estates did not report for work today, demanded 20 per cent bonus and Rs 500 daily wages and reportedly did not allow union leaders to intervene on their behalf, sources said.

The agitation assumes significance as it is similar to the one launched by the Munnar women tea plantation workers, who kept trade unions at bay.

Asked about the plantation agitation spreading to other areas, Chief Minister Oommen Chandy said government would take all steps as per law.

CPI(M) leader and CITU state president Aana Thalavattom Ananthan today claimed this agitation had the backing of various trade unions.

INTUC state president R Chandrasekharan, however, refused to confirm it and hit out at the media for portraying the trade unions in bad light.

"Trade unions are fighting for the cause of workers. The 20 per cent bonus and Rs 500 daily wages for workers were the demands raised by the unions," he said.

The workers live in pitiable conditions, he said.

Efforts are also on to form a separate union with four representations from each estate and a common forum is to be started.

On September 13, women tea plantation workers in Munnar had ended their nine-day agitation after the management of Kannan Devan Hills Plantations company agreed to their major demands in a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy.

The women workers had demanded 20 per cent bonus and Rs 500 as daily wages.