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Non-agri workers have a field day, minimum wages up 42 per cent

By ET Bureau | Aug 31, 2016, 01.34 AM IST

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NEW DELHI: The Centre on Tuesday raised minimum wage of non-agricultural workers by 42 per cent and announced revised bonus for Central employees for two years in a bid to discourage trade unions from going ahead with a proposed strike on September 2.

This could be another consumption boost ahead of the festival season and a day before the revised Seventh Pay Commission salaries are released. The minimum wages for unskilled non-agricultural workers for 'C' category areas have been raised to Rs 350 per day from Rs 246 in the central sphere.

Finance Minister [Arun Jaitley](#), who chairs the inter-ministerial committee on labour, said the decisions are based on the proposals of the panel set up last year to look into the 12-point charter of demands of the trade unions.

Trade unions, however, are likely to go ahead with the proposed strike. "Government's announcement on minimum wages is a mockery and deception and we will combat it through massive strike on Friday," Left-affiliated Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) said in a statement.

DL Sachdeva, national secretary of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), said, "As of now there is no reason to call off the strike as there is not enough clarity on the government's claim.

The unions will meet tomorrow (Wednesday) and take a call." The inter-ministerial committee on labour, consisting of labour minister [Bandaru Dattatreya](#), power minister [Piyush Goyal](#) and petroleum minister [Dharmendra Pradhan](#) besides Jaitley, had last met all central trade unions exactly a year ago.

However, it had exclusively interacted with the RSS-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh twice this month, thereby drawing the ire of other unions. While the new minimum wages would be effective after a notification from the labour ministry, it will be only advisory to states and not binding on them as labour is in the Concurrent List and making it binding for all states would mean a change in the Act.

The decision was taken following deliberations at a meeting of Minimum Wage Advisory Board under the chairmanship of the labour minister. Jaitley said, "The revised bonus will cost the exchequer Rs 1,920 crore per year for two years and that the government will take necessary steps to resolve the cases pending in HCs/SCs with regard to payment of bonus." The decision would benefit 33 lakh central government employees.

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