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Protest brews on estates over delayed wages

- [Giji K. Raman](#)

Cardamom estates reduce number of daily labourers

The distribution of weekly wages to workers of cardamom estates has been severely hit in the plantation heartland of Idukki. As per estate norms, workers are paid at the weekend.

For the past two days, estate managements have been pondering over ways to tackle the situation arising out of demonetisation of higher-end currency notes. A few of them informed trade union leaders that they would not be able to pay wages.

A major estate at Udumbanchola promised to pay workers in old currency notes, but they declined the offer. Some workers accepted the offer since there was no other option. Vimala, an estate worker, said she accepted the offer but did not know what to do with the money. “I thought it was better to accept the money as we have to buy food items,” she added. Some of the estates have reduced the number of daily workers. Others did not pay wages at all. Agitated workers staged protests in front of closed offices.

K.S. Mohanan, general secretary of CITU-affiliated Malanadu Plantation Employees Union, told *The Hindu* on Saturday that workers’ plight would become more miserable in the coming days. Talks were on with estate managements. No concrete action was likely, he said. Over 70 per cent of the estate workers are women, the families’ breadwinners.

On tea estates

The situation in the tea plantations is not much different. On tea estates, managements usually pay a subsistence amount to workers on Saturdays and the total wage by month end.

Many estates could not even raise the sustenance amount meant for purchase of rice and essentials for a week. Some estate managements have promised payment as soon as the crisis is over.
