

Trade unions join stir against currency ban

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GUWAHATI: Trade unions joined the country-wide protest against demonetization in Assam on Saturday, accusing the Centre of making life miserable for commoners by withdrawing the now-defunct Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currency notes.

At a time when both the Centre and the state government are putting in all efforts to switch over to cashless mode of transaction, the trade unions lashed out at the Centre for allegedly making life of lakhs of tea garden workers miserable.

Activists of INTUC, CITU, AITUC, AICCTU, AIUTUC and HMS, along with employees from banking, insurance, railways and telecommunication sectors, staged a massive protest on the banks of the Dighalipukhuri here demanding an end to the miseries of people.

"Demonetization has hit the business of lakhs of small traders in Assam. Banking services have not covered the rural areas of the state fully and the government's move to switch over to cashless mode has made life miserable for tea garden workers of the state who can't handle ATM cards. We condemn the Centre's move without realizing the ground reality in the state," said Tapan Sarma, general secretary of the Assam state committee of Citu.

The situation turned tense in the city when police prevented a rally of the trade union activists, who were about to start their march from the banks of Dighalipukhuri.

INTUC state secretary Kirti Kamal Nath, state president of AITUC Munin Mahanta, HMS state president and former state education minister Ramani Barman, AICCTU state president Subhas Sen and AIUTUC leader Prabhat De led the protest.

The trade unions urged the government to make public details about the recovery of black money after demonetization saying that the workers and employees has the right to know about the recovery of illegally amassed money after joining demonetization move.

The trade unions asked the government to set up ATMs in every village of the state as the government's initiative to promote cashless transactions has been hindered due to lack of ATMs.

"Commoners supported demonetization so that the corrupt could be punished. Everywhere, the traders are incurring losses. Workers and employees are losing their jobs and small businesses have been hit due to scarcity of lower denomination currency notes. Is this the farsight of the BJP-led government?" questioned trade union activist Madan Talukdar.