

# Trade unions oppose take over of tea estate land at Peermade

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IDUKKI: Even as the state government plans to take over 6,127 acres of tea estate land at Peermade as per a report by special officer M G Rajamanickam, various plantation workers' unions are opposing the move and demand the government to dismiss the report. A joint workers' union will conduct a protest march on Monday at Vandiperiyar against the move.

Members of Peermade Estate Workers Union (CITU), High Range Plantation Employees Union (INTUC), High Range Estate Labour Union (AITUC), Kerala Plantation Workers Union (INTUC) and Plantation Employees Union (CITU) will join the protest march.

Last week, Rajamanickam issued notice to RBT Company (CBS Group) and RBT Company (MMS group) to vacate 6,127 acres of tea estates at Peermade which was with the Travancore Estate (UK) Ltd before Independence.

"The special officer issued notice to the RBT Company tea estates at Kozhikknam, Pambanar, Grampi, Manjumala, Pasumala, Thengakkal, Nellimala, Thankamala and Mount. There are over 7,000 workers in these estates. But the government didn't take any steps to assure job security for them before deciding to take over the land," said the joint workers union.

The previous UDF government had appointed Rajamanickam as a special officer to inspect the British companies and individuals prior to the Independence holding land in various parts of the state. But the INTUC has been opposing the report.

"We fully back the plantation workers on the issue," said High Range Plantation Employees Union (INTUC) president Cyriac Thomas.

"The government should assure job security of the workers in these estates before taking over the estate lands. The UDF won't oppose the special officer's suggestion to take over the land," said DCC president Ibrahimkutty Kallar.