

India: Statement On West Bengal Tripartite Wage Agreement In Tea Industry

Tuesday 10 March 2015, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2015).

We are shocked by the tripartite wage agreement signed on 20.2.2015 in the presence of the State Government in West Bengal. The agreement has provided a raise of Rs.37.50 over three years to tea plantation workers in Terai and Doars and Rs.42.50 to workers in Darjeeling.

Workers will therefore be paid a miserly amount of Rs. 112 .50 in the first year, Rs.122.50 in the second year and finally Rs. 132.50 in the third year. These amount to starvation wages and are likely to worsen conditions of poverty and malnutrition amongst tea plantation workers. We are thus likely to continue to get shameful reports of starvation deaths in an industry that is a huge export earner and has a flourishing and ever expanding domestic market.

By no logic can such an increase be justified. Firstly it comes nowhere near the repeatedly articulated demand by the workers for minimum wages, which all unions had calculated to be between Rs.285 and Rs.345. Nor does it make tea plantation workers at par with other sectors, with the State Government-declared minimum wage even in the poorest agricultural sector, being Rs.206 at present.

As a face saver, the agreement has also put down in writing that the agreement will remain in force till a Government committee formed on 17.2.2015 puts forward its proposal on minimum wages under the Minimum Wages Act 1948. Despite repeated appeals by various unions, no deadline has been given for this committee and it has been asked to submit its report "as early as possible".

There are well defined and well accepted norms for the calculation of minimum wages. In West Bengal, such an exercise has been carried many steps forward, with a draft notification given in 2010 by the previous Government. With proper political will of all concerned, the exercise to declare a minimum wage for the tea sector should be possible within a short time.

We call upon the State Government to ensure that the minimum wage committee submits its report in the next three months and that the wages in tea sector are raised to meet all accepted norms and Supreme Court orders for a minimum wage.

We also extend our solidarity and support to the tea plantation workers who will now have to continue their struggle for a decent wage.

Organisations

All India Forum of Forest Movements

Asanghatit Kshetra Shramik Sangrami Union, West Bengal

Binodini Shramik Union

Chemical Mazdoor Panchayat

Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (Mazdoor Karyakarta Committee).

CHITRA - Centre for Human rights Initiative, Training & Research Association, Delhi

Darjeeling Dooars United Development Foundation (DDUDF)

Durbar Mahila Sammanvay Committee, West Bengal

Durbar Disha Mahila Griha Shramik Sammanvay Committee

Garment and Allied Workers Union , Haryana

Haldia Dock Complex Contractor Shramik Union, West Bengal

Hazards Centre , Delhi

Hero Honda Theka Mazdoor Sangathan , Haryana

Himalaya Niti Abhiyan, Himachal Pradesh

Hosiery Workers Unity Centre, West Bengal

Indian Oil Petronas Contractor Shramik Union, West Bengal

IIT Kanpur Citizens' Forum

Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh

Jyoti Karmachari Mandal, Gujarat

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity, Assam

Mahila Mukti Morcha, Chhattisgarh.

National Hawkers Federation

Prayavaran Suraksha Samiti, Gujarat

Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity, West Bengal

Paschim Banga Swarojgari O Radhuni Union, West Bengal

Pragatisheel Cement Shramik Sangh

People's Union for Democratic Rights(PUDR)

Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics Workers Union, West Bengal

Shramajivi Mahila Samity, West Bengal

Shramajivi Samanvay Committee, West Bengal

TUCI West Bengal State Committee

Udayani Social Action Forum, West Bengal

Uttar Bango Bon-Jon Shromojivi Manch, West Bengal

Vadodara Kamdar Union, Gujarat

Vettiver Collective, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Individuals

Amit Bhaduri, JNU, Delhi

Ankita Agarwal, Jharkhand

Chitra Joshi

Geeta Charusivam, Tamil Nadu

Greeshma Rai

Imrana Qadeer

Juhi Jain

Kaveri Indira, Hyderabad

Kavita Krishnan, AIPWA , Delhi

Nandini Rao

Uma V.Chandru

P.S.

* Published on Sunday, 08 March 2015 07:06:

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