

Sri Lanka Plantation workers want more

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Plantation workers are demanding a living wage to be paid to workers in line with the existing cost of living in the country.

During discussions between the estate sector trade unions on Friday, the workers' representatives said they want the Regional Plantation Companies (RPC) to increase their basic wages to ensure they have a living wage in line with the existing cost of living, Ceylon Workers Congress representative Arul Swamy told the Business Times following the meeting with the TUs.

Trade union representatives from the Joint Trade Union Council, the Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union and the Sri Lanka Nidahas Sevaka Sangamaya participated in the discussions.

He pointed out that they had discussed all aspects of the tea industry like the non-application of glyphosate, tea returned from various markets and tea prices for the last three years among other aspects impacting on the lives of the workers in the industry.

"We have to decide how much a family needs for day to day living," he said adding that a living wage would ensure they would obtain a wage that would reflect the high COL.

Moreover, he noted that if the RPCs required increased productivity on the estates, then they should provide incentives to the workers and engage them better.

In addition, he pointed out that they want an extra wage for skilled workers on the plantations for which a reasonable amount needed to be increased.

Mr. Swamy explained that the Collective Agreement had not been revised since 1992 when they first signed it and as a result this year they hope to do so.

RPCs are finding it hard to attract labour to the estates since a number of opportunities have opened up around these plantations.

This has resulted in around 475,000 workers when the TUs first signed up collective collective agreements, now dwindling to about 123,000, he said.

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