

# Sri Lanka: Plantation sector wages: CWC to take Labour Department to task

Tuesday 26 April 2022, by [FERNANDO Asiri](#) (Date first published: 23 April 2022).

- **Labour Dept. slow to enforce law**
- **Enough penalties, bring errant planters to book: Thondaman**

The Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) is seeking legal advice to explore the possibility of taking legal action against the Labour Department for failing to enforce a gazette issued last year regarding the Rs. 1,000 wage for plantation sector workers, *The Sunday Morning* learns.

The Ministry of Labour issued gazette extraordinary (2217/37) on 5 March 2021 notifying the plantation sector about the Rs. 1,000 wage which was approved by the Government following a prolonged campaign by rights activists, trade unions, and political parties such as the CWC.

However, according to CWC Leader Senthil Thondaman, the Labour Department has been dragging its feet on enforcing the legislation.

Thondaman stressed that the Department needed to take action on the matter and that once legal consultations were completed, the CWC would formulate legal action against the Labour Department on the failure to carry out their duties.

Responding to a question, Thondaman charged that the Labour Department had been facilitating compensation and charging penalties from tea estate owners and operators who had delayed or not paid the mandated daily wage as per the Wages Boards Ordinance gazette.

"The CWC has lost faith in the Labour Department as it has failed to implement its own gazette. I have given the Department more than 500 pay slips of workers for action to be taken. The Labour Department says it will launch an inquiry and look into it. We can't provide pay slips every month. The wage is now law. They need to enforce it. Why hasn't the Department taken legal action against those who have not paid the wage? The gazette was issued over a year ago," Thondaman stressed.

Thondaman said the CWC was no longer ready for compromise and urged the Labour Department to take legal action against the companies and relevant officials who had neglected to pay the mandated daily wage to the workers.

"We want the company heads, estate superintendents, and others involved to be brought before court to answer for these actions," he said.

## **CWC moots increase to daily wage**

The Ceylon Workers' Congress (CWC) is planning to seek a wage increase for plantation sector workers due to the significant increase in the cost of living and galloping inflation.

Thondaman told *The Sunday Morning* that with the rupee devalued, export earnings, which the tea industry receives in dollars, would see them in a better position to offer much-needed relief to estate

workers.

“This is an export-oriented trade. When we pushed for the Rs. 1,000 daily wage, the dollar was at Rs. 191. However, today the dollar is close to Rs. 330. The people are facing a crisis, so we plan to seek a higher daily wage,” Thondaman said.

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