

CHENNAI, November 13, 2016

Weekly wage workers hit hard

- [Sangeetha Kandavel](#)



In some parts of the State, workers were given Rs. 500 and Rs 1,000 notes and employers requested them to exchange the notes at bank counters.— File Photo: V. Ganesan

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Weekly wage workers in Tamil Nadu from sectors including construction, plantations and MSME are hard hit.

Many of the workers went home empty handed on Saturday while some got 50 per cent of their wages. In some parts of the State, these workers were given Rs. 500 and Rs 1,000 notes and employers requested them to exchange it at the bank counters. A few who got Rs 2,000 were upset that they won't be able to exchange or get change easily.

In Chennai, more than 30 per cent of employees in the MSME sector were impacted, according to sources in the industry. "MSME sector has daily wage workers, weekly wage workers and the permanent staff who get paid monthly. The first two categories were hit," said a senior official in this sector. The State has 12.94 lakh registered MSME units, providing employment to about 80.81 lakh persons.

In Coimbatore and the Nilgiris, workers went home with part wages as employers were not able to withdraw more cash. Ramesh Bhojarajan, secretary of Nilgiris Small Tea Growers' Association, said that the factory owners offered to transfer the weekly amount to the accounts of the growers. While some accepted, some did not. "Only if the growers get the money from the factories can they pay the wages to the workers," he said.

Workers in the plantation sector were the worst affected. Tamil Nadu has 2,224 plantations covering an area of 61,747 hectares, of which, 683 are registered with an area of 54,071 hectares. Further, there are 1,541 unregistered plantations in an area of 7,676 hectares. The total number of workers in plantations is estimated to be 59,133 of which 36,043 are women and 23,090 are men.

An official in the construction sector, said, "Work was dull last two days and now we are feeling the heat more as we have to pay weekly wages. We have paid 50 per cent wages and have promised the remaining amount on Monday." The same was the version of five other builders. Tamil Nadu has established 17 unorganised workers welfare boards. Around 25.90 lakh workers are registered in Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board and 40.60 lakh workers are registered in the remaining 16 welfare boards.

In Tiruchi, most of the construction workers were forced to accept old Rs.500 and Rs.1, 000 notes as there was a shortage of other denomination notes. "Given the current scenario, workers had no option but to accept the notes and get it exchanged at banks," said C.Selvaraj, district president of the Construction Workers Union affiliated to the AITUC.

Sonal Arora, Vice-President, TeamLease, said, "In India about 600 million work in unorganised sector and 40 per cent of them get salaries in cash. Out of them those paid on daily or weekly basis would be 15-20 per cent. While the move would affect these industries in the short-term, workers would benefit in the long run."

"Currently, workers are made to sign vouchers and get Rs. 1000-2000 lesser than what is written in the voucher. All this would end and industry players have to move towards more formal channel of payments," she added.

(With inputs from M. Soundariya Preetha, Sanjay Vijayakumar, S.Ganesan)
