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Wages of jute, tea workers hit on notes ban, say industries

- Special Correspondent



CASH shortage: The two sectors taken together make weekly cash payments to nearly five lakh workers.— FILE PHOTO

Two traditional eastern region industries — jute and tea — are facing problems over the demonetisation move of the Centre, which they say is impacting wage disbursements.

They have appealed to the RBI and the state governments, seeking their intervention in the matter. The two sectors taken together make weekly cash payments to nearly five lakh workers.

While the tea garden workers are scattered over the tea growing areas of North Bengal, the jute workers are concentrated in the south Bengal districts and the industry is fearing a law and order problem in case of an issue over wage payments. Aside from the problem due to demonetisation of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes, a November 8 notification limiting weekly cash withdrawal to Rs.20,000 till November 24, 2016 is creating problems for both the industries.

“In view of the provisions, it will not be possible for the jute mills (around 90) to pay wages to the 2.5 lakh workers.” the director general of Indian Jute Mills Association S. Majumdar said in his representation to the Regional Director, RBI. This amounts to around Rs.270 crores monthly.

Industrial unrest

The issue has been flagged by the IJMA chairman Raghavendra Gupta before the State Finance Minister and the Labour Minister. There are increasing fears of industrial unrest in the jute mill areas if the situation lingers beyond November 21, the next scheduled day of fortnightly payment.

The tea industry has appealed to the RBI and the CM seeking their intervention. The Tea Association of India said that while it welcomes the move, it is facing practical difficulties in meeting its wage payment obligations to the workers in the tea estates. They too are fearing law and order problems in Assam and West Bengal on this account. The tea industry makes weekly payments amounting to around Rs. 90 crores to the workers in Assam and West Bengal.

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