

Kerala ministers pitch for state's farmers in cabinet

Two senior ministers from Kerala made a plea for their state's farmers in the central government's cabinet meeting Friday and expressed their unhappiness at their home district not being included in the modified loan waiver package.

Defence Minister A.K. Antony and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi, both from Kerala's Alappuzha district, were said to be unhappy that their home district was not included among the 237 identified districts that would get a debt relief of 25 percent of the outstanding amount or Rs.20,000, whichever was higher.

Finance Minister P. Chidambaram Friday announced that large farmers of 237 districts would also be brought into the ambit of its farm loan waiver scheme and expanded the package of Rs.600 billion to Rs.716 billion.

The ministers pointed out that Alappuzha being the major agricultural district should have been included in the package, informed sources said. Three districts - Wayanad, Kasargod and Palakkad - have been included in the loan waiver package.

The ministers from Kerala are also believed to have reminded their ministerial colleagues that the long-pending Kuttanadu package for the state has also not been cleared yet.

A committee headed by eminent agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan had recommended a Rs.18.4 billion package for environmental and agricultural preservation and development of Kuttanadu wet lands - once known as the rice bowl of Kerala.

However, the package has not been yet been given the green signal.

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