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Contractual workers ransack offices of Paradip Port demanding pay hike and job security

PARADIP: The members of Paradip Port DLR and Contractual Workers' Association on Thursday ransacked the offices of maintenance department and medical unit of Paradip Port Trust (PPT) during a dharna over pay hike and permanent jobs.

The workers had begun their indefinite agitation on Wednesday in front of the PPT's officers club instead of the main gate over their 10-point charter of demands that included minimum salary of `18,000 and benefits like free checkups in port hospital, accommodation, water and power facilities, besides regularisation of job. Family members of the workers, including children, are also taking part in the strike.

Apparently, the port has four trade unions with DLR and contractual workers as their members. However, only members of Paradip Port DLR and Contractual Workers' Association participated in the agitation along with their families. Workers under the other trade unions refrained from the mass dharna due to difference with the association and joined work.

Agitated with the response, the workers entered the maintenance department and medical unit of Paradip Port and asked the other DLR and contractual workers to join the strike. When the workers refused, the agitators ransacked the offices and threatened them with dire consequence.

However, port work and cargo operation remained unaffected as a majority of DLR and contractual workers had joined their duty. There are over 700 DLR and contractual workers employed in different departments of PPT. They have not been regularised despite 20 years of service. Protesting this, the workers had threatened to paralyse cargo operation in Paradip Port since Wednesday.

Paradip IIC Subhransu Sekhar Nayak said, "Reports of agitators forcing the workers to join the strike have been received and we are keeping a close watch on the situation. Investigation is on." PPT Chairman Rinkesh Ray appealed to the contractual workers to withdraw the agitation and invited them for a discussion on the issues.

Sources said to resolve the long-pending demands of the 700 DLR and contractual workers, PPT had formed a seven-member committee headed by Deputy Chairman N Vaiyapuri.

The committee will submit a detailed report on the demands by September 15, which would be sent to the Union Shipping Ministry for consideration.