

Tea garden mgmt to take back 17 retired permanent workers

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Dehradun: The tea garden management which has been in the eye of a storm ever since it retired 17 permanent workers above 73 years old a few days ago, has relented in the face of protests by staff and others. The management has agreed to take back all of them. However, they have been absorbed as casual workers for a period of two months. A decision was taken by the management on Saturday night.

Now, around 120 permanent workers and 35 temporary workers have been left to serve.

Chitra Gupta, president of Dehradun Tea Garden Association, said, "The management finally budged before the protests of the workers as well as civil groups for taking back the 17 permanent tea garden workers who were forcefully retired on being over 73 years of age. Though the employers announced to take them back, but it is only for two months and that too as casual workers, which means their salaries, other benefits and leave will be hit. In reality, there is no provision of retirement at any age as per the rules and regulation of tea garden management."

She said the workers are not happy with the decision but the management has asked them to wait as after two months they would be taken back as permanent members.

Champa Devi, coordinator of the tea garden workers, said, "It is very strange that on the first they are thrown out and then, they are asked not to lodge protest or move labour court by assuring them that they will be reinstated after two months. If that was their intention then why were the workers removed in the first place."

Gupta said this entire "ploy" is a signal that the management does not want to rake up any fresh controversy or conflict which could mar the prospects of the clearance of a smart city project over tea garden by the Centre. She said this also means that the management wanted the workers to support the smart city project in the online poll.

