

Sangha's contention to represent ACC contract workers upheld

- Special Correspondent

Labour Commissioner accepts sangha's locus standi in the matter

More than 3,000 contract labourers and casual workers employed in ACC Cement Factory at the industrial township of Wadi scored a tactical victory after Deputy Chief Labour Commissioner (Union government) accepted their plea for conciliation with the management on their long-pending demand to be covered under the Cement Wage Board.

Deputy Chief Labour Commissioner K.V. Subramanian, who held discussions with the office-bearers of the Shramajeevigala Karmika Sangha and representatives of the management of ACC Cement Factory in Bengaluru on March 8, rejected the contention of the factory management that the sangha had no *locus standi* to take up the issue of the contract labourers and agreed with the contention that the sangha was a registered trade union under the Trade Union Act and that it had *locus standi* to represent the contract labourers working in the factory.

Sangha president Chandrasekhar Hiremath told presspersons here on Thursday that the acceptance of the plea of the sangha for conciliation was a first major victory for the workers who have been working as contract and casual labourers and denied benefits under the Cement Wage Board all these years.

Mr. Hiremath, who headed the team of the sangha at the meeting convened by Mr. Subramanian in Bengaluru to discuss the strike notice issued by the sangha and also the proposed indefinite hunger strike in front of the factory premises in Wadi, said that the representatives of the management had stated that the demands of the contract labourers have been settled after discussion with members of the ACC union representatives.

Mr. Hiremath said that the ACC union represented only the permanent employees of the factory and the contract employees were not members of the union and any agreement entered into with the management by the ACC union would not have any impact on the contract labourers or, at the same time, bar them from raising their demand through a union representing them.

He said that the issues raised by the sangha included immediate implementation of the Cement Wage Board salaries to all contract workers working in the factory and its grinding unit, payment of arrears from 2011 to all contract workers, extending all facilities enjoyed by permanent workers to contract workers and regularising their services in phases. The other demand to deter the management from resorting to illegal suspension and termination of workers from service would be taken up in the conciliation meeting scheduled on April 6.

Mr. Hiremath said that the Deputy Chief Labour Commissioner has also asked the factory management to submit detailed comments on all the four demands by the sangha. Following an appeal made by Mr. Subramanian, the sangha had decided to withdraw the strike call and indefinite hunger strike (scheduled to start on Thursday).

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