

Strike at Sanand plant: Gujarat govt asks Tata Motors to end standoff on 'priority basis'

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Workers were detained by Sarkhej division police outside Sanand GIDC Saturday. Salman Raja

Top officials from the Gujarat government's labour and employment department have intervened in the 29-day long standoff between Tata Motors Sanand plant workers and the management on Monday and asked Tata Motors to come with a "final decision" to resolve the feud with its 400 odd striking employees from its Sanand plant. This was communicated at a joint meeting between both parties led by Sanjay Prasad (IAS) — Principal Secretary to Government, Labour & Employment Department, Gujarat Government, on Monday at the Labour Commissioner's office at Khanpur.

"Today while both parties met for talks, no decision was reached. The company officials did not come with any proposal to resolve the issue and we told them to get in touch with their headquarters and come back with a "final decision" on top priority basis. We understand that there have been several proposals from the workers side in past few weeks, but no clear decision has been communicated by the company management till now. Several talks held by the deputy labour officials before also failed to bring an outcome and for the first time there has been an intervention from the government level. We will hold a joint meeting on March 22 at the labour department in the Sachivalay at Gandhinagar between both parties," said R H Vasava, Deputy Secretary, Labour & Employment Department.

Sources close to the development said that Prasad specifically asked Tata Motors officials to come back with an amicable resolution to resolve the workers issue, as the Tata agitation was denting the industry friendly image of the state.

"In the last meeting on Friday, Tata had asked us to get signatures or authorisation of all the striking workers backing the newly minted workers union leaders. Today, when we actually got the authorisation, they (company) did not even ask for them. We had been waiting to meet with company officials since 3:30 pm, but Tata officials came only by 5 pm and that too with no proposal. Labour department officials asked the company to come back with a positive solution acceptable to both parties at the meeting. Labour officials also mentioned that the offences levelled against several workers in the chargesheet are not of a grave nature and to not delay decision to resolve them," said Harpalsinh Jhala, a worker representative.

Meanwhile, the court order on the injunction plea moved by the Tata Motors at the Ahmedabad Sessions court, that had been moved to Tuesday, will also take place. An official release by Tata Motors said, "Further to the meeting held on Friday, we have not yet received the authorisation letters from the workmen, as was committed. However we remain hopeful that the meeting scheduled tomorrow by the Deputy Labour Commissioner, with the seven member workmen committee, will help bring positive results. The management team is grateful to the Deputy Labour Commissioner for facilitating the meeting to engage with workmen and Management to resolve this illegal strike. We also expect the Industrial Tribunal procedures to commence as well."

