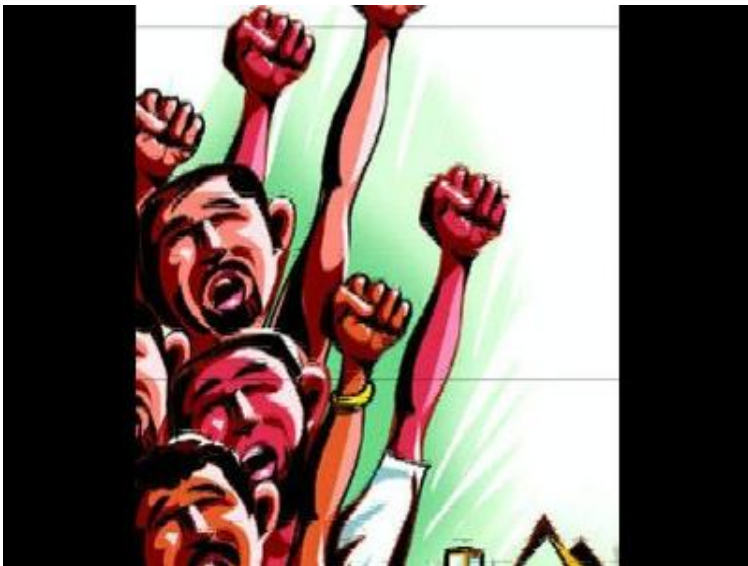


Sacked workers call for boycott of Honda products

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JAIPUR: Sacked workers from the Honda two-wheeler manufacturing unit at Tapukara in Alwar district protested outside Honda showrooms across several districts. Activist from Gujarat Jignesh Mewani also joined the workers in Jaipur on Wednesday. The workers said that after 3,000 of them were sacked in February this year, Honda appointed workers who were not ITI trained. Many of the current lot of workers, they said, had not finished school. The unit manufactures around three bikes each minute and requires a high level of specialization. There is a clear difference in the quality of products now being churned out, the sacked workers claimed, adding that around 10,000 two-wheelers from the unit meant for sale in Bangladesh have recently been put on hold.

Surendra Kirdoliya, a leader of the workers who were sacked earlier this year after they attempted to form a union, explained that the government seems to be meeting the Honda management, rather than the protesting workers who have been sitting on relay hunger strike at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.

"No representative from the government has met us even once. But we know that several meetings have occurred with the firm's management," Kirdoliya said, addressing a rally in the state capital to protest delay in grant of compensation to silicosis patients, denial of pension to about 10 lakh pensioners and deprivation of rations to poor families.

One sacked Honda worker warned the people attending the rally that sub-standard bikes produced at Tapukara were being pushed for sale ahead of Diwali. "Buyers should refrain from patronizing Honda. That way, they will stop spending money on something sub-standard and extend support to the struggle of the sacked workers."

A spokesperson for Honda Motors dismissed the claims of the protesting workers, saying sacked workers could hardly know what was going on in the firm they left behind. "The Tapukara plant has a daily capacity of 4,400 units but is now rolling out 4,400-4,500 units to meet rising demand," the spokesperson said.