

## Dharna against Tata Steel's ferrochrome plant enters 44th day

- Staff Reporter

*18 retrenched group-D employees have also joined the contractual workers*

Continuing dharna and agitation of retrenched unskilled contractual workers continuing since August 2 in front of the upcoming ferrochrome plant of Tata Steel near Gopalpur port in Ganjam district of Odisha entered 44 days on Tuesday.

The agitation is being thought as a hindrance for the proposed inauguration of Tata Steel unit, which, according to the company sources, is ready for production. The agitating retrenched contractual workers are from displaced and affected families, who were earlier employed by Tata Steel. They have united under the banner of 'Gopalpur Tata Steel Prakalpa Prabhavita Chasi Manch (GTSPPCM)' for the dharna. Eighteen retrenched group-D employees of the company have also joined them.

The GTSPPCM Adviser Sudhakar Reddy said the administration has organised three tripartite meetings to end the impasse. But all these meetings have failed. These meetings were attended by officials of administration, Tata Steel and representatives of the agitators. The agitators have threatened to intensify their democratic protest.

These agitators have taken up the issue of 860 unskilled workers from affected families, who had been earlier employed on contractual basis on daily wages. They were later retrenched by the company. The company authorities claimed that it would be hard for them to further employ these retrenched contractual employees. As per the company, in August 2013 at the request of Ganjam District Collector around 1,800 persons from displaced and project affected families had been provided sustenance compensation through employment as contractual unskilled workers. It was to continue till the approval of the revised Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package, company sources said.

With the implementation of the revised R&R package approved by the Odisha government in June 2015, around 900 persons from displaced families were discontinued from this contractual employment arrangement.

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