Hindustan Unilever agrees to withdraw lock out, Domdooma factory to reopen

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The Hindustan Unilevers Limited on Sunday agrees to withdraw its one and half month long lock-out at personal care product factory at Domdooma in upper Assam’s Tinsukia district. The factory was closed down on 15th of July, 2007 after the workers union detained some of its managerial staff for nearly 16 hours without allowing them to have meal and water demanding more incentives and facilities from the authority. There was also a lady officer among the hostages. Police later intervened into the business and rescued the held captives, which sparked the situation and forced the management to declare an indefinite lock out at the factory with an immediate affect. Hindustan Unilever (earlier Hindustan Lever) Limited owns several Tea Gardens in and around Domdooma apart from the personal care product factory, which was set up in 2001 availing benefits of North East Industrial Policy-1997 including excise duty exemption and capital subsidy. The factory produces personal-care products like skin care cream, body lotion, toothpaste, with an estimated workforce of about 850 people. Doomdooma is located approximately 510 km east to Assam's capital city Guwahati.

According to the union leaders this conflict was inevitable following suspension of eight union leaders by management on 10th of July. They were accused of indulging workers in unauthorized activities. The workers were on a series of strike demanding special allowance.

Hindustan Unilever operates more than 45 factories across India. Doomdooma factory produces 30,000 metric tonnes of products per annum, accounting for about 35 percent of the company's total output of personal-care products in the country. Later on 18th August one worker who was also an assistant general secretary of the Union and allegedly responsible for the unrest committed suicide by himself ignited the workers movement delaying conciliatory moves. He had been placed under suspension along with the eight other employees. He was found hanging from the ceiling in his house on the day in which hundreds of workers formed a new union alleging former one anti worker.

A tripartite meeting was held among the representative of new union, Government of Assam and HUL to solve the problem. HUL was represented by a Vice President coming from Mumbai and state government by Hiranya Borah, Chairman Assam Industrial Development Corporation. The meeting was a marathon one, started Saturday evening and concluded at 8 AM on Sunday morning. The HUL authority agreed to reopen its factory withdrawing lock out from Monday as an out come of the meeting.

editor

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