

Indian ports offer wage hikes to avert dockworker strike

August 23, 2024



Port of Nhava Sheva in Mumbai, India

Stakeholder efforts to avert a countrywide port strike in India seem to have begun. The Indian port administration advised dockworker unions, who have threatened to stage indefinite action from 28 August, of a revised wage hike proposal that it is open to implementing in a conciliatory move.

Labour union sources who spoke with *Container News* have confirmed the outreach from the Indian Ports Association (IPA), a governing body for 12 major or public ports in the country.

“The labour federations are studying the proposal and will hold a joint meeting between ourselves on 24 Aug. to decide the next course of action,” a union representative said.

But labour groups appeared to be in no mood to budge on their charter of demands, saying the proposal is not even worth negotiating.

“The proposed revisions are meagre,” the source pointed out. The official further said: “The last wage revision package was implemented in 2017, which was due for renewal in 2022.”

The source went on to add, “The unions will deliberate on a co-ordinated stance to be conveyed to the port administration.”

The IPA has invited labour representatives for a first round of talks on 27 August, on the eve of the threatened industrial action.

“The revised proposal is subject to the ministry’s guideline that – the wage revision shall be subject to the condition that there shall be no increase in labour cost per physical unit of output,” the authority stated in its letter.

The IPA also clarified: “Hence, the individual ports may offer the settlement plan in staggered manner in order to keep the labour cost per physical unit of output under control.”

It remains to be seen if both sides will agree on a deal at the proposed meeting in New Delhi on 27 Aug.

For now, the seemingly defiant posture taken by union leaders has stoked fears of a nationwide port strike that could cause disruptions to trade verticals already battling the lingering effects of the Red Sea-linked challenges.

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