
ArcelorMittal Trinidad steel workers protest over wages

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Reuters reported that a trade union representing workers in Trinidad employed by ArcelorMittal threatened to intensify a protest over compensation.

The workers said that ArcelorMittal was supposed to establish an Employee Share Ownership Plan under an agreement with the government when it bought the formerly state owned steel company 14 years ago. The union estimates the value of the 40% shareholding was between USD 300 million to USD 350 million.

Mr Philip Sancho secretary general of the Steel Workers Union told Reuters that "We shut down production and workers used their lunch time to protest and they will do so until we decide to step up the pressure and take further action against Mittal." He added that since the beginning of the year, workers have been protesting during their lunch breaks. When the government sold the Iron and Steel Company to Mittal Steel, 40% of the shares were to be listed on the local stock exchange. 10% of those shares were supposed to be held in an employee share ownership plan."

Mr Mariano Browne junior finance minister of Trinidad said that he does not think an ESOP was ever set up by Mittal Steel. He said that "I don't think they've set up the ESOP for one reason or the other. I think this goes back to six or seven years ago." Mr Browne told reporters that the company argued that incentive bonuses were distributed in full. Under normal employee share purchase schemes, workers might have been able to convert the incentive bonuses into shares.

Mr Fazad Mohammed a spokesman of ArcelorMittal said that the company would continue talking with the workers in the hope of reaching an amicable agreement.

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