

Port workers defer strike after last-minute deal

Relief for transporters, traders who were fearing cost hikes

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Port and dock workers' unions of major ports have deferred their indefinite strike proposed from Wednesday, official sources said on Tuesday.

The decision came after an agreement between representatives of workers' unions and ports management on workers' demands at a marathon meeting in the national capital on Tuesday, they said.

At a national coordination committee meeting in Tuticorin (Tamil Nadu) on August 8, major port workers' unions affiliated to five federations decided to go on an indefinite strike from August 28 to press for immediate wage revision and other benefits, pending for nearly 32 months.

Subsequently, strike notices were served by the unions to administrators of the respective ports on August 12.

"The federations have agreed to postpone the proposed strike from August 28," a top port official said.

As part of the agreement, the fitment benefit of 8.5 per cent on the aggregate amount of basic pay as on December 31, 2021, plus 30 per cent VDA as on January 1, 2022, will be given, the official said.

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The workers' unions are affiliated to five federations — All India Port and Dock Workers' Federation, All India Port and Dock Workers Federation (workers), Water Transport Workers Federation of India, Indian National Port and Dock Workers Federation and Port, Dock and Waterfront Workers Federation of India.

Sources at the India Port and Dock Workers' Federation (workers) had last week said the major port operators and the federations were to sign a five-year

wage revision agreement prior to the expiry of the earlier wage pact on December 31, 2021.

The shipping ministry set up a Bipartite Wage Negotiations Committee comprising representatives of port management and federations in March 2021.

The committee is headed by Mumbai Port Authority Chairman Rajeev Jalota.

Though the Bipartite Wage Negotiations Committee met seven times during the past 32 months, it could not reach an agreement with the federations.