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BMC sanitary workers to protest privatisation move

Staff Reporter

Talks between the leaders of the BMMKS and Mayor, BMC fail

BMC says it is prepared to face the agitation of sanitary workers

BERHAMPUR: The sanitary workers of the Berhampur Municipal Corporation have decided to take up the path of agitation to protest against attempts to privatise cleaning in parts of the city.

The decision to take up agitation was taken at a meeting of the Berhampur Municipality Mehentar Karmachari Sangh (BMMKS) held on Saturday evening. The BMMKS happens to be the union of sanitary

workers working under the BMC. As per Sukant Mukhi, a leader of the union, they have around 850 members, which includes both regular and temporary sanitary workers employed by the BMC. Mr Mukhi said they are working out the details of their agitation plan.

The BMC has decided to hand over cleaning of nine wards to private parties. It had called up tenders from parties for it. The BMMKS activists had held demonstration in the BMC office premises on Friday while the tender bids were being opened. The talks between the leaders of the BMMKS with Mayor Siba Shankar Das and in charge Commissioner of BMC Bhima Manseth also failed.

The Mayor and the Commissioner were of the opinion that they had to opt for privatisation of cleaning of wards as most corporators were of the view that the existing sanitary workers were failing in their duties. The BMMKS members demanded appointment of more sanitary workers rather than opting for privatisation. Mr Manseth said privatisation is not new in Orissa's urban bodies. In Sambalpur, cleaning process in 29 wards had been privatised. Most corporators alleged that the sanitary workers of the municipality were using other persons in their place through payment of small amounts. "If sanitary workers can hand over their work to others on contract then why not the BMC opt for privatisation through contract which would have accountability," corporators like K.K.Mishra said.

The BMC authorities said they were prepared to face the agitation of the sanitary workers as they had the support of the general public who were disgusted with the lack of sanitation in the city. Cleaning of four

markets in the city has been already privatised. The wards where cleaning has been privatised by the BMC are ward numbers 10, 13, 14, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26 and 35.