

CIL Divestment: 5 Unions Protest

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Our Bureau

Kolkata: Five trade unions of Coal India (CIL) on Friday made a token demonstration against the government's move to divest an additional 10% in the state-run monopoly miner.

Although several union leaders had claimed that there would be heavy demonstration at all offices of CIL, there were none at the company's headquarters in Kolkata.

According to a press release issued by the Congress-affiliated INTUC, about 200 workers protested against the divestment at the Western Coalfields headquarters at Nagpur. Western Coalfields is one of the eight subsidiaries of Coal India.

The government's move to divest an additional stake took the unions by surprise. They will have to resort to demonstrations because they cannot resort to their usual weapon of strike, which needs to be preceded by a 14-day prior notice.

INTUC secretary general SQ Zama threatened gorilla war by all the trade unions against the government's attempt at disinvestment and denationalisation of Coal India, saying the unions will soon decide on their next course of action.

On Thursday, in a release, on behalf of all the five unions, Zama had said that after the five-day strike called by INTUC, BMS, HMS, AITUC and CITU, the Union minister of state for coal had convened a meeting, following which the strike was called off on January 7. "The coal minister had assured that CIL will not be privatised and there will be no



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further divestment and it was also decided to constitute a joint committee under the chairmanship of joint secretary which will submit its report to the government at the earliest. However, the committee is yet to

be constituted," the release said. INTUC had successfully thwarted through threats of a strike the former Congress-led government's effort to make an additional divestment in Coal India. This time, though, the union did not get the time to either mobilise the workforce on such a short notice or the means to declare a strike before execution of the divestment.