

Pfizer Thane plant faces uncertainty as lockout notice lapses

Company initiates VRS for workmen

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As the 14-day notice period to avert a lockout lapses, Pfizer's Thane facility faces an uncertain fate.

Earlier this month, the drug maker had said it was forced to issue a lockout notice to ensure the safety of its colleagues and facilities.

"We continue to remain concerned about this and are unable to reliably assure our colleagues of their personal safety. We will follow the appropriate legal process

and will review next steps in due course," Pfizer said, responding to queries on whether negotiations with employees had made headway.

Meanwhile, Pfizer has initiated a voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) for workmen at the plant. The facility employs 221 people.

After a lockout notice is issued, the company and employees legally have two weeks to sort out their differences, and that period has passed at the Thane plant. But with matters taking a legal turn, Pfizer said: "We will not be able to comment on the proceedings before the Labour Commissioner as this matter is currently sub-judice." The

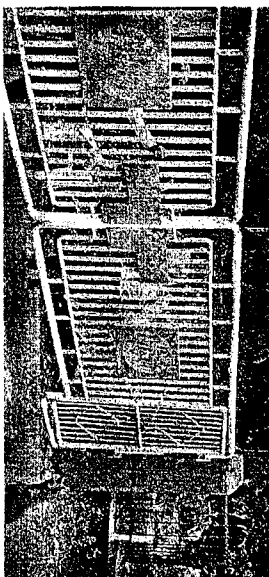
Thane plant is an old facility and the last in India directly under Pfizer. It has another plant in Goa, which came into its fold when it acquired fellow-multinational Wyeth.

Pfizer had globally acquired Wyeth in a \$68-billion deal in January 2009. The two companies are in the process of completing their local merger in India.

Voluntary retirement

Pfizer said the VRS ended on August 19 and it had received a positive response, but did not provide details.

"Pfizer has a practice of maintaining the privacy of personnel



Uncertain future Pfizer's Thane plant

matters, so we are not in a position to disclose details of the VRS provided to colleagues," the company said, responding to queries on

whether a section of employees had refrained from accepting the VRS. An employee at the plant, who did not want to be named,

agreed that some employees had accepted the VRS.

But negotiations with the company were deadlocked despite employees giving an undertaking to keep the working environment safe, he alleged, adding they are now taking the legal recourse to try and stop the shutdown of the plant.

Employees are concerned that the Thane premises could be sold to real estate companies.

Pfizer said: "There continues to be no production at this plant since the past several months. However, we have ensured that this does not affect product availability in the market."

Company