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200 go back to work

The 200 men of Gammon Kier Lilley Joint Venture working at the Mass Transit Railway's site in Yaumati, who have been on strike since Monday, have agreed to return to work today.

This was disclosed at the end of an emergency meeting last night between the workers and representatives of the company.

The trouble arose over the dismissal of four workers who the company claimed had left the tunnel at various times without permission.

The workers countered by saying that it was sometimes necessary to leave the tunnel for short periods to recover since the temperature inside at

times reaches 38 degrees Celsius.

It could not be learned last night whether the firm had agreed to re-engage the four men as a condition for the return to work agreement.

Earlier yesterday, a spokesman for the workers expressed hope the company would give the dismissed workers another chance.

He said he and his fellow-workers do not feel the company should dismiss workers on the spot and without any prior warning.

The spokesman also said that the dismissals would set a precedent and the workers fear that any one of them could, in future, be similarly sacked.

He said if the four men were not reinstated, the strike would continue.

The company had earlier accepted all the workers' demands except the reinstatement.

An expatriate foreman, whose attitude towards the workers incurred their displeasure, has been asked to write a note of apology and will be transferred to another post or another construction site.

Expatriates were instructed not to use vulgar language again to scold the workers.

The company has also agreed to engage a lawyer to defend a worker who has been charged with obstructing the police on Tuesday.