

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

6 October 2001

South Korean bank workers oppose merger

Hundreds of Kookmin Bank employees in South Korea demonstrated on September 29 outside a shareholders' meeting called to ratify a merger with the Housing and Commercial Bank (H&CB). Workers believe the merger will result in restructuring and job losses.

About 500 workers attempted to enter the meeting at the Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry, but were blocked by security guards. The Kookmin employees, who are also shareholders, intended to vote against the merger and other arrangements.

Cathay Pacific dispute continues in Hong Kong

Cathay Pacific pilots voted last week to continue a work-to-rule campaign begun in early July. The pilots are seeking a pay increase and opposing changes to the rostering system that will increase flying hours. During the dispute, 52 pilots have been victimised and sacked by Cathay management.

The pilots' union has signaled its willingness to make concessions. Referring to the international crisis in the airline industry, union general secretary John Findlay told the press: "We very much hope and want to see Cathay get through this difficult time... to that end the union is prepared to work with Cathay but the dispute cannot be settled unless we return to the negotiation table."

Protests halt court proceedings in Indonesia

Workers from two different companies protested inside the Central Jakarta District Court on October 1, disrupting court proceedings.

The first demonstration was organised by workers from the state-owned electricity company PT PLN demanding the court cancel a \$US700 million electricity transaction with PT Paiton Energy. Workers allege it constitutes a misuse of public funds.

The second demonstration involved workers from

Bank Panin, who demanded the court suspend the trial of two employees who have been charged with defaming their supervisor.

Sri Lankan paramedics launch sick note campaign

Paramedics in Sri Lanka, including x-ray technical officers, medical laboratory technologists, physiotherapists, pharmacists and occupational therapists, launched an island-wide two-day sick note campaign on October 3. The workers are demanding a salary rise and the introduction of a diploma certificate for paramedical employees. The industrial action follows protests on July 31 and September 1.

Indian strike ends

A 17-day strike by revenue employees in Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, was called off on September 29 after negotiations between unions and the state government. Some 35,000 employees struck to demand the reinstatement of a suspended superintendent and two senior assistants. They also called for the provision of vehicles to area revenue officers, the publishing of a seniority list and the employment of junior assistants as computer operators when vacancies occurred.

According to a spokesperson for the Andhra Pradesh Revenue Services Association, the government has only agreed to consider the demands.

Coles Myer workers protest job losses in Australia

Workers employed by retailing giant Coles Myer are rallying on October 6 outside the company's Geelong and Melbourne offices to protest the destruction of hundreds of jobs. About 395 layoffs have been announced, but the union claims as many as 1,000 jobs may be slashed. The demonstration was called after Coles Myer management told unions they would not reconsider the job-cutting plan. A court order putting the dismissals on hold expired on October 3.

Textile workers protest over entitlements

About 100 Melbourne textile workers occupied the foyer at the head office of Austrim Nylex on October 1 to demand the management guarantee their accrued entitlements, including long service, annual holiday and severance pay. The workers attempted to make their way to the fourth floor of the building to confront Austrim CEO Peter Crowley but found the doors locked.

The workers are concerned that the company, which has debts of more than \$400 million, could declare bankruptcy and refuse to pay them over \$15 million in entitlements. A spokesman said: "It's not Austrim's money to trade on, it's not Austrim's money to go and use to get themselves out of a difficult situation."

Council workers in pay dispute

More than 500 maintenance workers employed by the Brisbane City Council went on strike for 24 hours on October 3 for a new enterprise work agreement.

The workers, who are responsible for maintaining council buses and the city's water treatment plant, are demanding a 6 percent pay increase, backdated to July, followed by a further 6 percent in a year's time. The council has refused to budge from its offer of a 4 percent increase with a further 5 percent in December 2003. The workers have voted to stage further work stoppages over the next days.

Fiji Bank workers stop work

Three hundred ANZ Bank employees attended a stop-work at the Suva Civic Centre on October 4 over against the abusive attitude of the company's Human Resource Management department and its treatment of workers.

The Fiji Bank Finance Sector Employers Union secretary Dewan Shankar said the union had to call the meeting after receiving many requests and complaints. He refused to comment on plans for further walkouts by union members over the issue.



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