Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

22 January 2011

Chinese taxi drivers strike

Taxi drivers in two central Chinese cities are on strike to protest new local government policies which they claim will damage their livelihood.

In Zhengzhou thousands of taxi drivers have been on strike since January 10 protesting over the city government's decision to abolish the long-established system of six work days, one rest day. Since January 1, drivers have had to work seven days a week in order to satisfy the government's demand for more cabs on the streets. One driver complained, "We are not robots, we deserve proper rest". Zhengzhou currently has over 10,600 licensed cabs and the new policy will add another 2,000 cabs.

Meanwhile in Xianning several hundred drivers have been on strike since December 16 after the city government announced that cab licences would be rescinded after ten years, and that the drivers' 30,000-40,000 yuan ($US6,060) licence fee would not be returned. Nearly 100 drivers have been detained by police during protests.

Pakistan rail workers protest mass sackings

Thousands of Railway Workers' Union members demonstrated at the Pakistan Railway workshop in Lahore on January 14, the second time in ten months, to oppose a proposed restructure that will terminate 20,000 employees. Union officials claimed that the sackings, along with the reduction of passenger trains and a 25 percent fair increase, were aimed at preparing the railway for privatisation. Workers have threatened a national stoppage if the restructure proceeds.

India: Tamil Nadu public servants to strike

The Tamil Nadu Government Employees Association (TNGEA) has served a notice for a one-day strike on February 10 over several demands including a minimum pension of 3,500 rupees ($US78) per month. They also want payment of 300 days' leave when they retire, 180 days of maternity leave and a one-year special payment for childcare. In addition, the TNGEA wants the government to enter into talks on the removal of anomalies in the salary structure.

Uttar Pradesh public transport employees protest

Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (SRTC) employees demonstrated at the corporation's regional office in Allahabad on January 13 over the non-payment of salaries. The demonstration erupted after the corporation notified workers they would be paid only half their monthly salary. Workers said the corporation had not given any reason for its decision.

An official of the UP Roadways Employees' Union told protesters that if management failed to pay full salaries the union would withhold from the state government the SRTC Allahabad region's earnings.

Orissa construction workers demonstrate

On January 14, thousands of construction workers at the India Oil Corporation Limited's (IOCL) Oil Refinery Project in Paradip demonstrated over working conditions

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and better treatment for displaced families. Thousands of unemployed youth from families displaced to make way for the construction project joined the demonstration.

The main demands of the Maa Baidehee Oil Refinery Workers Union include an end to unpaid overtime and implementation of the 8-hour day, medical assistance for injured workers, an on-site canteen, 1,000 rupees toward house rent and one million rupees compensation for families of workers killed on the job. Workers also want work uniforms, safety equipment, provision of a rest shed and drinking water, employment for local youth and vocational training and crèches for the children of female workers.

The union has submitted a memorandum to Orissa's chief minister and several other ministers as well as the IOCL director.

Tamil Nadu fishermen walk out

Over 3,000 fishermen from the Rameswaram coastal region are refusing to put to sea following the fatal wounding of a colleague, allegedly by the Sri Lankan Navy, on January 17. According to striking fishermen, they are regularly confronted and fired at by the Sri Lankan Navy and have accused the Central and state governments of ignoring their demands for protection. Strikers said they would resume fishing only if the Coast Guard ensured their safety.

New South Wales power workers walk out

At least 100 contract workers have walked off the job for five days and picketed the Eraring Power Station on Lake Macquarie on Monday in a dispute over wages and conditions. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) members are employed by contract company Power Projects International to upgrade one of the power station's four units .

An AWU official said their members were doing construction type work but paid under a maintenance agreement. According to the official, the contract pay rate was $10 an hour above the maintenance rate with additional allowances. Fair Work Australia was due to begin hearing the case on January 21.

Western Australian aged care workers strike

More than 20 aged care workers at the Carinya on Bristol Nursing Home in Bicton, Perth walked off the job for four hours and picketed the premises on January 15. The workers were protesting a new work agreement pay offer. According to the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union, if the offer from Barnsley, the residence operator, was accepted then the most experienced workers would only receive a 26-cent per hour pay rise by 2013 and have their annual leave cut from six to five weeks.

Workers want a 4 percent pay increase with no loss in entitlements. A union official said members have not had a pay increase for two years and have voted to strike for up to 12 hours if their demands are not met.

Western Australian construction workers strike

Twenty members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union downed tools and occupied a state housing department construction site at Northbridge in Perth on Monday. Pyramid, the project builder, called police who removed the protesting workers.

Workers claim sub-contractor Proform has not paid their wages since December 17 and that they are owed a total of $150,000. The striking workers voted to continue industrial action until their wages are paid.

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