

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

31 December 2011

Chinese workers at LCD screen factory end strike

At least 8,000 workers at LG Display, the world's largest LCD screen manufacturer, walked out of its Nanjing plant on Monday to demand year-end bonus payments on par with the Korean employees in the company's three manufacturing plants in China. According to workers, they received the equivalent of only one month's pay while their South Korean counterparts received year-end bonuses equivalent to six months' wages. The strike ended after two days when management offered to double the year-end bonus for Chinese workers.

India: Rajasthan government doctors on strike

Over 3,500 government doctors of the All-Rajasthan In-Service Doctors Association walked out in a national stoppage on December 21 to demand a salary increase and pay parity with Central government employees. The Jaipur Association of Resident Doctors ordered its 1,500 resident doctors in Jaipur to return to work on Wednesday after 400 doctors across the state were arrested when the government enacted the Essential Services Maintenance Act. The government has authorised private medical facilities to treat public patients.

Meanwhile, over 20,000 contract employees of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), who walked out on December 21, returned to work on Tuesday after the government made a commitment to "look into" their demands. NRHM workers demanded permanent posts, which they claimed were promised to them by

the chief minister last year.

Karnataka local government workers strike

On December 26, local government employees from various gram panchayats (villages and towns) walked off the job and rallied at the Zilla Panchayat office in Davangere, Karnataka. They demanded a pay increase and the payment of their salaries in the first week of each month. Many workers, who are paid a meager monthly salary of between 1,600 and 2,200 rupees (US\$30-40), said they had not been paid for six months.

The Karnataka Rajya Grama Panchayat Employees' Union claimed the government had stipulated salary scales to different employees like bill collectors, pump operators, watermen, peons and sweepers, but none of the gram panchayats had implemented them. A government official told protesters he would call a meeting of all gram panchayat secretaries to discuss their demands.

Bangladeshi garment workers locked out

Employees of Boltex BD in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) in Savar have been locked out since last Sunday. The lockout followed three days of strike action and protests in a dispute over a log of 12 demands, including double payment for working on holidays, transport facilities and lunch allowance.

Freeport mine workers delay return to work

On Wednesday, the PT Freeport Indonesia Workers' Union, representing over 8,000 striking workers at the Freeport-McMoRan's gold and copper mine in the Indonesian province of West Papua, directed its members to halt their return to work until a dispute with a contractor was resolved. The miners, who were paid as little as \$US1.50 an hour, ended their three-month strike on December 14 after accepting a union deal for a 37 percent pay increase and a slight improvement in entitlements.

The current dispute is with private contractor PT Kuala Pelabuhan Indonesia (KPI), which employs 2,100 workers, mostly at a port which handles concentrate shipments as well as logistics supplies for Freeport operations. The company said earlier that 18 of its workers had been sacked and another 101 temporarily suspended in September and October pending further evaluation. The union wants a guarantee from KPI that the 119 workers will be rehired.

Adelaide waterfront workers locked out over strike

Waterfront company DP World has announced that it will lock out 140 staff from its container terminal in Port Adelaide, South Australia, for 24 hours on January 3. The action is retaliation for workers calling a snap strike over January 1 and 2, that will shut the port's operations. Negotiations toward a new enterprise agreement have broken down due to the company's rejection of a number of demands made by the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). The Port Adelaide facility is the only container port servicing South Australia.

New Zealand dockworkers strike

At least 320 members of the Maritime Union of New

Zealand (MUNZ) struck for 48 hours on Friday at two container terminals of Ports of Auckland Limited (POAL) in a dispute over a new work agreement. The action follows a series of strikes and lockouts that began on December 1, including two 24-hour strikes last week after negotiations reached deadlock. The union rejected POAL's last offer for a 10 percent pay increase and 20 percent bonus increase, in return for "full operational flexibility" and productivity increases.

According to the union, the main concern for workers is the ongoing contracting out of port shuttle work to Conlinxx, a 90-percent owned POAL subsidiary that employs non-union labour to shift containers between the Fergusson and Bledisloe terminals. The MUNZ is looking to do a deal with POAL if it can regain union coverage of the shuttle operation. Union national president Garry Parsloe said his members remained ready to lift their notice of further strikes next month if the company showed "good faith" by allowing them to operate two cargo shuttle carriers.

Port management rejected the unions' offer, claiming it would require independent truck operators entering the port to leave their vehicles while unionists drove them between container terminals.



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