

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

5 January 2013

## Asia

### **Cambodian garment workers protest**

About 2,000 sacked workers from the bankrupt US-owned Svay Rieng Garment Company in Bavet city's special economic zone have been demonstrating outside the closed factory since December 24 to demand severance pay.

The company has offered to pay each employee wages and bonuses from December and \$US40 severance—less than three weeks' pay. The protesting workers want \$100 severance pay and have told the media that 200 of their colleagues will camp outside the factory each night to prevent the company removing equipment.

### **South Korean security guards protest forced retirement**

A former security guard climbed a 20-metre chimney in the Shin Hyundai Apartment compound in Seoul on December 31 to protest his forced early retirement and the sacking of 13 other, over 60-year-old security guards.

The former guard is occupying a platform on the chimney, while his colleagues are maintaining a protest below to demand reinstatement. The workers, who were on part-time contracts, some for up to nine years, claimed their contracts were not renewed for "ridiculous reasons". The security contractor lowered the age limit for part-time security guards from 65 to 62 years in March 2012.

### **India: Protesting auto-parts workers arrested**

At least 200 Samkr Piston and Rings workers were arrested by police on December 31 after they marched to the state collector's office in Srikakulam, northern Andhra Pradesh, to demand the company honour a wage commitment. The protest was led by the Stalinist Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), which has channelled workers' action into appealing to the district administration to take up the issue with the company.

Samkr Piston and Rings has three plants in Andhra Pradesh which produce auto parts for export to vehicle manufacturers in the US, Europe and the UK.

### **Uttarakhand government workers employees on strike**

About 35,000 state government employees in India's northern state of Uttarakhand walked off the job on December 27 to demand time-bound promotions and equal pay with state workers in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh. All counter and administrative services had ceased by the second day of the strike.

The Uttaranchal Federation of Ministerial Services Association said its members would remain on strike until their demands were met.

### **Reserve Bank of India employees' union calls off strike**

Following closed door negotiations with Reserve Bank of India authorities on Monday, the United Forum of RBI

Officers and Employees called off planned January 1 strike action. Bank employees are opposing government plans to close 200 cash exchange counters and destroy about 1,000 jobs. The union has provided no details about the negotiated outcome.

Banking sector unions have previously allowed finance sector companies, such as the Life Insurance Corporation, to downsize and replace permanent staff with lower paid contract workers.

### **Tamil Nadu village women demand outstanding pay**

On December 27, dozens of women labourers from Kovilambakkam in Tamil Nadu protested outside the village authority's (panchayat) office to demand promised wages. The women had been employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to deepen a reservoir for the village water supply. They were only paid 60 rupees (\$US1.20) a day, instead of the promised 132 rupees a day.

### **Karnataka agricultural workers walk out**

About 50 Horticultural Producers Co-operative Marketing and Processing Society or HOPCOMS workers from several Karnataka outlets are maintaining protests outside the state deputy commissioner's office in Bangalore. They began strike action on December 26 to demand a wage rise and entitlements.

HOPCOMS are government managed cooperatives that receive produce from local small farmers and sell it to the public. The farmers receive 70 percent of the sale price.

In September 2011, HOPCOMS workers held daily protests to demand a 3 percent increase in the Dearness Allowance and regular payments of the allowance.

### **Bangladesh university workers strike**

More than 500 Bangladesh Open University (BOU) workers in Gazipur, 40km north of Dhaka, walked off the

job on December 30 and protested outside the vice chancellor's office to demand promotions and house building loans as proposed by the Workers' Welfare Association.

The welfare committee claims that workers are not receiving any benefit from the university's welfare fund. University employees are also demanding authorities stop using forced transfers to intimidate workers.

[subhead/]Sri Lankan rail workers to strike

The Joint Trade Union Alliance has threatened a 48-hour national strike of rail workers on January 9 if the Rajapakse government fails to address long-pending workers' claims.

Rail workers, who are in 111 separate unions, walked off the job for 24 hours on December 7 after the transport minister reneged on an agreement to take up their demands with the salary commissioner. Workers are demanding a salary rise, distress loans and the immediate filling of 9,000 job vacancies.

The rail unions called an early end to a national strike over the same issues last February after the government falsely promised to resolve workers' grievances.

### **Pakistani hydro-electric workers demand pay rise**

Water and Power Development Authority workers held rallies throughout Sindh Province on December 19 to demand an upgrade in their pay scale. They also want the employees' children recruitment quota increased and abolition of a contract system that strips workers of limited benefits.

Wapda Hydroelectric Central Labour Union officials addressed protesters in Larkana, Hyderabad and Sukkur, calling on the government to implement the recommendations of a pay and pension review commission. Headed by a former State Bank of Pakistan chief, the commission, however, has called for cuts to pensions, allowances and other benefits.



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