

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

30 March 2013

Tamil Nadu sanitary workers protest

On March 25, sanitary workers in Virudhunagar, in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, struck and marched to the Collectorate to demand implementation of Government Order 385, which from September 2010 fixed Special Time Scale of Pay rates for sanitary workers. The order affects daily wage and consolidated workers with minimum service of three years. The protest was organised by the Tamil Nadu Sanitary Workers Association, Arundhathiyar Livelihood Movement and Tamil Nadu Adhi Arundhathiya Mahasabha.

Andhra Pradesh beedi workers demand pensions

Beedi (local cigarette) workers belonging to the Indian Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) demonstrated in front of the District Labour Office in Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh on March 21 to demand a provident fund for all workers, pensions of no less than the minimum wage and 1,000-rupee minimum pensions as an interim measure until the central government fixes the new pension rate. Their protest followed an earlier demonstration by beedi workers at the Provident Fund Regional Commission.

Indian Defense Force canteen workers end strike

Employees of Defense Force Unit Run Canteens

(URC) ended a 100-day strike on March 26 after authorities agreed to increase their salary by 15 percent. The increase applies to all temporary and casual staff.

Health workers demand permanent jobs

National Rural Health and Child Health contract workers protested in New Delhi on March 25 to demand job regularisation. They carried placards such as, “Now injustice, later fight” and “We will not take this anymore.”

Jammu and Kashmir child development workers protest

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) (anganwadi) employees protested in Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu & Kashmir, on March 26 to demand overdue salaries, not paid for up to eight months. Workers from 278 anganwadi centres in Thanamandi district reported that they had not been paid wages for five months, leaving them unable to pay their rents.

Canberra construction workers protest over exploitation of foreign workers

On March 26, around 60 construction workers, some

employed on the federal government's 457 temporary visa program, protested at an apartment construction project in Canberra over the exploitation of foreign employees. Korean workers employed by the KP Pro Group complained that they had been forced to work unpaid overtime and had to wait up to six weeks for payment.

One worker told the media that he had been recruited through a Korean language website just after finishing his accounting degree at Macquarie University in Sydney, and worked an average of 55 hours a week while being paid for just 38 hours. KP Pro reportedly employs more than 60 workers on 457 visas at construction sites around Canberra and in a joinery plant where workers complained they were sometimes forced to work from 6.30 am to 10 pm with only a single half-hour break.

The "community" protest was organised by the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) to support the trade union movement's reactionary campaign, taken up by Prime Minister Julia Gillard, for bans on overseas workers. None of the unions has taken any action to protect the foreign workers from exploitation. In fact, the Australian Metal Workers Union staged a "community picket" at a Melbourne construction site earlier this month to demand the sacking of four Filipino welders.

Solomon Islands teachers on strike again

Over 8,000 members of the Solomon Islands Teachers Association (SINTA) have been on strike since March 22 after the government failed to meet its own commitments to pay outstanding wages. Teachers walked out for over a week earlier this year to demand back payment of a salary increase to which the government agreed in 2012. In meetings in early February, teachers agreed to return to work after the government promised to pay the outstanding money in three installments over a four-week period. According to SINTA only 2,000 teachers have received their money.

The government has threatened to take the teachers to court, claiming it has fully paid them. SINTA has

begun legal proceedings against the government.

French Polynesian doctors on strike

Close to 100 doctors at government hospitals in France's Pacific Ocean territory of French Polynesia have been on strike since March 21 in a dispute over pay. Most outpatient surgery has been cancelled but emergency services are exempt from the strike.

The strike was sparked when the territorial administration refused to transfer a doctor's seniority within the French system into a local contract, forcing the doctor onto a lower pay rate. Most doctors at the hospitals come from France and are concerned they will be forced onto territory contracts on reduced wages.



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