

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

6 July 2013

Chinese shipyard workers on strike

Over 2,000 workers at the privately-owned Nantong shipyard in the eastern province of Jiangsu have been on strike since June 30 after the company announced that employees would have to take leave for a week. Police attacked strikers picketing the shipyard's main entrance on Wednesday. Workers complained that the company is behind in wage payments.

Several thousand workers at the shipyard, owned by the financially troubled Rongsheng Heavy Industries, were laid off in recent months. Rongsheng has around 6,000 workers on its payroll and uses more than 10,000 workers via labour suppliers.

GM auto workers in South Korea strike

Union members at GM Korea (General Motors) held a six-hour strike on July 4 and imposed bans on overtime and weekend work, following failed annual pay and production target talks with management that began in April. The GM Korea union is affiliated with the Korean Metal Workers Union. A union official told the media the strike action would probably be extended.

The union wants a bonus increase equivalent to three months' salary, a one-time payment of 6 million won (\$US5,300) and a basic salary rise of 130,500 won.

Last year, GM Korea suffered its biggest strike since it was created in 2002, resulting in lost production of 40,000 vehicles in a dispute to end overnight work. The dispute was not fully settled. GM agreed to end overnight work in 2014 but is still in dispute with the union over wage compensation for the reduced time

worked.

GM Korea is one of the US automaker's key Asia bases, producing a quarter of GM's Chevrolet cars sold globally and 98 percent of cars, such as the Cruze and the Aveo subcompact, sold in Europe.

Indonesian railway workers sacked after protest

Around 150 outsourced contract workers at the state-owned PT KCJ mass rapid transport system (Jabodetabek) in Jakarta were sacked after walking out last week to protest outside the PT KCJ office at Juanda station. The workers are demanding permanency. Police used teargas to end the demonstration which prevented trains running through the station for several hours.

PT KCJ employs 3,000 outsourced workers from eight agencies as ticket sellers, station attendants, administration staff and security officers. A Jabodetabek Train Worker Association official told the media that if the issue was not resolved by July 1 there would be more strikes.

India: Motorcycle workers in Pune on strike

Around 1,300 production workers at the Chakan plant of Bajaj Auto in Pune, Maharashtra have been on strike since June 25 over a new three-year work agreement. Their demands include a pay rise, improved conditions and the allocation of 500 company shares to each employee at one rupee per share.

The strike has prevented the production of at least 25,000 units. Management has begun transferring production to its sister plant in Aurangabad, and has appealed to the labour court to have the strike declared illegal.

The Vishwa Kalyan Kamgar Sangathan union is maintaining a protest of 800 strikers outside Bajaj Auto's corporate office in Akurdy, Pune suburb.

Karnataka medical institute workers on strike

Some 171 contract workers at the Belgaum Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS) in Belgaum, Karnataka are maintaining strike action begun on June 26 to protest management's decision not to renew their contracts and outsource their jobs. Twenty-five strikers began a hunger strike on July 1.

The BIMS workers—non-clerical staff, nurses, lab assistants and technicians and other non-medical staff—have been employed as Group D category workers for four years. Their contracts expired on May 31. The strike was organised by the BIMS Government Contract Workers' Association.

Sri Lankan railway workers protest

Two thousand Sri Lanka Railways (SLR) employees stopped work and picketed the Salaries and Cadre Commission Office in Colombo on July 1. They were demanding the removal of salary anomalies and the axing of 4,000 cadre positions from the railway service. The railway workers complained that salary anomalies have persisted at SLR for seven years.

Victorian power station workers remain locked out

Seventy-five members of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) at the Yallourn

power station, in the Latrobe Valley, east of Melbourne, have been locked out by their employer, Energy Australia, since June 21 in a dispute for a new enterprise bargaining agreement. Following failed conciliation talks in the Fair Work Commission (FWC) this week, Energy Australia said workers will be locked out indefinitely, leaving the plant operating at only half its capacity. The CFMEU said that the company had now reduced the pay offer, removed back pay and scrapped a number of allowances which were part of the previous offer.

CFMEU members were offered a 25 percent pay rise over four years but the union wants a consult-and-agreement clause added to the enterprise agreement, allowing it to participate in operational decisions. This has been rejected by management. The CFMEU and Energy Australia were in talks for eight months before the company broke off negotiations in April and attempted to move the dispute to the FWC.

Queensland sugar mill workers resume strike action

Around 200 members of the Australian Workers Union and the Electrical Trades Union at MSF Sugar's Mulgrave Central Mill on Queensland's far north coast have resumed 24-hour rolling stoppages begun on June 24 in a dispute over a new work agreement. Workers rejected a pay rise offer of 10 percent over three years, stating it did not provide pay parity with colleagues at other sites owned by the company. The company and unions said they will maintain negotiations.



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