

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

21 September 2013

Kia Motors workers in South Korea accept pay deal

Around 35,000 workers at South Korea's second largest auto maker Kia Motors, in the Ulsan Industrial District, ended a three-week strike over wages and benefits on September 12 after voting on a deal that will raise their monthly base salary by 5.1 percent. In addition, workers will receive bonuses equivalent to 350 percent of their monthly salary plus a one-time payment of 5 million won (\$US4,500). Over 46,000 workers at Kia's sister company Hyundai ended a three-week strike two days earlier after accepting a deal with the same benefits.

Chinese steel workers walk out

Close to 2,000 workers at the Beigang Group's steel plant in Jixi city, Heilongjiang province, marched to local government offices on September 16 to demand five months' dues. The workers, who earn just \$US3 a day, complained that the former state-owned steel plant, which currently produces girders for the construction industry, had not raised wages in two years and defaulted on compulsory social security payments and pension contributions.

All production at the plant had ceased and the furnaces were shutdown. Strikers refused to return to work until they were paid.

Bangladeshi police attack protesting garment workers

At least 50 people were injured when police used teargas and baton charged 5,000 protesting garment workers in Gazipur, on the outskirts of Dhaka, on September 18. Employees of KCO Pyia Apparels, of the Elegance Industrial Group, had blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway demanding monthly wages be lifted to 8,000 taka (\$US102).

Their action followed a walkout by KCO employees the previous day during which 10 workers were injured by the industrial police using rubber bullets. Workers warned that their action would continue. Management stopped production at three garment plants, fearful that the protests would spread.

India: Chandigarh contract teachers protest

On September 15, over 1,000 contract teachers in Chandigarh, the Punjab state capital, blocked the national highway at Kharar for several hours to demand regularisation of over 7,000 teachers. The Education Providers Union-Punjab told media that the regularisation of contract teachers was too slow. The process began more than two years ago when the Indian central government ordered 700 teachers "regularised" in Chandigarh.

New Delhi government employees on hunger protest

Indian government employees in New Delhi began a hunger strike on September 16 to demand improved wages and conditions. Delhi Administrative Subordinate Services (DASS) members have demanded wage rises in line with the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations and filling of vacancies.

Liquor depot workers in Andhra Pradesh protest

Around 3,000 daily wage workers at the Autonagar liquor depot of IML (Indian Made Liquor) in Vijayawada protested outside the depot's gate on September 16 to demand job security and a wage rise. Their union, which is affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, alleged that management is attempting to introduce a tender system to remove the workers.

Pakistan: Lahore health workers granted job regularisation

A one-day protest by 2,000 employees of the Lady Health Workers (LHW) program in Lahore on September 16 was called off after the Punjab provincial authorities issued notices to regularise the services of 51,000 employees. The directive includes 47,000 LHW workers. Protesters had blocked the road outside the

provincial assembly for most of the day, refusing to call off the demonstration until they saw documentation for regularisation.

Last year, after four years of workers' protests, the Supreme Court ordered the government to regularise the jobs. The government, however, kept employees on contracts and on wages below 8,000 rupees (\$US88) a month. It also denied them entitlements that apply to regular workers.

Cambodian Khmer Rouge tribunal workers end strike

Over 200 Cambodian interpreters, translators and other employees at the UN-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal in Phnom Penh have ended a two-week strike over unpaid wages after court authorities received a loan to cover their dues. Workers had walked out on September 2 to demand wages outstanding since June. The Cambodian government is officially responsible for paying their salaries.

Khmer Rouge leaders, who are charged with alleged war crimes and other offences committed during their four-year rule of Cambodia in the 1970s, have been on trial since November 2011. The tribunal has met with resistance from the Cambodian government, where many top officials are former Khmer Rouge members. This was not the first time these workers walked out over dues.

Western Australian public school workers walk out

Around 20,000 education workers, including teachers, assistants, administrative staff, cleaners and gardeners, from 800 government schools across Western Australia struck for four hours on September 19 and rallied in Perth and regional areas. The walkout, which was called to protest the axing of 500 education jobs and cuts to education funding, was called by three unions, the State School Teachers Union, the Community and Public Sector Union and United Voice.

The planned cuts by the Barnett state Liberal government include 350 education assistant jobs, 150 administrative jobs, a freeze on teacher numbers and funding cuts to specialised programs for literacy and numeracy. The government told media it had not been tough enough in the past and would not back down. Protesters passed resolutions calling for further combined union stop work meetings.

New South Wales nurses and midwives protest

Hundreds of nurses and midwives from across New South Wales rallied at Parliament House in the state's capital Sydney on

September 17 in a long-running campaign for a new enterprise agreement that will increase nursing numbers in government hospitals. The NSW Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA), representing 35,000 public hospital nurses and midwives, presented a 100,000-signature petition to parliament with their demands.

Nurses have been campaigning for two years for increased staffing levels at all state hospitals. They want ratios of one nurse to four patients in general medical, surgical and mental health wards, one to three in general children's wards and one to three in emergency departments. Midwives are demanding a maximum of four hours' per shift contact time with patients, leaving four hours for associated duties.

While a July rally of 5,000 striking nurses and midwives passed a motion resolving to continue their action, the NSWNMA has restricted this to out-of-hours protests and a public campaign to pressure the state Liberal government. The union has also indicated that it will accept a 2.5 percent pay rise (excluding the superannuation component) if the O'Farrell government agreed to minimum nurse-patient ratios.

New Zealand public hospital workers suspended

Eleven IT workers at the Grey Base Hospital in Greymouth, on New Zealand's South Island, were suspended on September 16 after imposing work bans in a wages dispute with the District Health Board (DHB). Association of Professionals and Executive Employees (Apex) members took action after rejecting the DHB's offer of a 1.5 percent pay rise. The workers complained that they were earning 23 percent less than average market rates for the South Island.

The work bans include not using email or electronic communication and a ban on re-call duty outside of their normal hours. The DHB said it would continue negotiations with the union.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact