

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

8 February 2014

## India: Ex-Maruti Suzuki workers protest in New Delhi

More than 2,000 ex-Maruti Suzuki workers and supporters demonstrated in Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on January 31, after completing a two-week journey on foot which began on January 15 in the neighbouring state of Haryana.

Protesters demanded the immediate release of 148 Maruti Suzuki workers who have been jailed for the past 17 months on murder and other frame-up charges, and for reinstatement of 2,300 workers arbitrarily sacked in September 2012.

Demonstrators also called for a judicial inquiry into the death of a Maruti Suzuki Human Resources manager in July 2012 during a company-instigated altercation with workers. The company also used the altercation as the pretext to purge its workforce of over 500 permanent and 1,800 contract workers.

Using lists supplied by company management, Haryana police arrested almost 150 workers, including the entire leadership of the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union—an independent union formed in 2011 and which led a militant campaign of strikes and plant occupations.

In a meaningless gesture, representatives from most of India's major trade unions who attended the demonstration pledged "to support the workers until their demands are met by authorities." They failed to make any call for concrete industrial action by their members to demand the release of the jailed unionists or reinstatement of the sacked workers.

## Andhra Pradesh sanitary workers strike

Outsourced sanitary workers in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh have been holding rolling stoppages since February 2 to demand a pay increase. While garbage is still being transported many streets are not being swept, leaving rubbish littering the streets. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Employees' Union wants the current monthly wage increased from 6,700 rupees (\$106.93) to 16,500 rupees. The strikers held a procession on Tuesday from the Temple Alwal to the Select Theatre in Hyderabad.

Meanwhile, on February 4 around 5,000 workers in Sangareddy, 55km from Hyderabad, demonstrated outside the Collectorate to demand that the minimum monthly wage be increased to 12,500 rupees.

## Puducherry government employees protest

Government daily-wage and part-time workers in Puducherry on India's east coast, held a sit-down protest outside the Special Secretary's office in the territory's capital Pondicherry on February 3. They were demanding regularisation of their services.

According to a Confederation of Government Employees official, the court had previously directed the government to regularise the workers but no action was taken. A list of daily wage workers and part timers who need to be regularised was handed to the Special Secretary.

## Pakistan rail workers protest over increased electricity charges

Pakistan Railways Peshawar division employees demonstrated outside Peshawar Press Club on February 4 over electricity tariffs in their railway residences. The protest was organised by the Railway Workers' Union. In February last year railway workers in Lahore demonstrated outside railway administrative offices to oppose a 1,000 percent rise in electricity and water charges.

Workers complained that railway accommodation was in a squalid condition—after management ended maintenance of housing many years ago—but that the administration continued to increase charges for residents. Successive governments have slashed funds to state run utilities and enterprises in preparation for privatisation.

respond to repeated requests to fix the building's broken air-conditioning system.

Workers complained that the system had not worked for over a month causing temperatures in the building to be constantly above 30 degrees centigrade. Striking workers and supporters marched along the town's main street and rallied in the town centre. A couple of hours later, the workers received notice that the air conditioning system had been fixed.



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### **Cambodia: Phnom Penh rubbish collectors end strike**

Rubbish collectors employed by contract company Cintri in Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh, ended strike action on February 5 after demanding their union improve on a low-wage deal it had negotiated with the employer. On February 4, 100 street cleaners and truck drivers refused to return to work after the union told them it had reached an agreement with Cintri. The company offered a \$US15 increase on their current salary of \$65 monthly for street cleaners, and a \$10 increase for truck drivers, lifting their monthly pay to just \$120.

Under the new agreement, street cleaners will be paid \$90 per month and truck drivers will receive \$130. Other concessions won included building a new health clinic for workers, company supplied work clothes and social security entitlements.

### **McDonalds workers strike at Kaikohe**

Employees at the McDonalds fast food outlet in Kaikohe, on New Zealand's North Island, walked off the job on January 31, after management failed to