

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

21 June 2014

Samsung workers in South Korea on strike

Over 1,000 Samsung contract workers remain on strike after walking out on May 19, following the suicide of union leader Yeom Ho-seok. Yeom's suicide was in protest against company suppression of the union and in support of demands for a living wage.

Samsung Electronics Service Workers' Labor Union members are holding round-the-clock protests outside the Samsung Group Head Office in Seoul and the Samsung Electronics Headquarters in Suwon, Gyeonggi Province. The union is affiliated to the Korean Metal Workers Union (KMWU).

The media has reported that although the workers are not directly employed by Samsung, management has entered into "confidential talks" with the KMWU in an attempt to end the strike. The KMWU has not provided any details about the negotiations.

Chinese government officials pressure workers to end Walmart protests

Local Chinese government officials have intervened to pressure 67 sacked Walmart workers to end their three-month dispute with Walmart's Changde branch in Hunan province.

Government officials, carrying photographs of the sacked employees, visited the homes of workers, urging them and their families to call off pickets that have prevented Walmart from removing goods from its Changde store, which closed in March. The sacked employees were demanding Walmart double its severance pay and provide rental and other subsidies for those who transferred to company stores in other cities.

Walmart has closed 13 stores in China over the last 15 months. In most cases the workers were only given two

weeks' notice. Neither the two-week notice period nor the amount of compensation offered to workers was in accordance with China's compensation laws.

India: Delhi steel plant workers' strike enters third week

More than 1,500 workers at 26 hot-rolling steel plants at the Wazirpur Industrial Estate in Delhi have been on strike since June 5 to demand improved wages, safer working conditions and various other entitlements.

The workers are currently paid just 8,000 rupees (\$US135) a month and forced to work 12 hours a day. They are demanding a Provident Fund (PF), Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) health benefits cards, occupational safety measures, a minimum monthly wage of 10,375 rupees and overtime pay, as mandated by law.

A 45-year-old striker told the media that the workers had decided to walk out because there had been no response from the labour courts. "We have been fighting court cases for overtime, for PF, etc. We tried to approach the labour offices at Nimni Colony many times since 2013 but there are no changes," he said.

Following union threats to extend the strike to include all 600 rolling mills in the industrial estate, the government sent safety and health inspectors to the plants on June 18 to "check" if labour laws were being followed. A Garam Rolla Mazdoor Ekta Samiti (Hot Steel Workers Unity Front) representative told the media that the inspectors found that most plants lacked registration numbers and did not follow the Factories or Minimum Wages acts.

Maharashtra hospital workers strike

Around 400 health workers at the Maharashtra Institute of

Medical Education and Research (MIMER) and the Dr Bhausaheb Sardesai Talegaon Rural Hospital at Talegaon Dabhade, Maharashtra, walked off the job on June 13 in a dispute over Dearness Allowance payment arrears and to demand permanent positions for contract workers. Employees picketed the hospital preventing a nurses' shift change.

Hospital management responded by prematurely discharging 300 patients, including some from the intensive care unit. Neighbouring hospitals condemned MIMER management for its actions.

Maharashtra head-load porters strike

Head-load porters at 20 state-run APMCs (Agricultural Produce Market Committees) in Maharashtra's Nashik district went on strike on June 16 to demand a wage rise. They are demanding an increase from 2.05 rupees (\$US0.03) to 2.16 rupees per quintal of onions. Traders rejected the demand, claiming it would add 200 rupees to the cost of a tractor load of onions. The strike was suspended after 48 hours, until July 10, following a meeting of state marketing federation officials, traders and strikers.

The walkout followed a 24-hour strike by 80,000 head-load porters, transport workers and cleaners at APMCs across Maharashtra on May 28 to demand better pay and conditions and affordable housing. The strike was organised by the Transport and General Kamgar Union.

Pakistan postal workers protest

Pakistan Post employees demonstrated on the premises of the General Post Office in Rawalpindi on June 6 to demand payment of unpaid entitlements, including medical bills, stationery, fuel and other charges. They also protested against the Pakistan government slashing the postal allocation by 30 percent.

Postal workers previously called for strike action in April but the Postal Workers Union delayed the action and held a series of limited protests.

Catholic school teachers vote for strike

Over 1,400 Catholic school teachers and support staff in New South Wales' Hunter region have voted to hold a half-day stoppage on June 26 in a dispute over a new work agreement with the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations. Dioceses in Wollongong, south of Sydney, and other parts of New South Wales are expected to follow suit.

Meanwhile, 90 percent of teachers and support staff employed by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) in Tasmania have voted to take industrial action in their protracted dispute for a new work agreement. They have threatened four- and 24-hour stoppages before the school term finishes on July 4.

Teachers and support workers, who are members of the Independent Education Union (IEU), have advanced over 30 claims, including a pay increase, entitlements and classifications on par with government schools, and minimum 12-month contracts for staff. The last agreement between the IEU and the TCEO was signed in 2009.

Papua New Guinea seafarers continue protests

For the second time this month, laid off seafarers from one of Papua New Guinea's inter-island cargo and passenger operators Lutheran Shipping Services protested in Lae to demand payment of two months' outstanding salaries and other entitlements for 500 employees. The dismissed workers rallied outside the Lutheran Shipping Services office on June 13. The company doors were locked and management officials refused to respond to workers' demands.

Lutheran Shipping Services, which previously ran a fleet of eight small passenger/cargo ferries and general cargo ships, has downsized and sacked staff. Only two passenger services will be continued.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact