

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

30 May 2015

Chinese bicycle-parts workers strike

About 100 workers, mostly middle-aged women, at a bicycle-parts factory in Shenzhen, China, have been on strike since April 30 demanding unpaid entitlements. They occupied the Taiwanese-owned factory, New An Lun Lamp, for two weeks, stopping production and delivery, until police evicted them and arrested their leaders. At least 13 workers have been fired and nine arrested by police for allegedly “disrupting public order.”

According to workers, New An Lun Lamp has broken China’s labour laws and social insurance policies by failing to contribute to both the workers’ pension fund and a housing fund aimed at helping workers buy or rent apartments. They also allege that they were not paid sick, maternity, work injury and marriage leave and various other legal entitlements.

Cambodian military police fire on protesting handcart pullers

Cambodian military police opened fire during a demonstration by handcart-pullers in Poipet City on May 25. The workers were demanding that customs officials stop charging them exorbitant fees to transport goods across the Cambodian-Thai border. One hospitalised worker alleged, “Military police kicked me, beat me and kneed me until I lost consciousness.”

About 100 protesting handcart-pullers set up a roadblock on National Road 5, which leads to the Poipet International Checkpoint, resulting in violent clashes with about 30 police and military police. The demonstration was the third in the past six months by the cart-pullers.

Vietnamese shoe factory workers strike

Some 600 workers at the Dinh Vang leather shoe factory in Hai Phong, north-east Vietnam, walked off the job on May 21 and protested outside the plant over “heavy workloads.” Other complaints include the company’s failure to send their contributions to the state social insurance fund, lack of bonuses for

senior workers, poor food and regular rebukes by managers.

Workers at the 3,000-strong factory complained that management had increased their workload by 40 percent, forcing them to work additional hours without extra pay. The strike ended after management agreed to reduce their workload and the local authorities said they would press the company to “improve its policies.”

India: Tamil Nadu pump operators and sanitary workers demand wage rise

Tamil Nadu Village Panchayat Overhead Tank Operators and Sanitary Workers Association members protested in Madurai and Pudukkottai on May 25. Workers in Pudukkottai protested outside of the Collector’s office while workers in Madurai struck for a day. They want a 750 percent pay rise to lift their monthly wage to 15,000 rupees (\$US234). Other demands are for fixed working hours, job permanency and a Provident Fund scheme. They also protested against the privatisation of sanitary jobs in rural areas.

Panchayat (village council) employees work long hours, without job security for a poverty monthly wage of \$31.28.

Tamil Nadu pump and motor manufacturing workers protest

Around 40 CRI Pumps casual workers protested in Coimbatore on May 25 against an indefinite lockout. Management claim that the workers were locked out after they demanded their 8.33 percent bonus be increased on par with the 30 to 40 percent bonus paid to fulltime workers. Protesting workers said they had been employed at the factory for 25 years without confirmation as regular workers.

Another group of terminated workers from Best Engineers Pumps Limited joined the CRI workers’ protest, telling the media that they were terminated because they asked for a wage increase. Some of them said they had worked for the company for 30 years without a pay rise.

Himachal Pradesh sanitary workers strike

Sanitary workers in Shimla Municipal Corporation in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh walked out indefinitely on May 23 to demand job permanency after five years' employment and other claims. They were organised by the Shimla Environment Heritage Conservation Society Workers' Union. City management mobilised scab labour to break the strike and clear garbage.

Sri Lankan public sector health workers end strike

Some 40,000 hospital workers, including health attendants, clerks, laboratory assistants, overseers and laundry assistants, ended a three-day strike on May 28 after the government offered a 1,000-rupee (\$US7.45) monthly allowance.

At least 1,000 hospitals were affected when members of the All Ceylon Health Services Union walked out on Monday to demand a 3,000-rupee allowance and other claims. Their action followed half-day stoppages at various hospitals on May 20.

The Sirisena government used armed forces personnel to carry out the duties of the striking health workers. Casual and substitute employees were told that they would be sacked if they participated in the industrial action.

Pakistan: Punjab government school teachers resume protests

Teachers from Punjab province government schools held their third demonstration in a month on May 25 outside the provincial government assembly in Lahore over various long pending claims. It followed an eight-day protest that ended on May 15 and one-day action on May 21 outside the assembly over the same demands. The protests were coordinated by the Muttahida Mahaz Asatza Punjab, a consortium of different teachers' associations across the province.

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The teachers want pay-scale increases and time-scale promotions, scrapping of a performance evaluation scheme used to intimidate teachers and permanency for contract teachers. The teachers have rejected government claims that job regularisation of 50,000 teachers is underway.

Teachers have threatened continue demonstrations, beginning on June 1, outside the assembly until their demands are met.

Punjab government employees demand wage rise

Government workers in Faisalabad Irrigation Department and Multan demonstrated on May 21 as part of the province-wide campaign by Punjab government clerks for an increase in the minimum wage, pay-scale revision and job permanency for daily wage, contract and ad-hoc workers.

The All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA), which called the demonstration, said it would organise a protest march towards Islamabad if the government failed to meet employees' demands. The union called off strike action in March, claiming that the government had agreed to its demands. The APCA called off action last year after accepting false government promises.

New Zealand cancer-treatment workers begin rolling industrial action

Over 60 cancer-treatment specialists at Canterbury, Southern and Auckland District Health Boards (DHBs) began a one-week overtime ban on Monday to demand a pay increase. The bans will be followed with a week of similar action by workers at Capital, Coast and Waikato DHBs.

Action by members of the APEX union follows four months of failed negotiations for pay increases of between 20 and 45 percent. The union claims the rise would bring their members' pay scales closer on par with their colleagues in Australia. APEX has threatened to consider strike action by the specialists if a resolution is not reached by June.

New Caledonia bank workers on strike

Bank employees in the South Pacific French territory of New Caledonia walked out on May 26 in an "unlimited" strike to demand higher pay. The strike, which has led to the closure of some banks, is being supported by a majority of the unionised labour force.

The French Banking Federation has offered just 0.2 percent. The bank workers are demanding a two-percent pay rise.



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