

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

20 June 2015

## Chinese garment workers on strike

In their second strike in six months, over 400 workers from Shenzhen Artigas Clothing & Leatherware walked out on June 8 and are currently occupying the factory in an attempt to prevent it being relocated. The workers are also demanding that all previously dismissed employees be re-hired. The plant factory produces goods for Japan's Fast Retailing, the owner of the Uniqlo clothing brand.

Workers ended a strike in December after management said they would not relocate operations. A spokesman for the workers told the media last month that the company again started to move equipment out. "This time the workers have decided to fight through to the end," he said.

Numbers of major manufacturers in southern China have been moving their facilities to inland China or to countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia in order to cut labour and production costs.

## Chinese supermarket workers strike

Workers at the LeGou supermarket chain in southern China struck on June 5 in protest against deteriorating pay and conditions after the previously owned Tesco corporation was sold to China Resources Enterprises.

The supermarket employees stopped work and protested outside LeGou stores in Guangzhou, Dongguan and Shenzhen in Guangdong, holding banners that read "Equal treatment. Respect your work force! China Resources, treat us fairly again!"

Eight similar protests and strikes have hit China's retail industry since January, many of them over wage arrears due to company restructures and change of ownership.

China Resources Enterprise is a listed subsidiary of China Resources Holdings with investments in retail, beverage, food processing and distribution, textiles and real estate in Hong Kong and mainland China.

## Cambodian garment workers maintain industrial action

Some 500 workers at A&J Carter (Cambodia) in Kampong Speu province protested outside the factory on Monday, continuing a strike that began on June 11. Employees walked off the job after

management terminated the contracts of three Free Trade Union (FTU) officials. The garment workers want FTU organisers reinstated, a \$US15 per month lunch allowance and an end to forced overtime. The strikers have refused to meet Cambodian labour department officials for negotiations.

## India: Police attack protesting teachers in Haryana

Around 250 contract computer teachers, who have been protesting for the past 150 days in Panchkula, in India's northern state of Haryana, were viciously attacked by police on Tuesday after they tried to march to the District Commissioner's office in Panchkula. They were stopped by police using water cannons and beaten with lathis (steel-tipped canes). Around 30 teachers were injured with one protestor receiving nine stitches on the head.

The teachers' main demand is to be made permanent education department employees.

## Telangana: MGM Hospital workers on strike

Paramedics, contract and outsourcing employees at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Hospital in Warangal, Telangana walked out on indefinite strike on Monday over 15 demands. These include a minimum wage, job security, Employee State Insurance and membership in the Pension Fund. Most of the workers had been employed at the hospital on a contract basis for 13 years. The workers are members of the Telangana United Medical and Health Employees' Union, affiliated to the Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU).

## Kerala public transport workers hold flash strike

Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) workers in Pathanamthitta suddenly walked off the job on June 16 to demand the arrest of the private bus owner who attacked a KSRTC conductor two days earlier. The strike ended a few hours later, after the accused was arrested.

## **Pakistan: Paramedics in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces on strike**

Paramedical staff at state-run hospitals in Lahore walked out on June 15 in a long-running dispute over the delay in implementing the agreed new service-structure and regularisation of contractual employees. Apart from emergency care, the strike has shut down services at all the state-run hospitals. Members of the Punjab Paramedics Alliance are protesting outside the Punjab Institute of Cardiology.

Meanwhile, paramedics in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province have been on strike since June 12 to demand implementation of an agreed service-structure upgrade and time-scale promotions. State-run hospitals in the province are only providing emergency services. The government has refused to meet with representatives of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Paramedics Association, representing 13,000 paramedics in government hospitals. The paramedics were still on strike on June 16.

## **Sindh database employees maintain strike action**

National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) employees in Pakistan's Sindh province walked out on June 11, closing down 52 offices. They are demanding a service-structure revision, time-scale promotions, salary and bonus increases, medical allowances and other benefits and job permanency for contract workers. Strikes in February and May were called off by the All Pakistan NADRA Employees Union after the government falsely promised to meet workers' demands.

## **Federal public servants begin rolling stoppages across Australia**

Thousands of federal public servants from 15 departments and agencies in NSW, Western Australia and the Northern Territory began rolling strikes on Thursday afternoon in a lengthy dispute over new work agreements.

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According to the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), 36,000 of its 57,000 members would be involved in the action. Stop work meetings were to be held in Coffs Harbour and Alice Springs on Friday, Tasmania on Monday and Canberra on Tuesday.

Workers at Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), represented by the CSIRO Staff Association, also commenced action on Thursday. Their action included half-day stop-work meetings in Sydney, Newcastle, Darwin and Perth. CSIRO workers in other parts of Australia will take action on later days.

More than 160,000 federal public sector workers have been involved in a year-long enterprise agreement dispute with the Abbott government over wages and conditions. Although action began in some departments in December, the unions have restricted all action to harmless protests, limited strikes and ineffective work bans.

Workers in all departments have rejected the Abbott government's pay "offer" of between zero and 1.5 percent annual increases combined with cuts to conditions and entitlements. For some employees the so-called offer would be an annual pay cut of between \$2,000 and \$6,000. The CPSU and other unions covering federal public servants are demanding 4 percent annual pay increases for three years with no loss of conditions.

## **South Australia tram drivers stop work**

On June 11, tram drivers in Adelaide, South Australia's capital, stopped work for four hours to attend a stop-work meeting. The action is part of an ongoing enterprise agreement dispute for a pay increase. Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members have rejected the state Labor government's wage offer of annual 2.5 percent increases over the next three years in return for changes to work conditions and acceptance of forced redundancies. The union has been involved in 18 months of negotiations with the government.

An RTBU spokesman said no further action was planned until the government presented a revised offer. He indicated that action would be limited to work bans. The union has not made public its demands.

Meanwhile, Adelaide metro train drivers, also members of the RTBU, are currently voting on whether to take protected industrial action in their pay dispute with the state government. The drivers have rejected a similar enterprise agreement presented to the tram drivers.

## **Queensland mine construction workers reject pay freeze**

Some 35 construction and maintenance workers from contract company Monadelphous met on June 12 in Gladstone (500 km north of Brisbane) and unanimously agreed to make an application for a Protected Action Ballot with the Fair Work Commission. The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) members have rejected company demands for a pay freeze.

The company's pay freeze enterprise agreement will apply to employees at major Rio Tinto mine sites across Central Queensland, including QAL, Yarwun and Boyne Smelter. The construction workers want a 2.5 percent annual pay increases in line with the consumer price index.



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