

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

27 June 2015

Philippines: Sacked banana processing workers back at work

Over 140 sacked banana-packing workers for the Japanese owned Sumitomo Fruit Corp. in Compostela Valley in the Davao region have returned to work after management agreed to reinstate them on June 19. The reinstatements ended a nine-day strike by workers at other Sumifru plants who walked out in support of the sacked workers.

The workers alleged that the sackings were in retaliation for a successful strike in April when management was forced to revoke its new piece-rate scheme and make up for several weeks of lost wages. The piece-rate scheme slashed wages by half.

Hong Kong: Cathay Pacific pilots maintain work-to-rule

Cathay Pacific pilots are maintaining their work-to-rule action begun in December after agreement could not be reached over work scheduling and job cuts. The Hong Kong Aircrew Officers Association members accepted an offer of an 8 percent pay increase over two years but oppose the airline's proposal to cut flight crew numbers on some flights to Europe and changes to rostering arrangements. Talks are continuing.

Cambodian garment workers end strike

Some 1,700 garment workers at the W&D factory in Phnom Penh ended a two-week strike on Wednesday after management agreed to 10 of their 12 demands. Management also agreed to drop criminal complaints against 13 union representatives of the Cambodian Workers Union Federation-W&D who were accused of inciting a riot and damaging factory equipment. Details of the workers' demands were not made public.

Striking Cambodian garment workers protest in Phnom Penh

On Tuesday, a group of strikers from the Kauntex factory in Takeo province travelled to Phnom Penh to present petitions to the Ministry of Labour and National Assembly. Workers walked off the job earlier

after a manager beat a colleague after she complained about cuts to her wage.

A representative of the Collective Union of Movement of Workers alleged that the factory cut \$5 per month from all workers' pay, reducing their minimum pay to only \$123. The government lifted the minimum wage for garment workers in January from \$100 a month to \$128. The increase followed mass protests in January 2014, during which four striking workers were shot dead by Cambodian military police.

India: Telangana MGM Hospital workers end strike

Paramedics, contract and outsourcing employees at the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) Hospital in Warangal, Telangana ended their six-day strike on June 21 after state government officials agreed to "address" their demands.

Members of the Telangana United Medical and Health Employees' Union, affiliated to the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), walked out last week with 15 demands. These included a minimum wage, job security, Employee State Insurance and membership to the Pension Fund. Most of the workers had been employed at the hospital on a contract basis for 13 years.

Delhi municipal sanitation workers strike

Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) sanitation workers announced that they intended to strike indefinitely on June 26 over several issues. Their demands include the immediate payment of three months' salaries, confirmation of contract employees' services, payment of arrears to those who were made permanent in 2003 and 2004, and cashless medical facilities. The 28 unions across the three wings of the MCD have formed the Joint Front of MCD Unions to press for their demands.

On June 12, 15,000 East New Delhi Corporation sanitation workers ended their 12-day strike after the corporation agreed to pay one month's outstanding salaries.

New Delhi government hospital doctors end strike

Two thousand resident doctors at 20 hospitals in New Delhi ended a two-day strike on Tuesday evening after authorities agreed to address their demands. Federation of Resident Doctors' Association (FORDA) members defied government threats to use the Essential Services Maintenance Act, which imposes heavy fines on government employees if they continue strike action.

The doctors' were demanding adequate supplies of generic and life-saving drugs, security at the workplace, fixed duty hours and timely payment of salaries. Their action followed a one-day strike in February over the same issues, which ended after the government falsely promised to consider their demands.

Manipur municipal workers on strike

Over 200 permanent employees of the Imphal Municipal Council (IMC) have been on strike since June 10 impacting on revenue, sanitary, general, assessment and engineering services. Workers locked the IMC depot and are currently protesting outside the building demanding a wage increase as per the Sixth Pay Commission. The IMC agreed to implement it following a five-month strike in 2013.

Imphal Municipal Employees Union members first made their demand in 2003 and began limited strike action in 2006. A union spokesman said contract employees receive the revised pay scale but regular employees have to negotiate. The strikers have refused to return to work until their demand is met.

Pakistan: Islamabad university employees stop work

Quaid-e-Azam University employees in Islamabad walked off the job on June 18 and locked down the academic section in a dispute over pay and other issues. The Employees Welfare Association, which called the protest, warned that if demands were not met by Friday they would expand the campaign and shut down the university.

They are demanding paid leave, overtime pay, timely promotions and permanent jobs for long-serving daily wage workers. Over 150 workers are protesting outside the university administration offices.

Pakistan: Punjab government tax revenue workers protest

Over 140 daily-wage employees of the Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) have set up a protest camp outside the PRA office building in Lahore over non-payment of their salaries and for job permanency. Workers complained that they have not been paid wages and overtime for May and June. The protesting workers are mostly post-graduates who have been forced to work in grades below their qualifications.

Bangladeshi jute workers protest

Workers at the state-owned Alim Jute Mills in Khulna, Bangladesh demonstrated along the Khulna-Jessore Highway on June 19, temporarily blocking traffic. The workers had formed the Privatisation Resistance Committee to oppose the government's plan to privatise the jute industry. The demand for jute has declined sharply over past years, forcing at least 60 private mills to close, rendering over 56,000 workers unemployed. Many workers complained that they are not being paid on time.

Federal public servants continue strike action

Following last week's half-day strikes by federal public servants in the capital cities and six regional centres in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, thousands of public sector employees in Tasmania, Canberra, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia held half-day strikes. Services at Medicare and Centrelink were affected, along with delays at international airports in Melbourne, Brisbane and the Gold Coast when customs officers stopped work for four hours.

Enterprise bargaining for 160,000 public servants covering 118 staff agreements and several unions in over 70 departments and agencies has been underway since March 2014. 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. According to the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), if the government's wage proposals were accepted workers face losing up to 70 percent of their existing rights and some face an actual 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. Although action began in some departments in December, the unions have restricted all action to harmless protests, limited strikes and ineffective work bans.

Wollongong brick layers protest unpaid wages and benefits

Workers from City Bricklaying, based in Wollongong, drove to Sydney's North Shore on June 23 to protest outside a building project by Grindley Construction, which specialises in building aged care and retirement facilities for the not-for-profit sector. The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) members alleged that Grindley has failed to pay a \$1.4 million bill to City Bricklaying, leaving workers with reduced pay and entitlements.



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