# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

**22 August 2015**

**South Korean tyre workers walk out**

Workers at Kumho Tire Company, South Korea's second-largest tyre manufacturer, began their first full shift strike in three years on Monday after the union failed to reach agreement in a new pay deal. Following a four-hour stoppage last week, workers at the company's three production facilities struck for eight hours against management demands for a "wage-peak system."

The peak system allows employees to accept reduced salaries in exchange for working until the retirement age set by the company. The union says it should not be a part of wages negotiations.

Kumho has proposed a three million-won ($US2,537) one-off bonus and a one-year extension of the retirement age if the wage-peak system is adopted. The union has called for an unconditional 8.3 percent salary rise and performance-based pay for 2014.

Workers also want compensation for salary and bonus cuts when the company was under debt reconstruction from 2009 to 2012. The union claimed that the pay cuts amounted to as much as 40 percent during this period.

**Pakistan: Power-loom workers in Faisalabad locked out**

Over 5,000 operators of 25,000 textile power-looms in Faisalabad, Punjab province have been locked out by loom factory owners since August 9 in a dispute over wages and safety. The Council of Loomowners Association claims that the National Workers Movement (LQM) demands are "extortion."

The LQM has threatened strike action across Faisalabad and involving up to 45,000 textile weavers, if the lockout is not ended.

In a similar dispute, Faisalabad brick kiln owners have locked out 60,000 workers at 500 kilns since August 7. The kiln workers' union has called for payment of the officially mandated 962 rupees ($US9.43) for 1,000 bricks per day.

**Punjab bus security guards strike**

More than 200 contract security guards at Metro Bus Service terminals in Rawalpindi walked off the job on Monday demanding their July wages. Around eight security guards are normally deployed at each terminal. Bus services were suspended during the strike.

The guards returned to work after three hours when their employer Security 2000, under pressure from the Metro Bus Authority, agreed to pay last month's wages.

**Islamabad medical staff end strike action without resolution**

On August 18, medical staff at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad ended 15 days of industrial action, including two-hour daily strikes and demonstrations, after authorities said they would address their issues. The 4,000 workers want PIMS separated from the Shaheed Zulifiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University.

When PIMS merged with the university in 2013, the former civil servants became university employees and ineligible for government-approved allowances, pay rises and timescale promotions. The workers are also concerned that the hospital, which has lifted patients' fees, is being run like a private enterprise.

Hospital management is threatening to take "strict" disciplinary action against 18 employees it has singled out as strike leaders.

PIMS employees are also involved in ongoing protests by medical staff at all government hospitals in Islamabad. The workers are demanding reinstatement of the health risk allowance, which has stripped up to 7,000 rupees ($US68) per month from their salary.

**India: Telangana contract health care workers maintain strike**

Around 1,500 Telangana state contract and outsourced health care (Aarogyasri) workers have been on a state-wide strike since July 25 over 12 demands, including job permanency, salary increases and holidays, which the government promised during its election campaign.

The contract workers are paid as low as 5,900 rupees ($US90.2) per month, depending on job status, and do not receive benefits paid to government employees.

At least 200 strikers were arrested at a demonstration organised by the Telangana Aarogyasri Outsourcing Employees' Association outside the Aarogyasri trust office in Jambagh.

**Kerala telecommunications contract workers walk out**

Contract workers of the state-run communications company BSNL have been on strike in Kerala since August 12 to demand better wages. The Contract and Casual Workers Federation (CCWF) has reduced demands for a 200-rupee increase that would have brought workers' wages close to

© World Socialist Web Site

the 650-rupee daily average wage in Kerala. The union has now halved this and will accept a 100-rupee rise. BSNL management agreed to meet with the union again for Thursday.

**Australian parliament cleaners strike**

Following a 24-hour strike in June, contract cleaners at Australia's federal parliament in Canberra walked off the job for five days on Monday in a year-long pay dispute. The 40 cleaners, who work for Limro Cleaning Services, want their current $21.10 hourly rate increased to $22.90.

In 1998 there were 100 parliament house cleaners, today there are only 40 for the building's 4,700 rooms.

According to the United Voice union, the rise would bring workers into line with the Commonwealth Cleaning Guidelines, which were scrapped in 2014 as part of the Liberal-National coalition government's "war on red tape." As a result, the cleaners' pay has been frozen since 2013.

The government claimed that abolishing the "guidelines" would not reduce workers' pay. Cleaners at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade building in Canberra, however, have had their wages slashed by 15 percent or $6,000 a year. Department of Immigration and Border Protection cleaners have also had their hourly rate cut by $2. United Voice opposes any unified industrial campaign by its membership to defeat these cuts.

**New South Wales: Illawarra coal miners on strike**

Around 200 workers at the South32-owned Dendrobium underground coal mine at Mount Kembla in the Illawarra region, 80km south of Sydney, walked off the job for seven days on August 14 in a dispute for a new enterprise agreement.

The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) members voted overwhelmingly for strike action last week and planned to impose bans when they returned to work yesterday. Miners and supporters are maintaining a picket outside the mine.

The current enterprise agreement expired in April 2014 when BHP Billiton owned the business and was unresolved in May when South32 took it over. South32 began giving Dendrobium workers a six-month interim pay increase in an attempt to avert industrial action.

The dispute mainly centres on job security. The miners want an agreement which restricts the use of short-term casuals. The CFMEU claimed that it would not accept the casualisation of permanent positions but was prepared to accept redundancies "if the positions were no longer needed."

Enterprise agreements at South32's other Illawarra coal mines—at Appin and West Cliff—expired last month.

**Queensland Big W warehouse workers strike**

Around 35 members of the National Union of Workers (NUW) at the Big W (Woolworths) distribution centre in Warwick, 130km south-west of Brisbane, voted last week to take industrial action over a pay dispute. The action could involve strikes and paperwork bans.

The union wants a 6 percent pay rise to bring Warwick's wage rates closer to those at Woolworths' distribution centre in Brisbane. The company has offered just 1.2 percent and pays its Brisbane distribution centre workers 17 percent or $11,000 per year more than the Warwick employees. In preparation to impose job cuts, the union has called for improved redundancy payouts.

Last week the NUW sold out strike action by workers at Woolworths' Liquor Distribution Centre in western Melbourne. After isolating the strike for four days, NUW national secretary Tim Kennedy told strikers that they would face Fair Work Australia fines if they continued industrial action and pushed through a return-to-work vote. None of the workers' key demands—no use of labour-hire companies or any retribution against the strikers—were met.

**New South Wales health workers protest**

Allied health workers and other staff, held a lunch-time demonstration outside Maitland Hospital, in the Hunter region (140km north of Sydney), on August 14 over job cuts.

Hunter New England health authorities plan to restructure allied health services in the region and cut costs by $600,000. Six out of seven specialist directors' positions in allied health will be axed. One director will be required to oversee physiotherapy, social work, occupational therapy, speech pathology and dietetics.

About two-thirds of the hospital's staff are members of Health Services Union (HSU) and are expected to refuse to do the duties of the redundant workers. A union official told the media that the lunchtime rally provides a chance for members to demonstrate solidarity but proposed nothing to fight the job destruction.

**Tasmanian food production workers vote for strike**

Some 75 employees at McCain Foods potato chip plant at Smithton in northern Tasmania have unanimously voted to take industrial action over an unresolved pay dispute. Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) members, including food processing workers and maintenance staff, are opposing company attempts to wind back their conditions and take-home-pay in a proposed new enterprise agreement.

The dispute came to a head when McCain refused to lift its 3 percent pay offer over two years. The rise would involve trade-offs, including cuts to weekend penalty rates, overtime pay and shift allowances. The union says that weekly take-home pay for maintenance workers would be cut by $91 and production employees by at least $72.

**South Australian train drivers maintain overtime bans**

Metro train network drivers in South Australia's capital Adelaide are maintaining overtime bans imposed last month in an 18-month dispute with the state Labor government over a new enterprise agreement. Services for some weekend sporting events have been cancelled.

The Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members rejected the government's annual 2.5 percent pay rise over three years in return for accepting forced redundancies and changes to working conditions. The

© World Socialist Web Site

union has said it is prepared to accept forced redundancies if they are imposed on future employees.

**New Zealand: Auckland cash delivery security guards strike**

In a dispute over stalled pay negotiations, 28 security guards delivering cash to ATMs (automatic teller machines) in Auckland, on New Zealand's North Island, cut short their deliveries on Wednesday morning. They drove back to the East Tamaki depot of their employer ACM, a subsidiary of Linfox Armaguard. The guards' employment agreement expired in April. Mediation talks between the Service and Food Workers Union and ACM failed on August 14.

Workers had rejected the company's pay increase offer of 2 percent and a further 1.4 percent or consumer price index next year, whichever is greater. The guards want crew leaders to get a larger pay rise in recognition of their higher level of responsibility. Other issues to be resolved include changes to their daily run, and rosters that they claim caused stress and resulted in high levels of sick leave, which, in turn, brought more roster changes.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

© World Socialist Web Site