

Class struggle developing on Indian sub-continent

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

3 June 2017

India: Bangalore municipal workers protest

About 10,000 daily-waged contract workers from BBMP (the governing body of Greater Bangalore) marched to Freedom Park on May 25 demanding permanent employment and payment of outstanding wages. The protesters, mainly street sweepers and sanitation workers, are among the lowest paid in the state. They said that they cannot exist on their meagre wage which is often delayed for several months.

The workers want permanent jobs, a wage increase and payment of overdue wages. A union spokesman said previous protests ended in May 2016 after the chief minister falsely promised that a new employment scheme by March this year would give them permanency. Protesting workers threatened to strike indefinitely if their demands are not resolved by June 12.

Haryana public transport workers strike

Haryana Roadways Workers Union members stopped work across the state on Monday to oppose the state government's decision to allow private operators to run buses on 273 routes. Workers at the Sirsa depot, where private operators have begun running services, have been on strike since May 24 over the issue. Around 3,500 state buses were grounded by the walkout. Their action followed a 24-hour state wide stoppage on April 10.

The workers have accused the government of restricting the transport services in order justify privatisation. They claim that there should be 16,000 government buses providing jobs to around 96,000 workers. Currently there are only about 4,000 buses, workers said.

BASF chemical plant workers in Karnataka protest

Production line workers at the German-owned BASF chemical plant in Mangalore, Karnataka have been protesting on the plant's premises since May 22 against the company's "anti-union" discrimination. The union claimed the workers' protests do not affect production. Workers at BASF plants in Mumbai and Gujarat also have complained of management's discrimination against union members.

The Mangalore workers claim that non-union employees doing the same work are categorised in higher salary posts with better employment

benefits and fewer working hours. Workers claim the company has recently fired 60 union members in an attempt to intimidate employees..

Pakistan: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa doctors on strike

Members of the Provincial Doctors Association, including seniors and professors, at the Ayub Teaching Hospital in Abbottabad have been on strike since May 24 over long standing issues. Classes are closed and only surgery for emergency cases is being performed.

Doctors want better hostels and payment for on-call duty. They claim that poor accommodation outside the hospital complex contributed to the recent unexplained deaths of two junior doctors.

Attempts by the provincial government to stop the strike failed on Monday when doctors unanimously voted to continue the boycott until demands are met. In an attempt to intimidate striking doctors, authorities issued notices demanding an immediate return to work or face strict disciplinary actions and legal action.

Meanwhile, on separate issues, members of the Young Doctors Association (YDA) began a province-wide strike on May 23. YDA members are maintaining a protest tent outside the Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar. They want a service structure and protection of the Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) from decentralisation.

Doctors fear that the government's plan to decentralise the PGMI to various teaching hospitals in the province will lower professional standards. The YDA has also demanded that the government release money meant for compensation to families of doctors who died while on duty.

Lahore railway workers protest

Railway Workers Union members from the state-run Pakistan Railways demonstrated outside the railway workshop in Lahore on May 29. They want a 100 percent pay increase, a service structure, 60 percent of new employees selected from the children of retired and deceased workers and an end to government plans to privatise the public service.

Around 1,000 railway workers protested at the Lahore Press Club in January over the same issues.

Sindh province power and water utility workers demonstrate

Thousands of All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers' Union members stopped work on May 25 to demonstrate throughout Sindh province on May 25 with a raft of demands to be included in the upcoming budget. Workers were from the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company and Sukkur Electric Power Company, among others.

The power workers want pay increases between 100 and 150 percent, rises in pensions and house rent, a death and dowry grant, relief allowances, job security, job quotas for recruitment of sons of employees, Eid rewards and an end to privatisation.

Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) workers are also engaged in a long campaign against the government's attempt to privatise the utility company under demands from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Philippines: Luxury hotel workers issue strike notice

The Peninsular Employees Union, representing workers at the luxury Peninsular Manila Hotel, has filed for industrial action in their dispute over the hotel's proposed new collective bargaining agreement, and "aggressive" attacks on working conditions and rights. Workers claimed that management's proposed new agreement would increase existing harsh disciplinary action and further slash working conditions.

The union also wants reinstatement of a union leader sacked last year following industrial action and for management to comply with a government order to give 405 casual workers at the hotel permanent status. To undercut negotiations on the collective bargaining agreement, the hotel attempted to form a company union in January. It was overwhelmingly voted down by employees.

Australian childcare workers vote to strike

More than 3,000 early childhood educators have overwhelmingly voted in favour of national strike action for higher wages in childcare centres. The move follows similar action in the sector in March when 1,000 workers walked off the job closing down around 20 childcare centres across Australia. Workers anticipate that up to 50 centres will close during the proposed escalated action. A date for the walkout has not been set.

The United Voice union has mounted a case in the Fair Work Commission (FWC), calling for pay rises of between 39 and 72 percent. The union is arguing that the 80,000-strong workforce is paid much less than men with similar qualifications.

An educator on the base rate for certificate III only receives \$20 an hour, slightly above the minimum wage, while workers with diploma-level training receive between \$23 and \$25 an hour. Childcare educators believe their claim for a substantial hourly wage increase would substantially reduce the 16.2 percent pay gap between men and women in Australia.

While the union attempts to blame the low wages in the sector on the fact that over 80 percent of educators are female, this perception ignores the broader trend across all industries towards falling or stagnant wages. The FWC ruled in February that penalty rates for work on Sunday and public holidays will be reduced for full-time and part-time workers in the hospitality, retail and fast-food industries, reducing the annual wage in the sectors by up to \$6,000.

Sydney bus drivers take industrial action

Sydney bus drivers from 12 depots around the city declared a "fare-free day" on Thursday and turned off ticketing machines. Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members are protesting against the New South Wales Liberal-National government's plan to privatise the operations of the bus services in the city's inner-west and south.

On May 18 about 1,200 drivers from depots in the inner-western suburbs of Leichhardt, Tempe, Kingsgrove and Burwood walked out for 24 hours. They defied orders by the state's Industrial Relations Commission banning the strike.

While the RTBU claims it is worried that members could lose their jobs or be employed under lower conditions, its real concern is that if inner-west services are privatised, bus drivers will be covered by the rival Transport Workers Union.

Saipan: Terminated casino construction workers protest

Twenty-nine Chinese workers from construction contractors MCC, Belieda, Gold Mantis and CMC demonstrated outside the construction site of the multimillion-dollar Imperial Pacific Resort on the Pacific island of Saipan on May 25. They were demanding unpaid wages and reimbursement for medical fees incurred from injuries sustained in the workplace. They chanted, "We want our money! We want to go home!"

Many of the workers had not received wages since February. More than 50 workers from MCC took limited industrial action in April over outstanding wages and "sub-standard" living conditions.

According to Reuters, MCC and Beilida Overseas (CNMI) Ltd, were charged by the US government on April 3 with illegally importing and employing Chinese workers, including one who died in March. Earlier this month Gold Mantis Construction Decoration was forced to pay outstanding wages to 90 of its workers who entered the country on tourist visas and send them back home to China.



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