

Public servants, teachers strike in Pakistan

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

14 October 2017

## **Pakistan: PIMS medical staff resume strike**

Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) workers resumed strike action on Monday in Islamabad after authorities failed to resolve their demands. Staff are stopping work for three hours each day. A three-day strike last week by administration, paramedical staff, nurses and others was called off after the government falsely claimed it would discuss and resolve their demands.

PIMS workers lost their status as civil servants, as well as government accommodation and other benefits, in 2013 when the hospital—a 1,200-bed facility—was upgraded and affiliated with the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Shaheed Medical University. Workers want the affiliation reversed and have been holding limited rolling strikes since July 2016 over the issue. More than 4,000 employees are affected.

## **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa college teachers on strike**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professors and Lecturers Association members from state-run colleges began an indefinite boycott of classes and co-curricular activities on Tuesday over several long pending issues. Academic activity in 150 colleges was suspended.

Teachers demanded a halt to government plans to establish a Board of Governors to give financial and administrative autonomy to colleges. Teachers fear the plan would increase the financial burden on students and would be a step towards total privatisation of colleges.

The strikers' other demands included job upgrades in line with nation-wide promotions that began in 2006 but are yet to be completed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a proper service structure, and professional allowances similar to doctors and other professions.

## **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa contract teachers protest**

About 600 government school and college teachers whose contracts expire on October 31 demonstrated outside Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister Pervez Khattak's residence on Monday in Islamabad. The teachers were demanding permanency. Roads to his residence were barricaded, preventing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders

attending meetings.

The government has repeatedly ignored the teachers' demand for permanency. The teachers' contracts were to end last year but were extended in response to protests. The protest was called off after Khattak promised to resolve the issue within a week.

## **Visually impaired workers in Lahore demonstrate**

Visually impaired workers from government departments in Lahore demonstrated outside the Lahore Press Club on Monday to demand permanent jobs. Demonstrators spilled onto the Metro Bus tracks forcing a partial suspension of the service.

Workers said that the government, despite repeated assurances over the past three years, has failed to provide them with permanent jobs and as a result they are forced to survive on daily-wage contract employment. Several workers complained that they had not been paid for four months.

## **India: Delhi sanitation workers strike again over unpaid wages**

The Swachhta Karamchari Union, which covers 11,000 sanitation workers from the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), called an indefinite strike from Wednesday over non-payment of salaries, bonuses and arrears due from 2003. The Swatantra Majdoor Sayunkt Morcha, a union with members in Delhi's three municipal corporations, has announced it would strike from October 16 over the same issues.

The EDMC is reeling from a huge budgetary deficit since the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was split into three separate municipalities in 2011. It has failed to pay salaries regularly, triggering six strikes in three years. The corporation has not paid its sanitation workers since September.

An EDMC spokesman said the corporation had asked for a 1,000 million rupee (\$US15.4 million) advance from Delhi in order to pay wages in time for the Diwali religious festival on October 19.

## **Mumbai juvenile remand-home workers strike**

Around 250 workers at Children Aid Society (CAS) juvenile remand homes in Mumbai struck on October 9 over long outstanding demands. The Children Aid Society Employees' Union has demanded on-time payment of salaries and a pension and provident fund.

Workers also want increased government funding for CAS and better facilities for inmates at the city's eight juvenile observation homes. The union alleges that while cost per child is 2,500 rupees, the government grants only 635 rupees per child.

## **Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat health workers protest**

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers in Ongole, Andhra Pradesh and Vadodara, Gujarat demonstrated this week demanding that the monthly minimum wage be increased to 6,000 rupees and that they be provided with uniforms.

Coordinated by the AP Asha Workers Union and the Stalinist Centre for Indian Trade Unions, the protest followed a demonstration last month by hundreds of ASHA workers in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh over the same demands.

## **Sri Lankan rail workers strike**

Sri Lanka Railways drivers and guards suddenly walked out on strike in Colombo on Wednesday evening affecting trains leaving the Colombo Fort station. Police were called to several railway stations in the city when commuters protested over the cancellation of services. The rail workers allege that management had disregarded recruitment policies and procedures when recruiting trainees.

## **Victoria: Aged cared nurses walk out**

Around 1,000 nurses at 26 Bupa aged care facilities in Victoria began limited industrial action on October 3 in a dispute over a proposed new enterprise agreement. Ongoing protest action by members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) includes wearing union t-shirts at work and distributing campaign materials to residents, relatives and the community.

ANMF members in Melbourne walked off the job and demonstrated outside Bupa's aged care facility in Clayton on Monday while stop-work action was held at seven other facilities across Victoria during the week.

The ANMF said it has been attempting to negotiate with management of the international health corporation over the past 14 months for increased staffing levels and skill mix to improve patient care, and better working conditions.

The union claims that Bupa nurses are paid 10 percent less than their peers in other facilities. Nurses and carers are also demanding a rise of

around 10 percent over four years, on top of "catch up rates" to meet industry standards.

## **South Australia: Marion Council workers protest**

Around 40 outdoor workers from the Marion Council, south of the state's capital Adelaide, demonstrated at the council chamber meeting on Tuesday over a disputed enterprise agreement. Australian Workers Union (AWU) members want 3 percent annual pay increases in a three-year enterprise agreement.

Management has only offered 2 percent and is demanding more flexible working hours, including being able to extend the working day as required. The union offered to extend the working day in return for a 38-hour four-day week. About 90 staff would be covered by the agreement.

## **Papua New Guinea fish processing workers strike**

Around 2,000 Frabelle PNG fish processing workers in Lae, Morobe province demonstrated at the factory gate on Monday demanding a pay rise and better conditions. They refused to begin work until their long-pending demands were met. The workers want better health benefits and their current 3.5 kina (\$US1.10) hourly wage increased by 14 percent.

Frabelle PNG is a joint Taiwanese-Filipino partnership and one of the largest employers in Lae, processing around 200 metric tons of fish per day.

## **French Polynesian public servants strike**

Public servants in the small Pacific colony of French Polynesia struck on Wednesday to protest the French government's plan to impose massive public sector job cuts. Hundreds of workers demonstrated in the colony's capital Papeete. The strike affected public administration, the courts and schools.

The French government plans to cut 120,000 jobs from its public sector, which employs more than five million people, including 10,000 in French Polynesia.



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