

## South Korean media workers continue strike

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

21 October 2017

### South Korea: Strike at public broadcasters MBS and KBS in seventh week

Over 3,000 members of the National Union of Media Workers at MBC and KBS, South Korea's two biggest public TV networks, have been on strike since September 4 to protest alleged management interference in news coverage and unfair labour practices. News broadcasts have been severely restricted. Re-runs of popular entertainment programs are being aired.

Around 1,800 workers at KBS and 2,000 at MBC have called for the removal of the networks' management and the restoration of independent reporting.

The strike is an escalation of an action by 400 MBC reporters, TV producers, camera journalists and announcers at MBC. They walked out in August following revelations of an MBC "blacklist" which categorised journalists into different groups based on their involvement in a 170-day strike in 2012, their relations with the labour union and "loyalty" to the company. Six journalists who were dismissed then as a consequence of the strike are still awaiting a final court ruling.

### Filipino jeepney drivers hold another strike

Around 200,000 jeepney drivers across the Philippines held a two-day strike from Monday over government plans to phase out passenger jeepney vehicles 15 years or older. The government suspended all work at government offices and public and private schools in an attempt to minimise traffic congestion in major cities.

The strike, called by PISTON, followed stoppages in February, May, July and September over the issue. While other drivers' organisations such as Stop and Go Coalition and Jeepney Phase-out Coalition were involved in previous strikes they did not participate in the latest strike.

President Rodrigo Duterte's government claims it wants to modernise transport vehicles and make them environmentally friendly. The union groups allege that only big companies can afford the vehicle replacements demanded, and called for an upgrade of their jeepneys and improved enforcement of road-worthiness rules.

Under the government's draft plan, a jeepney operator will be required to have 7 million pesos (\$US140,393) for a franchise, have 20 units by 2018 and double that number the following year. The replacement units must be fitted with Euro 4 engines or electrically-powered engines with solar panels for roofs. They are to be equipped with closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, a GPS navigation system, an Automatic Fare

Collection System (AFCS), speed limiters, dashboard cameras and Wi-Fi.

The jeepney phase-out was due to begin in July and will impact over 600,000 drivers and 250,000 operators.

### Cambodian cement factory workers strike

Around 100 workers from the Chinese-owned Battambang Conch Cement Company in Ratanak Mondol district demonstrated outside the factory on October 15 demanding to be paid wages for September. Management called police when supervisors failed to calm workers. Several people were injured before police broke up the demonstration.

### Pakistan: PIMS medical staff maintain strike

Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) workers in Islamabad are maintaining three-hour daily stoppages begun on October 9 after authorities failed to resolve their demand to be classed as government employees. A threatened three-day strike in the first week of October by administration, paramedical staff, nurses and others over the issue 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.

### Karachi government hospital doctors stop work

Doctors at the government-run Civil Hospital and Abbasi Shaheed Hospital in Karachi walked off the job for several hours on Tuesday to demand long overdue promotions. The outpatients' department was forced to close while doctors demonstrated on the premises of their respective hospitals.

## **India: Strike by East Delhi sanitation workers escalates**

An indefinite strike by 11,000 sanitation workers, members of the Swachhta Karamchari Union from the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), was joined on Monday by sanitation workers of the Swatantra Majdoor Sayunkt Morcha union, with 54,000 members in the South and North Delhi Municipal Corporations. The strike, begun on October 11 by EDMC workers, is over non-payment of salaries for September, and bonuses and arrears due from 2003.

The EDMC and other municipal corporations are reeling from huge budgetary deficits since the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was split into three separate municipalities in 2011. Salary payments are regularly delayed, triggering six strikes in three years.

## **Tamil Nadu garment workers suspended after protest**

Fourteen workers from the Celebrity Fashions garment factory in the MEPZ-SEZ at Chennai were suspended on October 14 following a protest by factory workers the day before demanding a 20 percent increase in the annual bonus and reemployment of their suspended union leader. The factory employs over 2,000 workers.

The suspended workers, members of the Garment and Fashion Workers Union (GAFWU), were campaigning for the full government-mandated minimum wage, employee state insurance (ESI) and other issues. Workers complained that management was illegally deducting transport allowances from their pay, reducing their wages to below the legal minimum.

## **Maharashtra state transport workers strike**

State transport workers in the Indian state of Maharashtra began an indefinite strike at midnight on Monday, saying they would stay out until they are paid better salaries. At least 17,000 Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation buses were left idle. Members of the Maharashtra State Transport Workers Union want the recommendation of the Seventh Pay Commission implemented and a 25 percent pay increase until their contracts are revised.

Workers rejected the corporation's offer of a 10 percent interim pay increase and the establishment of a committee to "resolve their grievances."

## **Bangladesh: Gazipur garment workers locked out**

Workers at the Apparel-21 garment factory in Gazipur were locked out on October 15 following their demonstration outside the factory the day before. They were demanding the reinstatement of a sacked worker. Police and hired thugs violently broke up the demonstration, injuring three workers. At a tripartite meeting with government authorities, management and workers on Sunday, management agreed to lift the lockout and offered to reinstate the sacked worker or pay his termination within two days.

## **Gazipur ceramics factory workers strike over unpaid wages**

Workers from the Farr Ceramic Factory in Noulapara, Gazipur struck work on Monday and began a factory occupation demanding wages for September and October. Other demands were for the festival allowance and arrears from 2015. Management called in police to stop workers leaving or entering the factory. Management agreed to begin talks with workers on Tuesday to discuss their grievances.

## **Queensland: Gold Coast council workers strike**

Around 200 members of eight unions from the Gold Coast City Council, in southeast Queensland, walked off the job on Thursday in a dispute over a proposed new enterprise agreement. Strikers included cleaners, electricians, plumbers, mechanics and administration officers. The limited strike action followed multiple rolling stoppages over six weeks.

The unions are demanding a 3.5 percent pay rise, guaranteed job security for temporary workers, less outsourcing and more control over work hours. Workers oppose the council's proposed changes to work conditions which would mean workers could be scheduled to work between 4am and 9pm. Currently workers can only be scheduled between 6am and 6pm.

## **New South Wales: John Hunter Hospital nurses vote in favour of industrial action**

Over 250 nurses and midwives at the state-owned John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle, north of Sydney, on Monday voted in favour of implementing industrial bans across the facility, unless the state Liberal-National government addresses staffing problems. The NSW Nurses and Midwives Association alleged that an audit of medical and surgical wards revealed the hospital was 6,695 nursing care hours short between last December and June this year.

Nurses complained that the staff shortage is exacerbated by the amount of time they are required to spend away from patients on their ward or unit to complete follow-up discharge phone calls. Nurses voted to implement a ban on the follow-up discharge calls from Thursday, unless the government "immediately" introduced measures to address "safe nursing" staff numbers.

## **Fiji: Nadi air terminal workers vote to strike**

Some 368 out of 588 Air Terminal Services workers at Nadi International Airport, on Fiji's main island Viti Levi, voted in a secret ballot last week to give the trade union the green light to move toward strike action. A Federated Airlines Staff Association representative said it had tried to reach agreement on several issues, including a pay increase and cost of living adjustments since 2007. He said the dispute had been held up in the Employment Relations Tribunal for ten years.

The Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association claimed that a strike by Air Terminal Services workers would affect the livelihoods of 100,000 workers in the tourist industry. In response, a government spokesman

threatened workers, saying the strike ballot was conducted unlawfully and any resulting strike would be illegal.

### **Fiji trade union members demonstrate in Suva**

The Fiji Trade Union Congress (FTUC) has been given permission by Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama's military-backed government to hold a protest march in Suva on October 21. Workers will protest against several issues, including public sector work contracts, the new minimum wage and workers' rights to take industrial action.

Public sector workers are opposed to a public service restructure plan that imposes fixed-term individual contracts of one or two years for civil servants, teachers, nurses and employees of other government-owned entities. They allege the move is in preparation for mass job losses. The low minimum wage of \$2.68 is another issue. The FTUC wants it increased to \$4 an hour.

### **Papua New Guinea: Port Moresby public transport workers strike**

Public motor vehicle (PMV) operators stopped plying routes in PNG's capital Port Moresby on Monday to protest the alleged brutal police assault of a driver, following a reported traffic infringement. Workers accused the police of stealing the driver's takings. The government told PMV operators their licences would be revoked if they failed to return to work on Tuesday.



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