

Apple iPhone workers protest in China

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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China: Apple iPhone factory workers protest

Hundreds of workers from an Apple iPhone manufacturer in Wuxi (150 km west of Shanghai) demonstrated outside the factory on October 19 to protest unpaid bonuses and factory reassignments. Workers told the media that several labour agencies had promised bonuses of between \$US302 and \$1,000 if they stayed at the factory for two months, but never made the payments.

Jabil Inc., which runs the Green Point factory, told workers that it would discuss the grievances with their respective agents.

Cambodian garment factory workers strike

Following a two-day protest inside their factory, workers at the Pou Yuen Cambodia garment factory in Sen Sok district walked out and demonstrated in front of the factory on October 19. Workers were protesting over the management's offer to extend their 12-month contracts by only three months. Workers fear that management is preparing to close the factory and has offered short contracts to reduce termination compensation. Workers rejected management's revised offer to extend the contracts by six months.

India: East Delhi sanitation workers' union closes down strike

The Swachhta Karamchari Union, representing 11,000 sanitation workers from the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), called an end to their 14-day strike on Wednesday on a vague promise from authorities to "review" their demands. The strike was called on October 11 over non-payment of salaries for September, and bonuses and arrears due from 2003. The strike was the second this year, and the eighth since 2015.

Other demands, which the corporation agreed to "consider," were regularisation of workers, re-employment of workers who were removed in 2006, organisation of union elections, and representation of union members on ward committees.

Meanwhile, the Swatantra Majdoor Sayunkt Morcha union, with 54,000 members in the North Delhi (NDMC) and South Delhi (SDMC) municipal corporations, suspended their indefinite strike on October 18 for 20 days after only two days. The workers walked out over similar issues as the

EDMC workers. The union closed down the strike on a flimsy promise by the corporations that "a committee would be constituted soon to look into their issues."

The three municipal corporations are reeling from huge budgetary deficits that have developed since the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was split into three separate municipalities in 2011. Salary payments are regularly delayed, triggering over three years of strikes in various municipal departments.

Court orders Maharashtra state transport workers to end strike

The Bombay High Court on October 20 ordered striking workers from the Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) to return to work, ending a four-day strike. The court ordered the MSRTC to form a negotiating committee and report back to the court by November 15.

Over 100,000 MSRTC workers, mostly drivers and conductors, walked off the job at midnight on October 16, leaving 17,000 buses across the state idle. Their demands were that the recommendation of the Seventh Pay Commission be implemented, with a 25 percent pay increase until their contracts are revised.

Coimbatore municipal contract workers end strike

Around 3,300 contract conservancy workers from the Coimbatore Municipal Corporation in Tamil Nadu ended their two-day strike on October 21 after the corporation agreed to form committees at zone level to resolve their demands. The workers' demands were for minimum wages as per the Minimum Wages Act 2009, an annual bonus better than the 1,000 rupees (\$US15.45) paid in the past and one-day off a week. The committees are to include government, corporation, contractor and workers' representatives.

Pakistan: Strike by PIMS medical staff in third week

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. Strikers, including administration, paramedical staff and nurses, have established a permanent sit-in camp outside the hospital.

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.

A PIMS Employees Association spokesman said it had met with ministry officials who assured them the grievances would be addressed soon, but workers decided to keep protesting until their demand is resolved.

Pakistan: Karachi hospital workers fight for wages

A boycott of duties by house officers, paramedical staff and final year students at the cash-strapped Abbasi Shaheed Hospital run by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) is in its fourth week. Workers are demanding the immediate payment of overdue wages. Paramedical staff have not been paid for two months, while house officers and final year students have not been paid for five months.

Doctors and nurses stopped working for several hours on Monday, forcing the closure of the outpatients department. Emergency ward facilities were also affected. Staff complained about the appalling conditions in the hospital, including shortage of beds, no air-conditioning system in the intensive care unit, lack of functional x-ray and MRI machines, and a shortage of medicines.

A KMC official claimed the corporation was aware of the situation but was unable to get further funds from the Sindh provincial government. The 850-bed teaching hospital, which services over one million residents in Karachi's north, has been in a severe funding crisis since May 2016, when it received only 10 percent of its required budget. Patients were asked to bring their own medical supplies to the hospital before they could be treated.

Toba Tek Singh brick kiln workers end protest

Scores of brick kiln workers and their families ended a four-day protest at Shahbaz Chowk in the Toba Tek Singh district of the Pakistan province of Punjab on October 24 after a meeting with government officials, who assured them their demands would be resolved soon.

Workers set up their protest camp on October 20, saying four months had passed since the Punjab government had issued a notification regarding minimum wages under which kiln owners had to pay 1,110 rupees (\$US10.53) per 1,000 bricks to workers, but it had not been implemented. They said another promise not kept by the chief minister was that 4,000 rupees would be paid to each parent who worked at a kiln and sent their children to schools, while children would be provided with free bags, books, uniforms, shoes and stationery.

After a protracted struggle by kiln workers, the pay rate was fixed by the government. However, kiln owners ignored the government's directive and continued to pay rates as low as 600 rupees per 1,000 bricks. Workers warned they would resume their protest if the government failed to uphold the agreement.

Australian federal court workers strike

Hundreds of staff at the Federal, Family and Federal Circuit courts, and National Native Title Tribunal walked off the job for four hours on October 20 over the federal government's proposed enterprise agreement (EA). Some 90 percent of Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) members in the three departments rejected the government's proposed EA in a ballot in June.

According to the CPSU, the Liberal-National government wants to cut entitlements and conditions, and increase the working day in return for a 1 percent annual pay increase—well below inflation. These workers have not had a pay increase since 2013. Workers are adamant that they will not accept cuts to existing conditions.

The government has opposed attempts by the CPSU to have the dispute heard in the Fair Work Commission, the federal industrial court, as a means of heading off unrest among the workers.

Woolworths warehouse workers' union applies for industrial action

The National Union of Workers (NUW), representing 2,000 workers at four warehouses of supermarket chain Woolworths in Victoria and New South Wales, has applied to the Fair Work Commission for permission to conduct ballots over taking protected industrial action. The NUW and Woolworths have been locked in negotiations over a proposed new enterprise agreement.

The NUW's log of claims calls for improved job security, more full-time work, better redundancy pay-outs and a \$2 an hour pay increase per year, which could be up to 6 percent a year.

The Victorian warehouses are at Broadmeadows and Laverton in Melbourne and at Wodonga in the state's north.

The 700 workers at the company's Hume distribution centre in Broadmeadows face the closure of the site. No date has been set, but Woolworths is moving to replace Hume with a new facility in Melbourne's east that will employ far fewer workers due to greater automation.

Rather than fight the destruction of jobs, the NUW is seeking retraining, redeployment to other sites and greater redundancy pay-outs. Unemployment in Broadmeadows, the location of the recently closed Ford car plant, is officially the highest in Victoria at 25.3 percent.



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