

Indian government bans ambulance workers' walkout, South Korean teachers vote on strike action

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

11 November 2017

## India: Delhi government forces ambulance workers to end strike

The Delhi government invoked the Haryana Essential Services Maintenance Act (HESMA) against contract ambulance drivers and paramedics on November 4, forcing an end to the three-day strike. The ambulance workers have been banned from striking for the next six months. Only 50 of the 260 ambulances of the Centralised Ambulance Trauma Services (CATS) remained in service during the walkout.

Drivers and paramedics suddenly walked off the job on November 1 complaining of irregular payments and disciplinary action taken against vice-president of their union.

CATS, an autonomous body of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, was outsourced to BVG-UKSAS EMS Private Limited in July 2016. Around 600 workers were transferred to the private entity on contract basis.

About 250 CATS contract workers struck last December over violation of labour laws and exploitation. A CATS Contractual Employees Union spokesperson claimed that since ambulance services have been outsourced wages were not paid on time, labour laws were grossly violated and the ambulances lacked proper equipment.

five months' outstanding wages and regular monthly payments of salaries and pensions.

Teachers and staff have threatened to strike for one day on November 13 followed by an indefinite strike on November 30 if their demands are not met.

## Bangladeshi sugar mill workers demonstrate

Workers from the Pabna Sugar Mill, 120 km north of Dhaka, demonstrated on November 6 for a wage increase and 18 other demands.

A Pabna Sugar Mill Workers' Union spokesman said that while professional status employees have received national wage scale payments since July 2015, the mill workers have only just been offered the national pay scale. Workers want back-payments to July 1, 2015 and for the minimum wage to be fixed at 8,500 taka (\$US102) a month.

The sugar workers said tougher action would be organised, if their claims were not fulfilled by the end of this month.

## Jammu and Kashmir power plant workers' strike enters fifth week

Daily wage workers at the Baglihar Hydro Electric Project (BHEP) near Chanderkote in Jammu and Kashmir have been on strike since October 11 demanding permanency. The workers were recruited in 2000 on a daily wage basis by the Jammu and Kashmir State Power Development Corporation. They allege that management has assured workers over the past five years that they would be made permanent but the promise has not been kept.

## Teachers protest at state-assisted private schools in Pondicherry

Teachers and staff at government-aided private schools held a one-day mass casual leave protest and demonstrated outside the Swadeshi cotton mills in Pondicherry on November 7. Their demands included immediate implementation of the 7th pay commission recommendations, payment of

## Pakistan: Punjab college professors and lecturers protest

Punjab Professors and Lecturers Association (PPLA) members at government colleges in Lahore and Bahawalpur launched a protest campaign on Monday against restrictions on leave, teacher monitoring and in support for a pay-scale upgrade and timely promotions. Teachers wore black arm-bands during lectures.

The Punjab government has banned teachers taking any casual leave except in case of a death of a close relative. Teachers are also monitored for their class attendance, punctuality, discipline and performances.

The new measures impact over 19,000 teachers across 560 colleges in Punjab. The PPLA has demanded the Colleges Directorate of Public Instruction immediately withdraw its repressive demands.

The union said that if authorities failed to resolve their grievances by November 12 the protest would be expanded to include daily one-hour class boycotts and rallies from November 13 to November 28. A mass demonstration is planned for November 29 in Lahore.

## **Railway workers in Lahore fight for permanent jobs**

Daily wage workers employed by Pakistan Railway demonstrated in Lahore on November 3 for job permanency. Workers carried banners and slogans denouncing the Pakistan government for failing to offer permanent positions and entitlements as per regular government employees.

## **Sindh disabled workers demand jobs**

Disabled workers protested in Karachi on Monday to demand implementation of a 5 percent job quota for disabled persons in all government entities. The demonstration was held outside the Sindh assembly. Workers held placards condemning the government for failing to implement regulations passed last December, which lifted the job quota for disabled persons employed by the government from 2 to 5 percent.

## **South Korean teachers vote on strike action**

Thousands of Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union (KTU) members began voting on Monday on whether to strike over their demand to be re-registered as a legal union. A walkout is planned for November 24.

The KTU was stripped of its legal status in 2013 by the Park Guen-hye administration on the grounds that it violated the Teachers' Union Law. The legislation states that the union must not have any non-teachers, including those who have been fired, as members. The dispute goes back to 2009 when the KTU refused the then Lee Myung-bak administration's order to expel members who were sacked for signing statements critical of the government.

The KTU alleges that the newly installed president Moon Jae-in indicated during the presidential campaign that he would restore the KTU's legal status if elected. The union is also demanding abolition of the instructor assessment system and performance bonuses.

## **Victoria: Bupa aged-care workers continue rolling stoppages**

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

ANMF members at 13 Bupa facilities took three days of consecutive rolling strikes during morning or afternoon shifts starting on October 31. Around 400 nurses and carers demonstrated outside Bupa's Melbourne offices on November 1. The action followed a week of rolling stoppages at seven Bupa facilities in mid-October.

The ANMF said it has been attempting to negotiate with management of the international health care provider since July 2016 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. The dispute is currently being mediated in the Fair Work Commission.

## **Queensland: Lockout at Glencore coal mine continues**

Multinational mining giant Glencore is continuing its lockout of 190 Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) members at its Oaky North underground coal mine in Central Queensland. CFMEU members have been locked out since June 9, following limited industrial action in May over an enterprise agreement.

The lockout was due to end on July 28 but the CFMEU's isolation of the workers has enabled Glencore to extend the lockout on multiple occasions to a total of more than 130 days.

Glencore has hired a replacement, contract-based workforce and used staff employees to maintain production. Workers fear that Glencore's ultimate aim is to casualise its entire workforce.

The CFMEU wants 3 percent per annum pay increases but indicated it would accept a two-year pay freeze if the current enterprise agreement was rolled over. According to the CFMEU, Glencore wants to axe 50 percent of existing conditions in return for annual pay increases of 2 percent.

## **Port pilot vessel workers in New South Wales strike**

Crews manning pilot vessels at Port Botany in Sydney and Port Jackson, south of Sydney walked off the job for 24 hours on Wednesday in a dispute over a proposed enterprise agreement (EA). The strike is the fourth in six weeks over the issue. The Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) and Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) have been in negotiations with the Port Authority of New South Wales since February over the EA.

## **French Polynesia: Government hospital doctors walk out**

Government doctors at hospitals on Tahiti and surrounding islands in France's South Pacific territory French Polynesia walked off the job for an indefinite period on Tuesday. The government has repeatedly refused to meet and discuss the doctors' grievances.

The doctors' main concern is the government's refusal to recognise and remunerate them according to work experience and seniority obtained outside French Polynesia. The doctors are currently maintaining emergency services.



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