

Hyundai autoworkers rejected pay deal; Taiwan workers protest industrial laws

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

30 December 2017

## South Korea: Hyundai Motor workers reject pay deal

Hyundai Motor workers on December 22 voted down a tentative pay deal negotiated by the union. Some 88.4 percent of Hyundai's 51,000 unionised workers participated in the vote, with 50.4 percent rejecting the offer.

Hyundai Motor had offered to increase workers' basic monthly salary by 58,000 won (\$53) and give bonuses worth 300 percent of basic pay plus 3 million won in extra compensation. The union's initial demand was for workers' basic monthly salary to be increased by 154,883 won and a bonus payment of 30 percent of the company's 2016 net profit of 5.72 trillion won.

A union spokesman said the deal was rejected because the increases offered were lower than last year. Last year, the base pay was lifted by 72,000 won, together with bonuses worth 350 percent of basic pay and 3.3 million won in extra compensation.

The tentative deal with management followed 39 rounds of negotiations and several weeks of strike action at the company's assembly plants in Ulsan. The union is considering whether to immediately resume negotiations or hold them over until after leadership elections in January.

## Chinese optical technology factory workers strike

Around 2,000 workers from the US-owned Sanmina-SCI Optical Technology factory in Shenzhen have been on strike since December 16 demanding a decent compensation package before the plant closes and moves to Thailand next year.

Workers want the company to announce a specific contract termination date and compensation package before anything is removed from the premises. In an attempt to get workers to end the strike management offered compensation to remain at the Shenzhen plant for the transitional period. Most workers did not accept the offer, which expired on December 20, deciding instead to hold out for a better offer, expected on January 15.

## Taiwan workers rally against new industrial laws

Over 10,000 workers and students rallied outside the Democratic

Progressive Party's headquarters in Taiwan on December 23 to oppose the Tsai administration's latest amendment to the Labor Standards Act. After three hours of speeches, protesters attempted to march to the Legislative Yuan but were blocked by police.

Workers condemned the draft amendment which would allow some industries to raise the maximum number of consecutive working days from six to 12 and lower rest time between shifts from 11 hours to eight hours. The proposed changes would increase the maximum number of overtime hours from 46 to 54 per month, but cap it at 138 hours over three months.

A recent survey by 1111 Online Job Bank found that 75 percent of workers were against the labour amendments with many fearing they would become physically and mentally exhausted if employers were allowed to set longer overtime hours.

## Cambodian shoe factory workers locked out

Around 2,000 workers from the Pou Yuen shoe factory in Phnom Penh's Sen Sok district were stopped from entering the factory by security guards last Saturday. Workers said management had not made any announcement but suspected that the factory was closed because of reduced orders. A Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions spokesman said workers intended to continue protesting outside the plant until they received severance pay.

Following a two-day protest inside the factory in October, workers walked out over management's offer to extend their 12-month contracts by only three months. They suspected then that the factory was preparing to close at the end of December.

## India: Sanmina factory strike in Chennai enters sixth week

About 230 workers from the US-owned Sanmina electronics factory in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, have been on strike since November 21 for a pay rise, union recognition and reinstatement of 30 workers on "compulsory rest" and other suspensions following a sit-in protest in March.

The electronics workers, affiliated with the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), want their current 12,000-rupee (\$US186) monthly pay increased to 21,000 rupees in line with workers at the

neighbouring Foxconn and Nokia Siemens factories.

Sanmina's facility, which has around 400 permanent and another 400 contract workers, has maintained production using contract labour and workers affiliated with the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), which is not supporting the strike.

### **Bengaluru sanitation workers protest**

Hundreds of sanitation workers protested at the Bengaluru municipal office in Mahadevapura on Tuesday because garbage contractors had not released their salaries for over three months. Workers also accused the contractors of misusing their ATM cards and bank accounts.

The municipal council claims that the arrears of 30,000 rupees for each worker were paid to the contractor but workers said the contractor was withholding the money.

### **Pakistan: Karachi police attack protesting school teachers**

Police used batons, tear gas and water cannon against more than 1,500 protesting school teachers when they tried to march from the Karachi Press Club to the chief minister's house on Monday. Several teachers were severely injured while 200 were detained. The attack was the third by Karachi police against protesting teachers since September.

All Sindh Primary Teachers Association (ASPTA) and the New Teachers Action Committee (NTAC) members had gathered from all parts of Sindh province to rally in Karachi over several demands.

ASPTA members want permanency for contract teachers and teachers who have been evaluated prior to being appointed to primary, secondary and high schools. They have rejected the government's offer to re-evaluate these teachers by National Testing Service (NTS) saying they are already qualified. Primary school teachers also want the government to honour a promise given in 2014 to grant promotions into scale 16.

NTAC members want payment of overdue wages for teachers appointed in 2012. These teachers said they received their appointments in 2012 but salary payments ceased after 16 months. The teachers, who are still working, alleged that they were told by the treasury department that there were discrepancies in their appointments that had to be resolved before salary payments were resumed.

The protests were called off on Wednesday after government representatives arrived at the demonstration and claimed they would free all arrested teachers and address their demands.

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa paramedics begin industrial action**

Paramedical Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa members began wearing black armbands in all government hospitals on Tuesday, leading up to a provincial strike on January 3 if the government continued to ignore their demands. Stop-work meetings involved 15,000 paramedics were planned for Thursday.

The paramedics' action is part of a long-running campaign for better wages and facilities. They want a new service structure that elevates pay grades and increases the promotions quota, as well as a health professional allowance for all Class IV employees.

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa doctors strike**

Doctors at the government-run Bacha Khan Medical Complex in Swabi boycotted duties on December 20 to demand payment of a health professional allowance. Outpatient departments and classes in adjoining Gajju Khan Medical College were affected. Teachers and students want the college to be affiliated with the Medical and Dental Council.

Doctors said they would continue the protests and threatened to expand their action to other hospitals if authorities failed to resolve the issues.

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa hydro workers demand permanency**

Malakand hydropower project workers demonstrated outside the Peshawar Press Club on December 13 demanding job permanency. Over 230 workers are affected, including engineers. The Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organisation refuses to make them permanent.

Workers have accused the government of outsourcing construction and maintenance duties in order to avoid creating permanent jobs.

### **Bangladeshi primary assistant teachers end protest**

Thousands of assistant teachers from government primary schools across the country gathered in Dhaka on December 23 and began a protest hunger strike. They want the government to reduce the difference in wages between trained head teachers and trained assistant teachers. By the third day of the protest at least 40 fell sick and four were sent for treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The Primary Assistant Teachers Greater Alliance called off the hunger strike on Tuesday after the government gave an assurance that their demands would be met "if they are found to be logical."

Teachers want their pay to be upgraded to 11th grade with a basic salary of \$155 (Taka 12,500) from the existing 14th grade with a basic salary of \$118. They claimed that the pay scale discriminated against 350,000 primary assistant teachers.

### **Fiji: Lockout at Nadi international airport in second week**

About 250 Air Terminal Services (ATS) workers at Fiji's main international airport in Nadi have been locked out since December 16. Management is refusing to allow them to return to work until they agree to sign a declaration saying that a walkout to attend a shareholders meeting was wrong, apologise and accept disciplinary action. ATS provides catering, baggage-handling and engineering services at the airport. ATS has a workforce of 640.

The dispute was triggered when 70 ATS workers walked out to attend an Air Terminal Services Employees Trust (ATSET) beneficiaries meeting. They were not allowed to return to work and were joined by other ATS workers who also refused to sign the declaration.

Mediation talks involving the Fiji employment minister, ATS

management, the Federated Airline Staff Association, the Fiji Trades Union Congress and the Confederation of Public Sector Unions began on Wednesday.

#### **Australia: Spanish diplomatic staff in Sydney on strike**

Five workers at the Spanish consulate-general in Sydney walked off the job in November on an indefinite strike to demand a pay increase and improved working conditions. They said they've been paid below the Australian minimum wage for more than six months due to an ongoing wage freeze by the Spanish government.

Workers want pay parity with Australian public servants and their professional classification moved to the Australian Public Service Work Level Standards.

Consulate-general workers in Sydney walked off the job in June after the Spanish government refused to pass on a 3.3 percent pay increase ordered by the Fair Work Commission as an increase to Australia's minimum wage. Workers claimed their wages were frozen for nine years.

Similar strikes were held by 7,000 staff around the world working in Spanish embassies, consulates and trade commissions, including in the US, Argentina, Brazil, Sweden, Finland, Canada, Uruguay, El Salvador and the Spanish embassy to the EU in Brussels.



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