

Unions shutdown three-week strike by Chinese technology workers

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

21 April 2018

Six thousand Chinese workers strike against factory sale

Unions shut down a three-week strike by 6,000 factory workers at Zhuhai in China's Guangdong province after an intervention by local Communist Party officials. The stoppage began on March 29 after Flex, a multi-disciplinary technology company, announced it was selling its Multek subsidiary to MFLEX, an arm of Suzhou Dongshan Precision Manufacturing.

The striking workers issued an open letter, complaining that there had been "no communication whatsoever regarding the deal." They demanded that all long-service benefits and social insurance contributions be guaranteed and they be given new employment contracts with MFLEX.

While Flex refused to provide any guarantees, the unions, fearful that the strike would become the focal point of a broader movement of workers, collaborated with government representatives, shut down the dispute. Communist Party officials said the strike should be ended in order to "maintain social stability." One union official claimed that "agitators" were responsible for the industrial action.

India: Kerala nurses threaten to strike

Hundreds of nurses from the south Indian state of Kerala have threatened to strike on April 24. The nurses, who are members of United Nurses Association (UNA), are demanding a minimum 20,000-rupee (\$US300) monthly wage for private hospital nurses, as previously ordered by the Supreme Court.

Last July members of the UNA and Indian Nurses Association held a month-long protest over the same demands. The campaign ended after nurses were assured by a state minister that their demands would be granted.

Indian municipal workers threaten indefinite strike

Telangana municipal workers are threatening indefinite strike action on April 25. The workers have formed a Joint Action Committee and are demanding a wage rise in line with the latest pay commission ruling and permanent jobs for all contract and outsourced workers. The workers protested outside the municipal office in Hyderabad on April 11.

Pakistan teachers and college educators protest over pay and conditions

Government school teachers from the Punjab Teachers Union and the Schoolteachers' Union protested in Islamabad on Tuesday against a meagre pay rise offer and government failures to resolve several issues affecting teachers across the country. The teachers rejected a proposed 10 percent pay rise from the government, pointing out that recent commodity price hikes eclipsed the meagre wage increase.

The teachers oppose planned privatisation and demanded a nationally uniform policy and service structure and an end to provincial policy and pay regimes. The two unions warned of further action if the government failed to resolve their demands.

A day earlier Khyber Pakhtunkhwa teachers protested outside the provincial parliament building in Peshawar. They demanded the implementation of a timescale promotion policy as part of the service structure and opposed the government's school privatisation agenda.

College teachers in Punjab are also planning to demonstrate in front of the state's Civil Secretariat on Wednesday. They want one-time promotions for all, implementation of a timescale promotion policy, professional allowances and an end to the ban on study leave and other demands.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa engineers strike in Pakistan

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government engineers struck work on Monday and demonstrated in Peshawar to demand a higher pay scale, professional allowances and an end to bans on private practice.

The strikers held a sit-down protest and a march outside the Civil Secretariat, which was joined by engineers who had travelled from across the province.

In January, up to 1,000 government department sub-engineers protested to demand job permanency and promotions.

Pakistan doctors demand outstanding pay

Government hospital doctors in Gujrat, in the Punjab province, demonstrated on April 12 to demand 10 months' outstanding salaries and other dues. The doctors were members of the Gujrat chapter of the

Pakistan Medical Association and the Young Doctors Association.

At least 146 doctors in Gujrat hospitals are affected by the non-payment of their dues. The protests ended after authorities agreed to resolve the issue within five days.

Bangladesh garment workers demand reinstatement of sacked employees

Several hundred Hydroxide Knitwear factory workers demonstrated in the Bangladesh on Sunday to demand reinstatement of sacked fellow employees and the immediate withdrawal of all disciplinary action.

On April 5, management sacked around 400 workers and filed disciplinary action against 57 of them after a protest over the terminations. The plant, which employed over 3,000 workers, has recently installed labour-saving machines to cut costs. The workers are members of the National Garments Workers Federation and the Ekota Garments Workers Federation.

Bangladesh jute mill workers demand their wages

Workers from the closed Jute Spinners plant in the Shiromoni industrial zone demonstrated on Thursday for outstanding pay and entitlements. They also erected a barricade across Khulna-Jashore highway to highlight their demands.

Protesters told the media that plant authorities ignored their demands and threatened strong action in coming days. The workers are now poverty-stricken, have no money and cannot afford to pay for the education of their children.

Sri Lanka: University unions end six-week strike

On April 12, the University Trade Union Joint Committee (UTUJC) ended a 44-day strike by about 15,000 university non-academic workers.

The non-academic workers were demanding a 20 percent wage rise, a language-proficiency allowance, increased concessionary loans and the introduction of medical insurance and a pension scheme.

The UTUJC ended all industrial action after claiming they received a circular from the university grant commission (UGC) granting a 10 percent salary increase and that the relevant government minister would establish a commission to investigate workers' other demands.

Two days before the strike ended, university authorities threatened to dismiss all probation, contract, training and temporary workers and that permanent employees would not be paid if they failed to return to work on April 17.

Cambodian garment workers picket to prevent plant closure

Workers at the South Korean-owned First Gawon garment factory at Takhmao, Kandal province, are holding a series of protests outside government offices and employers' organisations over unpaid wages.

Eleven workers monitored the factory from April 11 until April 19 (the Khmer New Year holiday) to ensure the owners did not close the plant, move out valuable equipment and deprive the workers of any possibility of compensation. A Coalition of Cambodia Apparel Workers Democratic Union representative at the plant said workers were worried the move would be made during the holiday period.

Workers have not been paid their monthly \$180 salaries since December. Hundreds of workers were sacked in January for supposedly not following a court order to continue working while the wage dispute was unresolved. The dispute has been running for almost a year.

Australian maritime union calls off strike at Port Botany

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) this week called off a scheduled seven-day strike at Port Botany's Kalmar operations. Up to 48 maintenance workers planned to take the industrial action in a claim for a reduction in working hours from 35 hours a week to 30 hours and a 15 percent pay increase over three years.

Kalmar management organised a replacement workforce even before the scheduled industrial action began. MUA members refused to work with the replacements due to "health and safety risks."

The Fair Work Commission (FWC) has issued an interim order prohibiting the dockworkers from refusing duties again until at least next week. The MUA has not yet stated publicly why it called off the seven-day strike and is complying with the FWC directive.

New South Wales prison staff strike over job cuts

About 900 Corrective Services NSW staff walked off the job last Thursday over job cuts and deteriorating conditions. The industrial action began at the Long Bay prison in Malabar, Sydney and spread to other centres after stop-work meetings were held at Goulburn, Berrima, Silverwater and Dillwynia prisons. About 4,000 staff were involved in the walkout.

The strike, which was to have lasted for 48 hours, was declared illegal by the Industrial Relations Commission after the first day and the staff ordered back to work with a moratorium placed on any further industrial action until May 12.

The Public Services Union, which covers the prison staff, immediately complied with the back-to-work order and has re-entered negotiations with Corrective Services. The union claims that "benchmarking" being carried out by Corrective Services could result in up to 91 job losses at Long Bay Jail and 300 at other locations across NSW. This would increase the guard to inmate ratio from one to 14 to one to 16.

Cairns council workers strike over wage dispute in Queensland

Up to 1,200 council employees in the northern Queensland city of Cairns took strike action on Thursday morning over an ongoing wages dispute. The workers are demanding an increase in their base rate of pay, backdated to 2014.

Council staff participating in a two-hour strike rallied outside council chambers on Spence Street. In a calculated provocation, council

authorities advised them not to go back to work for the rest of the day, effectively imposing a limited lock-out. This was despite the fact that the stoppage was “legal” under Fair Work Australia industrial legislation.

The unions covering the workers, including the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union and the Electrical Trades Union, told workers at the rally the issues confronting council workers would be resolved through the election of Labor Councilor Richie Bates as mayor.

New Zealand bus drivers’ strike in Auckland

Bus drivers for NZ Bus in Auckland began rolling strikes on Tuesday. The industrial action is set to continue for two weeks. The company’s bus routes cover a large area of the city from the CBD through major suburbs.

First Union organiser Graham McKean said the strike was over fairer pay and conditions, explaining that drivers are not compensated for long periods spent at bus depots of up to 4 hours in between shifts. This effectively means that drivers are working 14 hours but only paid for 8. First Union has drawn out negotiations with NZ Bus and have called the strike as a “last resort.”

New Zealand rail union rams through sell-out deal in Auckland

The Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) has imposed a sell-out deal on Transdev rail workers in Auckland. The long-running dispute is over the possible loss of hundreds of on-board jobs with the introduction of driver-only operations.

Rail workers held a 24-hour strike in December and limited industrial action in late February. The RMTU ended all action and negotiated a deal with Transdev for a 2.5 percent pay increase and future negotiations on driver-only operations. The union has not ruled out staff cuts.

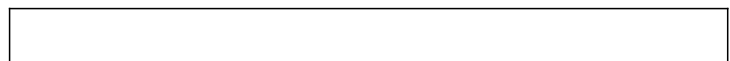
The RMTU claims there was 99 percent support for the deal but according to its own published figures, only 4 of the 501 ballots were returned. Under the union’s anti-democratic voting system all unreturned ballots were as counted as votes in favour of the deal.

New Zealand maritime workers strikes deal with Lyttleton Port management

On Wednesday, the Rail and Maritime Transport Union (RMTU) withdrew all strike notices and announced a settlement with the Lyttleton Port Company (LPC). Around 200 port workers have been on and off a strike since March 13.

RMTU members demanded the same pay rise as the other 200 port workers, who are members of the rival Maritime Union NZ, but LPC refused unless the workers accepted flexible working hours so the port can operate 24/7. The union began negotiations with LPC in September.

Details of the settlement have yet to be announced but the RMTU recently accepted a sell-out deal for Auckland rail workers, suggesting a similar agreement has been made with LPC. The RMTU separated the struggles of the port workers with their rail worker members in Auckland and Wellington.





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