

Foreign workers protest dormitory overcrowding in Taiwan

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

28 April 2018

India: GKN driveline workers continue sit-in protest in Tamil Nadu

Over 120 permanent GKN driveline workers in Tamil Nadu are continuing a sit-in protest they began at the plant on April 19. Four workers fainted and were admitted to the Sriperumbudur general hospital after management blocked food supplies to the protesters.

The GKN workers are protesting vindictive actions by company management against leading militant workers after planned strike action last November. GKN management has sacked one worker, suspended another and forcibly transferred three others so far this year.

The giant British-based multinational, which supplies component parts to auto manufacturers such as Nissan, Hyundai and Toyota, employs about 50,000 workers globally.

The protesting workers have accused management of trying to slash its permanent workforce and demanded withdrawal of disciplinary action against anyone demanding their right to unionise and for collective bargaining.

Madhya Pradesh civic workers take mass leave

Hundreds of Ujjain civic workers took mass leave action on April 20 to demand the Madhya Pradesh state government implement Seventh Pay Commission wage increases and end management discrimination and civic employees. The walkout followed a mass meeting on April 19. The workers, who are members of the Nagar Nigam Nagar Palika Karmchari union, have threatened indefinite strike action if their demands are not granted.

Bangladesh: Grameenphone workers demonstrate over pay demands

Grameenphone employees demonstrated outside the company headquarters in Dhaka on Sunday over pay and the dismissal of an elected workers' council representative. The protesters, who are members of the Grameenphone Employees Union (GEU), denounced a recent annual increment as "inadequate" and demanded a genuine pay increase.

GEU general secretary Zahidur Rahman told the media that while shareholders received a 204 percent increase on their dividends for 2017, the pay increment announced by the company for its employees was an insult. Grameenphone is one of Bangladesh's largest mobile phone company providers.

Pakistan: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government employees demand higher pay

Hundreds of All Pakistan Government Class-IV Employees Association employees rallied and marched to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial parliament on Tuesday to demand a 100 percent pay rise.

The provincial government workers' demands include timescale promotions, increases in the promotions quota, improved allowances and other claims. They threatened to boycott duties and lock down offices if the government failed to address their calls. Government workers from across the province were involved in the protest.

Peshawar wood workers demand permanent jobs

Pak German Wood Working Centre employees in Peshawar demonstrated and chanted slogans outside the Press Club on Monday to demand permanent jobs under Pakistan's Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) Service Rules.

More than 100 employees have worked for the company for 18 years on a fixed wage basis but never given job permanency. Protesters said that the company was highly selective about which employees it made permanent.

Pakistan college teachers protest

Hundreds of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government college teachers demonstrated outside the provincial parliament on Tuesday in protest over the removal of allowances previously agreed by the government. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professors and Lecturers Association members boycotted classes, examinations and election duty throughout the province.

The teachers' union and the government previously signed a five-tier

allowance deal. Teachers have accused the government of suddenly changing the agreed scheme and have warned that protests would continue if the government failed to address their demands.

Balochistan health workers demand pay rise

Young Doctors Association (YDA) and Paramedical Staff Association (PSA) members at Balochistan hospitals protested in Quetta on Tuesday over the government's failure to raise wages as previously promised. The health workers are demanding the same pay rises awarded to health employees in three other Pakistan provinces.

While the protesting workers were blocked from marching to the provincial chief minister's secretariat, they established a protest camp outside the Commissioner's Office. The protest ended on Wednesday after several Islamic suicide attacks occurred in Quetta. YDA and PSA officials called off previous demonstrations following negotiations between the unions and the Chief Justice of Pakistan on April 9.

Taiwan: Foreign workers protest dormitory overcrowding

Over 100 foreign workers in Xizhi protested last Monday against illegal overcrowding in employer-supplied dormitories. The Taiwanese press described the company as a "well-known optics" producer.

After inspecting the living quarters on Tuesday, a Labor Affairs Department official confirmed that 334 Vietnamese and 28 Indonesians were living in spaces less than the legally mandated 3.2 square metres per person. The protesters claimed that the accommodation was only fit for about 100 people, and that they also faced exorbitant air conditioning fees.

Labor officials also revealed that the accommodation charges were much more than those stipulated in their contracts. In a bid to assuage workers' anger, the Labor Affairs Department claimed it would fine the company if the issues were not rectified.

Philippine department of labour ends dispute at electronics firm

The Philippine Department of Labour last week intervened to end a protracted industrial struggle at Lakepower Converter Incorporated, a Taiwan-owned electronics plant in Rosario. Fearful that the dispute could become the focal point of a broader movement in the Cavite Economic Zone, labour officials brokered a deal which included reinstatement of over 60 workers.

The employees were dismissed after striking against onerous conditions and poverty-level wages in December. They had been involved in the formation of a new union, the Samahan ng Manggagawa sa Lakepower Converter Incorporated Independent.

While few details of the agreement have been released, the deal appears to allow the company to continue victimising and politically repressing its employees. It includes requirements that workers "respect and abide by the rules and regulations of the employer" and refrain from "releasing negative publicity to the media that may ridicule the company."

Australia: Queensland brewery workers strike again

Workers at the XXXX brewery in Milton, an inner-city suburb of Brisbane, took strike action on Thursday, as part of an ongoing dispute over a new workplace enterprise agreement. Up to 100 workers at the plant have participated in four stoppages over the past four weeks.

The workers are opposing attempts by Lion, which operates the facility, to use contract labour to cover full-time employees' leave. The contract workers would be paid up to 25 percent less than permanent staff, sparking warnings of across the board pay cuts and sackings. There has also been speculation that Lion may be preparing to shut the plant, and sell it to the highest bidder.

Around 35 workers who struck on Thursday protested outside the plant's main entrance. The United Voice union has limited the campaign to sporadic stoppages, and impotent appeals to football authorities, who have business arrangements with the brewery. The union is calling for a meagre pay rise of just three percent per annum, well below the rapidly rising cost of living. Another stoppage and rally outside the brewery is planned for next Thursday.

New Zealand: First Union calls off Auckland bus strikes

The First Union has called off rolling strikes by drivers for NZ Bus in Auckland. The strikes were originally set to last for two weeks. On April 19, the union announced that the strikes were no longer necessary because it had reached an agreement with the company after months of negotiation.

Drivers were striking for fairer pay and conditions because they are not compensated for lengthy periods of up to four hours spent between shifts at the bus depot.

A meeting was held to ratify the settlement on Tuesday but details of the agreement have not been released.

Nurses begin voting on strike action in New Zealand

Around 27,000 nurses began voting in a strike ballot on Monday. Nurses rejected a 2 percent salary rise offer last December and again in February. Media reports have shown many nurses are likely to vote in favour of strike action but the New Zealand Nurses Organisation is attempting to contain the nurses' mounting anger over their low pay rates.

Voting will continue until May 25. If industrial action is endorsed it will consist of one or two 24-hour strikes in July. The union is stretching out the process to wear down the nurses. It has also deleted comments posted on nurses' Facebook pages which are critical of the union, including comments sharing articles from the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Papua New Guinea weather staff to be punished for striking

Papua New Guinea Transport Minister Wesley Nukundj said on April 19 that staff at the National Weather Service (NWS) would be punished for a strike that began on April 6 and lasted about a week. About 65 staff walked out to protest non-payment of allowances.

Nukundj told the media that the workers would be paid the 1.7 million kina (\$522,000) owed at the end of the month. But in an inflammatory statement he said the strike “bordered on sabotage” and was a “serious criminal matter.” He threatened disciplinary action against strike leaders but did not specify how many would be impacted and what the punishment would be.

NWS workers have been fighting for their unpaid allowances for years. In early January the NWS Working Committee union also held a strike after the government failed to deliver on promises made in December 2017 to resolve the issue.



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