

Indian sanitation workers union shuts down month-long strike;  
Western Australian bus drivers strike over pay

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

13 October 2018

## India: Sanitation workers union calls off East Delhi Municipal Council strike

Thousands of East Delhi Municipal Council sanitation workers ended their month-long strike on October 10 following directives from the Swachhata Karmchari Union. The strike against the Bharatiya Janata Party-led municipality, which began on September 12, was for permanent jobs and regular payment of salaries.

The Swachhata Karmchari Union called off the industrial action claiming the mayor had given assurance that the council would phase in permanent employment for contract workers. The East Delhi Municipal Council has around 16,000 workers, half of whom are contract employees.

The decision to end the strikes came a few days after municipal authorities on October 8 terminated the jobs of 26 contract sanitation workers and suspended 17 others for allegedly “obstructing” work. On the same day police in New Delhi attacked a large protest of sanitation workers.

Meanwhile, sanitation workers in Vijayawada, a major city in Andhra Pradesh state, remain on strike after walking out indefinitely last week in protest against the privatisation of sanitation services and to demand higher pay and permanent jobs. The strike action, which was called by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, has seen hundreds of workers stage sit-down protests in the city. Strikers want a minimum monthly salary of 18,000 rupees (\$US246).

## India: Auto-component workers protest in Gurugram

Hundreds of workers from different automotive companies operating in and around Gurugram in Haryana state held a one-day hunger strike and demonstration in the city last week.

The auto workers were protesting against recent large-scale layoffs in the industry and the Indian federal government’s abolition of permanent employment in the public sector and introduction of contract employment. They also demanded the reinstatement of sacked Maruti Suzuki auto workers and the release of 13 Maruti Suzuki workers who were framed-up on bogus charges and last year sentenced to life imprisonment.

The protest was organised by Bellsonica Auto-Component Workers’ Union and supported by workers from some of the major automotive companies, including Maruti Suzuki, Honda, Bellsonica Corporation, Rico Auto Industries and Endurance Technology.

## Pakistan police arrest teachers for protesting in February

Pakistan police have started arresting teachers employed by the Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD) in Islamabad for demonstrating in February to demand immediate payment of six months outstanding salaries and benefits.

Over 2,000 teachers are employed by CADD on a daily wage basis. They have also called for permanent jobs and their monthly pay to be increased from 12,500 rupees (\$US101.67) to 25,000 rupees.

## Bangladesh garment workers demand reinstatement and higher pay

Tamishna Fashion Wear (Unit-2) factory workers at Sreepur in Gazipur demonstrated on October 4 to demand higher piece rate payments, reinstatement of terminated workers and an end to management harassment of female workers. Workers allege that the company had victimised a number of workers in the last few months.

Tamishna management responded to the protest by shutting the factory. According to news reports and the Gazipur industrial police, the demonstration ended after factory authorities promised to increase piece rate.

## Union calls off national truck drivers in Bangladesh

A national strike by Bangladesh truck drivers was called off by their union, the Bangladesh Truck-Covered Van Transport Agency Owners’ Association, on October 9. The powerful walkout, which

began three days earlier, had a major impact on businesses and, according to media reports, stopped all trucks leaving Dhaka, the national capital, during the strike and affected transport in other districts.

The drivers were protesting against amendments to the recently enacted Road Transport Act 2018. Under these laws, truck drivers can be sentenced to five years jail or 500,000 takas (\$US5,913), or both, for traffic offenses. The law also states that if a driver kills anyone they can be charged with murder or culpable homicide.

Calling off the strike, Bangladesh Truck-Covered Van Transport Agency Owners' Association president claimed that the union had held a fruitful meeting with the Bangladesh home minister. No details of the discussion, however, were released.

The striking drivers were also demanding unconditional release of all drivers arrested over previous truck accidents, proper licenses for all heavy vehicle drivers, an end to police harassment and other demands.

### **Taiwan doctors protest vacation cuts**

Taipei Doctors Union members protest on October 4 against a government policy forcing medical professionals to undertake workplace courses during their vacations.

Hospital staff often need to sacrifice up to 100 hours of vacation time each year to attend such courses. These can include general courses, safety drills and more specialised training programs. If medical workers fail to participate in this study their pay can be cut.

The protesters said that they wanted a collective agreement with the hospitals that the training will be carried out during paid employment periods.

### **Western Australian bus drivers strike over pay and conditions**

More than 300 Western Australian drivers employed by private bus operator Transdev struck for four hours last Thursday after negotiation for a new work agreement stalled.

The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) is calling for a 3 percent pay increase, extended annual leave and greater job security. Most of the drivers are employed on a casual basis.

The strike affected services on routes in Fremantle, Joondalup, Rockingham and Perth. At meetings held during the stoppage, the drivers voted to continue industrial action and not switch on their bus ticket machines. Transdev responded to the walkout by standing down the drivers for 48 hours. The bus drivers plan to "work-to-rule" for three days next week.

The TWU has repeatedly appealed to the company for further negotiations, signalling its willingness to push through a sell-out deal.

### **Go Bus drivers strike again in New Zealand**

Over 100 Go Bus drivers in Hamilton struck on October 3—the fourth time bus workers in the Waikato region have taken industrial action this year. The drivers are barely paid above the minimum wage, work dangerously long hours and have complained of poorly maintained buses.

First Union, which covers the drivers, is desperate to contain its members' anger on the low pay. Negotiations have been dragged out for over a year, and the Employment Relations Authority has now been brought in to mediate the discussions.

The strike was held during off-peak hours to deliberately "minimise disruption to bus timetables," according to the union's media statement. The union has also called for a Fair Pay Agreement for all bus drivers in New Zealand. An FPA will boost the political power of the union bureaucracy and ban strikes during nationwide pay negotiations.

### **New Zealand stationary company workers strike for five days**

Workers at Winc's Auckland distribution centre struck from October 1 to 5 before the company agreed to return to negotiations. Winc was formally known as Staples and was bought twice within the last 12 months. Workers are concerned about redundancies and low pay, around the minimum wage of \$16.50.

The negotiations are for a collective agreement, which will also cover workers in the company's Wellington and Christchurch branches, who did not go on strike.

### **Print workers strike for 24 hours in New Zealand**

Workers at print shops owned by the Blue Star Group struck for 24 hours on Wednesday. The walkout came after months of unsuccessful negotiations by the E t? Union. Blue Star workers banned overtime in May.

The strike was in reaction to company demands that workers agree to shift changes without consulting them first and demands that staff reveal if they had second jobs. A recent press release by E t? does not reveal whether the union has called on the company to increase pay.



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