

India: Contract health workers remain on strike in Bihar; South Australian teachers strike over pay and conditions

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

1 December 2018

India: Contract health workers remain on strike in Bihar

Class IV contract workers at the Government Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) and the Government Cancer Hospital (GCH) in Aurangabad, capital of the Indian state of Bihar, remain on strike after walking out on November 22. They claim to have been paid far less than the official minimum wage.

The state-run facilities have reportedly outsourced a number of positions, including cleaners, sweepers, peons and office attendants. There are currently 56 contract workers at the GMCH and 50 at the GCH.

The GMCH recently began using a new labour contractor following complaints of misconduct and insufficient staff payments with the previous company. Workers claim, however, that the contractor continues paying around half of what they are owed in wages. The new contractor also allegedly sacked 20 employees who complained about the pay rates.

Andhra Pradesh pharmaceutical workers protest for pay rise

Aurobindo Pharmaceuticals workers in Andhra Pradesh began a hunger strike on November 25 outside company facilities in the Srikakulam district. The protest, which was organised by the Center of Indian Trade Unions, also included a bike rally that covered all 26 villages in the local administrative division.

Around 3,500 workers are demanding a minimum wage, establishment of a provident fund and company provision of medical insurance and other benefits. They also want jobs to be offered to locals and for the development of 12 villages under the corporate social responsibility scheme.

New Delhi university teachers stage hunger strike

Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers Association (JNUTA) members held a hunger strike on Monday in protest against attacks on

working conditions and the rescheduling of the academic calendar.

In a circular issued in mid-November, the administration declared that university employees needed to have worked seven continuous years to be granted sabbatical leave. It also threatened staff allowances if employees did not agree to “arbitrary changes” to scheduling and conditions.

The JNUTA has demanded that the administration immediately withdraw “arbitrary” from scheduling and staff compliance.

Chennai city corporation workers’ strike cancelled

Planned indefinite strike action this week by thousands of Chennai city corporation workers was called off after local authorities promised to postpone the opening of tender bids for the privatisation of garbage collection and similar work in the Tamil Nadu state capital.

The federation of conservancy workers, the union covering the sector, immediately entered into talks with city administration representatives. The Chennai city corporation has over 7,700 permanent and 4,100 contract employees.

Corporation officials had planned to privatise garbage collection in eight city zones through the introduction of so-called public private partnerships. They were planning to open tenders in early December.

A large number of police were deployed around the city corporation building when the strike was announced.

Hundreds of South Korean delivery workers strike

About 700 delivery workers of CJ Korea Express, South Korea’s largest parcel delivery service, went on strike on November 21. They are demanding that the company recognise a recently formed union.

The stoppage has paralysed deliveries in the south-eastern city of Gyeongju for more than a week. Some 15,000 packages had piled up at the bus terminal as of Wednesday. The workers are only allowing perishable products to be delivered by replacement employees.

Some delivery workers in Seongnam, south of Seoul, and Daegu, in the southeast, have also taken part in the action. Workers are officially

employed by third-party delivery franchisees. CJ Korea Express has refused to enter direct negotiations with the strikers.

South Australian teachers strike over pay and conditions

Thousands of teachers at around 900 South Australian state schools stopped work for three hours on Thursday morning after negotiations for a new enterprise agreement stalled. The stoppage, the first in the state's schools for a decade, was accompanied by large rallies in Adelaide and regional cities.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) has claimed the state Liberal government is seeking to remove long-standing conditions and funding safeguards. The government has rejected teachers' demands for reduced class sizes, improved resources for special-needs children, greater incentives for teachers to work in rural areas and expanded permanency.

The government is yet to make a pay offer. The AEU this week demanded a 3.5 percent interim pay increase. Teachers have not had a wage rise since 30 June 2017. In a clear signal that it is preparing to push through a sell-out, the AEU has been holding weekly closed-room meetings with the government for almost six months.

Queensland coal freight train drivers call for strike action

The majority of central Queensland and east coast workers from coal freight train operator Aurizon have voted to take strike action in a dispute for a new enterprise agreement. Over 90 percent voted for ongoing stoppages lasting between 24 and 48 hours.

More than a 1,000 workers could participate in the action. They are covered by the Rail Train and Bus Union, the Electrical Trades Union, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees (AFULE). None of the unions have indicated if or when strike action will be called.

An AFULE spokesman said the dispute was over Aurizon's refusal to back pay any negotiated wage increase, rostering issues and changes to the redundancy scheme, as well as removal of "arbitration."

New Zealand midwives' industrial action continues

About 1,100 midwives in public hospitals throughout New Zealand continued a partial strike this week. Industrial action began on November 22 and is due to continue until December 5. Two-hour strikes and rallies have been held in numerous locations around the country.

Midwives rejected a pay offer of 3 percent per year for three years, the same increase given to 30,000 nurses and healthcare assistants, which was pushed through by the New Zealand Nurses Organisation in August despite widespread resistance from hospital workers.

The Midwifery Employee Representation and Advisory Services has

put in a claim for an additional 3 percent, or a \$NZ5,000 retention allowance.

In their first year after graduating, midwives are only allowed to work part time and earn just \$39,599, or \$23 an hour. They are also saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt.

Go Bus ends driver lockdown in New Zealand

On November 24, Go Bus lifted a lockdown that it had imposed four days earlier on 120 bus drivers in Hamilton, Te, Awamutu and Otorohanga.

The lockdown followed a lengthy dispute over low wages, including five strikes and other industrial action this year. Some drivers are paid just \$17.35 an hour. First Union has called for this to be increased to \$20.55 per hour.

Hamilton City and Waikato Regional Councils, which contract Go Bus for public transport services, say the dispute has now been resolved. Details of the agreement, however, will not be released until a council meeting on December 6.

Aged care nurses strike in Wellington

Nurses and administrators employed by Nurse Maude Care Coordination in Porirua, near Wellington, began a week of industrial action on November 29. The nurses provide care for elderly people in their homes, as well as inpatient care in the organisation's hospice and hospital.

The Public Service Association said in a statement that workers would withdraw their labour "across specific activities carried out by Administrators, Clinical Screeners and Care," but gave no further details.

The nurses and administrators are angry about increasing workloads and under-resourcing over the past decade, as well as stagnant pay. According to the union, many workers receive less than \$20.55 an hour, which the unions designate as a "living wage." The PSA has called for measures to close the pay gap with nurses employed directly by public District Health Boards, but has not outlined any specific wage demand.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact