

Hyundai and Samsung workers protest in India; Cambodian garment workers strike

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

19 January 2019

India: Samsung mobile manufacturing workers demonstrate over salaries and shift times

Hundreds of Samsung mobile manufacturing workers protested on January 12 to demand higher pay and changes in shift times. The workers assembled at the company's office in Noida Phase-II in the morning and remained there till around 10 pm.

The Samsung plant is just outside New Delhi and is reportedly the world's largest mobile making facility with the capacity to produce 120 million phones per year. It was opened last July by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As well as demanding higher wages, the workers want restoration of previous shift times, which were changed this month. They also called for changes to current holidays and better food. Nearly 500 farmers demonstrated outside the company's office in October for more jobs for the local youth. A similar protest was held in August.

Hyundai workers in India hold one-day hunger protest

A group of workers from Hyundai Motor's Chennai plant in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, held a one-day hunger protest on January 9 over stalled wage contract talks. The permanent workers previously banned overtime and have accused the company of using trainees to replace skilled workers.

The United Union of Hyundai Employees (UUHE) has been in talks for months with management to settle a 2018–2021 employment contract. Workers are demanding higher wages. Hyundai Motor has over 2,200 permanent workers, around 3,500 trainees and another 5,000 contract workers at the facility.

India unions shut down nine-day Mumbai bus workers' strike

Unions covering Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) workers ended a nine-day bus strike for higher wages on January 16.

BEST is a Mumbai-centered public transport provider.

The BEST Sanyukta Kamgar Kruti Samiti, a joint committee of many labour unions, called the industrial action to demand higher wages and for better employee housing.

The unions called off the industrial action, which involved an estimated 32,000 workers who grounded nearly 3,200 buses in Mumbai after accepting a high court ruling that a mediator be appointed to resolve the wage dispute.

Pakistan police attack demonstrating workers

Police violently attacked and arrested protesting Sehwan Development Authority workers in Dadu, Sindh province on Tuesday. The workers have not been paid for the past 40 months. Twenty workers were injured and fifty others, including protest leaders, were arrested.

Workers carrying placards blocked the M-9 Motorway at the Jamshoro Toll with barricades and burning tyres for about four hours.

Sri Lankan Telecom workers strike for better working conditions

Around 1,000 telecom workers from several branches across the country held a one-day strike and protested outside the company's main Colombo office on January 16.

The workers chanted slogans denouncing company administrators and called for salary increases, bonuses and a 40,000-rupee (\$US219) basic monthly salary for contract workers who currently receive just 17,000 rupees. The strike was one in a series of protests held by Telecom workers for the same demands.

Chinese workers strike in Shenzhen over compensation

Two hundred OPD Technology workers in Shenzhen held two days of strikes beginning on January 6 to protest the company's refusal to provide employees with compensation after it announced that it was relocating operations to another city.

The OPD Technology plant in Shenzhen's Baoan district is being transferred to Qingxi County's Dongguan, a city more than 70 kilometres away. The government had ordered the relocation to facilitate the creation of a new highway.

Under Shenzhen rules, companies that transfer factories out of the city are required to pay workers compensation, calculated by the length of each workers' employment. OPD Technology attempted to relocate without any discussion with workers or compensation.

The strike was violently broken up by police, leaving many workers injured. The industrial action ended after the company, backed by the local government, declared that it would pay 40 percent of the legally required compensation.

Protest to free jailed Shenzhen workers

Around 30 people protested at Beijing's liaison office on Thursday after marching from the Western Police Station. They demanded the release of jailed workers and supporters.

In July, the government launched a brutal crackdown against workers at the Jasic Technology plant in Shenzhen who were trying to form an independent union. Many were injured, arrested and jailed.

The workers' struggle attracted the support of students from universities who were also detained. Some of them have effectively disappeared. An estimated 40 people have been held since July. Protesters demanded that all those arrested by police should be freed before the Lunar New Year holiday, to be home with their families.

Cambodian garment workers continue strike

Over 1,000 employees of the W&D garment factory in Phnom Penh remain on strike, against the company's refusal to rehire ten workers it accuses of "inciting" recent stoppages.

Strike action began on December 24 over wages and conditions. The workers wanted payment of seniority indemnities, which are supposed to be made twice a year.

W&D management, with the support of the courts and the Cambodian Council of National Unions, issued an ultimatum for the workers to return to work within 48 hours or be sacked. The workers responded, however, by occupying the factory. On January 4, the company issued a press release stating that 1,200 workers at the plant would be sacked.

This week, the company retreated from its threat of mass layoffs. According to a company spokesperson, 600 strikers agreed to return to work but 1,000 refused. Garment worker Sam Srey Mom, told the media that she would not return to work, because the victimisation of the ten workers was an attempt by the company "to pressure and divide us."

Cambodian garment workers walk out over unpaid wages

Five hundred workers at the Cambodian Quantum Clothing factory in Phnom Penh began strike action this week after its American owners sold the plant to a Chinese company without paying outstanding wages and benefits.

One of the workers told the *Khmer Times* that the plant had changed

owners three times without outstanding payments being settled. Strikers said they would not return to work until their wages and benefits were paid.

Australia and the Pacific

Australia: McDonald's workers picket Brisbane store

Around 50 members of the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RFFWU) protested outside a McDonald's store in Brisbane on January 11 against alleged company threats to employees who had demanded their right to a paid 10-minute break after four hours of work.

The RFFWU, and its competitor the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association, are currently in negotiations with McDonald's over a new work agreement covering over the company's 100,000 employees.

New Zealand: Wellington bus drivers strike

Around 200 NZ Bus drivers in Wellington, represented by the Tramways Unions, held a strike on January 16 in order to attend a union meeting. NZ Bus, is exploiting the fact that previous employment conditions were not carried over when bus companies sought new contracts to run buses in 2018. NZ Bus is forcing more workers to work part-time, with fewer guaranteed hours. Workers agreed to refuse to take fares from passengers starting January 28.

In recent years Wellington bus drivers have taken industrial action opposing the contract negotiations between operators vying for bus contracts and the Greater Wellington City Council. In May 2017, 60 of the bus lines were assigned to a new contractor, Transit-Group, who offered to take on former NZ Bus drivers, but without any guarantee of their wages and conditions.

New Caledonia miners' strike in third week

A strike by workers at SLN, New Caledonia's major nickel mining company, is continuing at the mines in Thio, Tiebaghi and Nepoui. The workers walked out on January 3 opposing a restructure of shift patterns aimed at cutting costs. SLN is currently running at a loss, having been affected by a global drop in resource prices. The company reportedly wants to extend the working day to 10.5 hours and introduce a 2 a.m. finishing time for afternoon shift workers.

Union leaders in Noumea have sought to end the strike and have accepted the company's proposed changes, which are already in force at the mine in Kouaoua. A worker at one of the striking mines told the public broadcaster that the union bureaucracy's agreement, reached without the consent of the workers, was unacceptable.



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