

Thousands of childcare workers demonstrate in Karnataka; South Korean shipyard workers protest downsizing; NZ secondary teachers maintain industrial action

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

1 June 2019

Telangana rural workers protest

About 60 workers from Ayyavaripally village in India's Telangana state demonstrated on May 28 over unpaid wages and the lack of basic workplace facilities. The workers are employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which is supposed to

The Ayyavaripally village workers who were employed to dig canals, pits, trenches in various parts of the community have not received any pay or been provided with drinking water, shade or first-aid facilities. The workers have warned that if the government failed to address their demands they will hold another demonstration on June 3.

Last month ten female MGNREGA workers were killed when a trench collapsed on them in Tileru village in the same district. No safety precautions had been implemented at the work site.

Kerala sanitary workers begin hunger strike

Kozhikode Medical College contract sanitary workers in Kerala began a hunger strike on May 27 in protest over the Left Democratic Front-led state government's failure to reinstate several suspended employees.

The workers—known as “Nipah heroes”—played a vital role in combatting an outbreak of the Nipah virus at the hospital a year ago and were promised by the government that they would be given permanent jobs at the hospital. The virus killed 18 people in Kozhikode.

The government pledge was never fulfilled and, instead, hospital management suspended a number of the contract workers. This week's hunger strike follows previous protests by about 40 contract sanitary workers at the facility.

Thousands of childcare workers demonstrate in Karnataka state

Over 5,000 childcare (anganwadi) workers marched and demonstrated near the Karnataka deputy commissioner's office this week over state government moves to establish kindergarten classes in state-funded

schools.

Organised by the Childcare Teachers' Association, protestors said the government move would directly impact on about 70,000 childcare workers in the state. The childcare protestors angrily denounced the government and told the media that they would step up their action unless the state government withdrew its measures.

Telangana teachers demand jobs

Scores of unemployed qualified teachers mobilised by the Telangana State Upadhyaya Sanghala Porata Committee demonstrated in Hyderabad on May 25 to demand the state provide them with jobs.

While over 8,900 teachers passed the official teachers recruitment test in 2017 the government has not appointed a single teacher in the last five years. Unemployed teachers previously held sit-down protests at district headquarters throughout the state on May 16.

Haryana Roadways workers defend threatened contract workers

Haryana Roadways workers demonstrated on May 26 to demand management withdraw plans to sack hundreds of contract bus drivers, clerks and depot staff. The protest, which was organised by Haryana Roadways Workers Union, was in opposition to the Haryana state government's sudden announcement that it was eliminating 450 contract positions.

While the state government announced on Tuesday that it would rescind the terminations no details have been provided by management or any guarantee that there will not be future sackings. It is the second time in less than six months that management moved to terminate hundreds of employees. In December, 250 contract drivers across the state were fired by the transport company.

Pakistan: Daily wage workers fight job cuts

Hundreds of daily wage workers in Faisalabad demonstrated on May 23 in protest against the water and sanitation agency's elimination of 800 jobs. Protestors demanded their unconditional reinstatement and immediate payment of two months' outstanding wages and benefits.

The water and sanitation agency termination notices claim the jobs are being axed because of a "paucity of funds and a severe financial crunch" facing the Pakistani government.

Indonesian seafood workers protest union leader's arrest

Bumi Menara Internusa (BMI) seafood factory workers in Lampung have held daily protests over the past week and a half over the arrest of a union secretary on May 17.

The company claims that police and prosecutors moved against BMI Workers Union secretary Reni Desmiria because she allegedly submitted a fake high school certificate when applying for work at the factory eight years ago.

Desmiria was arrested at her home by armed police equipped with automatic weapons. The company is pressing for the maximum penalty of six years imprisonment. The move is part of the company's union busting operation at the plant.

The union was formed in 2012 amid anger over the abusive treatment of workers on casual employment contracts. Female employees were forced to work night shifts for over a year without any shift rotation system. Over 1,000 workers are employed in the factory, which is a major supplier to the global seafood industry. Most are not permanent and do not have social security or health care cover.

South Korean shipyard workers protest downsizing

Hundreds of dock workers staged sit-in strikes this week against the scheduled merger of two shipyards in the southeastern industrial city of Ulsan. They fear that the restructure will result in mass job cuts.

The strike began on Tuesday, after hundreds of workers demonstrated inside Town Hall where a shareholders meeting on the merger was expected to occur on Friday. Workers unfurled large banners that read, "Stop corporate division that will wipe out all the workers!" after clashing with security personnel.

The stoppage was in defiance of an Ulsan court ruling on Monday which approved an injunction filed by the company prohibiting the union from interrupting the upcoming shareholders meeting. The court said the union would have to pay 50 million won per activity in breach of the order.

The companies involved, Daewoo Shipbuilding & Marine Engineering, and Hyundai Heavy Industries, have destroyed more than 30,000 jobs over the last four years following a government-initiated restructuring of the shipbuilding industry. The merger will create the world's largest shipbuilding group with a market share of around 20 percent.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation workers meet over new agreement

Australian Broadcasting Corporation employees in Sydney and other capital cities attended union-organised meetings this week to discuss

bargaining for a new one-year enterprise agreement.

The meetings, called by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance and the Community and Public Sector Union, were held a month before the current deal is set to expire. Management wants to cap any pay rises in the planned one-year agreement at 1.5 percent and is pushing unspecified changes to working conditions.

Signalling their willingness to impose cuts, the unions have offered to "roll-over" the current agreement, which would limit wage increases to 2 percent, well below the official rate of inflation.

The unions have, over the past decade, enforced a series of restructures, which have resulted in the destruction of hundreds of jobs, the closure of entire departments and the slashing of broadcasting in regional and rural areas. Coverage of the arts and other cultural issues has also been wound-back.

Further meetings are scheduled for next week.

New Zealand secondary teachers maintain industrial action

About 20,000 secondary teachers in public schools across New Zealand will take part in industrial action next week. The action, which will be spread across four weeks, consists of "rostering home," meaning teachers will refuse to teach specific year groups on given days. One-day strikes have also been scheduled for later this month, with different regions striking on different days.

The action follows a nationwide strike on May 29 by 50,000 primary and secondary teachers to demand significant improvements in pay and conditions. The secondary teachers, members of the Post-Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA), put forward a pay claim last year calling for an immediate 15 percent pay increase, while primary teachers called for 16 percent. Teachers also want smaller class sizes, reduced workloads and more support for children with learning difficulties.

The teachers' strike on May 29, one of the largest in New Zealand's history, attracted widespread support from parents, students and workers. The PPTA and the primary teachers' union, the New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) have stressed that they want to reach a deal with the government to avoid future strikes. A strike previously scheduled for April 3 was called off, with the Christchurch terror attack used as a pretext.

Retail workers strike in New Zealand

Workers at the department store chain Farmers continued taking industrial action this week. About 10 staff walked out for an hour and a half on Thursday at the Palmerston North store. This followed partial strikes, protests and pickets at stores in Auckland, Kapiti, Dunedin and other parts of the country.

Workers are protesting against low wages. According to the FIRST Union, about one in five Farmers workers are only paid the \$17.70 an hour minimum wage, with many others earning little more. Workers claim the company's performance assessment system is rigged to keep wages down, regardless of how well workers have performed.

NZ disability care workers hold one-hour strike

Workers employed by IDEA Services, which provides services to people with intellectual disabilities, held a one-hour strike on Friday. About 3,000 members of the E Tu union were reportedly involved. The walk-out is their fourth since April. Seven months of negotiations between the union and the organisation have failed to produce a new collective agreement.

The workers are protesting against under-staffing and want additional compensation for working long hours and on weekends. Workers say current staffing levels are unsafe and they suffer frequent assaults.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact