

Punjab Roadways workers strike for three days; thousands of Bangladesh municipal workers strike

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

6 July 2019

India: Telangana railway workers demonstrate against corporatisation

Mettuguda rail workshop employees in Telangana protested on July 2 against Indian government moves to privatise rail services and associated production units. The demonstration was part of the South Central Mazdoor Union's ongoing campaign against the railway ministry's 100-day action plan.

Large numbers of railway employees participated, chanting slogans denouncing the Modi government and threatening to organise nationwide strike action. Railway workers demonstrated in other parts of the country, with one of the largest protests at Rae Bareilly where almost all 4,000 workers denounced the planned corporatisation of the Rae Bareilly coach factory

New Delhi Centralized Ambulance Trauma Services employees strike

Centralized Ambulance Trauma Services (CATS) contract employees remain on strike after walking out on July 1. The next day a CATS driver set himself on fire outside the chief minister's residence.

CATS, which has 265 ambulances in the fleet, provides pre-hospital emergency medical response services to the general public. Workers respond to 1,100–1,200 calls per day.

The government outsourced the operation and maintenance of the ambulance services in 2006. The contract workers have held numerous protests over salary delays and alleged violation of labour laws. Last year, the private company said it could not continue running the services and a new firm hired. The old company, however, owes three months salaries to many employees.

Punjab Roadways workers strike for three days

Punjab Roadways contract workers began a three-day strike on July 2 to demand permanent jobs, the hiring of more workers, including drivers and conductors, and equal pay for equal work. Other demands included timely promotions, bans on private buses operating without permits, and 100,000-rupees compensation, along with a job to a family member of an

employee who dies at work.

The strike, which grounded more than 1,500 buses across the state, was organised by the Punbus Contractual Workers Union. Strikers said that contract workers had been employed for up to 15 years but not given permanent jobs and only receive between 6,000 to 7,000 rupees (\$85 to \$100) per month.

Punbus workers have threatened to intensify their protests if the state government does not grant their demands.

Mumbai teachers protest

Mumbai University (MU) teachers, along with members of the Maharashtra Federation of University College Teachers' Organisations (MFUCTO), held a sit down protest (dharna) at Azad Maidan on July 1 over the university's failure to implement Seventh Pay Commission recommendations. Teachers denounced the Maharashtra state government for attempting to whip up anti-teacher sentiment amongst students. Protesters also demanded the university formulate a proper career advancement scheme (CAS).

While the state government has issued a government resolution on the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations the university is yet to implement the pay increase.

BSNL contract workers on hunger strike in Tamil Nadu

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) contract workers held a three-day hunger strike in Tamil Nadu state starting on July 2. The workers have not been paid for the past six months. Members of Tamil Nadu Telecom Contract Workers' Union and the BSNL Employees Union participated in the protest.

The BSNL Casual and Contract Workers' Federation has called for a nationwide protest outside the Chief General Manager's office on July 17 over the same demands.

Chennai Metropolitan Transport Corporation workers hold one-day strike

Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) employees held a one-day strike on July 1 in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, grounding hundreds of buses. The sudden walkout by drivers and conductors was in protest over the non-payment of June salaries. The strike ended after MTC management claimed that the salaries were delayed because of bank holidays and that workers would be paid immediately.

Assam state teachers demand permanent jobs

Teachers stormed the Khanapara Veterinary Ground in Guwahati on June 29, demanding permanent jobs. Over 15,000 teachers, who have been waiting for permanent jobs for seven years, denounced the government's refusal to grant their long-standing demand.

The teachers, united under All Assam Primary TET-Qualified Teachers' Association, have been supported by other educators as well as journalists and the leaders of various political organisations.

Municipal corporation workers protest in Delhi over unpaid salaries

Delhi Municipal Corporation class IV employees staged a sit down demonstration outside the corporations' Zone D office over two months' unpaid salaries. The protest was organised by the All-India Safai Mazdoor Congress.

The workers chanted slogans against authorities. According to the union leadership about 4,000 employees have not been paid.

Bangladesh municipal employees hold nationwide demonstrations

About 15,000 workers from over 320 Bangladeshi municipalities staged sit-down protests and a one-day strike on Tuesday demanding regular salary payments and the nationalisation of municipal services.

Wages have not been paid for two months and in some municipalities for up to six years. Workers are demanding that the outstanding amounts and allowances are paid from government revenue instead of municipalities' funds. They have threatened to strike on July 14 if their demands are not met.

The workers, who are members of the Bangladesh Municipality Service Association, demonstrated in March last year over the same demands.

Bangladesh garment workers demand unpaid wages

Hundreds of apparel workers of Alif Apparel Limited in Dhaka blocked Mirpur Road on June 28 for a few hours to demand unpaid wages and protest plans to move the factory without any prior notice to another location.

The demonstration ended after authorities assured the workers that unpaid wages would be paid. The factory has about 500 employees.

Pepmaco workers strike in the Philippines

Peerless Products Manufacturing Corporation (Pepmaco) workers in Luzon have vowed to continue their strike after being set upon by company thugs at 1 a.m. on Friday June 28.

Eleven workers, who were among two groups of strikers resting in two camps outside the factory, suffered head and other injuries. Masked men in battle gear jumped out of vans, wielded batons, fired water jets and threw heavy rocks. The shields and batons used were taken inside the factory after the attack.

The workers were striking over sackings, contractualisation, 12-hour shifts, seven-day working weeks and unsafe conditions. The Luzon plant makes detergents, fabric conditioner, toothpaste, shampoos and conditioners.

Hong Ri handbag workers attacked in Burma

Striking workers at the Chinese-owned Hong Ri handbag factory in Yangon's Hlaing Tharyar township were attacked at 11 p.m. on June 28 by 20 men wielding swords, knives and slingshots.

Twenty workers were injured, six seriously and one female worker suffered a miscarriage, in the assault. Police arrived but took no action against the gang of thugs.

Four hundred workers went on strike the previous day over unsafe drinking water and demands for labour rights and more facilities. There are only three toilets for a total of 500 employed at the factory.

The Industrial Workers Federation demanded at a press conference on Monday that the Yangon regional government take action against the factory owner.

Tuk-tuk drivers strike in Cambodia

On Wednesday 100 tuk-tuk (small cab) drivers protested on Hun Sen Boulevard in Phnom Penh to demand that the PassApp Technologies Company restore their previous fare rates and reduce the commission the drivers have to pay for the company's services.

PassApp Technologies reduced the fares drivers could charge, the company claimed, because of competition. At the same time, however, PassApp increased the commission it took from drivers from 13 to 15 percent.

Taiwan Flight Attendants continue strike into third week

Negotiations between the Taoyuan Flight Attendants' Union and EVA Airways led to another impasse on Thursday, with workers still fighting for better conditions and wages. The strike has been ongoing since June 20th.

A major factor in postponing a settlement was a clause in a drafted agreement which called on the union to never launch another strike outside of defined periods and to give advanced notice. Such a move would severely limit the bargaining power of workers in future and allow the company to out-manoeuvre workers' strikes.

In an effort to appease the company and dissipate the strike, which has cost the company tens of millions and affected over two thousand flights, the union is attempting to keep flights to some of Taiwan's outlying islands operational.

On Tuesday evening, over 1,000 flight attendants and supporters joined a rally in front of Taiwan's presidential office, calling President Tsai Ing-wen to address what it sees as an "autocratic and authoritarian" management.

Queensland: Aurizon bulk haulage train crews impose overtime bans

For the second time in two months train crews from Queensland's bulk haulage operator Aurizon have imposed a state-wide 14-day overtime ban that commenced on June 28. Aurizon's bulk haulage network carries grain, sugar, cement and other freight along Queensland's East Coast and the North West.

The action is part of a long running dispute between Aurizon and four unions, the Rail Tram and Bus Union, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees (AFULE), the Electrical Trades Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, over the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Over 1,000 workers in Aurizon's Coal and Bulk rail network have not had a pay increase for 18 months.

The unions claim that Aurizon wants to implement different wage rates in Coal and Bulk which workers fear would lead to lower pay rates in Bulk. Other disputed issues are the company's demand that workers use up to 160 hours of their annual leave for planned shutdowns, replace the current payment system for working beyond ten hours and give credits instead, among other issues.

In response to industrial action, Aurizon has broken from negotiations and announced that it will put the proposed Bulk-EA directly to workers for a vote. The ballot date has not been revealed. The AFULE has directed its members to vote against the proposed agreement.

Victorian tram drivers to vote on strike action

The Rail, Tram and Bus Union has lodged an application with the Fair Work Commission to hold a protected action ballot of members who drive and operate trams in Victoria's capital Melbourne, to decide on strike action in their dispute with Yarra Trams for a new enterprise agreement. Industrial action could involve up to 24-hour stoppages and a range of other bans on wearing uniforms, making announcements and doing overtime.

The RTBU has been bargaining since March with the company, but claims that the operator, owned by international company Keolis Downer, has rejected the bulk of the union's 107 claims. A union spokesman said Yarra Trams was trying to remove a minimum requirement that part-time workers do seven hours a day. He said the company wants to bring in more external part-time workers to work fewer hours, and that the company wants to raise a 4 percent cap on part-time work to 22 percent across the company.

In May, Yarra Trams put out a proposed agreement for a 3 percent annual wage increase over four years, which was rejected by a large number of workers. The proposed enterprise agreement covers more than 1,500 Yarra Trams drivers, authorised officers and customer service staff.

Sydney council workers strike to oppose use of "Roundup" weed killer

More than 500 outdoor staff from Blacktown City Council, west of Sydney, downed tools and returned to their depots on Wednesday to protest the Council's refusal to discontinue the use of glyphosate-based weed killer Roundup, which has been linked to cancer. The walkout was sparked after management ordered six staff to either use the product or face being forced into alternate jobs.

The council sought an urgent hearing in the Industrial Relations Commission on Thursday morning after 10,000 garbage bins were not emptied and other outdoor services were disrupted. On Thursday afternoon the Council reached an agreement with the United Services Union under which workers would return to their jobs as long as the council implemented a trial of a "viable alternate weed control product".

Bayer, which bought Roundup maker Monsanto for \$63 billion last year, faces lawsuits by more than 13,400 plaintiffs in the US and globally. A series of Roundup jury verdicts against Bayer vindicates the concern of council workers who are forced to use the product.

New Zealand school principals protest pay offer

Primary and intermediate school principals opposed to the Labour-led government's latest pay offer delivered letters to Ministry of Education (MoE) offices in nine regions around the country on Tuesday. Hundreds of principals joined protests outside MoE offices, calling for pay parity with secondary school principals and a larger salary for those in smaller schools.

About 2,000 principals, who are members of the NZ Educational Institute (NZEI) had earlier voted to reject the government's offer, which had been recommended by the union at the same time it pushed through a sell-out deal covering 30,000 primary teachers. That agreement provided for a three percent pay rise a year for three years, much less than the 16 percent sought by teachers, and nothing to address workload and staffing crises.

The offer rejected by principals would have given a three per cent salary increase for three years to those at schools with a roll of more than 100 students. Principals at schools of up to 100 students were offered three pay increases of about 4.5 percent each year.

Principals said the offer did not address workload "in any way, shape or form". Nor did it grant primary principals pay parity with their secondary colleagues and pay increases for teachers meant it would be easier for deputy principals to earn more than principals of small schools.

The principals voted this week to impose a six-week ban on working with the Ministry of Education unless they get an improved offer. They will stop co-operation with the ministry from July 8 to August 16. NZEI is due to resume negotiations over the contract next week.

New Zealand retail workers strike

Around 55 workers at the retail giant H&M voted to take limited strike action beginning this week, demanding what the FIRST Union calls a "living wage." This follows similar recent actions and protests by workers at the Farmers chain. Retail workers typically earn just above the legal minimum wage of \$17.70 per hour.

The “Living Wage” campaign, promoted by the trade unions, claims that a rate of \$21.15 per hour is the minimum necessary for workers to stay out of poverty. However, the figure is no more than is paid at Kmart and other competing companies, and does nothing to combat the deepening big business austerity offensive against the working class.



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