

Jammu & Kashmir power workers demand outstanding salaries;  
Pakistan tourism workers oppose job cuts

# Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and New Zealand

14 September 2019

## India: Local government workers demand pay rise in Telangana state

Local government (gram panchayat) workers protested outside the district collectorate in Bhongir on September 9 to demand immediate payment of salary increases promised during the elections by the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi state government. The government told local government workers that their monthly pay would be increased to 8,500-rupees (\$US119).

A scuffle broke out when police attempted to stop the protesters entering the collectorate building. Police later allowed a delegation of workers into the building to speak with officials.

The gram panchayat workers want immediate payment of all outstanding wages and the promotion of all daily wage workers and bill collectors. A similar protest was held in Karimnagar, a major city north of the Hyderabad, the state capital, on the same day.

## Doctors demonstrate for salary rise in Haryana

Doctors from a civil hospital in Panchkula's Sector 6 area protested on September 5 to demand equal allowances and pay increments with specialist doctors in other Indian states. The demonstration was organised by the Haryana Civil Medical Services Association.

The doctors had given the Haryana government a 15-day ultimatum to fulfil their long-outstanding demands after state authorities assured doctors on August 30 that their demands would be granted.

## Uber drivers take "offline" strike action in Kerala

About 100 Uber drivers in Kochi, in the south Indian state of Kerala, began an "offline" strike on September 5 in protest against alleged anti-labour policies by the company.

The drivers, who are members of the Self-Employed Drivers Union, claim the company engages in rampant contract violations during busy periods. The drivers established a temporary shack outside the

company's office in Kadavanthra, a major commercial centre in Kochi, and close to the city's busiest railway station.

## Telecom contract workers protest in Kerala

Bharth Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) contract employees held a hunger protest outside the GPO in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala's state capital, on September 10.

The telecom contract workers and their families denounced the Indian government and BSNL management for non-payment of contract workers' wages over the past seven months. The workers have maintained an ongoing protest outside the chief general manager's office for the past 79 days.

BSNL management claims that it cannot pay the wages unless funds are released by the Indian government. Workers alleged that the non-payment is part of Prime Minister Modi's moves to destroy and privatise the telecom company and other state-owned enterprises.

## Jammu & Kashmir power workers demand outstanding salaries

Hundreds of Power Development Department (PDD) workers protested outside the PDD chief engineer's office on September 9 over unpaid salaries. Angry workers have threatened to ban basic repairs and walk out indefinitely if their wages are not paid. While PDD has hired over 3,400 workers in recent years it does not regularly pay their wages. Some workers claim to have not been paid since 2014.

## Pakistan tourism workers oppose job cuts

Workers from the government-run Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) and its Flashman's Hotel in Rawalpindi began protests on September 9 over management plans to terminate 700 jobs

and transfer all PTDC properties to provincial administrations. Some workers have threatened to commit suicide if the authorities proceed with the job destruction.

Workers are maintaining a protest camp outside the PTDC managing director's office. The PTDC Employees Union and the Flashman's Hotel Employees Union have threatened national industrial action and protests. The job-cutting is in response to the International Monetary Fund's demands that the Pakistani government slash expenditure.

### **Sri Lankan administrative officers hold two-day sick note strike**

Around 3,000 administrative workers began a national 48-hour sick note campaign on September 10 to demand an end to long-standing salary anomalies and for politicians to stop interfering in management decision-making. The industrial action brought work at Sri Lanka's departments of immigration and emigration, pensions, motor traffic and other key government services, as well as divisional and district secretariats, to a standstill.

Striking civil servants held a mass demonstration in Central Colombo, near the ministry of public administration on September 11, to push for their demands.

### **Health workers in Sri Lanka protest over salary arrears**

Members of the All Ceylon Suwa Sewa Association and several other health sector unions held a half-day strike and demonstrated outside the Colombo South teaching hospital on September 10.

The workers have 12 demands, including establishment of proper transfer and promotion policies, payment of salary arrears, and a 2,000-rupee special allowance. Strikers picketed several other hospitals, including in Galle and Kandy, and the National hospital in Colombo.

### **Taiwanese taxi drivers demand transport reform**

Hundreds of taxis on Wednesday morning travelled slowly around the Executive Yuan in Taipei City. The protest, which held up traffic, was against the Ministry of Transportation and Communications' decision to extend a grace period for Uber drivers before an amendment to the transportation regulations takes effect next month.

The introduction of Uber and other ride-sharing apps has come at the expense of traditional taxi drivers who have demanded that all drivers be registered as licensees. The deadline on acquiring a license was originally set for October 6. Only 2,000 of 12,000 Uber drivers have secured licenses.

### **Cheese factory workers in New South Wales strike over wages**

Over 320 workers from the Bega Cheese factory in southeast New South Wales have overwhelmingly endorsed industrial action after rejecting the company's offer of a 2.5 percent pay rise in a new enterprise agreement. Workers decided to strike after management refused to offer an increase in the pay offer during negotiations on Tuesday.

The workers are members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU), the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union and the Electrical Trades Union.

Around 20 maintenance workers from the AMWU walked off the job for 24 hours on Friday with further action next week by all three unions. It is the first time in the history of the company that workers have walked out on strike. Employees are angry that the company's directors recently awarded themselves a 2.7 percent pay increase.

### **Auckland SkyCity workers strike for second weekend**

Workers at SkyCity's Auckland casino held a second weekend of strikes on September 7–8, opting out of all shifts from 10 p.m. on Saturday night until 8 a.m. on Monday. The vote followed a 48-hour strike the previous weekend, during which hundreds of workers and supporters picketed the casino and disrupted its operations.

The Unite Union said SkyCity made no offer on the union's key claim for weekend and night rates during mediation last week. This was despite an appeal from Unite's negotiators to "discuss different options."

The employer claims it is prepared to discuss rosters but workers are demanding higher rates for weekends and night work. According to the union, some workers would make themselves more regularly available for higher pay, which means that others are not forced to continuously work shifts that make their personal and family lives very difficult.

Almost 900 of the casino's employees are members of Unite Union, as part of the SkyCity Employees Association. Ninety-four percent of them voted to reject SkyCity management's last offer.



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