

Coca-Cola bottling workers strike in north India; Bangladesh garment workers protest over unpaid wages

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

28 December 2019

India: Karnataka hospital contract workers strike

Over 540 contract workers from the McGann Hospital, which is attached to the state-owned Shivamogga Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) in Karnataka, stopped work on December 23 in protest over unpaid salaries and other issues. The strikers included housekeepers from the college and the hospital, nurses, and Group D staff hired.

The workers said the salary delays had occurred because the labour hire firm had not presented required paperwork to the government and demanded SIMS management end the contract labour hire system and directly hire workers.

Coca-Cola bottling workers in Uttar Pradesh strike

Nearly 600 workers at two Coca-Cola bottling plants in Uttar Pradesh and one in Jammu stopped work on December 23 in protest against company's plan to sell off its bottling subsidiary. Workers are worried about job security and uncertainty over the transition to the new management.

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages announced on December 4 that it planned to sell its bottling operations in north India to three other bottling companies in order to slash costs.

Delhi University teachers continue protest after strike

Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) members held a protest march from Feroz Shah Kotla in Delhi to the University Grants Commission (UGC) to demand permanent jobs for ad-hoc and temporary teachers and immediate promotions. The demonstration followed strike action by thousands of teachers at the university on December 4.

The strikers demanded withdrawal of an August 28

management circular which they believe jeopardises the careers of some 4,000 ad-hoc teachers. The circular proposes that all vacant positions be filled by guest teachers.

DUTA members want permanent positions for all temporary and ad-hoc teachers and all promotions to be determined according to years of service. While the university offered to withdraw the August 28 circular it has said it will not concede any other demands. Teachers said that there had not been any interviews for permanent teaching positions since 2015.

Andhra Pradesh municipal workers demand better conditions

Municipal corporation workers in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, demonstrated outside their municipal office on December 17 with a list of long outstanding demands. These included a pay rise, permanency for contract workers and release of pending medical allowances. The protest was part of statewide demonstrations by municipal corporation workers in Andhra Pradesh.

The state municipal commissioner has attempted to appease the unions by issuing a verbal assurance that workers' demands would be resolved "at the earliest" and allowance arrears credited to workers' accounts.

Bangladesh: Hundreds of garment workers protest over unpaid wages

About 100 GK Garment workers in Savar, Bangladesh, demonstrated on Tuesday over breached promises by management to pay outstanding wages. Workers blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway near Savar Bazar bus stand for several hours.

On December 21, over 400 workers from Top Jeans in Dhaka

demonstrated to demand unpaid wages and allowances. The demonstration ended later that day after the police intervened and claimed they would discuss the issues with the factory owner.

Cambodia: 500 garment workers demand compensation

Nearly 500 garment workers have staged multiple protests since December 14 to demand outstanding wages and compensation after the closure of a factory owned by Sees Global in the Khsach Kandal district.

On Monday, workers organised a protest convoy of six trucks and motorcycles to Prime Minister Hun Sen's home to demand he intervene in the issue. Workers, however, were blocked by local authorities. According to media reports, workers presented a petition to local authorities before returning to the factory.

Burma: 1,000 garment factory workers protest breach of labour policies

Around 1,000 garment workers in Patheingyi, Ayeyawady region, demonstrated on Sunday to demand the resignation of Immigration and Human Resources Minister Dr. Soe Win and regional labour department officials for failing to uphold labour laws.

The protest, which included workers from the Hya Mon garment factory who have been on strike for three weeks, demanded better dispute settlement procedures and for government action against factories that fail to comply with the labour laws.

DP World cancels bonuses after waterside workers walkout over smoke haze

International stevedore DP World has stripped \$120,000 worth of bonuses from 600 workers at Port Botany, Sydney, after they walked out this month over poor air quality caused by bushfires. The company cancelled a fortnight's worth of productivity bonuses.

The company has singled out 60 workers and docked them about \$20,000 worth of pay over stopping work for six hours on the evening shift on December 5 over the same issue.

The company accused their workers of taking action that was

“inconsistent” with provisions in their enterprise agreement. However, waterside workers at other stevedore terminals in Botany Bay and office workers in central Sydney stopped work on the same day over the hazardous smoke.

The Maritime Union of Australia, a division of the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union, has not called industrial action over the issue and instead said it will prepare a case to take DP World to the Fair Work Commission.

NSW Ambulance reports that in the week between December 5 and 11 there was a more than a 30 percent increase in presentations to emergency departments for asthma and breathing difficulties and 40 percent increase in emergency calls. On December 10, the Sydney air quality index, a measure of air pollution, was 11 times higher than that considered “hazardous.”

Jetstar pilots and baggage handlers suspend industrial action until January

Unions representing around 800 pilots and 250 baggage handlers and ground crew employed by Jetstar have suspended industrial action during the peak Christmas holiday period. The Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP) and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) said strike action will resume after January 2 in their dispute with Jetstar, a Qantas Airways budget subsidiary, for new enterprise agreements.

TWU members walked out for two hours during the peak periods at airports in Sydney, Melbourne's Tullamarine and Avalon airports, as well as Brisbane, Cairns and Adelaide on December 13 and 19 to demand 4 percent annual pay increases, a minimum 30 hours work a week, more rest breaks, a guaranteed 12-hour break between shifts and safety improvements in a new work agreement.

Pilots walked off the job for four hours on December 14 and 15, pushing for 3 percent annual salary increases and changes in fatigue management through improved rostering. Jetstar was forced to cancel 28 domestic flights.

Jetstar is refusing to make a new offer or meet with the AFAP or TWU until the unions provide “clear evidence” they are prepared to discuss a deal that “fits within” the company's wages policy.



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