

Garbage collectors strike in India's Maharashtra state capital; military vehicle production workers oppose sackings in Tamil Nadu

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and New Zealand

4 January 2020

Asia

India: Punjab sanitation workers demand permanent jobs

Sanitation workers from the Tarn Taran district, Punjab demonstrated on December 18 to demand permanent employment and salaries in line with the Labour Commission's recommendations. The Commission has stated that every employee should be paid 21,000 rupees (\$US295) per month.

Workers also demanded an end to the contract labour system and proper details of the amounts deducted from their salaries for the General Provident Fund. The workers were organised by the state committee of the Safai Sewak Union, which has threatened to call a state-wide protest on January 8.

Garbage collectors in Nagpur strike

About 1,600 garbage collectors from Nagpur, the capital of India's Maharashtra state, held a sudden strike on December 27 to demand unpaid wages. The walkout left around 905 tonnes of garbage uncollected from households and the streets.

The workers are members of the Bhartiya Kamgar Sena,

which claims that two new operators, AG Enviro and BVG India, have not paid any salaries since December 7.

Telangana childcare centre workers protest against closures

Anganwadi (childcare) teachers and helpers demonstrated on the premises of the Collectorate in Kothagudem, Telangana state on December 27 to demand the government withdraw its plans to rationalise the state's child care centres. The government wants to amalgamate or close all centres with ten or less children. About 2,000 centres will be affected by the cost-cutting measure.

The Anganwadi Teachers and Helpers Union and the Centre for Indian Trade Unions estimate claimed that at least 4,000 jobs will be destroyed. Protesters also demanded that the government immediately pay outstanding travel allowances and salaries. Protest leaders submitted a memorandum to government officials.

Tamil Nadu: Military vehicle production workers oppose sackings

Former vehicle production workers from Hindustan Motor Finance Corporation Limited (HMFCL) are holding an indefinite demonstration outside the company's factory gate in protest against being

retrenched.

Around 170 long-term employees were dismissed when the company, which produces bullet-proof passenger cars, trucks and multi-utility vehicles for India's defence industry, was taken over by the French company PCA. Some employees have worked for the company for 22 years.

Workers said that prior to PCA's take-over the company claimed it would retain all HMFCL employees. The vehicle production workers, however, were sacked after PCA recruited an additional 200 workers. A legal case on behalf of the sacked workers is pending in the High Court.

Bangladesh state-owned bank employees oppose pay cut

Workers from the state-owned BASIC bank demonstrated in Dhaka on December 29 to oppose a pay cut. Protesters confined the bank's managing director to his office for several hours and demanded a discussion with the bank's board of directors. Management claims the pay cut was due to the bank running at a loss.

The demonstration ended later that day with striking bank employees resuming work the following day. Workers claim they are entitled to a special pay structure but the board of directors on December 22 imposed a government pay scale for state-owned banks, which is lower than the previous pay rates.

Cambodian beach-front vendors fight eviction

On Monday, more than 60 mobile food vendors along the Sihanoukville's O'tres beach front, protested outside the Provincial Hall to demand authorities rescind an order forcing them to leave the location.

On December 4 the provincial governor issued a notice ordering 64 vendors to leave the area. The directive claimed it was to protect public order and preserve the "beach's beauty, hygiene and environment."

Authorities falsely claimed that the vendors drained sewage into the sea, which was disputed by the vendors who said they had financed a proper toilet with its own

underground septic tank container with a regular pump-out facility.

One of those impacted told the media that the vendors had been at the site for years before it became popular with tourists. She said the vendors were not against development of the beach front but wanted the provincial authorities to provide them with fixed stalls instead of driving them away from their only source of income.

New Zealand supermarket workers protest

Supermarket workers in New Zealand's South Island took limited protest action on December 24 over stalled pay talks. Workers at the Pak'nSave supermarket in Richmond, near Nelson, and at New World City Centre in Dunedin were protesting low pay at the two Foodstuffs-owned outlets.

The First Union restricted the workers' action to wearing stickers demanding a "living wage" while it calls for "meaningful bargaining" by the stores' owners.

While a union spokesman complained it had waited more than three years to settle new collective agreements, the union has not organised any action. Dunedin New World had changed ownership in that time.

The union has recently settled agreements with five Pak'nSave stores in the North Island, offering average starting rates of \$19.50 per hour, rising to above \$21 by 2021. In contrast, Richmond Pak'nSave is offering just 0.05 cents above the current minimum wage of \$17.70, and Dunedin New World is offering the same, with the possibility of workers earning up to 50 cents an hour extra, depending on "performance."

The so-called "Living Wage" campaign endorsed by the trade unions falsely claims that a wage of \$21.15 per hour is sufficient for workers to live "with dignity." In fact it is woefully inadequate, consigning low paid workers in retail and other sectors to ongoing poverty.



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