

India: Haryana public transport workers strike against outsourcing;
Pakistani journalists oppose salary and job cuts

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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India: Haryana public transport workers strike against outsourcing

Workers from the state-owned Haryana Roadways walked out for two days on January 7 in opposition to the outsourcing of commuter services. The walkout was sparked after the state government announced a plan to hire up to 150 private buses on a per kilometre basis throughout the state to make up for years of not upgrading service and equipment.

Workers fear that the outsourcing is just the first step towards full privatisation of the company and the elimination of thousands of government jobs. In October last year 20,000 roadways workers struck for 18 days over the issue. The Haryana Roadways Employees Union is demanding that the state government add 14,000 buses to the current fleet and provide thousands of new jobs.

Karnataka public sector workers oppose Indian government's privatisation plans

More than 5,000 public sector workers demonstrated in Bangalore on January 4 against the Modi government's privatisation policies. Workers from Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Bharat Heavy Electricals, Bharat Electronics, Visvesvaraya Iron & Steel, Vignyan Industries and Hindustan Aeronautics, which are all earmarked for partial privatisation, participated in the protests.

Petroleum workers reject privatisation in Kerala

Workers from the state-owned Bharat Petroleum Corporation protested in Kochi on January 3 against Modi government moves to sell off the profit-making company. The demonstration was organised by the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), a trade union federation affiliated with the prime minister's Bharatiya Janata Party.

Union officials transformed the protest into an anti-government rally, denouncing "the anti-labour policies" of India's central and state governments.

Tamil Nadu workers protest employers' anti-labour policies

Hundreds of workers from various industries in and around Sriperumbudur and Chennai walked off the job on January 5 and held a 24-hour hunger protest to highlight the anti-labour practises of their employers. Protesters demanded jobs for hundreds of workers who have been hit by the growing number of factory closures in Tamil Nadu.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions opposes unified strike action and continues to issue toothless appeals to the government to take legal actions against companies that ignore labour laws and union rights.

Kerala journalists protest against new labour law

Members of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists and Kerala Newspaper Employees Federation demonstrated outside the state governor's official residence in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala state, on January 4 to oppose the new labour laws which they say will disadvantage them.

The new law, which is called the Labour Code on Industrial Relations 2019, will consolidate 44 existing labour laws and divide them into four codes. Journalists fear they will lose the guarantee of the minimum wage set by Working Journalists and Other Newspaper Employees Act.

The demonstration was joined by information technology employees who are also opposed the new labour laws and IT industry retrenchment policies.

Pakistan: Islamabad journalists oppose salary and job cuts

Journalists demonstrated at the National Press Club in Islamabad on January 2 against sackings, pay cuts and long delays in the payment of salaries by media companies. The protest was organised by Media Action Force and 4th Pillar Media International. Journalists have threatened to continue and expand their protests nationally if their concerns are not resolved. They also appealed to other journalists' organisations to join future protests.

Bangladesh land port workers demand higher wages

Thousands of Benapole Land Port employees stopped work and formed a human chain outside the port administrative building on January 4. Loading and unloading of all cargo was suspended for six hours. The striking workers are demanding pay parity with their fellow workers at other land ports.

Workers at Benapole port, which is on the border with India, are employed through a middleman contractor and only paid 22 taka (\$US0.26) per tonne that they load or unload. Land point workers at Bhomra, Sona Masjid and Mongla receive 35 taka per tonne. The 891 Port Handling Labour Union has threatened extended strike action if higher wages are not agreed within the next week.

Taiwanese workers protest over wages and conditions

Dozens of workers affiliated with various labour rights organisations protested outside the China Nationalist Party's headquarters in Taipei, the Taiwan capital, last Saturday. They later marched to the offices of other Taiwan political parties.

The workers want their pay raised to the official minimum wage and receive retirement pay and for their holidays to be increased from 116 to 123 days a year. They also demanded the lowering of the threshold for official "union recognition" from 30 to 10 members and for abolition of the migrant brokerage system, under which foreign workers have to pay exorbitant fees for the right to be employed.

Thousands of Cambodian hotel workers on strike

Some 3,000 workers from Phnom Penh's NagaWorld hotel and casino complex walked out on strike for higher wages and improved conditions on Thursday. They are also demanding the reinstatement of the facility's union president, Chhim Sithar, who was suspended by the company in September.

The company sent a memo to workers prior to the strike threatening to sack them if they walked out. NagaCorp has an exclusive license to operate in Phnom Penh. It had a reported revenue of \$1.8 billion in 2019 and a nine-month net gaming revenue of \$616.3 million last year.

The hotel workers want staff paid \$US300 a month and gambling floor employees \$500. Wages are currently \$150 and \$250 per month. One striker told the media that workers are not allowed a toilet break if there is no one to replace them.

Thomastown packaging workers maintain work bans

Over 60 workers at Orora's fibre packaging plant in Thomastown, Victoria, are continuing two months of industrial action to demand a new enterprise agreement (EA). Workers have imposed an indefinite ban on overtime. In November, they began rolling one-hour stoppages.

Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union officials have met with management 18 times since last January over the company's proposed EA. The company is demanding the removal of certain paid meal breaks and other cuts in hardwon condition. In early December, Orora took its proposed EA to a vote of employees. It was rejected 59 to 7.

The Fair Work Commission on Tuesday dismissed Orora's application to have industrial action stopped on the grounds that the union was not negotiating in good faith.

Westmead Hospital cleaners in Sydney stop work to demand more staff

Cleaners on the afternoon shift at Westmead Hospital in Sydney's western suburbs walked off the job on December 20 over inadequate staffing levels. Health Services Union members have been campaigning for additional workers for over a year. They took action after management withheld data from a staffing review committee that supported a case for recruiting additional cleaners.

Workers have called for an additional 33 cleaners to be hired to relieve staffing pressure and ensure that the hospital is cleaned to an acceptable standard. Management responded by docking the cleaners' pay for the time lost during the stop-work meeting.

Food services workers strike at New South Wales hospital

Workers from the Food Services Department at Gosford Hospital, a 480-bed training hospital servicing the New South Wales Central Coast, walked off the job for three hours on December 19. Their action followed seven months of failed negotiations between management and the Health Services Union, including over staffing issues.

The union wants the immediate recruitment of eight staff, in line with a recent 13 percent increase in hospital activity. Workers have called for improved rostering and workflows, and an end to bullying and harassment.



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