

Pakistan: District government workers strike over unpaid wages;
New Zealand plastics workers strike over COVID-19 concerns

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

28 March 2020

**Pakistan: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police attack authorities.
government workers**

Police in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's administered northern district, assaulted protesting government workers in Dir on Tuesday for violating the COVID-19 related regulations against any gatherings. The Class-IV workers from the District Headquarters Hospital were demonstrating outside the District Accounts Office to demand immediate payment of two month's salaries.

The failure to pay salaries on time is spreading across Pakistan, especially affecting workers on lower pay grades. While an increasing number of workers are losing their jobs because of the coronavirus, those who are still employed are severely impacted by the delay in salary payments.

Bangladeshi garment workers strike over unpaid wages

More than 200 garment workers from the Dragon Sweater factory in Dhaka stopped work on Sunday morning and protested inside the factory claiming management had not paid wages and allowances for four months. At 1:30 p.m. they demonstrated on Malibagh-Rampura Street in Dhaka, blocking traffic for two hours. The demonstration ended after police mediated talks between workers and the factory

Cambodian casino workers protest over unpaid wages

On Tuesday, 100 workers from the Hao Cheng Hotel and Casino in Sihanoukville, a seaside city on the gulf of Thailand, demonstrated outside the complex to demand wages that should have been paid on March 10 and March 15. They were also protesting against the sacking of four co-workers.

Hao Cheng Hotel management claimed the pay delays were due to low customer traffic caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Some workers in the industry are anxious to return to the provinces to support their families in the pandemic, increasing the anger over the theft of their wages.

Australian Paper mill workers maintain work bans

About 160 maintenance workers from Australian Paper in Maryvale, southeast of Melbourne, Victoria state, are maintaining bans on overtime, not using company phones and paper work. The bans came into force in September and the company has hired workers on contract to maintain full production. Limited rolling strike action has been ongoing for seven months against

the company's proposed enterprise agreement (EA).

The workers are represented by three unions, the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, Electrical Trades Union and United Workers Union, who have been trying to reach a deal with Australian Paper for nearly 12 months. Workers have unanimously rejected the company's demands that they accept a two-tier agreement, which involves 15 percent lower wage rates for all new employees.

The company also wants a freeze on existing employees' wages until the pay of new starters catches up. The proposed changes could lead to full-time staff being replaced by contractors, cuts in sick and personal leave and alterations in the way overtime is calculated and rosters devised.

Australian Paper is a subsidiary of Nippon Paper, a global company with a net income of \$10.3 billion. In February the Victorian Labor government announced that a \$200 million grant was available to the company to shift away from hardwood and towards plantation supply.

receive full pay during New Zealand's four-week coronavirus national shutdown.



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New Zealand: Sistema plastics workers walkout over COVID-19 concerns

Sistema plastics factory employees in Auckland walked off the job on March 25 citing health and safety concerns associated with the spread of coronavirus. The plant employs around 500 workers. With New Zealand currently in a national lockdown, only businesses deemed "essential" are permitted to continue operating.

While Sistema is deemed an essential business, workers said the company had not provided any personal protective gear, such as gloves and masks, and employees were expected to work for hours within one metre of each other. Lockdown procedures currently dictate that, apart from members of their own household, everyone should be at least two metres from other people.

Workers said they would not return to the plant until it was safe to do so. E T? Union officials met with Sistema management on Wednesday and following a WorkSafe inspection of the plant on Thursday, the company said workers could remain at home and would