

India: Telangana coal mine workers strike against privatisation;
Queensland hospital workers walkout over pay freeze

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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India: Cement plant workers in Telangana demand unpaid wages

Contract workers from the Kesoram Cements plant in Ramagundam in Telangana state have been on strike since June 3 over three months' outstanding wages. The company stopped paying salaries during the coronavirus lockdown. Strikers also allege that more than 1,000 workers had been on contract for several years and should be given permanent jobs.

Management has deducted half of this year's bonus and only paid half salary rates, claiming the company was running at a loss. Workers said that the strike will continue until management resolves all the contract employees' demands.

Telangana state-owned coal mine workers strike

Thousands of mine workers from the government-owned Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) struck for 24 hours on Wednesday against the Modi government's plans to privatise the mines.

The mine workers held sit-down protests outside general managers' offices at state-owned mines in the coal belt and on June 11 and returned to work the next day wearing black badges. The strike followed a series of gate meetings throughout the Telangana coal belt.

Trade union officials claimed they would step up the protests if the Indian government failed to withdraw its plans after June 11. The SCCL employs around 49,000 people and is owned jointly by the Telangana government (51 percent) and the national government (49 percent).

New Delhi teachers on hunger strike over unpaid wages

North Delhi Municipal Corporation school teachers began a hunger strike protest on June 8 to protest over three months' outstanding salaries. The teachers said their action was necessary, and would continue, because the Delhi government, commissioners and corporation mayors had ignored their written appeals of the corporations were ignored.

Laid-off textile and garment workers in Karnataka protest

Laid-off workers from the Gokaldas Exports textile and garment factory in Srirangapatna, Karnataka state, have been demonstrating outside the Euro Clothing Company II since June 7 to demand the plant, which was shut the previous day, be reopened. Nearly 1,300 workers, mostly women, have lost their jobs.

Hyderabad doctors protest to demand better security after violent assault

Doctors from the Gandhi General Hospital in Hyderabad protested on June 9 to demand improved security following an assault by relatives of a 55-year-old patient who died while being treated for COVID-19. The hospital is the main health facility for treating COVID-19 patients in Telangana state.

The hospital's junior doctors said that they had explained to the relatives of the COVID-19 victim that the patient was unlikely to recover. When the patient died the doctors were physically assaulted by family members using hospital furniture. The junior doctors staged a sit-down protest outside the hospital building until the following day.

Ahmedabad nurses strike over pay cuts

A group of nurses and other health employees contracted by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to work at the Sardar Vallabh Patel (SVP) Hospital walked out on June 8 after their contractor cut their May salaries by between 10 and 20 percent. The nurses reported that they had only received 22,000 rupees (\$US290) for May with a deduction of 7,000 rupees.

"We work endlessly without complaining, risking our lives, spending up to 12 hours in PPEs without relieving ourselves and even during our periods. And yet they cannot pay our salaries?" one nurse said. Under pressure from the strike and protest the contractor later reversed the pay cut.

Tamil Nadu power loom workers stage black-flag protest

Power loom workers in Aruppukottai, a town in Tamil Nadu, held a black flag protest and strike on June 8 to oppose wage cuts and to demand permanent jobs. Black flags were raised in hundreds of locations across the town and workers walked out of the factories.

Power loom companies responded to the coronavirus lockdown restrictions by imposing a 20-rupee per garment cut in workers' rates. The pay cut has been continued for the past two months.

Tamil Nadu: Southern Railway workers protest over pay cut

A group of Southern Railway workers, led by the Southern Railway Mazdoor Union, demonstrated in Madurai on Monday to oppose a one-day salary cut and a reduction in dearness allowance payments for 18 months. Southern Railway management claim the pay cuts were in response to failing revenues caused by the COVID-19 lockdown.

Bangladeshi garment workers demand reinstatement of 700 employees

Hundreds of garment workers from the Cassiopea Fashion plant and the Cassiopea Apparel factory, part of the Elegant Group in Gazipur, demonstrated on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway on Monday to oppose the retrenchment of 700 workers.

Management claimed it was due to the lack of orders. Protesters cleared the highway after the industrial police intervened and told workers they secured a commitment from factory management saying that it would cancel the retrenchments. No details have been made available about the deal.

Pakistani steel workers fight privatisation

Thousands of workers from the government-owned Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) in Karachi began protest action on June 4 to oppose mass sackings and privatisation. The Khan government is moving to sack the corporation's 9,350 workers, restructure company debts and sell it off the business to private investors.

Police were mobilised by the government to brutally break up a peaceful protest a large group of workers marching from "Steel Town", a steel workers' housing area in Karachi, to the PSM factory. An eyewitness told the media that police manhandled and dragged away at least four of the protest leaders. Two workers are alleged to have died from heart attacks during the assault.

The protest was called by the Officers & Workers Action Committee, an umbrella union alliance. The formation, however, has isolated the PSM workers from the mass opposition of workers from other government enterprises fighting privatisation.

Consecutive Pakistani governments have agreed to privatise all state-

owned enterprises in exchange for International Monetary Fund loans.

Philippines teachers protest over remote learning

A group of teachers, led by the Alliance of Concerned Teachers, demonstrated outside the central office of the education department in Pasig City in Metropolitan Manila on Tuesday. They were protesting President Duterte's decision to continue remote learning introduced during the coronavirus lockdown throughout the 2020–21 school year.

Teachers claim that the decision disadvantages poor students and the government has no proper plan and is not providing resources to impoverished parts of the country.

The alliance pointed out that half of the 6.4 million enrolments for remote learning were in the three most urbanised areas of the country including Manila. Turnout was low in the remaining 14 regions due to lack of internet access and that the impoverished areas within these regions were the worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Queensland public hospital workers strike over pay freeze

Hundreds of non-medical health workers at public hospitals throughout Australia's north-eastern state of Queensland walked off the job for an hour on June 5 to protest against the government's proposed 12-month pay freeze.

Queensland Labor Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk intends to introduce a bill to parliament on June 16 that will freeze pay increases for public sector workers, depriving them of a previously agreed pay increase of 2.5 percent due in July.

Most of these workers, who are on the frontline in hospitals or as ambulance paramedics during the COVID-19 pandemic, have not had a pay increase for two years. The striking workers are members of the Australian Workers Union which represents hospital cleaners, kitchen staff and gardeners among others.

Although all state public sector workers will be affected by the wage freeze their unions, including the Together union, United Workers Union, Electrical Trades Union, Australian Nurses and Midwives Federation, Transport Workers Union and others, have refused to organise coordinated industrial action to oppose Labor's wage freeze.



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