

India: Airport workers in Kerala oppose sackings; Telangana private school teachers hold state-wide demonstrations

## Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and New Zealand

11 July 2020

### India: Airport workers in Kerala oppose sackings

Hundreds of workers employed as casual labour by Air India SATS (AISATS) at Trivandrum airport in Kerala state held a two-day strike on July 3 and demonstrated at the facility to oppose the sacking of 100 ground crew.

The company has over 900 employees at the airport, which includes 200 managerial staff. Other workers have also been terminated.

The strike was called by the Confederation of Trivandrum Casual Workers unions and joined by workers from the Trivandrum Airport Contract Labourers Union and other unions affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions and Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). The unions had called on AISATS management to reduce wages during the coronavirus lockdown rather than impose lay-offs.

### Telangana private school teachers hold state-wide demonstrations

The Telangana Private Teachers Association (TPTF) called a state-wide protest in Telangana on July 5 to demand salary assistance from the government during the coronavirus lockdown. They urged the state government to provide 15,000-rupees (\$US200) aid to each private school teacher and to reopen the schools.

A TPTF spokesperson alleged that the private schools had not followed a government order to pay salaries during the COVID-19 lockdown. He claimed that about 300,000 private school teachers and their families are facing hardships. A memorandum with their demands was submitted to the government.

### Newly recruited nurses at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad protest

Nurses protested against the lack of clarity about their employment at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Monday. The new recruits said they were confused over the uncertainty regarding their posting.

The nurses had initially applied for jobs at the TIMS Hospital but were informed that the vacancies were filled and that they were to report for duties at the Gandhi Hospital. When they reported for duty, however, they were not given job certificates, joining letters or accommodation.

They also claimed that the terms of their job contract had changed. They were initially told that their employment would be contractual but, at Gandhi Hospital, the nurses were told that they would be outsourced.

### Nurses and other workers at North New Delhi hospitals demand wages

Nurses and non-medical staff at the 600-bed, state-run Kasturba Hospital in New Delhi held a two-hour demonstration on Monday over the non-payment of salaries. The hospital is managed by the North Delhi Municipal Corporation and is the city's largest maternity hospital employing 140 doctors, 140 nurses and nearly 40 paramedics. They have not been paid for three months while resident doctors have not been paid since April. The protest was temporarily suspended after the authorities committed to paying salaries within a few days.

Earlier, paramedical staff and doctors at Hindu Rao Hospital, another medical North Delhi Municipal Corporation (MCD) facility, walked out over delayed salary payments. Several other North Delhi MCD employees, including teachers, contractors and retired workers, have not been paid for several months.

### Bangladeshi medical lab technologists demand jobs and pay rise

Hundreds of medical technologists from government laboratories held a two-hour sit-down protest outside the Sastha Bhadan at Mohakhali in Dhaka on Sunday demanding entry level pay be lifted to grade 10 of the national pay scale and the removal of discrepancies preventing permanent employment. They were joined by jobless technologists who were demanding recruitment for 20,000 technologists.

The Bangladesh Medical Technologist Association also called for government jobs for youth who have crossed the age threshold for recruitment, a separate board for technology education and an end to appointments of medical technologists on a temporary basis.

The association said the government's pool of health professionals was severely short of medical technologists. While the World Health Organization says there should be five medical technologists for one doctor there are only 5,000 medical technologists in Bangladesh per 30,000 doctors at the government level.

### **Bangladeshi gas field workers strike for festival bonus**

About 50 workers from the government-owned Bangladesh Gas Fields Company (BGFC) demonstrated outside the company's head office at Birasar in Brahmanbaria on July 2 to demand management reverse its decision to cancel the Eid-UI-Adha bonus and the annual salary increment. The Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Employees Union said that if management did to reverse its decision within four days it would call for strikes at BGFC's seven gas fields.

### **Cambodian garment workers protest in Phnom Penh**

About 50 garment workers from the Hana (Cambodia) 1 factory in the Por Sencheay district demonstrated outside the prime minister's residence in Phnom Penh on Wednesday demanding assistance in getting outstanding compensation and damages payments. Their factory was shut on June 23 without paying workers their legal entitlements. Workers said previous talks with government officials and management failed to resolve the issue.

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit Cambodia 400 garment, footwear and travel goods factories have shut down, leaving 150,000 jobless.

### **Offshore oil and gas workers' union applies for strike ballot**

The Australian Workers Union (AWU), covering 60 caterers, cleaners and cooks working on five Shell offshore liquefied natural gas (LNG) platforms in Western Australia, has applied to the Fair Work Commission for permission to hold a strike ballot in their long running dispute for a new enterprise agreement (EA). The workers are employed by Sodexo, a food services and facility management company headquartered in Paris.

The dispute is centred on the huge Prelude floating platform, which is owned by Royal Dutch Shell, KOGAS and Inpex, and managed by Shell. The Offshore Alliance (a coalition between the AWU and the Maritime Union of Australia) has accused Shell of using stand-over tactics on the workers and Sodexo after a principle agreement was reached but then collapsed. The unions alleged Shell illegally intervened in negotiations. A strike by Sodexo workers would affect production at all of Shell's five offshore platforms.

### **Jetstar workers at Newcastle Airport oppose closure of terminal**

Jetstar airport workers protested at a media conference in Newcastle on Wednesday calling on the airline and their parent company Qantas to reverse their decision to axe jobs and workplaces at Newcastle Airport, north of Sydney. Jetstar plans to close its Newcastle Cabin Crew base and Maintenance Base at Newcastle Airport, as part of massive job cuts announced by their parent company Qantas. The Transport Workers Union (TWU) claimed that over 200 jobs would be lost.

Jetstar has operated at Newcastle airport for 16 years. A TWU

spokesperson said workers were given two weeks' notice but no other support from the company since then. The TWU has not organised a mass campaign to save jobs and has instead called on the federal government to provide a special 'aviation keeper' allowance for aviation workers.

### **Melbourne public transport workers demand facemasks for passengers**

Transport workers operating Melbourne's trams and buses have called on their union, the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU), to pressure the state government to demand that facemasks be made available to all commuters.

While the RTBU claims on its Facebook site that it "has been advocating for masks from day one," and "pushed for anything that will make members safer, and reduce risks for the traveling public," it has not called for action over workers' requests.

The demands are a clear Occupational Health and Safety matter and allow workers to "legally" strike and take other action under Australia's repressive industrial relations laws.

### **New Zealand general practice nurses to stop work**

Around 3,400 nurses, administrators and receptionists at general practices throughout New Zealand will stop work for two hours on July 23. The nurses, members of the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO), are protesting against the pay gap between them and their counterparts in public hospitals.

Some nurses employed by District Health Boards (DHBs), which manage the country's hospitals, can earn as much as \$7,500 a year more than those working in medical centres, while having the same skills and level of experience.

The NZNO's negotiations for a Multi-Employer Collective Agreement (MECA) with the NZ Medical Association and Green Cross Health, which represent employers, have reached an impasse. Employers claim they want to meet the demand for pay parity, but the Labour Party-led government has not provided enough funding. A major concern for GPs is the shortage of nursing staff, partly caused by low pay.

The practice nurses dispute follows a series of strikes over the past two years by hospital workers, nurses, doctors, midwives and specialists, against low pay and inadequate staffing. A nationwide public hospital nurses' strike in 2018 was sold out by the NZNO, which reached an agreement for a meagre 3 percent pay increase and negligible increase in hospital staff.



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