

India: Over 40,000 Karnataka health workers begin indefinite state-wide strike; Pakistani doctors protest and Sri Lanka nurses demand overtime pay

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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India: Karnataka health workers begin indefinite state-wide strike

Around 42,000 Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers in Karnataka state began an indefinite strike on July 10 to demand a fixed 12,000 rupees (\$US160) monthly salary and permanent jobs. ASHA workers are currently only paid an honorarium of 4,000 rupees by the state government.

The ASHA workers claim that constant technical problems prevent them from entering their work activity data into the government computer pay system, resulting in inadequate pay or nothing at all. In January, striking ASHA workers returned to work after the state government falsely assured them that authorities would consider their demands.

The striking ASHA workers have threatened to extent their action to mass resignations if their demands are not granted.

Meanwhile, AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy) contract doctors in Karnataka have also threatened to resign if the authorities fail to increase their salaries and make their jobs permanent.

The ambulance workers demonstrated in the hospital and presented a memorandum about the police attack to the Health Committee. They said they would remain on indefinite strike until action was taken against the police officers.

Striking soya processing workers in Andhra Pradesh sacked

Some 92 striking contract workers from the Ruchi Soya Industries plant at Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh were terminated on Wednesday. They had been on strike for seven days to demand payment of four years' outstanding bonuses, an increase in minimum wages, social security payments, employment state insurance benefits and company adherence to labour laws at the plant. They have been protesting outside the district collectorate and the processing plant.

The workers are contracted by Sudhakar Industrial Services and part of the 350-strong workforce at the facility.

Gandhi Hospital workers in Telangana hold combined protest

Around 800 contract workers, including sanitation workers, security guards and patient care personnel, demonstrated outside the Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Tuesday to demand permanent jobs and increased wages. It was part of three-day protests by the workers who are demanding better working conditions and improved facilities. Police arrested numbers of demonstrators, releasing them later in the evening.

The state-run Gandhi Hospital is a major centre in Hyderabad for those infected with COVID-19. About 200 nurses are continuing their protest which started on July 11, inside the hospital. They are demanding the government honour previous commitments to increase their salary rates.

Haryana auto workers protest over sackings

Workers from several automotive manufacturing units in the Manesar-Gurgaon industrial hub in Haryana state, demonstrated outside the deputy commissioner's office on Thursday against the sacking of thousands of employees. Protesters alleged that the auto companies are using the COVID-19 lockdown and economic slowdown to fire workers and cut wages.

More than 10 unions and 100 representatives presented a memorandum calling for action against nine different manufacturing units.

The protesters accused labour department officials of being hand-in-glove with the companies and the management who have not paid wage settlements or improvements agreed to before the lockdown.

Bihar ambulance workers strike over police attack on colleagues

Members of 102 Ambulance Association in Samastipur, Bihar state walked off the job on July 11 to protest against the alleged police beating of two ambulance employees transporting a patient to hospital. The reason for the police attack has not been reported.

Tamil Nadu public sector workers protest in Madurai

Tamil Nadu government employees demonstrated outside the Madurai Collectorate on Tuesday over several demands. These include the provision of proper bus transport to workers' home villages and towns

during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tamil Nadu Government Employees' Association members demanded that workers who succumbed to COVID-19 must be compensated and all frontline workers be provided with personal protection equipment (PPE).

Demonstrators also called on the government to withdraw its decision to freeze the Dearness Allowance (DA) until July 2021, cancellation of an agreement to pay out 15 days earned leave and banning workers from taking holidays during the pandemic. Panchayat (local government) assistants, librarians, anganwadi workers and other employees on special time-scale based pay also demanded regular payment of their wages.

Pakistani doctors protest in Islamabad

Doctors from the government-run Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad protested on Monday to demand the immediate payment of a risk allowance and salary increments announced in September 2019. The Young Doctors Association (YDA) ignored threats by hospital administrators that "strict action" would be taken against protesting doctors.

The doctors' protest is the latest in a series by PIMS medical staff and includes action by the nursing students over the non-payment of stipends and for the provision of personal protective equipment. According to one media report, 200 workers at the hospital have been infected with COVID-19 and three have succumbed to the deadly disease.

The YDA later called off the protest claiming that officials from the Ministry of Health Services agreed to address their issues.

Sri Lanka: Nurses at Kandy hospital demand overtime pay

Around 300 nurses from the 2,300-bed Kandy General Hospital in Central Sri Lanka, demonstrated outside the facility on Monday to demand overtime payments according to previously agreed pay scales for the pandemic period. The nurses say they have been working four to eight additional hours but have not been paid promised salary rates.

The Kandy nurses' protest is the latest in the series of struggles launched by nurses in many parts of Sri Lanka against the cancellation of overtime pay and paid leave during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bangladeshi garment workers demand unpaid salaries

Over 2,000 garment workers from the Dipta Apparels factory in the Shampur area of Savar, Bangladesh, protested outside their factory on Sunday demanding unpaid salaries for June and reopening of the factory. They blocked a local road for several hours.

Factory management announced a three-day plant shutdown on July 1, blaming a drop in orders but later announced that the closure was indefinite, claiming electricity had been cut to the plant.

Workers also demanded payment of outstanding bonuses and the July Eid festival holiday allowance. The workers are members of the Bangladesh Garments and Shilpa Sramik Federation and National Garment Workers' Federation.

Bangladeshi university teachers protest sackings and outstanding salaries

Teachers from several private universities in Bangladesh have protested by filing complaints to the University Grants Commission against their termination and the non-payment of salaries.

Teachers said that university authorities have taken full tuition fees from the students for online classes but only paid some employees half of their salaries during the COVID-19 lockdown in March or nothing at all. Some universities terminated teachers during the COVID-19 crisis, claiming bankruptcy due to fewer student admissions.

Tasmanian tree lopping workers locked out

Nine workers from A1 Trees Services, a tree-logging company in Tasmania, were locked out by management on Tuesday in a dispute over their first enterprise agreement. The lockout was in response to low level work bans imposed by members of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU).

Police were called to the workers' picket line outside the company's depot in Devonport on Wednesday morning after the company owner drove his vehicle into the picket, injuring two workers and hospitalising one of them.

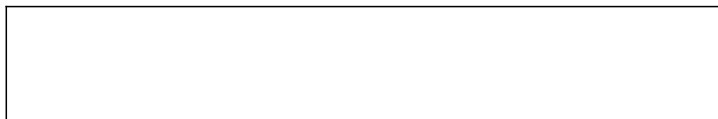
According to a union spokesman, the workers are only paid a flat rate below the minimum award rate with no benefits or penalty pay. He alleged that the workers were owed hundreds of dollars due to underpayment of wages. The workers want pay parity and entitlements with other workers in the industry and compensation for past wage underpayments.

Chemist Warehouse distribution workers refuse to enter Melbourne facility because of COVID-19 infections

Chemist Warehouse Distribution Centre workers in Somerton, Melbourne refused to enter the premises on July 10 after learning that a colleague had tested positive to COVID-19. According to the United Workers Union (UWU) the infected worker and five others have gone into isolation, despite the possibility that up to 100 staff who worked the same shift could have come in contact with the confirmed case.

While Chemist Warehouse management has demanded work should continue as normal, workers insisted that the facility must be closed for cleaning. Management has also declared that employees who refuse to work use their own entitlements, forcing casual employees and others with limited entitlements to choose between financially supporting their family or putting their health at risk.

The union has demanded that all workers at the site be placed on pandemic leave until they have been able to obtain a negative COVID test and that the facility be closed for 72 hours to allow for a deep clean. Although the issue is a workplace occupational health and safety concern the union has not called any industrial action despite complaining that the company has provided little details of the thoroughness of the cleaning process.





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