

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

28 January 2022

Asia

India: Haryana rural health workers continue strike action

Around 50,000 rural health (anganwadi) workers and helpers have been holding state-wide strikes and protests since December 8 over long-outstanding demands. Strikers demonstrated outside the mini-secretariat in Gurgaon on Tuesday, burnt an effigy of government officials and demanded re-employment of all workers dismissed during the strike.

Four union leaders have been terminated from their jobs and framed up on charges of obstructing government officials from doing their duties. There are 26,000 anganwadi centres in 22 districts and all have suspended activities.

Anganwadi workers want their monthly honorarium increased to 24,000 rupees (\$US319) and 18,000 rupees for helpers. Other demands include a rise in their status to skilled worker category, payment of a dearness allowance and 300,000 rupees in retirement benefits.

These low-paid exploited workers are involved in the government's Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and oversee the health and education of children. They also provide assistance and advice to expectant mothers as well as being expected to do election duty and be frontline workers monitoring the health of rural communities affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Andhra Pradesh government workers hold state-wide protest

Andhra Pradesh government workers began a state-wide campaign on Tuesday opposing a government wage revision which reduced their pay. The unions said they planned to hold a four-day hunger protest commencing Thursday, demonstrations on February 3 and non-cooperation (turn off all apps) on February 5. They have also threatened to begin an indefinite strike on February 7.

The Hyderabad High Court had ruled that the government has the right to reduce wages of government employees to boost the ailing economy.

Tamil Nadu sanitary workers oppose job outsourcing

Sanitary workers in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu demonstrated on Monday over several demands and condemned the state government's decision to outsource sanitary work at the state's civic bodies.

Protesters demanded that sanitary workers at all urban civic bodies be paid a 700-rupee (\$US9) minimum daily wage, uniforms be provided to workers who segregate the degradable and non-degradable waste, and additional workers be hired, rather than the outsourcing of jobs.

They also want wage deductions for the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to be properly paid into workers accounts. Another demand was for COVID-19 infected workers to be paid full wages, along with a 15,000-rupee incentive allowance in accord with a previous state government announcement.

Punjab government bus drivers protest pay cuts

Bus drivers from Punjab Roadways and Punbus stopped work in Bathinda on January 21 and used buses to block the entry and exit points of the city bus stand and other roads. Workers alleged that their wages had been reduced since the state run-bus companies altered timetables to favour private bus operators.

The drivers ended their protest after a government representative assured them that the original timetable would be restored.

Andhra Pradesh government teachers demonstrate against salary cut

As part of state-wide protests, Federation of Andhra Pradesh Teachers Organisations members demonstrated outside the district collector's office in Amaravati on January 20. They claim that their pay has been reduced by the Pay Revision Commission and implementation of revised House Rent Allowance. They demanded that the government order that the revisions be withdrawn.

Police arrested several teachers after their protest outside the Chittoor collector's office blocked the Chittoor-Vellore National Highway. Similar protests were held at various collector offices across the state. Police established roadblocks in several cities in an attempt to intimidate and restrict protesters.

West Bengal fast food delivery workers demand higher pay

Swiggy "partners"—i.e., gig workers—protested in Kolkata on January 20 to demand higher wages. A section of delivery workers went on strike on January 19 over low wages and pressed for other demands. The demonstrators complained that because they are contracted as "partners" they are not eligible for benefits such as provident fund and gratuity.

The workers said they only receive 20 rupees for every order up to 4km but effectively this is for 8km when the return journey is included. With rapidly increasing fuel costs it was "very difficult" to survive on this amount.

Tamil Nadu public transport workers protest

Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation workers demonstrated in Trichy on Monday against the government's delay in wage talks. They also demanded that wage deductions towards Provident Fund and Employment State Insurance (ESI) be deposited into their accounts. The Stalinist Communist Party of India (CPI) affiliated All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) coordinated the bus depot protests.

New Delhi hospital nurses demand compensation for families of deceased workers

Nurses at various governmental hospitals in New Delhi wore black ribbons while on duty on Monday as part of their protest over the Delhi government's delay in paying an already announced 10 million rupees (\$US13,300) compensation to the kin of workers who die while on COVID-19 frontline duty.

The Delhi Nurses Federation (DNF) have threatened to intensify their protests if the payments were not made by January 27.

Bangladeshi polytechnic teachers demand unpaid salaries

About 50 teachers from the Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute and the Rajshahi Women's Polytechnic Institute protested on January 18 to demand 18 months of unpaid salaries. They formed a human chain near the Shahid Minar on the Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute premises.

The teachers, who are members of the Bangladesh Polytechnic Teachers' Federation, said they have suffered a loss of income since the COVID-19 pandemic and been forced into debt, imposing a heavy burden on their families.

Sri Lankan internal revenue workers protest

Hundreds of Inland Revenue department workers have been holding lunchtime protests outside the department's head office since Monday demanding the government withdraw a plan to dissolve the department. The government intends to transfer the administration of the special goods and services tax to a special unit under the treasury.

The workers claim that the plan is a step toward privatising government services and that they will have to resign from all duties and take indefinite strike action if the government continues to ignore their demand.

Malaysia: Glove factory workers strike over beatings by security guards

Workers at a rubber glove factory in Sepang, Malaysia went on strike on January 23 after two of their colleagues were beaten by new security personnel engaged by their employer. The workers alleged that an

Indonesian female employee was beaten three days earlier and a Bangladeshi male worker beaten the day before the strike.

The rubber glove workers demanded the new security company's contract be terminated and former security guards brought back. Several hours after the strike began management agreed to move the new security guards from the gates of the workers' hostel where the beatings took place but insisted on retaining the company for other security purposes. Workers said they now feared that the security guards may retaliate against them.

Australia

New South Wales nurses protest excessive workloads and burnout

Over 50 off-duty nurses and midwives rallied outside Liverpool Hospital in south-western Sydney on Thursday morning to demand the New South Wales (NSW) Liberal government urgently address the long-standing staffing problems in hospitals which have worsened during the current Omicron variant outbreak. Protesters held placards saying "Fatigued, worn out, exhausted, burnt out" and "Public health in crisis."

One speaker told the rally, "Some of them [nurses] are in tears here this morning, just come off a night shift. They are caring for, sometimes, one nurse for eight to 10 people and covid has made their situation so harrowing."

Nurses and midwives across the state are calling for urgent action to alleviate the worsening staffing crisis. The 70,000-strong New South Wales Nurses and Midwives' Association, however, has not called any industrial action over the government's criminal removal of COVID-19 mitigation measures. Instead, the association has issued a series of toothless calls to the government.

An association spokesman told the media it had written to Premier Dominic Perrottet appealing to him to alleviate "unsustainable pressure" on hospitals and for a COVID-19 allowance for healthcare workers, for nurses and midwives to be given special leave when COVID-19 positive and increases in shift-by-shift ratios to ensure adequate staffing levels.

Food appliance maintenance workers in Queensland strike

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union members at Global Food Equipment in Queensland's capital Brisbane walked off the job for four days on January 20 in a dispute over the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

Global Food Equipment supplies and services appliances like coffee machines and commercial ovens at restaurants, bakeries and supermarkets. Workers said safety and training are major issues in the enterprise agreement dispute.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact