

India police attack striking auto workers in Tamil Nadu; New Zealand bus drivers walkout

## Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

29 September 2018

### India: Tamil Nadu police attack Yamaha and Royal Enfield workers

On September 26, Tamil Nadu police forced their way into Yamaha India and Royal Enfield, attacking striking workers and ejecting them from the respective plants, which are located in the Oragadam special economic zone near Chennai. The companies are both major two-wheeler manufacturers in India.

More than 750 Yamaha India workers began an indefinite strike and began occupying the plant September 21 to demand reinstatement of two sacked workers for their involvement in union activities. The workers had formed a new union, the Yamaha Motor Thozhilalar Sangham (India Motor Workers Association), which is linked to the Stalinist Communist Party of India (Marxist) and its Centre of Indian Trade Unions.

Nearly 1,300 Royal Enfield workers began their strike on September 24 for a wage increase and other demands. The company has threatened to terminate trainees at the plant if they did not return to work yesterday.

### Sanitation workers strike for unpaid wages in India's Telangana state

Over 420 sanitation workers from the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) area in Telangana launched an indefinite strike on September 25 for their wages from last August. Their current daily wage is just 553 rupees (\$US7).

The SCB and sanitation contractors are playing a blame game over the non-payment of wages. The contractors, who employ the sanitation workers, claim they have submitted the bills to the SCB but are yet to receive any funds. Meanwhile, SCB officials told the media that it had no money to pay to the contractors.

### India auto parts workers on strike

Nearly 140 workers from Myoung Shin Automotive India in the Oragadam Industrial Zone are maintaining strike action and an occupation which began on September 5.

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions, which is involved in the strike, told the media that the automotive component maker has not provided a pay increase for 30 months: "The management has held many rounds of talks with the workers' representatives, but till today, no mutual decision has been arrived at," a striking worker said.

### Bangladesh garment workers demanding outstanding salaries

On Saturday several hundred workers from the Swad Fashion garment factory in Shiddhirganj in Narayanganj demonstrated for two hours outside the main entrance of the Adamjee Export Processing Zone. They were demanding outstanding pay and other arrears.

Workers said that the factory had suddenly closed two months ago with

outstanding wages owing. Around 2,000 workers are employed at the factory. Police claimed that factory owners would pay their outstanding wages by October 22.

The next day police used tear gas and baton-charged several hundred protesting workers from Knit and Knitex in Gazipur leaving at least 10 garment workers injured. The workers, who were demanding outstanding pay and benefits, blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway.

Factory authorities had only paid the Knit and Knitex workers half their pay for August before Eid-ul-Azha (Muslims' festival) and promised the rest at the beginning of September.

When thousands of workers from nearby factories joined the demonstration, management at 20 nearby factories stopped production to prevent the protests spreading. The demonstrations ended after meetings between the unions, the police and factory owners.

### Government withdraws plans to restructure Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation

The Pakistan government has withdrawn a planned proposal to move the Pakistan Broadcast Corporation (PBC) to a new location and lay off contract-based workers after a demonstration on Monday by PBC employees in Islamabad. The PCB broadcasts the state's Radio Pakistan service. The main demonstration, which blocked Constitution Avenue in the capital, was supported by numerous protests by PBC employees across the country.

Under the government plan, the six-storey building accommodating 1,500 PCB staff and fully equipped broadcast studios would be moved to a small single-storey building accommodating no more than 200 people.

While the Pakistan minister for information and broadcasting withdrew the plan following the protests, he has demanded Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) representatives advance proposals within a month to boost PCB revenue.

### FATA teachers boycott classes in Pakistan

Teachers from two government-run schools in the Mohmand district of the formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which have been merged into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa areas, struck on Monday to protest the failure of the government to pay wages and benefits since July. A similar protest has erupted in some Kurram district schools.

The authorities claim the failure to pay dues were a result of the merger, which eliminated the funds formerly in the hands of the FATA authorities.

### Taiwan government workers strike for better conditions

Around 400 government contract workers rallied outside the Legislative

Yuan in Taipei on Wednesday to demand working conditions that meet minimum requirements in the Labor Standards Act.

Low-level government staff working on short-term contracts are not protected by the Act, but by regulations for public-sector employees. These are poorly defined and have left workers minuscule pensions and leave allowances.

According to Ministry of Civil Service regulations, contract workers who retire at the age of 65 after working 40 years at a government agency would receive a lump-sum pension of only \$ NT400,000 (\$US13,031). In the event of a work-related death, a contract employee's family members would be compensated the equivalent of just 10 months' salary.

### **Burmese factory workers rally**

On Thursday, Burmese workers marched along two main roads in Yangon Region's Hlaing Tharyar township to demand settlement of labour disputes at five factories.

The workers were calling for an end to a government order, stipulating that any disputes that cannot be settled by the local arbitration councils must go before regular arbitration courts. Workers say this is too expensive. Millions of workers have effectively lost any legal protection because of the order.

At the Great Well One factory workers have not been paid for two months. They have been unable to settle their dispute locally and do not belong to a union. They cannot afford to go to the arbitration council.

Seventy-six workers at the factory have not been allowed to return to work after they were demoted, transferred and refused employment in their new departments.

On Tuesday, workers from Fu Yuen garment factory held a demonstration outside the headquarters of the ruling National League for Democracy demanding that it intervene to assist workers. In August, hundreds of workers went on strike after 30 union members were sacked at the plant.

### **Cambodian workers threaten strike**

Over 100 workers have threatened to protest at the French embassy in Phnom Penh over unpaid financial benefits.

Workers were tasked with restoring the West Mebon temple in the Angkor Archaeological Park of Siem Reap province, when the original developer, L'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO), ran out of funds and passed the project on to the Apsara Authority.

### **Indonesia: Security workers protest in Jakarta**

Workers rallied outside the global security service company PT G4S office in South Jakarta, last Monday. They threatened to continue demonstrations for a month unless their demands are met.

The protesters said they represented more than 700 security guards employed by PT G4S. They occupied part of the street, blocking traffic. The workers claim they had been forced by the company to renew their contracts three times, losing pay and conditions in the process. The company also tried to break up the workers' union by firing one of its members unilaterally.

### **Australian union cancels bus drivers' strike**

The Transport Workers Union (TWU) this week called off strike action endorsed by hundreds of drivers at private bus operator Busways. The New South Wales stoppage was scheduled for Wednesday.

The union has agreed to mediation by the Fair Work Commission (FWC) in an ongoing dispute for a new enterprise work agreement. The stop-work would have impacted on services across Western Sydney and the NSW Central Coast.

The previous agreement expired in 2017, with no wage increase since then. The TWU has claimed it is demanding a 4 percent per annum wage

rise, but the company has so far offered only half that amount. The union's claim also includes a 5.5 percent increase in superannuation payments by 2020.

Busways approached the FWC earlier this month to mediate negotiations after workers engaged in work stoppages and rejected three offers from the company. The union has claimed Busways has "finally agreed to come to the table to negotiate a fair EBA." It has not reported any actual change in the company's offer.

### **New Zealand: Wellington bus drivers vote to strike**

Over 220 bus drivers in Wellington, the NZ capital, held a stop-work meeting on Wednesday to vote in favour of a strike if a collective agreement is not reached by October 23. Several companies manage buses in Wellington. The meeting was held by workers for Tranzit, which runs 60 percent of the buses, and Uzabus, which runs 6 percent of the buses.

The Tramways union is negotiating a separate contract for drivers at NZ Bus, which runs 28 percent of the buses. The other 6 percent are run by Mana Coachlines.

The drivers also passed a unanimous vote of no confidence for the Labour and Greens dominated Greater Wellington Regional Council, which oversees the transport network in the region. Instead, the drivers are calling for a commissioner to run the network. Tranzit drivers held a partial strike in July against a grossly unsafe working roster imposed by the council.

### **Fourth strike by bus drivers in New Zealand's Waikato region**

GoBus drivers in Hamilton held their fourth strike this year on Wednesday morning from 5:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The drivers are only paid between \$17.35 and \$19.46 per hour, slightly higher than the country's legal minimum. Drivers also say the buses are poorly maintained and are unsafe to drive.

First Union is desperately seeking to control the dispute and has called for arbitration between the company and the union via the Employment Relations Authority. They are hoping third-party facilitation will avoid the dispute escalating to a court trial.

### **Tomato workers strike throughout New Zealand**

Over a hundred workers for Turners and Growers across NZ struck for 24 hours on Monday. Workers included tomato growers and logistics and distribution centre operators. The New Zealand company is over 120 years old and has offices throughout the world.

The strike was over low wages, which are between the national legal minimum of \$16.50 and \$18.00 an hour. First Union has asked the company to pay its workers \$20.55, the supposed "living wage," as determined primarily by the union bureaucracy.

First Union has dragged out the negotiations for months but the strike was sparked after Turners and Growers refused to arrange a collective agreement nationally between hothouse workers and staff at the logistics and distribution centres. Splitting the contract in two would double the cost and the amount of work for the union.

### **Public sector strike expands on Wallis and Futuna**

On Tuesday, postal and telecommunications employees joined ongoing strike action by public sector workers on the remote French island territory of Wallis and Futuna. The walkout began a week earlier by 30 administrators, who wanted their competencies recognised and to be reclassified as French public servants.

Firefighters on the islands also struck on September 18 over working conditions and concerns over the fire services budget.

### **Unions call off general strike in French-Polynesia**

Five unions on the French-Polynesian island of Tahiti ended general

strike action on Tuesday night. The strike began less than a week earlier on September 19.

The walkout was held in protest against a rise in the retirement age, from 60 to 62, which the French-Polynesia assembly voted in favour of on Saturday. President Edouard Fritch claims the pension reforms are necessary to avoid a financial collapse.

In March, a general strike was held and the government had to delay voting on the reforms for a month when thousands of protesters forced their way into an assembly.

This time the unions sought to contain the strike as much as possible, choosing not to hold any marches or demonstrations. Instead, a union leader told the media the unions would challenge the reforms in France's highest administrative court.

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