

India: Punjab health workers and poor farmers protest over inadequate COVID-19 supplies; Queensland public health workers demand promised wage rise

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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Asia

India: Hospital medical staff demand protective equipment in Punjab

Paramedical and health workers at the Guru Nanak Dev Hospital in Amritsar, Punjab state, demonstrated outside the medical superintendent's office on April 3 to demand personal protection equipment (PPE) kits and other equipment needed for those treating COVID-19 patients.

Co-ordination Committee Para-medical and Health Employees-Punjab members said they were working under extreme mental stress and have not been supplied with N95 masks. PPE gear for nurses and Class IV staff are also in short supply, hand sanitisers are in a diluted form and drinking water is scarce.

The workers also demanded separate entry and exits doors for suspected patients and doctors, more ventilators and testing facilities and for private medical colleges and hospitals to be used to provide treatment for COVID-19 patients. Dental Students' Association members supported the protesters' demands.

Punjab farm workers demand relief rations

Farm workers from seven Muktsar district villages—Khunde Halal, Bhagsar, Bhuttiwala, Khnuna Khurd, Saonke and Dabra—held a roof-top demonstration on April 5 to demand relief rations during the COVID-19 lockdown. Farm and labour union members in the Moga district also staged protests.

The low paid workers also called for medicines, PPEs

and sanitisers. Landless farmers said that they had been the hardest hit by the lockdown and had no access to relief material. They said that the state government's recently announced rations for the poor remained only on paper and had not been provided.

Mumbai Hospital medical staff protest over poor quality PPE

Nurses, paramedics and other medical staff at K B Bhabha municipal general hospital in Bandra, a Mumbai suburb, protested on April 8 against the poor quality of PPE supplies. Workers demonstrated outside the hospital after a patient died from COVID-19 and demanded that they be quarantined because the facility had a high risk of spreading the virus.

Burmese workers demand factory shutdowns

About 1,500 factory workers from four plants at the Dagon Seikkan Township Industrial Zone in Yangon, Burma's largest city, stopped work on April 3 over the coronavirus pandemic. The mainly women workers were demanding employers shut down the plants for the whole of April and pay them their full wages for the month.

The strike began in the morning at the Blue Diamond handbag plant and quickly spread to Bluebird Enterprise backpack, Rainhouse Myanmar raincoat and Mayshar Myanmar glove factories.

The low-paid workers said they feared contracting COVID-19 and how they would financially survive in the months ahead. Already 20,000 factory workers in the region have lost their jobs. Employers claim there is a shortage of raw materials.

Australia

Queensland public health workers demand pay increase

Frontline public health workers, excluding doctors and nurses, are demanding the state government reverse its decision to freeze a promised pay rise agreed last year. These workers, including cleaners, ward-persons, kitchen hands, laundry staff, and other frontline workers who are putting their life at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, have not had a pay increase for two years.

Queensland Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk declared during a television interview last week that public sector pay rises had been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Together union and the Australian Workers Union, which cover these workers, have not called any industrial action over the government's attack on hospital workers' wages but issued a petition appealing to the state government to pay the increase.

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