

# *German Train Drivers Stage Strike Over Pay, Work Hours*

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Berlin, October 20 (RHC)-- One of the biggest strikes by German train drivers over pay and working hours has caused disruption across the country, Press TV reports.

The 50-hour walkout started from 3:00 pm (1300 GMT) on Friday on freight services and from 2:00 am (0000 GMT) on Saturday on long-distance and regional passenger services. The strike will last until 4:00 am (0200 GMT) on Monday.

It came at a time when school autumn holidays have started and may continue longer than announced earlier, as talks between the German train drivers' union (GDL) and state-owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) have stalled so far.

The GDL has called for a five-percent pay raise for its drivers and the reduction of their working hours from 39 to 37 per week. It has repeatedly accused the DB of stone-walling in ongoing pay talks.

The national rail operator, however, described the announcement of the strike - the fifth in recent weeks - as "excessive," saying, "with its 50-hour strike on a holiday weekend, GDL and its chairman Claus Weselsky has lost all sense of proportion."

The operator said it would ensure that at least one-third of services will run. An earlier strike action by train drivers on October 15 caused major disruptions for commuters.

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