

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

Haryana municipal sanitation workers continue indefinite strike

Contract sanitation workers from the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) have been on strike since September 18 to demand cancellation of contract tenders and for the corporation to directly employ sanitation workers hired by existing agencies.

The MCG terminated contracts with current sanitation agencies, alleging non-performance and regular union strikes. It hired six new agencies, but their employees have joined the union and are on strike over the non-payment of salaries. The workers' union is picketing the MCG commissioner's camp office and residence.

The strike has caused a sanitation crisis in the city. Streets are piled up with garbage and residents have either started burning it or paying illegal garbage collectors to remove it.

Chennai police arrest nurses demanding permanent jobs

Around 700 protesting nurses were detained by the Chennai city police, in Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday. They were demonstrating outside the offices of the directorate of medical services to demand job permanency. Nurses said police used force to remove them and some had fainted.

Around 7,000 nurses were recruited through the Medical Services Recruitment Board in 2015, of which only around 3,000 were made permanent and the remaining are working on consolidated pay. Protesters said they were employed to serve patients but are being made to do mainly data entry work.

The nurses, who have been working in various hospitals, demanded that the government provide paid maternity leave and fill vacant posts. The Tamil Nadu Nurses' Empowerment Association called off the protest after a meeting with the government. Details were not reported.

Tamil Nadu transport workers protest for restoration of old pension scheme

State Express Transport Corporation workers demonstrated in , a port city in Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday demanding the restoration of the old pension scheme and the cancellation of tenders floated recently for

appointing drivers and conductors on a contract basis.

Workers argued that the Metropolitan Transport Corporation's tender for appointing 234 drivers and an equal number of conductors through contractors would downgrade the quality of bus operations and service. .

Retrenched General Motors India workers in Pune maintain hunger protest

About 1,000 retrenched workers from General Motors India's shuttered plant at Telegaon near Pune in Maharashtra state, are continuing a hunger protest begun on October 2. They want reinstatement at the plant which has been sold to Hyundai Motor India.

The General Motors Employees Union (GMEU) has been ineffective in its attempt to get the government to intervene. It has now organised for "prominent" union figures to visit the protest and pledge their support. The union had earlier pinned its hopes on a false assurance from the state industries minister that the workers' demand would be considered.

Odisha municipal sanitation workers strike for minimum wage and entitlements

Sanitation workers from the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) walked off the job in 18 wards on Wednesday demanding social security, bonuses, a minimum monthly wage of 15,000 rupees (\$US180) and pensions after retirement. Another demand was that their victimised brothers sacked from the BMC be reinstated. Workers have threatened to intensify their strike if demands were not met.

Swiggy food delivery workers in Mumbai end strike

A city-wide strike by 10,000 Swiggy food delivery workers in Mumbai was called off on Tuesday by their union, the Rahstriya Karmachari Sena (RKS), following a meeting with the Maharashtra deputy chief minister and Swiggy executives. The strike was in protest of work changes that increased the travel radius for deliveries from 2 kilometres to 4 kilometres and reduced pay and incentives. Swiggy agreed to roll back the extended radius and to increase the base delivery fee.

Telangana nurses and midwives protest in Hyderabad

Around 2,500 Auxiliary Nurses and Midwives (ANM) working on contract in Hyderabad began a three-day sit-down protest on October 6 to demand permanent jobs and a wage increase in line with the recent wage revision. They also demanded the release of salaries in arrears.

Protesters chanted slogans demanding promises made during the suspension of the previous strike be fulfilled. The protest was organised by the All-India Trade Union Congress.

Punjab: Patiala municipal workers strike for higher pay

On October 6, Patiala Municipal Corporation workers began a series of daily two-hour strikes for an increase in annual wages on par with workers at other corporations and a rise in the Punjab government's contribution to the new pension scheme. The strike was organised by the Municipal Workers Union.

Punjab grain market workers demand wage increases

Jalandhar Big Grain Market (Mandi) workers in Jalandhar began indefinite strike action on October 7 to oppose the government's meagre pay increase. The workers unload grain in jute bags delivered to the market from local farms. They were offered a provocative increase from the current 2.42 rupees per bag lifted to just 2.45 rupees. Workers want a 25 percent increase.

Three-day national strike by Bangladeshi civil service teachers and administrative officers

Teachers and administrative officers from the Bangladesh Civil Service's (BCS) held on a three-day national strike on Tuesday. BCS General Education Association members demanded promotion and an end to discriminations among different BCS cadres. The strike affected 701 government colleges and madrassahs with about 2.6 million students. The action followed a one-day walkout on October 2 over these issues.

According to the association, discrimination is so great that as many as 7,000 eligible officials have not been granted promotions. On September 27, only 690 educators were promoted to associate professor posts out of 3,000 eligible for promotion. The association accused the government of renegeing on a previous assurance that the issues would be resolved.

Sri Lankan government doctors protest "deliberate" collapse of the health system

Doctors from the Government Medical Officers' Association (GMOA) held lunch break protests outside their respective hospitals and marched from the Colombo General Hospital toward the health ministry offices on Wednesday. Thousands of doctors in the western province joined the

march which was blocked by police.

Doctors demanded an end to the shortage of drugs and emergency purchasing, and protested shortages of medical equipment. GMOA demanded resolution of the increasing shortage of hospital doctors. It alleged that fourteen doctors and four specialists from hospitals have left the country due to the rising cost of living, high taxes and the "deliberate" collapsing of the health services.

GMOA has threatened to strike if no satisfactory solution is put forward by the government.

South Korea: Union at Kia Corp suspends planned strike

The union at Kia Corp, South Korea's second largest auto maker, said it would suspend strikes announced on Wednesday after company management agreed to reopen talks for a new work agreement. The union and Kia had been holding talks for three months over wage increases and an extension of the retirement age.

The union had planned to strike for eight hours on Thursday and Friday, then eight hours for three days from next Tuesday and 12 hours on October 20. The union has 26,600 members at Kia Corp with 92 percent approving strike action if management failed to meet their pay demands.

The union is seeking a minimum basic monthly pay increase of 184,900 won (\$US138.12), a performance pay equating to 30 percent of Kia's 2022 net profit, an increase to the retirement age to 64 from 60 and a 4-day work week.

Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority workers strike over unsafe staffing

About 150 technical specialists from Australia's Civil Aviation Authority (CASA) walked off the job for four hours on Tuesday over a chronic shortage of staff. The workers conduct safety surveillance and audit activities to check that airlines and other aircraft operators are not cutting corners on aviation safety regulation. They are covered by three unions, Professionals Australia (PA), Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP) and the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA), and include aviation safety regulators, flight training examiners, flying operations inspectors, pilots, engineers and other specialists.

At separate union ballots in September, members overwhelmingly voted to pursue industrial action, including wide-ranging bans and strike action. Workers want CASA to vastly improve staffing levels in a new enterprise agreement.

Workers claimed that CASA's chronic short staffing has created a huge backlog of work that is putting them under extreme pressure. They said CASA's reliance on overtime work to overcome the staff shortage has reduced the quality of safety inspections, the application of safety regulations, increased fatigue and is impacting the health and safety of workers. Unions are demanding that CASA increase its technical staff by 36 and review its technical staffing levels.

The federal government has been aware of the staffing issues at CASA for several years but failed to act. A 2022 Australian National Audit Office report showed CASA's surveillance activities had declined by 31 percent between 2018 and 2021, and that there is a "mismatch" between CASA staffing and anticipated surveillance levels.

DP World stevedores in Australia strike over pay and conditions

Over 1,500 members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), a division of the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union, at DP World container terminals in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Fremantle (Perth), are striking to oppose cuts to pay and conditions in DP World's proposed enterprise agreement.

Action begun on October 6 includes work stoppages from two to 24 hours and work bans of various lengths. These include bans on overtime and extensions, loading or unloading trucks and trains, work on any subcontracted vessel and servicing any trucks with a Qube logo. Sydney and Brisbane workers are only engaging in work bans.

Negotiations for a new agreement covering the four ports began in April but after 90 hours of talks there has been no agreement. According to the union, the company wants to cut wages by up to 32 percent, undermine job security and change the rostering system to the detriment of workers' work-life balance and safety.

DP World said it would return to the negotiating table on October 17 on condition that the MUA ceases industrial action. The MUA rejected the offer and announced that work bans would be intensified from October 15. A MUA spokesperson said the union wanted fair work-life balance, improved safety and the removal of ambiguity in the agreement.

B&D Doors strike in Victoria enters eleventh week

Thirty Australian Manufacturing Workers Union Members at the Kilsyth workshop of B&D Doors in Melbourne's north eastern suburbs, have been on strike since August 2 to demand higher pay offer.

On Monday the union mobilised workers and their families in a demoralising protest outside the head office of Dulux, B&D Doors' parent company, demanding they be allowed to speak with someone senior in the company. The request was denied.

The union claimed that after five months of negotiations the company's Japanese owners refused to budge from their offer of just 3 percent annual pay increases. The workers' last increase was in July last year and only 2.5 percent, well below the annual consumer price index at the time of over 7 percent.

Management responded to the workers' decision to strike by withdrawing an initial sign-on bonus offer and offering an extra 1 percent rise if workers reached company-dictated productivity increases. This was also rejected by workers.

The AMWU has indicated it would settle for a sub-inflation pay raise of 12 percent over three years with a sign on bonus.

Pacific National cargo rail movement planners in New South Wales locked out

Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members from the rail cargo operator's Integrated Planning Services division of Pacific National (PN-IPS) were locked out on October 6, after implementing work bans in their pay dispute. The workers are refusing to back down and remain locked out.

The workers have been employed on common law contracts since 2016 when Pacific National closed planning centres in Parramatta, Newcastle and Dulwich and then moved staff out of their enterprise agreement,

employing them under new work categories in the new International Planning Services entity.

The RTBU claimed that the workers are on low pay with poor working conditions, no overtime rates and no rostering protection. It also claimed that because workers nominated the RTBU as their legal negotiating representative twelve months ago, PN have refused to offer a wage rise to bring them in line with the industry standard. It has also refused to accept basic workplace rights in the agreement, such as arbitration and inserting their redundancy policy in the agreement as an entitlement.

Medical imaging workers at Canberra Hospital impose bans

Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) members at Canberra Hospital's Medical Imaging Department, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), are taking industrial action demanding a significant pay rise and increased staffing levels. Radiographers imposed a 48-hour ban on overtime, from 12.01 a.m. on Wednesday.

The union claimed that after a year of negotiations the ACT Labor government and Canberra Health Services failed to listen to the concerns of allied professional workers. It alleged that the medical imaging service, as well as the broader health service in Canberra, has continued to lose staff as they are unable to compete with the pay and conditions of public health services in other jurisdictions.

Workers complained that it has reached a point where the government is completely reliant on staff doing a significant amount of overtime to meet patient's needs.

In a related dispute, Health Services Union (HSU) members employed as Radiation Therapists and Perfusionists at Canberra Hospital walked off the job on September 21 claiming that low wages had led to the loss of 19 skilled professionals out of a workforce of 50.

New South Wales patient transfer workers begin industrial action

Patient Transfer Services (PTS) workers from the New South Wales government hospital support and supply section, HealthShare, imposed various work bans on Monday in their dispute over HealthShare's proposed 'PTS Management Restructure'. Health Services Union members are concerned over a safety issue with the Operations Lead role which they alleged would lead to "burnout" and role overload.

Bans were placed on certain administration reporting and dispatching functions, not backfilling shifts, not attending meetings associated with staff movements and not attending meetings with management. HSU warned that the bans will remain until HealthShare agrees to delay implementation of the restructure to allow a full health work and safety risk assessment to be done and agrees to directly appoint substantive position holders and acting employees with a claim to permanency to their relevant positions in the new structure.

New Zealand telephone health line workers strike

New Zealand telephone health line workers went on strike for 24 hours on October 6, their second stoppage in a month. The strike came after members of the Public Service Association and the NZ Nurses

Organisation voted to reject the latest pay offer from NZ Telehealth Services/Whakarongorau Aotearoa, a government-funded private organisation.

The workers answer calls on Healthline, GP doctors' after-hours services, the poisons centre, mental health crisis support, and other critical help lines. With GP appointments in short supply and emergency departments overflowing, people needing urgent health advice are increasingly being told to ring a helpline. In the year to June, 2.2 million calls were made to more than 35 helplines.

Mental health response nurse Jayne McQuarrie said many of her colleagues were quitting because of low pay. "You're not able to live properly on the wages paid, there are high levels of sickness, with rosters difficult to fill, shifts are often left short-staffed, increasing the stress on the staff on duty."

Nurses Organisation delegate Bruce Tomlinson said the latest offer of a 3.75 percent pay rise for most workers was not enough to stop the service losing more staff. He was not convinced by management's claim that it could not afford more. Whakarongorau returned a surplus of about \$7 million in the 2021 to 2022 financial year, he said.

The industrial action follows recent strikes by senior doctors and medical laboratory technicians over salaries and conditions.

New Zealand journalists walkout

New Zealand journalists working for Allied Press walked off the job for a day on October 10 to protest their employer's current pay offer. More than 40 members of the E t? union from Dunedin and Invercargill in the South Island participated.

The journalists are pursuing a pay rise that will bring their wages into line with industry pay rates. *Otago Daily Times* (ODT) journalist Rebecca Fox said pay rises over the last 15 years have not only fallen behind inflation, but behind others in the media industry. Their last pay rise was 2 percent.

Rebecca said it took about three years for journalists starting out at the newspapers to even gain the union-promoted "Living Wage," currently \$26 per hour and those with many years of experience felt short-changed. "We have people working with 20+ years of experience who are barely getting the new average salary for Otago which is around \$70,000," she said.



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