

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

8 April 2022

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

India: Workers demand permanent jobs and union rights at JNS Instruments auto parts manufacturer in Manesar

Hundreds of JNS Instruments workers have been protesting near the company's gate since March 3 over several issues, permanent jobs, the reinstatement of suspended workers and union rights. Talks between the management and workers have failed.

Workers joined the national two-day general strike on March 28, bringing production to a halt. On March 29, over 130 workers at the plant, including 76 women, were arrested by state police on bogus charges of rioting, wrongful restraint, disobedience to public servant orders and criminal intimidation.

JNS Instruments supplies auto parts to the Maruti Suzuki factory and other automobile manufacturers. It has a workforce of 1,200 and only 30 percent are permanent.

Tamil Nadu: Coimbatore refuse collection workers demonstrate against transfers

Around 40 conservancy (refuse collection) workers demonstrated in Coimbatore on April 5 against the Coimbatore Municipal Corporation's decision to transfer seven workers to another ward. The seven senior workers objected to the transfer order saying they would lose their seniority and have to work as junior conservancy workers in the new ward. Workers withdrew the protest after the deputy commissioner agreed to transfer junior workers.

Coimbatore doctors protest the suicide of a colleague

As part of a nationwide protest by the Indian Medical Association, doctors in Coimbatore are protesting the suicide of a Rajasthan gynaecologist on April 2. The doctors allege that the gynaecologist committed suicide after being victimised and charged by the Rajasthan government, which blamed her for the death of a patient.

Tamil Nadu COVID-19 contract nurses oppose sackings

Around 3,100 contract nurses, who were appointed by the state government during the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrated against the termination of 800 jobs in Chennai on Monday. The government claimed their services were not required anymore. Another 2,300 nurses' jobs are in danger of being terminated.

On March 23, doctors and support staff from COVID-19 mini-clinics across Tamil Nadu protested because their employment contracts were due to end on March 31. Around 1,600 doctors and 3,600 multipurpose hospital workers were to be out of work when their contracts ended.

Tamil Nadu matchbox workers stood down due to high production costs

At least 500,000 workers, mostly women, at 350 matchbox manufacturing units in Tuticorin and Virudhunagar districts, Tamil Nadu, have been stood down for 12 days by the National Small Matchbox Manufacturers Association. An association spokesman said they decided to stop production due to the increasing cost of raw materials such as wax and phosphorous, and freight charges. The association is appealing to the government for relief using the threat that without assistance thousands of workers could become unemployed.

Bangladesh: Commuter transport workers in Rangpur walk out

Bus and minibus drivers in Rangpur began an indefinite strike on Tuesday over several demands. Commuter services along the Rangpur-Dhaka route are affected.

The drivers want an increase in their daily wage, an end to police harassment, better road security and the withdrawal of all police charges against transport workers. The strikers have accused authorities of ignoring their demands. Their union, the Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation, Rangpur divisional unit, have disowned their drivers' industrial action, declaring that the strike was "beyond their authority."

Bangladeshi garment workers demand unpaid wages

Several hundred protesting workers from the Regent Textiles Mills factory at Kalurghat in Chattogram were baton-charged by police on Monday, injuring at least 16 workers. The factory was suddenly closed on March 16. Workers gathered outside the plant on Monday morning demanding unpaid wages. The protest spilled onto the Chattogram-Boalkhali road affecting traffic flow.

Sri Lankan local government casual workers protest sackings

Casual and substitute workers in local government authorities in North Central Province have been on strike since March 29 protesting over their termination from long-standing jobs.

Strikers claimed that 100,000 new recruits have been offered so-called vacant positions. As a result, 846 casual workers, including 28 sanitation workers, road maintenance workers, library assistants, office assistants and management assistants, have been laid off in 28 local government bodies in the province.

Sri Lanka: HSBC bank workers demand a living wage

Ceylon Bank Employees' Union members from the HSBC bank in Colombo are maintaining protests begun in March to demand a pay increase. Workers complained that they have not had a wage rise for more than three years and, under conditions of skyrocketing inflation, are demanding a substantial increase.

Workers have held a protest on the bank premises and implemented poster and social campaigns in Colombo. A union spokesman told the media that workers are threatening to intensify their protests in coming months.

Private company bus drivers in Victoria on strike

About 600 bus drivers employed by private bus operator CDC Victoria began strike action on April 1 for the first time in 20 years. Their action follows failed negotiations between the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and CDC over the wages and conditions in a new enterprise agreement.

Drivers are demanding secure employment, an end to the company's current rostering practices, improved conditions, a 4 percent wage increase and 1 percent superannuation rise.

The TWU, in an attempt to protect the state Labor government, limited industrial action to four-hourly stoppages on April 1, 4 and 5, claiming it did not want to affect school attendance.

The striking CDC bus drivers are expected to be joined by another 2,600 commuter bus drivers after they vote for industrial action at Victoria's other major private bus companies, Ventura, Dyson and Kinetic.

New South Wales private bus company drivers to strike

Bus drivers from Transit Systems, Transdev and ComfortDelGro—three New South Wales private commuter transport companies—plan to strike for 24 hours on April 11 for improved wages and conditions.

The services affected include most of greater Sydney, including the Sutherland shire, the Hawkesbury area, western Sydney and the Blue Mountains, as well as some regional services in Newcastle, the Hunter region, the Central Coast, Wollongong and the Illawarra.

The Transport Workers Union and the Rail Tram and Bus Union said

drivers want “same-job same-pay” protections and rights in a new enterprise agreement. Some drivers are currently paid substantially less than others operating the same routes, a two-tier system that the unions allowed following privatisation of government-run bus services.

Drivers also want improved safety and the provision of break rooms and bathrooms during their shifts. While both unions are claiming to oppose privatisation of commuter services, they are only calling for “community consultation” about the privatisation of bus services.

Queensland: Ipswich City Council workers strike again

The Services Union (TSU) members at Ipswich City Council (ICC) in southeast Queensland held a stop work meeting outside the council's administration building on Thursday as part of two days of protected industrial action. The union is in dispute with the council over its proposed certified agreement.

TSU members overwhelmingly rejected the council's proposed 9 percent pay increase over the three-year agreement. The union wants an increase of at least 10 percent in line with increases awarded to some other ICC workers. A 10 percent pay rise is an effective pay cut. The consumer price index increase for Queensland is currently above 4 percent, meaning workers would need a 12 percent increase just to keep up with inflation.

In late March, unions representing ICC outdoor staff accepted a below-inflation pay increase of only 8.5 percent over three years, claiming it was “one of the best council field staff pay offers in the last twelve months.” The combined unions wage-cutting deal was signed off by the Transport Workers Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Construction Forestry Maritime Mining and Energy Union.

PHI helicopter engineers in Western Australia plan to strike

The Offshore Alliance (OA), an enterprise bargaining unit representing 15 members of the Australia Licenced Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA) in wage negotiations at Petroleum Helicopters International (PHI) in Western Australia, plan to begin industrial action on April 15. ALAEA members are in dispute with the company over its proposed enterprise agreement.

A previously planned three-week strike beginning on March 16 was shut down by the Fair Work Commission on a vague safety issue. The delay has given time for PHI to engage other helicopter contractors to act as strike breakers.

PHI transfers workers between offshore LNG platforms and land facilities at Broom in northern Western Australia. The engineers want protection of jobs against outsourcing to low-wage labour hire contractors, an end to fixed-term employment contracts and for all engineers to be employed on a permanent basis, and the locking in of even-time rosters and paid annual leave.

OA is made up of the Australian Workers Union and the Maritime Union of Australia. It claims that PHI want an EA which gives the company an ability to sack highly skilled helicopter engineers at the end of their fixed term contracts and displace them with low wage labour hire contractors.



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