

Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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

India: Uttar Pradesh government sector workers protest sackings

Thousands of power workers and other Uttar Pradesh government sector workers demonstrated in Lucknow on March 25 over the sacking of 1,332 power contract workers and Essential Services Maintenance Act charges against 29 others who participated in a three-day strike on March 16.

The strike by 100,000 power workers was called off prematurely by the unions, organised under the Vidyut Karmachari Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti, after accepting bogus promises from the government that their grievances would be resolved, sacked workers reinstated, and police charges dropped. The striking workers wanted the government to fulfil a promise made last December to regularise pay, widen the scope of the cashless treatment facility, enact the chairman selection process, and make contract workers regular employees. The government never fulfilled its commitment.

The March 25 protest was sparked after legal cases against the sacked workers were not dropped, none were reinstated and there was no progress in resolving grievances. They threatened to call a larger movement across the state if charges against workers were not dropped and grievances were not soon resolved.

Tamil Nadu government farm workers strike for permanency

More than 500 temporary garden and horticulture farm workers in Ooty, Tamil Nadu, have been on strike since March 23 over several demands. They are demonstrating in the government botanical garden where 25 began a protest hunger strike on Tuesday.

Workers want to be made permanent along with changes in their salary in accordance with the special timescale pay. They said that some workers had been employed by the government for up to 30 years but still paid on a daily wage basis, receiving only 425 rupees (\$US5) a day.

They want temporary workers with over ten years' experience to be made permanent and daily wage workers employed in parks,

garden and farms run by the horticulture department to be paid the minimum wage that was fixed by the district collector. Workers said they will continue their strike until demands are fulfilled.

Melton City Council nurses in Victoria demand higher wages

About 50 members of the Australian Nurses and Midwives Federation (ANMF) from the Melton City Council (MCC) in Victoria began industrial action on Monday in their dispute with the council over its proposed enterprise agreement (EA). The limited action includes wearing red campaign t-shirts and stopping work to explain their dispute to parents and the community. The nurses provide preventive healthcare assessment and intervention to young families and immunisations in the outer-west Melbourne city's growing population.

The nurses last pay increase was in July 2021. After nine months of failed enterprise agreement negotiations, nurses rejected MCC's wage rise offer of 2.5 percent per annum in the proposed three year agreement, an effective wage cut compared to the current inflation rate of 6.8 percent.

The ANMF has not called for inflation-level wage increases. It has indicated that it could accept four percent per annum pay increases and an additional week's annual leave.

The union's industrial campaign, like its wages demand, is limited and designed to prevent nurses coming into conflict with the state Labor government or expose its restricted funding for local government bodies.

CHC helicopter maintenance engineers in Western Australia strike again

Offshore helicopter maintenance engineers from CHC Helicopter-Australia at Broome and Karratha in Western Australia walked off the job on Tuesday, their second 48-hour strike in three weeks. CHC was forced to ground several aircraft that needed maintenance and companies operating offshore LNG platforms were forced to seek alternate helicopter services.

Over 40 members of the Australian Licenced Aircraft Engineers Association (ALAEA) are in dispute with CHC after twice rejecting its proposed enterprise agreement. The union said CHC's pay offer during eight months of negotiations represented a real

pay cut.

The ALAEA threatened that industrial action will continue until CHC agree to a “real” annual wage increase, a \$10,000 per annum T-Bosiet (basic offshore safety induction and emergency training) allowance and annual leave loading. It said the next possible step was permanent work bans.

Offshore shipping workers in Western Australia strike for better pay

Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) members employed on vessels of Solstad Offshore ASA began a five-day strike on Wednesday in their dispute over Solstad’s proposed enterprise agreement. Workers in February approved taking protected industrial action in response to the lack of progress in enterprise agreement negotiations.

Solstad vessels service offshore oil and gas platforms on the coast of Western Australia.

Jetwave Marine divers in Western Australia strike to secure pay agreement

Nine inshore subsea dive crew employed by Jetwave Marine Services to service inshore oil and gas port facilities in Western Australia stopped work for 24 hours Tuesday over stalled negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) said a new deal was not reached after 12 months of negotiations. It claimed that Jetwave made “many promises” but failed to deliver.

Divers in March last year rejected Jetwave’s proposed agreement and on March 7 this year voted unanimously to take industrial action that could include various work bans and strikes from one hour to 24 hours. Workers said they are prepared to take further action.

OSM ship management workers in Western Australia extend their strike

Thirty Offshore Ship Management (OSM) workers, including those on Tidewater vessels, gave notice on Monday that they are extending their five-day strike begun on March 22 and will strike for another five days on April 1. Members of the Maritime Union of Australia and OSM are in dispute over the company’s proposed enterprise agreement.

The MUA accused OSM of attacking current workplace conditions. The union alleges that OSM’s proposed agreement waters down permanency and redundancy provisions, introduces a

substandard dispute procedure and wants to move workers to the inferior state workers compensation act.

Meanwhile, MUA members from Maersk Crewing Australia struck on March 25 in support of their claims in a new EA. The union timed the strike to coincide with the OSM strike. MUA issued a notice that another five-day strike will commence on April 1.

DOF offshore vessel services workers in Western Australia to strike

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), representing over 70 workers from the offshore vessel services contractor DOF has notified company management that its members will commence a five-day strike on April 3. At the same time over 70 MUA members employed by Australian Offshore Solutions (AOS) on DOF vessels will strike for five days.

MUA members are in dispute with DOF and AOS over their proposed enterprise agreements. The MUA claims it is close to making a deal with DOF but is also planning further industrial action, to establish an industry standard for future negotiations.

Airbus Pacific aircraft maintenance workers in New South Wales strike

Aircraft maintenance workers at Airbus Australia Pacific’s facility at the RAAF airfield in Richmond, west of Sydney, walked off the job and picketed outside the airfield on March 24 over the company’s proposed enterprise agreement (EA). The action by over 80 members of the Australian Workers Union (AWU) followed three weeks of overtime bans, work to rule and partial work bans.

Negotiations stalled when the company’s sub-inflation wage offer of 7.5 percent over 3 years was rejected. The current annual inflation rate is 6.8 percent. The AWU claimed that Airbus has refused to negotiate any improvement on its original offer.



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