

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.

South Korea: Seoul Metro workers strike over job cuts

Unions representing 14,000 workers from Seoul Metro announced on Monday that 81 percent of members who participated in a ballot approved strike action against Metro's plan to cut 13.5 percent of its workforce by 2026. Metro management claims it has suffered massive deficits for years and must cut at least 2,211 jobs to reduce costs.

The collective negotiation team, comprising representatives of the Korean Public Service and the Transport Workers' Union under the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions and the Federation of Korean Public Trade Unions, said discussions had collapsed after 10 rounds of negotiations since July 11.

The unions alleged that the cost-cutting plan includes outsourcing safety-related duties and will directly jeopardise safety. They said that, out of 383 outsourcing duties, 75 percent are related to personnel at the subway's general control centre, which is crucial for maintaining safe operations.

After mediation talks with the Seoul National Labor Relations Commission on Tuesday, the unions announced on Wednesday that they will go out on strike next month. The strike will affect Seoul Subway Lines 1 to 8 and a portion of Line 9.

This is not the first time these workers have taken strike action over the job cuts. In November last year, the unions shut down a strike by Metro workers after 14 hours, claiming to have "secured a promise" from management that it would not proceed with its downsizing plan.

Pakistan: Punjab teachers strike against privatisation and cuts to entitlements

Public school teachers in Punjab province have been on strike since October 13 with several demands relating to cuts to entitlements and privatisation. Educational activities have been totally stopped.

Strikers are protesting outside their schools, chanting slogans and demanding the release of 200 teachers arrested at a protest outside the Civil Secretariat in Lahore on October 13. A Punjab Teachers Union spokesperson told the media that the strike would continue until all arrested teachers were released and all demands accepted.

Teachers are demanding restoration of leave encashment, reversal of amendments to pension regulations, reduction of retirement benefits by 70 percent, and the cancellation of plans to privatise 10,000 schools.

The teachers are part of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance comprising government employees of various sectors. The All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association announced their solidarity with

the striking teachers and decided to boycott the upcoming examinations.

Bangladesh: Khulna Agricultural University teachers on indefinite strike over appointments

Teachers from the Khulna Agricultural University (KAU) have been on strike since October 8, demanding immediate solutions to problems related to the appointment and promotion of teachers. Teachers said they will continue the strike until their demands are met, while academic activities are severely disrupted.

Demands of the KAU Teachers Association include the promotion of 39 teachers, which has been delayed since the government cancelled the recruitment process in August last year, and financial compensation for these teachers.

They are also seeking the appointment of 73 teachers whose qualifications have been verified by a re-evaluation committee. The Association claims the committee's report has remained stuck in the education ministry for two months.

India: Tamil Nadu taxi drivers end two-day strike without resolution

Nearly 2,500 taxi drivers from Ola, Uber, Red Taxi, Porter and FastTrack called off a two-day strike on Wednesday afternoon. They were calling for the government to regulate the cab aggregators.

The Tamil Nadu Road Transport Workers' Federation said the companies are currently collecting a commission of 30 percent, which drivers want reduced to 10 percent.

Other demands included fixed meter charges, provision of meters for autos, banning of bike-taxis, increased penalties for renting private vehicles and government-issue license badges for commercial vehicles, including those used for apps like Ola and Uber. The workers also protested against alleged illegal toll booths.

A union spokesman urged the government to ensure that drivers are not victimised, or delisted haphazardly. A memorandum of demands was issued to the transport minister. Drivers plan to hold demonstrations in Madurai, Trichy, Coimbatore and Chennai in the next two days.

Haryana sanitation workers' strike in Gurugram city enters fifth week

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 corporation has hired contractors in an attempt to remove garbage that is piling up in the streets, without success.

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.

Tirunelveli municipal sanitation workers protest privatisation

Workers from the Tirunelveli Municipal Corporation (TMC) in Tamil Nadu have been protesting against the state government's decision to privatise sanitation and related operations. They submitted a petition at the Tirunelveli Collectorate on Tuesday demanding the government let them remain affiliated with self-help groups (SHGs).

Police arrested 450 workers on Monday, when they entered the corporation's administrative building to stage a sit-in protest.

Of the 1,600 sanitation workers at TMC, only 290 are permanent, while 753 are affiliated to SHGs. The newly inducted Chennai-based contractor employs 530 workers. SHG workers complained that if they are transferred to the government's hand-picked contractors, their wages will drop due to the contractors taking a commission and they will lose benefits.

TMC has refused to make the workers permanent and urged the SHGs to register themselves as a company through the government portal and retain benefits under the Employees State Insurance and Employees Provident Fund schemes. The Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) announced more protests were planned.

National Health Mission contract doctors in Maharashtra strike for permanent jobs

About 42,000 contract doctors and Class IV health workers from the National Health Mission (NHM) in Maharashtra held a state-wide strike on October 16 to demand permanent jobs. Many workers have been working on a contract basis for over a decade.

Workers said with the health department currently grappling with a substantial number of vacant positions, the burden of patient care falls heavily on the shoulders of contractual staffers. The government has decided to begin filling vacancies and NHM workers are demanding preference in the process.

Bihar government teachers protest holding residential training during Navaratri festival

Government school teachers in Bihar observed a daylong fast on Monday to oppose the state education department's residential training program, which runs from October 16 to 21. They demanded that the program be rescheduled after Navaratri, an annual Hindu festival.

The training program, aimed at improving teaching skills, faced criticism from several teacher associations. The TET Primary Teachers Association said protests will resume if their demand is not met within 48 hours.

Telangana road transport workers protest after suicide of female colleague

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) workers demonstrated at the Bandlaguda bus depot in Hyderabad on Wednesday, following the suicide of a conductor, Ganji Srividya (48), after she received a suspension letter on October 12. Srividya had worked as an RTC conductor for 12 years.

Her son, Shiva, filed a complaint at the LB Nagar police station, stating that the suspension caused her to suffer depression and led to her suicide. She died on October 16 at the Kamineni Hospital.

This was not the first time a worker from TSRTC has committed suicide due to pressure from the corporation. Two conductors and a driver at the company took their own lives during an indefinite strike in 2019.

Sri Lankan public sector workers demand pay rise

The Association of Public Service Trade Unions organised lunch-hour protests by public sector workers across the island on Monday to oppose the rising cost of living and demand a pay rise.

Hundreds of workers protested in front of the Divisional Secretariat in Colombo, displaying placards calling for a wage increase of 20,000 rupees (\$US61) and to stop the misuse of pension funds, along with other demands.

Similar protests were held in front of Divisional Secretariats in Kegalle, Central Province and Ampara, Eastern Province.

Infrabuild steel fabrication workers in New South Wales hold second strike

Australian Workers Union (AWU) members at Infrabuild's rod-mill in Newcastle, 140 kilometres north of Sydney, walked off the job for 21 hours on October 16, in opposition to the wage offer contained in a proposed enterprise agreement from the company.

Around 30 workers rallied outside the mill with signs saying, "Profits up. Wages down," and "Infrabuild rolling down wages"

On September 14, they participated in a 48-hour strike involving around 200 workers in the complex. Strikers included members of the Electrical Trades Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the AWU.

A union spokesman said workers want a pay rise that meets the cost of living plus maintenance of superannuation co-contributions.

Pacific National extends lockout of cargo movement planners in New South Wales

Freight rail operator Pacific National has extended a lockout of 100 union members at its Integrated Planning Services (IPS) division in New South Wales until October 25. Twenty non-union workers remain on the job, and management has redeployed former IPS staff to maintain

operations.

Members of the Rail Tram and Bus Union were locked out on October 6, after implementing limited work bans as part of a bid to replace existing contracts with a union-brokered enterprise agreement.

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 IPS entity.

According to the union, PN has refused to offer a wage rise to bring workers in line with the industry standard. It has also refused to include basic workplace rights in the agreement, such as arbitration and redundancy clauses.

Metro Tasmania bus maintenance workers strike over low pay

Bus mechanics at government-owned Metro Tasmania walked off the job on October 12 to protest wages that are well below industry standard. Metro Tasmania operates commuter services in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie.

Members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) said half of Metro's mechanics have left in the past 18 months and one-third of positions remain vacant due to low wages. Training has also been reduced. The union claimed that wages are \$10 per hour less than elsewhere in the industry.



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