

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

5 April 2024

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

India: Vistara airline pilots strike over wage cut

Pilots from Vistara airlines, co-owned by Tata group and Singapore Airlines, began a sick leave strike on Monday to protest a wage revision structure announced in February. Under the new structure to be implemented prior to the merging of Vistara with Air India, pilots will only be guaranteed pay for 40 hours per month, instead of the current guaranteed 70 hours.

About 30 percent of Vistara flights have been cancelled or delayed daily by the pilots' action. The pilots decided to take the action in response to a threat from management that only pilots who accept the February wage revision would be on the upgrade list and eligible for a one-time bonus and the opportunity to work in the Air India merger.

Andhra Pradesh port workers protest wage rise delay

Hundreds of workers protested at the port in Visakhapatnam on March 17 to demand implementation of the wage revision for class III and IV workers, effective from January 2022. The protest, which was organised by the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), was part of "All India Betrayal Day" demonstrations called by the National Coordination Committee of Major Ports and Dock Workers Federation at ports throughout the country.

Port workers at Goa and other workers like railway workers and Mormugoa port workers also held protests.

Exedy Clutch factory workers' strike in Karnataka enters second week

Factory workers from Exedy Clutch at Kolar, in Karnataka state, have been on strike since March 25 to demand a wage increase. The Centre for Indian Trade Unions (CITU) called the strike.

In February 2018, Exedy locked out 450 workers after a breakdown in negotiations over welfare measures. Production was maintained by about 700 contract workers while locked out employees held a hunger protest. At least 18 union members were suspended during that dispute.

Kerala state administrative building security workers sacked for demanding a pay rise

Thirteen members of the Kerala Security Employees Union (KSEU) at the Ernakulam Revenue Tower in Kochi were sacked on March 26 after demanding a pay rise. The security guards, who are employed on a casual basis, want their daily wage lifted from 300 rupees (\$US3.59) to 400 rupees. One distraught worker protested on Monday by climbing a tree at the building and threatened to commit suicide.

Pakistan: Balochistan water and sanitation workers protest unpaid wages

Water and Sanitation Employees Union and Balochistan Workers Federation members from the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) demonstrated in Quetta on Wednesday. Their protest, which began at the WASA office, moved to the Hokey Chock, near the government secretariat of Balochistan, where they held a sit-down protest demanding unpaid wages.

Bangladesh police attack locked out garment workers in Dhaka

Police in Dhaka attacked 2,300 locked out garment workers at the Odyssey Craft factory in Dhaka on Wednesday. They used batons, water cannon and teargas against the protesting workers. The factory area was reinforced with additional police.

Workers said they decided to strike on Tuesday after not being paid their salaries and the Eid bonus (Islamic festival). When they arrived to work on Wednesday morning the plant was closed with a notice at the entrance saying it was shut for the day. Workers held a protest and accused the authorities of not informing them about the closure and reasons behind it.

Thousands of garment workers in Gazipur strike for unpaid wages and Eid festival bonus

Over 4,000 garment workers from the Lithi Group's Apparels-21 factory stopped work on Wednesday morning and protested inside the factory at Shishir Chala village in Gazipur to demand an extension of the Eid holidays and payment of bonuses. Police were deployed at the factory.

On Monday and Tuesday, about 8,000 garment workers from the Kaya Net Composite Garment factory in Gazipur also protested demanding unpaid salaries and the Eid bonus. They blocked the Kashimpur regional road for seven hours, halting traffic, and then staged a sit-down protest in front of the factory.

Sri Lankan public sector and plantation workers protest over several demands

Development officers demonstrated outside the Central Province Council, Pallekelle to demand permanency and admission to the teaching service on Tuesday. That day Kurunegala plantation company workers in North-Western Province protested the allocation of some plantation land for building a private university which they fear will threaten their employment.

On Wednesday hundreds of educators in Kurunegala protested and marched toward the city to demand payment of long outstanding salary anomalies.

Airport firefighters across Australia to strike over pay and safety

The United Firefighters Union Aviation Branch (UFUAV) will hold four-hour stop work meetings at airports across the country on April 15 to demand a higher pay and increased staffing level. Over 800 members imposed an indefinite ban on overtime on April 5. Negotiations between the union and Airservices Australia for a new enterprise agreement began in September.

Workers want a 20 percent pay increase over a three-year agreement to compensate for previous below-inflation increases during the COVID-19 pandemic. Airservices has refused to offer any increase above the Australian Public Services Commission's blanket limit of 11.2 percent over three years, or annual increases of 3.7 percent. Australia's current average consumer price index (CPI) has increased by 4.1 percent.

Firefighters are concerned about chronic and unsafe understaffing at airports. The UFUAV alleges that domestic and international flights in Australia have been taking off and landing without the required number of aviation firefighters and trucks to protect that aircraft's size and passenger capacity.

According to the union, internal Airservices documents demonstrate that passengers using 13 major Australian airports face an "extreme" risk while "air travellers faced a high risk at the 14 remaining airports across Australia, including Sydney, Canberra, and Hobart." The union claimed that Airservices had refused to agree to a minimum staffing clause in the agreement that would overcome safety concerns.

Ambulance Victoria's vehicle maintenance workers strike for better pay

Fleet Maintenance Officers (FMOs) from Ambulance Victoria (AV) stopped work for four hours on March 27 to demand a higher pay in the proposed enterprise agreement. Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria (AEAV), representing 22 FMOs, has been trying to reach a deal with AV for over 14 months.

Workers want wage parity with other emergency services mechanics, wage rises in line with the consumer price index (CPI), improved sick leave and overtime entitlements, reclassification of roles, improved travel allowances and increased staffing.

According to the AEAU, 22 FMO's were servicing 272 vehicles in 2001. Last year 22 FMO's were servicing 755 vehicles. Workers threatened to hold a full-day strike next week.

The FMOs' campaign coincides with industrial action by AV paramedics, and administration workers who are in work agreement negotiations with AV. Administration workers say they haven't had a wage rise in seven years.

Adelaide commuter train workers impose bans for better pay and conditions

About 200 Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members employed by Adelaide Metro imposed work bans on Saturday morning after three months of negotiations for a new work agreement. RTBU members have refused to work overtime and wear uniforms. A union spokesman said workers wanted Adelaide Metro to improve its offer on pay and conditions.

New Zealand Pathlab blood-testing workers strike

More than 95 percent of staff at Pathlab blood testing facilities in New Zealand's Bay of Plenty region struck for 24 hours on Tuesday and Wednesday for better pay, amid rising inflation and living costs. About 60 workers protested at a road intersection in Tauranga with signs declaring; "Pay equity for Pathlab workers" and "Called Covid heroes, treated like zeros."

Pathlab provides pathology services to 1,000 patients daily. A First Union spokesperson said the workers were coming off the back of a three-year deal and had seen their wages "stagnate." Privately owned Pathlab has offered a 6 percent increase backdated to November.

The entry-level wage of a highly trained phlebotomologist is just \$23.56 per hour, below the inadequate union-defined "living wage" of \$26 per hour and marginally above the legal minimum of \$22.70 per hour. Workers are struggling to survive in one of the most expensive regions to live in the country.

Senior lab scientists at Pathlab earn \$10 an hour less than their public sector counterparts at Waikato Hospital. The APEX Union last month shut down a months-long strike campaign and pushed through a contract settlement for 1,000 Awanui Labs workers in Wellington and the South Island. The pay deal totally failed in its stated objective to raise wages to match the public sector.



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