

Workers Struggles: Asia & Australia

19 April 2024

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

Samsung Electronics workers in South Korea rally for pay increase

About 2,000 Nationwide Samsung Electronics Union (NSEU) members held a one-hour demonstration in front of Samsung's semiconductor headquarters in Suwon, south of Seoul, on Wednesday to demand a higher pay offer. The NSEU, representing five unions, is demanding a 6.5 percent pay increase, while Samsung offered only 5.1 percent.

Of Samsung's 120,000 workers, the NSEU covers around 26,000, almost three-quarters of whom voted to strike after nine rounds of negotiations. If the strike goes ahead, it would be the first the company has faced in its 55-year history.

India: Port workers in Andhra Pradesh strike for pay increase and better conditions

Workers at the Adani-owned Gangavaram Port at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, stopped work and held a sit-down protest outside the facility on April 13 demanding a pay increase. The action was part of five days of protests.

Workers demanded a minimum pay rate of 36,000 rupees (\$US436) per month, extension of the health service to family members, payment of dust allowance and increased job security. They threatened to intensify their action if demands are not met.

Federal Bank workers in Kerala protest illegal transfers

Workers from the Kottayam branch of the privately owned Federal Bank in Kerala held a demonstration in front of the branch on Wednesday. Members of the Federal Bank Employees Union (FBEU) accused the bank of violating its transfer policy. Protesters held banners saying "Stop attacks on transfer policy" among other slogans.

Odisha: Non-medical workers at major Bhubaneswar hospital strike for overdue wages

Around 500 sanitation workers, security staff and attendants from the Capital Hospital at Bhubaneswar stopped work and protested at the

hospital on April 14 to demand payment of wages for the month of March. The workers are supposed to receive their salaries in the first week of every month.

The strike caused disruption to the removal of bio-medical waste and other garbage. Patients arriving at the hospital had to be carried on stretchers by relatives.

Delhi Anganwadi workers threaten to boycott state elections

The Delhi State Anganwadi (childcare) Workers and Helpers Union (DSWAHU) have announced that their members have pledged to boycott the general election beginning from April 19 as none of the political parties have attempted to address their demands. These parties include the Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP), Aam Admi Party (AAP), and Indian Congress.

For several years, Anganwadi workers have been protesting with demands that include permanent jobs with government employee status, a guaranteed minimum monthly wage of 25,000 rupees (\$US300) and 20,000 rupees for helpers. They want the immediate reinstatement of colleagues whose jobs were terminated for participating in a strike over the same demands in 2022.

Punjab: Mohali municipal sanitation workers end strike

Sanitation workers from the Municipal Council (MC) of Mohali, in Punjab state, ended their strike after five days on April 15 following talks with the municipal authorities and the Mohali mayor. Workers were protesting the loss of 200 jobs after the municipal council gave the public toilet cleaning contract to a private company.

The Punjab Sanitation Workers Federation called off the strike after municipal authorities agreed to transfer the affected workers to other jobs in the municipality. Authorities also said they would propose that the MC House lift the monthly wage of sanitation workers to 15,000 rupees (\$US180) along with a 500 rupee petrol allowance.

Uber and Didi rideshare drivers in Western Australia strike for higher pay

About 4,000 Uber and Didi rideshare drivers in Western Australia's capital, Perth, turned off their apps on April 12, while more than 500 blocked rideshare waiting areas at Perth Airport for two hours from 7 p.m. Workers were demanding a reduction in the amount of commission the companies take from their earnings. Uber charges 27 to 30 percent

commission while Didi charges 10 to 15 percent.

Drivers are demanding improved conditions. They said they are often parked in a queue for hours at the airport waiting for a job without any easy access to washrooms, toilets or undercover parking. A spokesman for the drivers said the strike could continue for another five days if Uber doesn't reduce its commission rate.

The dispute is an indication that not much has changed since 2020 when Uber signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Transport Workers Union (TWU) in conjunction with the federal Labor government to regulate the rideshare and food delivery industries.

The TWU hailed the MoU at the time, claiming it had established a mechanism for "universal earnings protections and minimum standards that will support flexibility, safety and security across the on-demand industry."

Transgrid electricians in NSW and ACT hold third strike for pay rise

Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members from Transgrid, a consortium-owned power transmission company in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, held their third 24-hour strike in three months on April 12, in opposition to the company's proposed pay offer in a new enterprise agreement.

The ETU leadership has permitted only limited industrial action in the dispute, since negotiations for a new agreement began in October, as a means of wearing down workers' resolve and imposing a sell-out deal.

Prior to the commencement of last week's strike the ETU put forward a revised pay rise demand of just 6.5 percent per annum for three years, down from the 8 percent workers have been fighting for. Transgrid has offered a meagre 5 percent in year one, followed by 4 percent in each of the following two years.

Since 2019, Transgrid wages have increased by only 8 percent, while inflation was 18 percent over the same period.

Electrolux factory workers in South Australia strike for better pay

About 30 workers from Electrolux's home and kitchen appliance factory in Adelaide, South Australia, remain on strike after walking out on April 12 demanding a pay increase. They are protesting in front of their factory holding banners saying, "Times are tough. We've had enough."

The workers are covered by the Electrical Trades Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the Australian Workers Union. They have not had a pay increase since their current agreement expired in November 2022. They have twice voted down the company's proposed enterprise agreement. An AMWU representative said as well as a "decent" pay increase, workers want to be able to take their leave when they need it.

New South Wales child protection workers begin industrial action

Child protection workers across New South Wales have launched a month of rolling industrial action, including stoppages, beginning with a rally on Thursday outside the Community Services Centre in Edgeworth, a suburb of Newcastle, north of Sydney. The state Labor government has

announced the closure of the centre by the end of the year.

The Public Service Association (PSA), which covers the largest group of workers, is demanding that the state government approve an "immediate and substantial pay rise" and increase recruitment to overcome a chronic staff shortage, which they claim is putting the welfare of children at risk of serious harm.

Workers say the department needs an additional 500 caseworkers and want foster care placed back in the public sector instead of being outsourced to NGOs and charity organisations. The PSA wants child protection workers' wages lifted from an average starting rate of \$76,000 a year to \$88,000, which, the union, claims is the going rate in the private sector.

Statistics from the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) showed that the caseworker vacancy rate has increased 250 percent year on year. The statistics revealed that in the Central Coast and Hunter region there were more than 18,300 at-risk children, just 17 percent of whom were seen by a case worker.

Another recent report identified the staff shortages as a factor behind the death of some children in child protection during 2022.

West Australian public school teachers strike for pay rise

The State School Teachers' Union WA (SSTUWA), with 18,000 members at Western Australian public schools, has called a half-day strike on April 23. The union has been negotiating with the state Labor government for a new enterprise agreement and had given the government until April 19 to reach a deal.

Their current agreement expired in December and on January 29 teachers imposed work bans. They refused to attend out-of-hours meetings or participate in performance reviews.

Teachers rejected the government's latest pay offer of an immediate 5 percent pay increase and annual increases of 3 percent in the following two years. The union has called for a 12 percent rise over two years, 7 percent in the first year and either 5 percent or CPI (consumer price index), whichever is higher, in the second.

Teachers are also demanding a range of improved workplace conditions that will address their increasing workload. They want restrictions on class sizes and reduction of out-of-school-hours work.



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