

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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

South Korea: Gwangju Global Motors assembly workers strike

Close to 150 workers at the Gwangju Global Motors (GGM) plant, a joint venture manufacturing plant between Hyundai Motor and Gwangju city, stopped work for four hours and refused to work overtime for two hours in a dispute over a new wage and collective agreement. Some 228 of the 660 workers at the plant are union members.

According to the GGM branch of the Korean Metal Workers' Union, the action was the first all-out strike in an industrial campaign initiated by members on January 10. Until now union members have held partial strikes, with dozens of workers taking turns to stop work on a department-by-department basis.

While the union is demanding a 7 percent increase in basic salaries, management refuses to offer a higher rise, saying it has applied a 3.6 percent rise as previously determined by the so-called labour-management council. The union said workers will continue to strike until negotiations are taken seriously.

Indonesia: Online motorcycle taxi drivers strike in Jakarta over low pay

Online motorcycle taxi (ojol) and online taxi (taksol) drivers and couriers went offline on Monday to protest the current partnership work system. The Indonesian Transportation Workers Union said the partnership system with the company has failed to give legal certainty to the drivers.

A union spokesperson said drivers are being forced to work without rest beyond the 8-hour work provision with some forced to labour 17 hours or more. "The reason is that their income is calculated per order in the application, so they have to work extra to meet their daily needs," the spokesperson said.

The union claims the platform's profits have increased because the company does not pay the minimum wage and other workers' rights. It demanded that the online company provide employment agreements that guarantee the rights of the drivers as regulated in the Manpower Law.

India: Samsung household appliance factory workers in Tamil Nadu remain on strike

Around 500 workers at Samsung India's Tamil Nadu household-appliance manufacturing plant are maintaining a sit-in strike begun on February 5 against the suspension of three union officials for the newly-formed Samsung India Workers Union (SIWU). There are 1,800 workers at the plant. Management told the media that contract workers were maintaining production.

SIWU is affiliated to the Centre for India Trade Unions (CITU). Even though formal registration of the union was endorsed by the Labour Ministry, the workers had been asked to join a management-formed workers committee. Interest-free loans of 300,000 rupees (\$US3,455) were offered to workers as a bribe if they joined the company's committee.

A CITU spokesperson alleged that the company is planning to suspend another 18 workers in the plant and another set of talks were slated for February 24.

Samsung accused certain workers of illegally disrupting industrial peace, leading to an unsafe work environment. Meanwhile, the workers' families joined the protest near S.V. Chatham market, close to the plant.

Workers responded to the failure of recent talks in the presence of the labour commissioner, threatening to escalate their action on March 7, including possible protests outside Samsung household appliance showrooms.

Protesting Anganwadi workers Delhi demand higher pay

Maharashtra rural women and child welfare centre (Anganwadi) workers held a sit-down protest in Jantar Mantar, New Delhi on Monday. They want increases to their current poverty wage of 4,500 rupees (\$US52) a month. Other demands are for a pension and gratuity.

The Maharashtra State Anganwadi Employees Organisation said their members have not had a wage increase since 2017 and that the recent state budget did not mention them.

On the same day Anganwadi workers took action in Andhra Pradesh with the same demands. They demonstrated outside the Collector's office at Chittoor on Monday calling for their monthly wage to be lifted to 20,000 rupees (\$US231). Their protest was organised by the Andhra Pradesh Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Union, which is affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions. Workers complained that the Mini centres had not been upgraded, affecting 5,600 workers across the state.

ASHA workers in Kerala end week-long strike

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers called off their

week-long strike and protest outside the State Secretariat on Wednesday following an assurance from the health minister that their demand for higher wages will happen. They carried placards saying ASHA workers are not slaves.

The workers were demanding a raise in the monthly wage to 20,000 rupees (\$US231), which is now at 7,000 rupees, but they said they get only 4,000 to 5,000 rupees in hand due to strict conditions in the job.

Sanitation workers in Assam demand permanent jobs

Sanitation workers at Bilasipara in Assam state protested on Tuesday to demand permanent jobs. Workers said that they do not have stable employment and fundamental rights and their demands are repeatedly ignored by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party state government. They have threatened to intensify their protest on March 23 if the government does not grant their demands.

Pakistan: National strike by Utility Store Corporation workers

Workers from the state-owned Utilities Store Corporation held nationwide protests on Monday to oppose the sacking of about 2,600 daily wage employees. The corporation operates chain stores throughout the country that provide basic commodities for low paid workers. The Utility Stores Corporation (USC) union said that another national protest would be held if their demands for reinstatement were not accepted by Thursday.

The sackings are part of the government's "rightsizing" policy, which includes closing stores that it claims are under financial strain. Union leaders warned that a sit-in protest may be held in the federal capital and protests will continue until their demands are met.

Bangladeshi garment workers protest with multiple demands

On February 12, several hundred workers from the Eurotex Knitwear factory in Fatullah, which employs over 4,000 workers, protested to demand the reinstatement of dismissed workers, withdrawal of cases against them and the reopening of their factory. They blocked the Dhaka-Narayanganj Road creating a traffic jam. The blockade was lifted after the workers received assurances of a resolution from the factory authorities.

The action followed a protest on February 10 inside the factory. Workers were demanding payment of unpaid salaries and other benefits. Management responded by suspending several workers. It then issued a notice declaring the plant closed and then filed against some of the protesting workers alleging charges of vandalism.

On February 16, hundreds of workers from the Ssain Apparels factory in Ashulia protested to demand arrears and reopening of the factory. Their protest blocked the Bishmail-Jirabo Road.

Workers say they should have been paid their January salaries in the first week of February. The company responded to protests on February 9 by declaring a general holiday from February 10 to 20.

On February 16, several hundred workers at Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) protested outside the main entry gate of the industrial zone stopping the entry and exit of all vehicles for nearly five hours.

Tomago Aluminium smelter workers in New South Wales strike for pay rise

About 580 Australian Workers Union (AWU) members from the Tomago Aluminium smelter in Newcastle, 140 km north of Sydney, resumed strike action on February 12, following rolling two-hour stoppages on January 19 in opposition to the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Pot line, cast house and carbon workers held one-hour rolling stoppages with some striking for a total of three hours during their shift.

The AWU is demanding 4 percent annual pay increases over three years, back pay and \$1,000 sign-on bonuses. Tomago has proposed a 4 percent pay rise in the first year, followed by 3.5 percent increases in each of the next two years, along with a one-off \$1,000 sign-on payment, but no back pay.

Mental health workers at 19 government facilities in Victoria begin industrial action

About 3,900 mental health nurses and non-medical staff at 19 public hospitals in Victoria took industrial action this week in their dispute with the state Labor government for improved wages and conditions. The workers are covered by two unions, the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) and the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU).

HACSU members imposed 32 bans on Tuesday. These include bans on transfers, most administrative tasks, overtime, unplanned discharges, and strictly working to rule, among other actions. HACSU members want increased staffing, higher pay and a safer work environment.

Action by ANMF members, which commenced on Friday, includes commencing and finishing duty at rostered times unless overtime is approved, distribution of campaign material to the public, ban on non-clinical administrative tasks, plus ten other actions.

The government claimed in December that its offer would lift mental health nurses' wages and allowances by 28.4 percent accumulative and bring their wages in line with general nurses in the public health system. Wages and allowances offered for non-nursing staff were 3 percent annual increases over the four-year agreement, with a lump sum of \$6,232 per FTE (full time equivalent).

The ANMF rejected the offer, saying there were 70 union claims that were not listed, including conditions related to general nursing and designed to recruit and retain mental health nurses in the public mental health system.

Maternal and child health nurses in Bendigo take industrial action for better pay and conditions

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) members from the City of Greater Bendigo, in central Victoria, employed as maternal and child health (MCH) and immunisation nurses have been taking low-level industrial action since February 14. They are fighting for improved pay and reduced workload. Action includes bans on overtime and

administrative tasks, wearing campaign t-shirts and stopping work to explain their dispute to parents and community members.

The ANMF wants a 10 percent pay increase over three years and a 2.5 percent career-structure increase in 2026 for Year 3 nurses to improve retention and recruitment. Nurses said workloads have increased over the past 12 months. The union claims that 10 nurses or about one third of the workforce has resigned over the heavy workloads and low morale.

The council has offered a 10 percent pay increase over three years, plus a \$500 pro rata sign-on bonus. It rejected ANMF's claim for a fifth week of annual leave, which according to ANMF is a national nursing industry standard, and their claim for an extra 30 minutes to complete administration tasks. Council has put its latest offer out to ballot.

Thousands of Queensland construction workers demonstrate against reduced safety rules

More than 6,000 members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, (CFMEU), Electrical Trades Union (ETU) and the Plumbers Union demonstrated at Brisbane's Queens Gardens before marching to Parliament House on Wednesday.

Workers were protesting the trashing of the Best Practice Industry Conditions (BPIC) agreement by the newly elected state Liberal National Party (LNP) government. The BPIC policy applied to state government construction projects. It came into effect in 2018 in agreement between the unions and the previous Queensland Labor government.

BPIC provisions allowed workers on government sites to stop work when the temperatures exceeded 35 degrees Celsius or 29 degrees Celsius with 75 percent humidity. Workers were paid double time when it rains and were eligible for travel money when working on projects 50 km or more from the employer's address.

The LNP government ridiculously claimed that if the BPIC policy continued it would cause rents to rise 7 percent and reduce house construction by 22,000 units. In other words, by slashing construction workers wages, conditions and entitlements, billions of dollars will be saved.

Brisbane City Council bus drivers strike for higher pay

Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) bus drivers at Brisbane City Council (BCC) struck for two hours at 4 a.m. on Thursday over concerns about the long delay in reaching a pay deal in a new work agreement. Their current agreement expired on October 7, 2024. It has been over a year since their last pay increase.

Drivers want a "fair" pay rise, four months of back pay and improved safety amid the rising assaults on drivers. RTBU claimed that BCC's latest offer falls short, with drivers struggling to keep up with inflation. Drivers are maintaining work bans put in place on January 30, which include working to rule and not wearing the BCC uniform.

NOV pump manufacturing workers strike for pay rise

About 25 workers from the NOV pump manufacturing plant in Melbourne stopped work on January 14 and rallied outside the plant.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and United Workers Union members are in dispute with NOV over its proposed enterprise agreement.

Workers rejected NOV's annual 3 percent pay increases without back pay and are demanding 7 percent annual pay increases. While the current agreement expired on December 31 and the workers have not had a pay increase since January 1, 2024. It was only 3.5 percent when the consumer price index rate was 4.2 percent.

Maurice Blackburn law firm workers strike again for better pay and conditions

Close to 400 workers from the Maurice Blackburn law firm are continuing industrial action begun on December 12 with a strike followed by "coffee break" stoppages in their fight for better pay and conditions. Australian Services Union (ASU) members walked out again on Tuesday afternoon.

After seven months of failed negotiations for a new enterprise agreement, workers overwhelmingly voted on November 29 to take protected industrial action. The ASU have called for a 19 percent pay rise over three years, better work/life balance options, and 10 days of reproductive health leave in the new agreement. The Labor-aligned company has only offered a pay increase of 10 percent over three years.

Immigration Detention Centre workers in Melbourne strike

About 300 United Workers Union members at the government's Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre, managed by British security and defence multinational Serco, walked off the job for two hours at 5.30 a.m. and again at 5.30 p.m. on February 14. Workers accused Serco of refusing to negotiate a fair pay increase and attempting to undermine redundancy rights.

Serco lost its contract to operate Australia's nine detention centres in Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney and Brisbane to American prison operator Secure Journeys late last year. Serco claimed Secure Journeys rejected an offer to transition employees, along with lump sum payments equivalent to each individual employee's leave entitlement.

Rather than pay redundancy, Serco notified its 850 immigration centre workers that if they wanted to take up employment with the new contractor they would have to resign from Serco. The UWW claims that not one Serco worker had been offered a position with the new operator and that if they resign Serco, they will not be paid any redundancy/severance benefits.

Ongoing industrial action is occurring at all nine immigration detention centres in the form of paperwork bans.

CSL biotech company workers in Victoria strike for pay rise

On February 12, over 100 maintenance, laboratory, research and store workers at CSL's serum laboratories at Broadmeadows and Parkville sites in Victoria stopped work for four hours in defence of their wages and conditions in the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

The workers are covered by four unions, the United Workers (UWU), Electrical Trades Union (ETU), Australian Manufacturing Workers'

Union (AMWU) and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU). Negotiations for a new agreement have been ongoing for over six months.

Workers are opposing the company's demands that they accept cuts to over 40 hard-won conditions and allowances in the new agreement. They want better wages, job security and improved redundancy conditions. The unions say the company is yet to table a wage rise offer.

CSL Limited is a multinational specialty biotechnology company that researches, develops, manufactures, and markets medical products. It was formerly the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories wholly owned by the Australian federal government. It was privatised in 1994 and in 2024 had a net income of \$US2.91 billion.



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