

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

25 April 2025

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

China: BYD electronics manufacturing workers strike

Thousands of workers at BYD's electronics parts design and manufacturing plants in Chengdu and Wuxi walked off the job in late March and early April to protest cuts to pay and conditions since the facilities were acquired from Jabil Inc. in 2023.

Workers at BYD's Chengdu plant struck for two days on March 31 and accused management of breaking promises made before the acquisition. They demanded job security, transparency around workplace changes and fair compensation. They complained of reduced working hours, forced department transfers and slashes in allowances and bonuses.

The Chengdu strike followed a strike and protest inside BYD's Wuxi facility by over a thousand workers on March 28. Workers protested cuts to performance-based wages and the elimination of birthday subsidies, benefits that many had come to rely on. They also demanded fair compensation for workers who wanted to resign.

BYD acquired the American multinational Jabil Inc.'s mobile electronics business in December 2023, primarily operating in Chengdu and Wuxi. During the transition, BYD falsely promised workers their wages and benefits would remain unchanged for at least 18 months.

India: Tamil Nadu power-generation workers strike indefinitely

Over 1,000 contract workers from the NLC Tamil Nadu Power Limited (NTPL) power generating plant at Thoothukudi began an indefinite strike on April 18 demanding the administration implement a court order on pay increases. The strike has reduced the plant output from 1,000 MW to 300 MW.

The Labour Commissioner had ordered NTPL to increase salaries on par with other NLC thermal power plants from June 2021. NTPL appealed in the Madras High Court, but this was dismissed on March 4. NTPL's administration has still not implemented the commissioner's order.

The workers are organised by the Central Organisation of Tamil Nadu Electricity Employees Union and NTPL Contract Labourers Progressive Union LPF.

Tamil Nadu rural sanitation workers demand higher pay

Rural sanitation workers, organised by the Tamil Nadu Rural Development Labourers Union and the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), protested outside the Collector's office in Trichy on April 21 to demand an increase in minimum wages and for social security benefits, including the Employees State Insurance Corporation (health insurance) and Employees Provident Fund (pension benefit).

Another demand was for a COVID-19 incentive for their services in performing sanitation work during the pandemic. Protesters underscored the urgency to address the financial and social needs of rural development labourers and sanitation workers, and the need for adequate support from the government.

SJVNL hydro-power project workers in Himachal Pradesh protest

Hundreds of contract workers from the federal government-owned-power projects in Himachal Pradesh gathered outside the company's headquarters in Shimla this week over long outstanding demands. Protesters included workers from various unions at Luhri Hydro Construction and Sunni Dam Hydro, and hospital and hotel employees.

Their demands include gratuity, insurance coverage and job-based promotions. The protest was organised by the Centre for Indian Trade Unions.

Samsung India household appliance factory workers protest in Tamil Nadu

The newly-formed Samsung India Workers' Union (SIWU), affiliated to the Centre for India Trade Unions, announced on April 19 that it will hold a mass demonstration in Chennai to protest Samsung India's "vengeful" action against union members. The action will also highlight their 10-point demands, which includes the revoking of the suspension and other disciplinary action against 23 employees. They also want the company to stop trying to force workers to sign the "illegal" agreement it established with the company-initiated minority union.

On March 7, CITU abruptly shut down a militant month-long sit-in strike by 500 permanent workers begun on February 5 over the suspension of SIWU officials. Even though formal registration of the union was endorsed by the Labour Ministry, management tried to coerce workers 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. The union said the mass demonstration will appeal to the Tamil Nadu government to intervene in the dispute.

Rural employment scheme workers in Tamil Nadu protest unpaid wages

Workers, mostly women, employed part-time in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, demonstrated at Thirumani village near Vellore on Wednesday, blocking the Vallimalai Main Road. The impoverished workers, who come from small farms in the district, protested the non-payment of 20 months' wages, which they rely on to supplement their meagre income from farming.

Pakistani health workers continue to protest privatisation

The Young Doctors Association (YDA) and paramedics went on strike at government hospitals' outpatient departments in Lahore and other parts of Punjab. It was part of province-wide protests begun on April 10 against outsourcing.

Strikes occurred at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology, Lahore General Hospital, Jinnah Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital with partial strikes held at other teaching hospitals in the province. The protests were organised under the Grand Health Alliance.

The government's privatisation policy, announced in March, includes the outsourcing of operations at Basic Health Units and Rural Health Centres. These facilities serve as the foundation of primary healthcare in the province. Public hospitals will also be privatised, according to the announcement.

Paramedics and young doctors are protesting round-the-clock outside the Punjab Assembly and have blocked road traffic. The YDA said it would not end the protests until the government accepts members' demands.

Bangladeshi garment workers protest factory closure and unpaid wages

Tusuka Group garment workers in Gazipur's Konabari area began an indefinite strike on April 19 to demand 100 percent salary payments as recommended by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association grade framework. They are also demanding included holidays and days off as per government regulations, organising company picnics, stopping layoffs and payment of unpaid salaries.

Factory management has issued a false notice claiming that the workers' demands were accepted. However, when employees arrived at the plant on April 20, the following day, there was a notice at the main entrances announcing a three-day shutdown of its six plants from Monday to Wednesday. Management called in the police to intervene.

Public mental health workers strike in Victoria again for improved conditions

Nurses and non-medical staff at 19 Victorian public mental health facilities are continuing industrial action, including strikes, they began on February 18 in their enterprise agreement dispute with the state Labor government. On April 2, about 1,000 Health and Community Services

Union (HACSU) members stopped work statewide and on April 16 HACSU members at Eastern Health walked out and protested in front of the facility as part of the campaign.

Mental health workers want pay parity with their colleagues in the state's public hospitals, mandated staffing ratios and allied health worker profiles. HACSU, representing occupational therapists, social workers, health professionals, lived-experience workers and administrative staff, claims that some mental health workers are being paid up to \$30,000 less per annum than public hospital colleagues doing the same work.

The Labor government's proposed enterprise agreement was rejected by 90 percent of workers saying the 3 percent per annum pay increase was well below pay parity and failed to address ratios and staffing profiles.

Boral Resources drivers in Queensland hold second strike

About 30 truck drivers from Boral Resources construction materials depots in southeast Queensland walked off the job for 24 hours on April 17 to demand a higher pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Transport Workers Union members voted overwhelmingly on March 17 to strike and walked off the job on April 8.

The union says wages at Boral have not kept up with inflation but that pay has gone backwards by 9 percent in real terms over the last three years. Workers are demanding pay parity with their counterparts in neighbouring New South Wales who they say are paid \$6 an hour more.

Cleanaway garbage collectors in Noosa walk out again for higher pay

About 30 garbage collection truck drivers employed by Cleanaway at Noosa Shire Council in southeast Queensland walked out on Tuesday for their sixth time since February 25. The Transport Workers Union (TWU) and Cleanaway are in dispute over the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

Cleanaway has rejected workers' demands for a 7 percent pay increase, improved workplace rights and retention of current conditions. The last union-negotiated wage deal with Cleanaway was made three years ago. The unions say workers' wages have not kept up with inflation but have been reduced in real terms by over 3 percent.

The union alleged that Noosa Council gave funds to Cleanaway to pay for a wage rise backdated to January 1, but so far workers haven't been offered this money.

Keolis Downer bus drivers in Newcastle strike for higher wages

Over 250 Keolis Downer bus drivers in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie in New South Wales stopped work for 24 hours at 2 a.m. on Thursday over stalled negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. On April 3, Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) members turned off fare collecting machines indefinitely to force the company to resume negotiations.

A spokesman from the RTBU claimed Keolis Downer had repeatedly delayed negotiations by rostering local union delegates on shifts leaving them unable to attend meetings. Keolis Downer claimed it has had six meetings with the union since December, but the union failed to accept a "fair and reasonable" pay offer.

The RTBU wants 8 percent annual pay increases in a three-year agreement and at least 72 hours' notice for changes to drivers' shifts. Keolis Downer's pay offer is only a 10 percent increase over the three-year agreement and an extra 6 percent for first-year trainee drivers.



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