

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.

India: Hyundai Motor assembly workers in Tamil Nadu serve strike notice

On Monday, the Hyundai Motor India Employees Union (HMIEU) at the Hyundai Motor car assembly plant near Chennai, served a notice of intention to strike within 14 days in their fight for higher wages and recognition of the union. They also want withdrawal of all cases filed against union officials for supporting strike activities and holding a secret ballot for union elections.

Tamil Nadu rubber factory workers campaign for inclusion in state benefits

Arasu Rubber Corporation workers in Keeriparai, Tamil Nadu have been protesting for over 160 days to demand fair wages, job security and government benefits that include Employees' State Insurance (ESI), healthcare, housing, and education facilities, as well as relief during the monsoon season when work is often disrupted. Two workers are holding a daytime hunger protest outside the corporation's office. Other workers are protesting daily on a rotational basis.

The factory, which processes raw rubber using hazardous chemicals, employs 52 permanent and 12 casual workers. The corporation claims the workers are not entitled to ESI benefits because no finished products are made. The matter is under government review.

Uttar Pradesh power corporation workers protest arbitrary transfers

Purvanchal Electricity Corporation workers demonstrated outside the Ledhupur power sub-station in Varanasi on June 18 over arbitrary transfers and faulty photo biometric attendance recordings caused by inadequate proper data records or coverage for internet services.

Workers said they submitted a memorandum to management, which also complained of faulty meters affecting both the staff and consumers, these grievances have not been addressed. They threatened to hold a sit-in protest soon if their demands are ignored.

Haryana: Outsourced workers still on strike at health and science university

Over 1,000 outsourced workers from the Pandit Bhagwat Dayal Sharma University of Health Sciences at Rohtak, Haryana are maintaining their indefinite strike begun on June 1. Strikers are demanding to be hired under HKRN, a government body established to manage contract staff recruitment across the state.

Workers accused the labour hire agency of harassment and arbitrary wage deductions through false absentee recordings.

The university supports the transfer request and has urged the state government to expedite it. A court order has restricted protests near the university to supposedly prevent disruption of hospital operations with a hearing scheduled for July 1.

IT workers in Bangalore protest Karnataka government's 12-hour work-day law

IT workers in Bengaluru held a street protest on June 18 against the new "anti labour" law passed by the Karnataka state Congress government which allows employers to mandate a 12-hour work-day in the IT sector. The protest was called by the KITU, affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions.

Pakistan: Police tear gas protesting government employees

Peshawar province police this week used tear gas to attack government employees holding a sit-down protest outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. The demonstration was called by the All-Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) to demand a 30 percent disparity reduction allowance to be paid to federal government workers. The AGEGA includes more than 25 government employees associations.

Pakistan: Balochistan government workers protest provincial budget

The Government Employees Grand Alliance (GEGA) demonstrated on Tuesday after the Balochistan government failed to announce salary and benefit increases in the provincial budget like those paid to federal employees. Workers locked government offices and schools and marched

to the Balochistan Assembly where they held a sit-down protest. Police used batons and fired tear gas, injuring about a dozen demonstrators and arrested 30, including GEGA leaders.

The Alliance demanded immediate implementation of its 18-point charter, including salary increases in line with inflation, a disparity allowance, reversal of “anti-employee pension reforms,” and automation of the retirement process.

Bangladeshi garment workers demand unpaid entitlements

Garment workers from Seasons Dresses in Gazipur protested for two consecutive days this week outside the Department of Labour headquarters in Dhaka’s Bijoy Nagar area. Demanding unpaid wages and bonuses, they had confined the factory owner to plant since Sunday morning when he failed to give any assurance of payment.

Hundreds demonstrated chanting slogans outside the Bijoy Nagar building gate and along nearby streets, declaring that they would not leave until their demands were met.

The Bangladesh Garment Workers Trade Union Federation said 1,200 workers are owed more than \$US409,000 (50 million taka) in two months of back pay, including two unpaid bonuses.

Bangladesh government workers demonstrate against “black law”

Government workers from various ministries and divisions at the Secretariat held a two-hour strike on Monday to demand withdrawal of its repressive Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance 2025, also known as a “black law.” The strike followed a three-day protest on June 16.

Monday’s demonstration was organised by the Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Unity Forum. Workers gathered at the library located within the Ministry of Public Administration and said their next actions would involve professional bodies and office-based service associations across the country on June 25. A meeting with the government on Monday failed to resolve the issue, after which forum leaders said the protests would continue until Wednesday.

The Public Service (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 allows dismissal of public servants for “administrative disruptions” within 14 days and without departmental proceedings based on four types of offences. These are disrupting discipline, obstructing duties, unauthorised absence or inciting others not to perform their duties.

The initial protests that began on May 24 were called off after several days when the government promised that there would be a positive response by June 15.

South Australia’s public hospital doctors strike for pay rise

On Wednesday, more than 2,500 doctors in South Australia’s public health system stopped work for one hour at 8.30 a.m. to discuss further industrial action for late July. Members of the South Australian Salaried Medical Officers Association (SASMOA) are in dispute with the Malinauskas state Labor government over wages, conditions and doctor shortages.

The SASMOA has been in negotiations for over nine months in

opposition to the government’s proposed enterprise agreement. Doctors rejected the government’s offer of a minimum 10 percent pay rise over three years along with a one off \$4,050 base rate increase for Medical Internees and Medical Practitioners, plus a number of other changes for Consultants, Rural Generalists and others as totally inadequate.

Doctors want a pay rise that will attract and retain staff and are seeking 10 percent annual pay increases over the next three years, similar to that offered to the state police.

Public hospital health and disability support workers’ bans continue in South Australia

Over 2,100 public hospital health support workers and disability home support workers are maintaining industrial bans begun on February 22 in their dispute with the state Labor government over understaffing, low wages and insecure jobs. The workers are covered by the United Workers Union (UWU).

UWU members at Glenside Hospital, Royal Adelaide Hospital and Queen Elizabeth Hospital walked off the job for 30 minutes on June 19 and 20, demanding a 20 percent pay rise to bring them in line with their counterparts in other states. Theatre orderlies, patient service assistants, central sterilised stores department technicians, menu monitors, chefs, cleaners and kitchen services workers have put in place bans on cleaning management offices, performing duties above their classification, changing in and out of scrubs only during paid time and other work-to-rule measures.

Over 1,100 disability support workers from South Australia’s Department of Human Services (DHS) want a “living wage” and “Safe Support Services.” They have bans at 240 DHS houses which impact management, including restricted administrative tasks and communications during unpaid time. The UWU says DHS cannot attract staff because of low pay and a reliance on agency workers to meet minimum staffing levels.

Getinge electricians still locked out in Queensland

Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members employed by contractor Getinge, which maintains and repairs sterilising equipment at Queensland Health’s public hospitals, have been locked out for over four weeks in a pay dispute. The lockout was Getinge’s response to low-level industrial action, following five months of failed negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. The eight locked out workers are demanding wage parity with their Victorian colleagues who they say are paid \$7 per hour more.

The workers voted unanimously on May 19 to take industrial action that could include work stoppages of up to 24 hours, bans on overtime, call outs and other work. They have protested outside the company’s headquarters and the Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane.

Workers feared that as the lockout continues more and more sterilisation equipment will go offline and impact on surgery wait times and patient safety.

Peabody coal mine workers in New South Wales locked out

About 160 Mining and Energy Union members from Peabody's Metropolitan underground coal mine at Helensburgh in New South Wales were locked out for eight days on June 18 during negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. The lockout was the company's response to the workers' low-level industrial action.

Workers want a 15 percent wage increase over three years, a one-off market rate increase of \$1.50 per hour, plus a \$4 increase to crib payments.

CDC bus drivers in Victoria to strike again over pay

The Transport Workers Union (TWU) covering 314 bus drivers from CDC Victoria, which operates bus services in Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong, has called a strike for July 1. This will be their third strike since voting to approve taking protected industrial action on May 20. They are seeking driver safety, improved working conditions and "fair" pay in a new enterprise agreement.

Their last pay increase in July, 2024 negotiated by the union was only 1 percent, well below the official inflation rate of 3.7 percent, a real pay cut. The drivers are determined to proceed with further industrial action to address their already low wages.

Epworth Medical Imaging nurses walk out again for higher pay

On Tuesday, Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) members from Epworth Medical Imaging at Geelong and Richmond walked off the job for four hours, their second strike this month for a higher pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. The strikes were an escalation of limited industrial action that began in April.

The ANMF has been trying to make a deal with Epworth since late 2024. The nurses' previous agreement expired in February, and their last annual pay rise was in July 2024 for an incremental 2.24 percent, a real pay cut compared to the official inflation rate of 3.7 percent.

The 33 workers want 4.5 percent annual increases in a three-year agreement and a \$9 lead apron allowance. Management is holding firm on its offer of 4 percent pay increases only. Nurses are forced to wear lead aprons weighing 10kg for about 4 fours each day. The ANMF claimed the apron allowance is paid by at least one other employer.

Royal Hobart Hospital medical imaging nurses take action over staff shortages

Medical imaging nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital, Tasmania began industrial action on Tuesday over chronic understaffing and dangerous levels of fatigue in the radiology department. Nurses said they are being forced to work unsustainable hours well beyond safe limits. This includes excessive overtime and on-call rosters as often as every second or third day, placing staff and patient safety at risk.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) has been negotiating on behalf of the nurses with the state Liberal government since January but without success. ANMF members voted on June 17 for industrial action, which includes bans on overtime and all non-nursing duties, as well as taking 30-minute fatigue breaks for on-call staff.

Last August, Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members, including radiographers, sonographers and nuclear medicine technologists at the hospital's radiology department, walked out for two hours over high workloads, chronic staffing shortfalls and low wages. Workers claimed the hospital was unable to fill 30 percent of vacancies in the department and the shortfall was delaying patient's scans.

Westmead Hospital nurses in Sydney protest neonatal staffing

Hundreds of nurses at Sydney's Westmead Hospital and its Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) stopped work on Monday over staff shortages in the NICU and the NSW Labor government's failure to address the issue.

According to the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association (NSWNMA), the NICU is funded as a 44-bed unit at 80 percent capacity, but that capacity is regularly exceeded, surging to 130 and 140 percent. This has forced nurses to utilise former storerooms and corridors to park patients. Nurses complained that although they are often looking after babies that require one-on-one care, they are now having to provide care to two and three babies.

The union claimed high workload demands in the NICU has led to staff resigning or shifting from full- to part-time because of the stress and harsh conditions. The union wants an increase in staffing from 21 nurses to 24 to 26 nurses per shift.

The NSWNMA has not called for state-wide action but called on the NSW health minister to visit the NICU to see the overcrowding.

New Zealand hospital theatre nurses strike over pay

About 50 New Zealand theatre nurses and healthcare assistants (HCAs) at Northland's Whangarei Hospital struck on Tuesday over their ongoing pay dispute with Health New Zealand (HNZ). Perioperative nurses and HCAs from the surgical admission unit, theatre and post anesthetic units took turns to undertake three four-hour strikes, starting at 7am and ending at 7pm.

The strike came after more than 200 senior doctors and dentists in Northland struck for 24 hours last week. That walkout followed a nationwide 24-hour strike on May 1 by 5,000 senior doctors and specialists and another by 30,000 nurses last December. The Association of Salaried Medical Specialists (ASMS) and the NZ Nurses Organisation (NZNO) have done nothing to mobilise any ongoing unified nationwide strike action.

Steph Moule, a theatre nurse, told RadioNZ the latest offer by HNZ amounted to a one percent increase this year, and a further one percent next April. "That doesn't keep up with the cost of living and will see nurses and health care workers and their whanau [families] going backwards financially," she said, adding that nurses and HCAs were overworked and burnt out.

Northland is one of the country's most impoverished regions with high rates of unemployment and endemic illness. Health services are falling over. Moule said she was seeing the impacts of the government not adequately funding the health system and patients suffering because of it. "If they're getting sicker and sicker before they get to us, then it takes longer for them to recover. I had a patient the other day who'd waited four years for a joint replacement surgery," she said.

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wsws.org/contact

