

# Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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

## Hyundai shipbuilding workers reject union-management pay deal

On Wednesday, 63 percent of members of the HD Hyundai Heavy Industries union rejected a tentative wage settlement negotiated between the union and Hyundai Heavy Industries management. The tentative agreement followed strikes on July 11, 16, 17 and 18, and 14 rounds of negotiations since May.

The proposed agreement included a monthly basic wage increase of 133,000 won (\$US96.54) (including a seniority increase of 35,000 won), a payment of 5.2 million won including gift certificates of 200,000 won, and a special incentive payment of 100 percent of the agreed wage.

The offer fell short of workers' demands that included a rise of 141,300 won in monthly basic pay, an increase in longevity allowances, an extension of the retirement age to 65, and improvements in the treatment of subcontracted workers.

## Maharashtra government hospital nurses strike over staffing crisis and job security

An indefinite strike by Maharashtra government hospital nurses entered day five on Tuesday. Around 30,000 nurses took part in the statewide strike to demand implementation of the seventh pay commission, permanent jobs and increased staffing. The Maharashtra State Nurses Union said their demands were regularly ignored, forcing them to strike. The strike is in addition to a picket by about 2,500 nurses in the Azad Maidan in Mumbai begun on July 18.

Nurses complained that they are facing a dire shortage of staff to conduct major surgeries. Nursing students in medical colleges are forced to manage emergency services, and hospitals are forced to postpone planned and routine surgeries. Nurses demanded that the government halt contractual recruitments, increase allowances, and fill vacant posts to reduce workload.

The Medical Education Minister met with the union on Tuesday evening and accepted some of their key demands. However, nurses said they will continue the strike until they get written confirmation from the government.

## Uttar Pradesh power utility workers strike against privatisation

Thousands of power utility workers and engineers stopped work for four

hours at noon on Tuesday and held protests across Uttar Pradesh against privatisation. The largest protest was outside the energy minister's office in Lucknow. The minister refused to meet with workers.

The strike was called by the Vidyut Karamchari Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti and Rajya Vidyut Parishad Junior Engineers' Organization. Workers are opposed to the government's plan to privatise the power distributors Purvanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd and Dakshinanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Ltd, which serve 42 of the 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh. The unions accused the Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation and some senior state officials of colluding with select private companies to hand over valuable public assets at "throwaway prices."

## Pensioners and government employees in Punjab protest removal of old pension scheme

The Sanjha Pensioners Front held a protest in front of the Sub Division Magistrate Office in Phagwara on July 21. Dozens of pensioners and government workers protested the removal of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and demanded repeal of new labour codes, which they say dilute workers' rights and reduce social security protections.

They demanded the scrapping of the New Pension Scheme (NPS) and Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) and a return to the OPS, arguing that the current market-linked NPS is neither secure nor sustainable for government employees after retirement.

Other demands were for the state government to constitute a State Pay Commission, aligned with the anticipated Eighth Central Pay Commission, to ensure uniformity and fairness in pay structures, and for the immediate release of pending dearness allowance (DA) instalments in line with the 55 percent DA currently applicable to central government employees.

## Heavy Engineering Corporation workers in Ranchi demand entitlements

Casual workers from the government-owned Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC) at Ranchi, Jharkhand, protested in front of the company's headquarters on July 21 demanding leave on Sundays, government holidays, dearness allowance and provident fund. They had been protesting regularly at the headquarters since July 1. The HEC Supply Mazdoor Sangharsh Samiti organised the protest.

## Tamil Nadu mosquito prevention workers protest for permanent jobs

About 200 mosquito prevention workers protested in Chennai on July 18 to demand permanent jobs under the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM). Mosquito prevention workers spray oil in stagnant water, conduct inspections and perform public awareness drives, as a means of controlling dengue, malaria, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases. They are covered by the All India Trade Union Congress.

### **Karnataka public transport workers issue strike notice**

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) representing workers from the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) announced on Tuesday that it had issued a notice to strike on August 5 over long-pending demands. The JAC, led by the All India Trade Union Congress-affiliated KSRTC Staff and Workers' Federation and including five other unions, accused the government of making false promises that caused them to withdraw previous strikes.

The workers' long-pending demands include a pay rise with effect from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027 and settlement of salary arrears for 38 months (January 1, 2020, to February 28, 2023). The JAC claimed that the Chief Minister had rejected the previous government's order dealing with the clearance of pending dues and only committed to delivering the next wage revision in 2027.

### **Glencore coal miners in New South Wales strike again for pay increase**

About 100 Mining and Energy Union (MEU) members at Glencore's underground coal mine at Ulan in New South Wales walked off the job on Thursday and rallied in the nearby town of Mudgee as part of their campaign for pay parity with workers at the nearby Ulan West, also owned by Glencore. Protesting miners, along with supporters, held signs saying, "Rotten to the core" "Glencore respect our town" and "Glencore pays more next door."

The MEU claimed that workers at Ulan underground are paid almost 12 percent less than at Ulan West, just 2 kilometres away, despite both being employed by Glencore, and performing the same roles. The union said negotiations with the company have been ongoing for 16 months.

The MEU is representing 140 surface and underground miners for their work agreements with the Swiss-based mining giant. The long-running negotiations stalled with the union accusing Glencore of attempting to cut existing entitlements and conditions in current enterprise agreement offers. Surface operation workers have been seeking annual pay rises in negotiations with Glencore for three years.

### **Komatsu mining equipment manufacturing workers in New South Wales strike**

About 90 workers from the Komatsu mining equipment manufacturing and maintenance plant at Rutherford, New South Wales have been holding a series of short work stoppages since July 12, their first strike ever, to demand an improved pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Their latest walkout was on Thursday.

Workers want wage parity with their colleagues at other Komatsu sites

at Moss Vale and Rockhampton doing similar work. An Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) spokesman claimed that Moss Vale and Rockhampton workers were offered 15 to 16 percent pay increases over a three-year agreement, while Rutherford workers were initially offered 13 percent, before the offer was lowered to 11 percent in retribution for the industrial action.

The workers voted near unanimously on June 25 to approve taking protected industrial action that could include 23 work bans, like a ban on overtime and stoppages of various lengths ranging from one hour to one week.

### **Wingham Beef Exports workers in New South Wales strike for improved pay offer**

More than 20 maintenance workers at the Wingham Beef Exports processing plant in Wingham, New South Wales walked off the job for 24 hours on July 18 to demand an improved pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. The workers are members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the Construction Forestry Maritime and Energy Union, who have been trying to reach a pay deal with the plant's owner NH Foods for 8 months.

Workers want a pay increase that will bring them up to "industry standard" rates of between \$35 and \$50 per hour. According to the AMWU they are currently paid around \$28 per hour.

### **TK Elevators workers in Queensland strike for pay increase**

Electrical Trades Union members from TK Elevators stopped work for 24 hours on July 17 and rallied in front of the Brisbane Entertainment and Convention Centre where they maintain elevators and lifts. The 30 workers were demanding "industry standard" pay and conditions and protection of superannuation in a new enterprise agreement.

### **Urban Utilities workers in Queensland strike for improved pay offer**

Administration and technical staff from Urban Utilities, which provides water and sewerage services in southeast Queensland, have been taking industrial action since July 14 seeking improved pay and conditions in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Their actions have included rolling stoppages of 4 and 24 hours.

In May, members of The Services Union (TSU) rejected Urban Utilities' proposed agreement that included a pay increase of 10 percent over three years, saying it did not reflect the current economic conditions and did not include industry standard conditions such as proper consultation, career progression and a guaranteed rostered day off. Management has refused to improve its original offer.

### **Moffat equipment maintenance workers in New South Wales strike for pay increase**

Maintenance electricians from the kitchen and bakery equipment manufacturer Moffat at Rydalmere, New South Wales walked off the job on July 18, their third day of action opposing the company's proposed enterprise agreement. The Electrical Trades Union is currently in negotiations with Moffat for better wages and conditions and a 17.5 percent leave loading.

The 12 workers voted unanimously on June 23 to approve taking protected industrial action that could include an unlimited number of work stoppages between one minute and one week duration, and 17 work bans, including a ban on overtime.

### **Towong Shire Council workers begin industrial action for a better pay offer**

Thirty workers employed by Towong Shire Council in regional Victoria initiated a campaign of low level industrial action on July 17, demanding a real wage increase. The action follows 12 months of failed negotiations between the council and the Australian Services Union (ASU).

Management's latest pay offer of 2.5 percent was rejected by workers, who said it was an insult when compared with the 3 percent salary rise paid to the council's CEO whose estimated annual salary is in excess of \$200,000. Workers said the offer failed to address the rising cost of living or their already low wages.

The ASU says it wants its members' wages increased to be on par with private sector workers' hourly wage rates of \$34.50 per hour. Workers have put in place bans on communications and attending meetings called by management.

### **KONE Elevators workers in Victoria strike for pay rise**

About 50 Australian Manufacturing Workers Union members from KONE Elevators in Victoria began protected industrial action, including an overtime ban and a half-day strike on July 18. Workers are seeking an improved pay offer in the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

The action followed a 24-hour strike by KONE Elevators Electrical Trades Union members in New South Wales on July 4 to demand industry standard pay in a new enterprise agreement. These workers are currently finalising their second underpayment claim in as many years with KONE. The last one ended up being a \$12.6 million underpayment impacting more than 800 lift technicians across Australia.



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