

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: Telangana medical college contract workers demand unpaid wages

Telangana United Medical and Health Employees Union members from the Super Specialty Centre of Kakatiya Medical College in Warangal demonstrated outside the college on Monday to demand payment of six months outstanding wages for contract medical workers. Demonstrators included nurses, lab technicians, pharmacists, theatre assistants and data entry operators.

Protesters told the media that although they had worked for more than five years, their wages had not been paid for the last six months. Other demands were for Provident Fund, Employee State Insurance, paid maternity leave, permanent jobs and equal pay for equal work.

Nagaland public sector workers strike for promotions

Thousands of public sector workers held a state-wide three-day strike on October 14 to demand the induction of state services employees into Nagaland Civil Services (NCS). The Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), an umbrella organisation of several government employees' unions, such as State Services Employees, Service Doctors, Secretariat Service Employees, Finance and Accounts Service and Engineering Services, said there were vacant positions in the NCS but they were not being filled by state services employees.

Workers also demanded that only state civil services employees be advanced into the Indian Administrative Services (IAS). They accused the government of nepotism by admitting non-state-government employees into the IAS.

Delhi Municipal Corporation multitasked workers continue strike

Around 5,200 multitasked workers and mosquito-breed checkers from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi are continuing strike action begun on October 3. They have been rallying outside the corporation headquarters. The workers, who are demanding streamlined leave procedures and permanent jobs for precarious employees, decided to continue the strike, saying the corporation continued to “turn a blind eye” to their concerns.

Maharashtra power distribution workers strike against privatisation

Workers from Maharashtra's three power distribution utilities—Mahavitaran, Mahapreshan and Mahanirmiti—held a three-day strike starting on October 9 in defiance of the government's invocation of the draconian Maharashtra Essential Services Maintenance Act (MESMA), which made the strike illegal.

Workers want the power utilities to remain in government hands and not be sold off to the Adani Group and Reliances. Other demands included permanent jobs, higher pay and state pension scheme and the filling of vacant posts.

The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited (MSEDCL) management cancelled all leave and threatened striking workers that they would face disciplinary action. Media reported that Nagpur city was seriously affected by the strike.

The union, Rajya Vidyut Karmachari Abhiyante Adhikari Kruti Samittee, called an end to the strike after 36 hours, following talks with senior MSEDCL officials. There was no report of what assurances were given.

Assam tea workers demand better wages and facilities

Tribal tea workers in Assam held a protest for better wages and facilities on October 8. Thousands of workers from across the state participated, demanding wages and tribal status so they are eligible for land rights and other remunerations in the state. The poorly paid tea workers, who are one of the most oppressed sections of the working class in the state, were demanding land rights which were an election promise of the current ruling BJP government.

Bangladesh: Non-government secondary school teachers resume protests

Thousands of non-government secondary school teachers under the Monthly Payment Order (MPO) scheme have resumed their indefinite demonstration on Saturday over long-pending demands. MPO schools receive financial support from the federal government, which covers teachers' basic salaries.

Teachers want the nationalisation of MPO schools and an end to the disparity with government education institutions. Other demands include payment of a medical allowance of 1,500 taka (\$US12.24), a 75 percent festival bonus and an increase of the current house rent allowance from

1,000 taka to 3,000 taka. The government offered to increase house rent to 1,500 taka, which was rejected.

The teachers' current monthly gross salary is 14,000 taka (\$US115), including 1,000 taka in house rent, and 500 taka in medical allowance. They only receive 50 percent of the basic festival allowance.

The teachers have held repeated protests over their demands. In February, they held a sit-in protest for 22 days in Dhaka and in May went on strike in different districts. Records for 2023 show that 396,368 teachers and 136,036 other employees are MPO-registered in 28,655 non-government post-primary-level educational institutions.

On Friday, teachers demonstrating at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka began an indefinite hunger protest. A spokesman for the teachers declared, "We will not leave this place until our demands are met—even if it costs our lives." Teachers vowed that classes would continue to be suspended until their demands are won.

Bangladesh: Kader Synthetic Fibres workers strike for timely wage payments

Kader Synthetic Fibres factory workers in the Konabari BSCIC Industrial City, stopped work on Monday and protested outside the factory gate. Their demands include an attendance bonus and timely payment of salaries. Police were deployed, and said they were trying to discuss with the factory authorities to solve the issues.

Workers want salaries paid between the 7th and 10th of each month, approval of medical leave by a doctor rather than factory officials, and continuation of attendance bonuses during medical leave. Another demand was that no employee be terminated without a valid reason, and if dismissal is necessary they should receive an additional salary of three months and 13 days, along with resignation benefits.

Aurizon Bulk Central workers in South Australia strike for higher pay

About 30 members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) from Aurizon Bulk Central in South Australia walked off for 24 hours on October 10 after overwhelmingly rejecting the company's latest pay offer. Workers said the offer failed to address cost-of-living pressures and working conditions.

AMWU members voted on September 19 to approve future industrial action that could include 18 work bans and work stoppages from 30 minutes to 48 hours.

Aurizon Bulk Central provides general freight rail haulage and port services, and operates the 2,200-kilometre Tarcoola (northern South Australia)-to-Darwin railway line. AMWU members maintain trains, wagons and other heavy equipment at multiple sites.

South Australian public sector workers strike for better wages

On Wednesday, over 2,000 South Australian public sector workers stopped work and rallied outside state parliament in Adelaide to protest low wages and demand a pay increase. Public Service Association (PSA) members, including pathology workers, Service SA employees, prison

officers, sheriffs and TAFE administration staff, demanded a 20 percent pay rise over 18 months.

After 12 months of ongoing negotiations, the state Labor government has only offered a pay increase of only 3 percent over three years. Workers want compensation for six years of low union-government pay deals that delivered only a 6 percent increase. Housing rents have increased by over 50 percent over the same period. Strikers said there would be more industrial action if a better offer is not tabled.

ANZ bank workers in Melbourne protest job cuts

Ove 40 ANZ bank workers held a lunchtime rally outside the company's headquarters in Melbourne on Tuesday to protest the management's restructuring plan to axe 3,500 jobs and a further 1,000 managed service contractors by September 2026. The \$110 billion bank wants the job cuts to deliver an estimated \$800 million in cost savings. Workers complained that they only learned that their jobs were gone through news alerts on their phones.

The rally was organised by the Financial Sector Union (FSU) which has not proposed any concrete industrial action involving all bank workers and is calling for no forced redundancies and for "consultation" on current and any future job cuts.

In the six months to March 31, ANZ delivered net profits of \$3.64 billion, a 16 percent lift over the prior period, while revenues jumped 5 percent to nearly \$11 billion.

Sydney Metro workers demand better pay and conditions

Over 300 members of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) and Professionals Australia (PA) began low-level industrial action against Sydney Metro on Friday. Customer service attendants, signaling, control centre, and white-collar workers are in dispute with management over wages and conditions and safety concerns in its proposed new enterprise agreement. The previous agreement expired in August.

Negotiations began ten months ago but broke down in early October after Metro declared that bargaining was over. The RTBU wants wage parity with other workers in the rail industry for frontline workers, seating at Metro stations, and a retrofit of Metro trains to accommodate "safe space" staff cabins.

Although 97 percent of workers voted for future strike action of up to 72 hours, the RTBU has only called limited action, including members wearing union and/or industrial campaign material, distributing union material, and attaching union material to trains. The union says campaign will run indefinitely.

Cancer research workers at Tasmania's Royal Hobart Hospital protest budget cut

On Monday, about a dozen workers at Tasmania's Royal Hobart Hospital Clinical Trial Unit (CTU) stopped work and protested outside the hospital in opposition to the Rockliff state Liberal government's plans to cut funding to the unit by a massive 58 percent.

The workers are represented by the Health and Community Services

Union (HACSU) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF), who say the funding and staff cuts will severely reduce access to potentially lifesaving cancer research and treatments for patients who have exhausted conventional options. The unions say the cuts will worsen the current excessive workloads imposed on CTU nursing and ancillary workers.

Neither union has called for a statewide campaign by their members to support the CTU workers. Instead, they have announced they will have a conciliation meeting with the Department of Health in the employer-friendly Tasmanian Industrial Relations Commission.



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