

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: Strike by Delhi Municipal Corporation workers enters third week

The strike by about 5,200 multitasked workers and mosquito-breed checkers from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi entered its third week on Monday. Workers walked out on October 3 and have been rallying outside the corporation headquarters.

Anti-Malaria Ekta Karamchari Union members are participating in the action. Strikers want a wage increase, equal pay and grade parity, as well as jobs for family members of deceased workers, paid medical leave, earned leave and permanent jobs for precarious employees.

Tamil Nadu: Madurai sanitary workers' union suspends strike and accepts privatisation

The Madurai Sanitary workers union, affiliated with the Centre for Indian Trade Unions, called off an indefinite strike planned for Tuesday over the dismissal of 23 workers following an agreement with the Madurai Municipal Corporation.

The deal allowed privatisation of the corporation's solid waste management in return for the reinstatement of the 23 dismissed workers and 10,000 (\$US114) to 20,000 rupees to workers, including for the reinstated workers, as a bonus for Diwali (Hindu festival of lights).

Erode General Hospital sanitation workers protest non-payment of Diwali bonus

About 125 sanitary workers, employed by a private contractor at the Erode General Hospital, Tamil Nadu walked out and demonstrated outside the hospital on Monday over non-payment of the Diwali bonus. The workers were organised by the All-India Trades Union Congress which convinced workers to withdraw the protest after a discussion with hospital management. The workers had demanded one-month's wages as the Diwali bonus but accepted management's payment terms.

Jeypore Municipality sanitation workers strike for unpaid wages

Over 360 sanitation workers from the Jeypore Municipality in Orissa struck work on October 17 demanding payment of one-month of overdue wages. The workers ended the strike in the evening after management said the issue would be resolved that day.

Bangladesh: Fashion Forum Garments workers demand outstanding wages

Workers from Fashion Forum Garments, of IDS Group in the Ashulia area of Savar, Dhaka rallied outside their factory on Sunday blocking the road. The action followed a demonstration two days earlier to demand payments in arrears.

Fearful that the unrest would spread, factory authorities from six garment factories in Ashulia, including High Fashion, FNF, Trade Fashion and Priti Group, declared a general holiday on Sunday. Authorities from the Shahriar Garments Factory also closed their factory on Sunday as its workers were demonstrating following the retrenchment of several workers. Ashulia police were deployed to the factories.

Non-government secondary school teachers in Bangladesh continue strike

Thousands of non-government secondary school teachers under the Monthly Payment Order (MPO) scheme are maintaining their strike and protest begun on October 11 to demand nationalisation of MPO schools and an end to the disparity with government education institutions. MPO schools receive financial support from the federal government, which covers teachers' basic salaries.

Other demands include payment of a medical allowance of 1,500 taka (\$US12), 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 workers rejected.

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.

The teachers are maintaining their protest at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka. About 200 have begun an indefinite hunger protest.

Australian Catholic University staff strike for pay rise and job security

About 400 National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members at Australian Catholic University (ACU) campuses at Ballarat, Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne stopped work for two hours on October 16 to demand an improved pay offer in the university's proposed enterprise agreement. They rejected management's 2.5 percent annual pay rise offer which they said was well below the wage price index (national general wage growth) of 3.4 percent.

Along with an improved pay offer, workers want strengthened job security, workload regulations, and stronger rights in flexible work. A union spokesperson said that in a context where universities rely on rampant casualisation and redundancies to solve upper management problems, a key demand is for significantly stronger job security for all staff.

The union says ACU's vice-chancellor received a \$60,000 pay rise last year, taking his salary to \$1.1 million, a 5.8 percent pay rise, while offering staff only 2.5 percent.

Armaguard security workers in Victoria and Tasmania strike

The Transport Workers Union (TWU), covering 150 cash-in-transit security guards at Armaguard and Prosegur in Victoria and Tasmania, began industrial action on Wednesday over a delay in finalising a new enterprise agreement. Workers placed indefinite bans on overtime and working weekends and planned strike action on Friday and next Monday.

Workers are concerned about delays in the finalisation of a new funding model with the banks and supermarkets which would guarantee the future of the cash delivery industry. Workers want a decent wage rise, and stronger safety nets around pay and conditions.

The industrial action could affect the availability of cash at ATMs and supermarket checkouts.

Rix's Creek coal mine strike in New South Wales enters third week

The strike by 250 Mining and Energy Union (MEU) members at the Bloomfield Group-owned Rix's Creek open-cut coal mine near Singleton, New South Wales is now in its third week. Workers voted near unanimously on September 19 to take industrial action following ten months of failed negotiations over the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

Workers rejected Bloomfield's pay increase offer of 16.75 percent over four years, saying it was totally unacceptable. As well as an improved pay offer, workers want accident pay lifted to parity with other pits. Currently, injured workers are helped by fellow workers who contribute from their own wages to top up accident pay. The MEU claimed that management has started advertising for replacement labour and is offering a worse deal than its original.

Bloomfield is a billion-dollar family-owned company with approval to extract 1.3 million tonnes of coal per annum from its open cut mine.

CDC bus drivers in Darwin strike for better pay and safety

Transport Workers Union (TWU) members employed by the commuter bus company CDC in Greater Darwin and regional areas stopped work for 24 hours on Monday to demand a pay increase and improved working conditions in a new enterprise agreement. This includes better weekend and overtime rates and a wage that recognises the increasingly unsafe work environment, saying they have been hit, kicked, spat on and abused.

"We've seen rocks thrown through windows, attempted stabbings and buses vandalised," a worker said.

After several months of failed negotiations, the workers voted on September 3 for future action which could include work stoppages between one minute and 24 hours, wearing union badges and placing stickers on buses.

On September 15, TWU members at CDC Darwin, CDC Regional NT and Buslink NT began low-level industrial action which the union has restricted to placing union posters in buses and drivers wearing union hi-vis vests.

ZircoDATA warehouse workers in New South Wales strike for improved pay offer

Fourteen Transport Workers Union members employed by the data storage company ZircoDATA at its three warehouses in New South Wales walked off the job and rallied outside their premises on October 16.

After rejecting what workers said was a substandard pay offer from the company, the workers voted unanimously on October 1 for future industrial action that could include an overtime ban and work stoppages ranging from one hour to a week or an indefinite strike. ZircoDATA has not responded with an improved offer.

Coca-Cola factory maintenance workers in Queensland strike

About 30 Electrical Trades Union members from Coca-Cola's factory maintenance department stopped work for 24 hours and rallied outside the factory in Brisbane on Monday. Workers decided in late September to begin industrial action after four months of negotiations for a new work agreement stalled. They said they will take further action until they "win the fair outcome they deserve."

Public school teachers in Tasmania to hold national strike

Thousands of teachers and support workers from 192 public schools and colleges across Tasmania will conduct staggered strikes spread over three days next week. The stop-work action will be from 9am to 11am on Tuesday in the north-west, on Wednesday in the north, and on Thursday in the south.

The Australian Education Union (AEU) called the action after it accused Tasmania's Liberal state government of walking away from long-running enterprise agreement negotiations. The AEU said the government's actions will deny teachers a wage rise before the Christmas break and force many of its lowest paid workers to find work over the enforced break.

The government's last offer included a 3 percent wage rise conditional on further EA negotiations for a long-term agreement. Teachers rejected

the offer saying it did nothing to meet their wage demands, or address the exploitative workloads, classroom violence and issues driving teacher shortages.

The AEU's demands include a 21.5 percent increase over three years, starting with an initial 11 percent rise in the first year of the new agreement, a reduction in class sizes and career advancement in line with the mainline states. Another demand is for changes to the current employment arrangement for teaching assistants who are not paid for a full year and are stood down during school holidays.

Workers at Graincorp's port facilities in Victoria strike for better pay and conditions

About 100 United Workers Union (UWU) members at Graincorp's port facilities at Geelong and Portland walked off the job for 24 hours on Tuesday in their dispute over the company's proposed enterprise agreement.

According to the union, Graincorp is refusing to agree to the wage rise demands or the inclusion in the new agreement of an improved roster system that allows workers to plan their lives. Workers want wage rises to achieve parity with Graincorp workers employed at the company's other Victorian facilities.

Negotiations faltered after the UWU became aware earlier this year that workers at Graincorp's site in the Port of Geelong were paid a higher duties penalty during a six-year period and amounting to tens of thousands of dollars.

Following the underpayment revelation, the union says Graincorp is now seeking to remove or amend key clauses carried over from the old agreement into the new agreement related to the span of hours, rostering and the duration that casual workers are engaged for.

Infrabuild steel mill workers in Victoria strike for new work agreement

Over 100 workers employed at InfraBuild's steel mill in Laverton, a suburb of Melbourne, began a campaign of rolling 12 to 24-hour stoppages on Friday after decisively rejecting the company's "substandard" new enterprise agreement.

The Australian Workers Union said that after four years of negotiations and disputes over safety failures and wages falling behind the cost of living the workers had "reached their limit." Workers want the new agreement to include a wage rise that reflects the true cost of living increases and addresses concerns over safety and job security.

Workers said they will maintain industrial action until Infrabuild presents an acceptable offer. InfraBuild's Laverton plant processes recycled scrap metal into steel products. The company claims its \$3.5 billion Laverton mill is the biggest in Australia.



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