

# 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: Government bank workers strike nationwide for shorter work week

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella association of government bank workers, held a national strike on January 27. It was calling for a five-day work week instead of the current six days. Media reported that nearly 800,000 workers joined the action, affecting ATM services, cheque clearance, cash transactions, bill trading, bill discounting and treasury operations.

The campaign for the five-day week began five years ago. Workers complained that most financial institutions across the country work a five-day week and they want the same.

## Gig workers across India hold second national strike

On Monday, workers organised by the Gig and Platform Service Workers Union switched off their apps to protest ill treatment and low pay. Workers are fighting against falling incomes, arbitrary blocking of worker IDs, opaque rating systems, income insecurity, lack of grievance redressal mechanisms and unilateral changes in work policies.

The action included all app-based workers at companies such as Zomato, Swiggy, Ola, Uber, Urban Company, Porter and others. It followed nationwide action by 150,000 gig workers on New Year's Eve and a smaller strike of 40,000 on December 25, causing 50–60 percent service disruption in many cities.

The workers are fighting systemic exploitation and lack of fundamental protection in the gig industry. Gig workers are demanding formal recognition, secure livelihoods and dignity. The online action is to be followed by a physical strike and protests on February 3.

## Ludhiana Municipal Corporation workers in Punjab protest against state government

Ludhiana Municipal Corporation workers protested on January 21 against the Aam Admi Party (AAP) state government. Workers held a gate rally demanding an end to privatisation, permanent jobs to all the workers, restoration of benefits and parity in recruitment. Workers said

they had lost confidence in the AAP administration and have threatened to hold a road blockade and major strike if demands were not met.

## Punjab bus transport workers announce statewide strike for February 12

The Punjab Roadways, Punbus and PRTC Contract Workers' Union announced on Sunday that its members are to hold a statewide strike on February 12 to demand the release of 12 union delegates who have been jailed for nearly two months despite repeated assurances from the government that they would be released. Contract workers are also demanding regularisation of services, timely payment of salaries and withdrawal of the contract system, which they described as exploitative.

Another demand is that the government reverse its decision to open tenders for 100 air-conditioned buses under the kilometre-based bus scheme. Workers claimed this was a backdoor attempt to allow private players to operate on government-notified routes. Under the scheme, private operators lease buses to the transport department and are paid a fixed rate per kilometre. Workers fear that the move threatens thousands of jobs in the state transport sector.

The 12 jailed union delegates were detained just hours before a scheduled demonstration against the kilometre scheme on November 28. Workers responded by launching a four-day statewide strike. They returned to work after the government falsely promised to release the leaders.

The union warned that the February 12 strike would be preceded by a shutdown of bus stands across Punjab on February 11, and threatened that if their colleagues are not released, demonstrations would be held outside the chief minister's residence in Ludhiana.

## West Bengal: Kilcote Tea estate workers protest overdue wages

Kilcote Tea estate workers protested in Siliguri on January 22 against the non-disbursal of wages and management's failure to pay contributions to the Provident Fund. Workers locked the manager's bungalow and continued their protest.

The estate is owned by Sammelan Tea & Beverages Private Limited of Kolkata. Workers said they would expand their struggle, demanding a new owner of the tea estate. The Progressive Tea Workers Union (PTWU) organised the workers, who removed the company's sign board from estate premises on January 14.

## **Pakistan: Balochistan government workers continue fight for wage parity**

On Tuesday, Balochistan Employees Grand Alliance (BEGA) members held their third protest this month in Quetta and Khuzdar districts to demand implementation of the Disparity Reduction Allowance (DRA) as per the government schedule. Protesters marched from Bacha Khan Chowk to the City Police Station and held a sit-down demonstration shouting anti-government slogans. Eleven workers were detained by police.

Police violently attacked last week's protest in Quetta, the state capital, when they attempted to march toward the Red Zone for a sit-down protest. Workers began their campaign for pay parity with a province wide protest on January 12.

The BEGA claims that workers at the governor's house, chief minister's secretariat, the high court and similar institutions are paid higher salaries, despite being in the same grade as employees in other government departments.

## **Bangladesh: Apparel workers block road to demand unpaid wages**

Police attacked and injured 30 protesting garment workers from the Laxma Innerwear factory in Sreepur, Gazipur, on September 22 when they blocked the Sreepur–Masterbari road to demand unpaid December salaries. Workers had stopped work the day before and occupied the factory holding a sit-in protest demanding management clear outstanding wages.

According to reports, industrial police and local police who were deployed to end the protest started assaulting workers, baton-charging them and attacking with tear gas and rubber bullets.

At least 30 workers were injured, including 16 who were taken to the Upazila Health Complex and Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital in Gazipur. Some were sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Medical College Hospital for advanced treatment.

## **Sri Lanka: School Development Officers renew calls for inclusion in National Teacher Service**

Hundreds of School Development Officers (SDOs) began a sit-down protest outside the Presidential Secretariat on Monday, demanding confirmation into the national teaching service. They converted the protest into a fast unto death campaign. By Wednesday one campaigning worker was admitted to hospital while another worker refused to be hospitalised, ignoring medical advice.

The protesters, all of whom are university graduates, claim that their academic qualifications and seven years of professional experience make additional recruitment examinations unnecessary.

SDOs staged demonstrations in 2025, twice in September and again in November. Although representatives met with officials of the JVP/NPP government and were assured that steps would be taken on their demands, the officers say no progress has been made to date.

## **Qantas salaried and technical workers strike again for new agreement**

On Thursday, Qantas Technical and Salaried Staff, including engineers, safety trainers and technicians, walked off the job and rallied outside their workplaces as part of a national four-hour stoppage for a new enterprise agreement. The industrial campaign started on January 16 with a national stoppage by 150 members of the Australian Workers Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association.

The unions claim that Qantas management, after 18 months of negotiations, had failed to make a pay offer in line with increases in the cost of living. The unions have dragged out negotiations since the current agreement expired in December 2024. Their members have not had a pay increase since January 2024.

## **Dynelec electricians in New South Wales strike for improved pay**

Ten Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members employed at Dynelec's electrical equipment assembly plant at Unanderra, an industrial suburb of Wollongong, south of Sydney, stopped work and rallied outside the factory on January 23 in their dispute over management's proposed enterprise agreement. The highly-skilled workers build critical electrical infrastructure for major mining and construction projects across New South Wales.

Workers want fair pay increases, basic safety allowances, proper support for apprentices and improved carers leave. Their current agreement expired on September 30, 2025

## **DP World security guards at Port Botany strike**

Cirtus Security guards at DP World's Port Botany Terminal, Sydney walked off for one hour on January 23, following Cirtus' rejection of their pay and conditions demands in a new enterprise agreement. The striking MUA members were joined by about 100 other port workers at their picket at DP World's terminal entry gate, disrupting traffic flow. Workers are fighting for improved pay and conditions in the new agreement.

## **Air New Zealand flight attendants plan strikes**

Flight attendants working aboard Air New Zealand's B777 and B787 long-range aircraft have voted to strike on February 11, 12 and 13. The Flight Attendants Association (FAANZ) announced that in months of bargaining and two rounds of mediation the company had failed to present a satisfactory pay offer to international cabin crews.

A FAANZ spokesman said the company's pay offer would see crew "just hit the living wage. With inflation continuing to bite, many flight attendants are concerned they'll be back below a liveable wage within a short time." The airline is demanding flight attendants give up hard-earned terms and conditions in exchange for any "meaningful improvement" in wages, he said.

A spokesperson for the E t? union said many of the airline's long-range crews had been with Air NZ "for decades" and did not take striking lightly. Pay for flight attendants has not been good enough for a long time "and this really is a last resort," she said.

The union previously called off a planned strike just before Christmas

by 400 Air NZ short-haul cabin crews who work on domestic flights, and flights across the Tasman and the Pacific, after reaching an “agreement in principle” with the company.



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