

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: West Bengal tea plantation workers protest low wages

Tea plantation workers organised by the Chai Bagan Mazdoor Union-Joint Forum of tea workers protested on March 9 and 10 putting forward a 10-point charter of demands that included an appeal to the state and central governments to raise wages equal to Kerala workers ahead of assembly elections.

Workers complained that the daily wage in plantation states, such as West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, is between 220 (\$US2.3) to 258 rupees a day, well below the 546-rupee daily wage paid to Kerala tea workers. Workers want the daily wage lifted to 660 rupees and inclusion of maternity and sick leave, and permanent employment instead of contract work.

Rajasthan: Borosil glassware factory workers protest abrupt closure

Women from the Borosil glassware factory in Govindgarh area, Jaipur, protested outside the plant on Tuesday after the factory's LPG supply halted, leaving 3,000 employees without work.

The distressed workers demanded clarity from management, saying their families depend on their daily wages. "We manage our household expenses and bank instalments through this job. If the factory stops calling us for work, how will we run our homes?" one protester said. The workers said that the abrupt closure had created panic among families in Govindgarh and nearby villages, where many households have at least one member employed at the Borosil plant.

Punjab ASHA workers demonstrate over unfulfilled election promises

Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) Workers' Union members protested outside the Deputy Commissioner's office on Monday to press for long-pending demands. They handed the commissioner a memorandum addressed to the chief minister and health minister.

Union leaders demanded that ASHA workers with over a decade of service should be covered under minimum wage laws and granted a fixed monthly honorarium of 24,000 rupees (\$US260). They demanded restoration and enhancement of suspended allowances, an increase in the

travel allowance to 500 rupees, and recruitment of ASHA workers in urban areas.

Protesting workers also raised retirement-related issues, calling for a lump-sum payment of 500,000 rupees superannuation and half salary as pension, in line with workers' entitlements in Haryana. Workers vowed to keep fighting until their demands are granted.

Bangladeshi construction workers demand outstanding wages and Eid allowance

Construction workers affiliated with the Bangladesh Building Construction Workers Federation protested on Monday demanding outstanding wages and the Eid-ul-Fitr allowance. Eid-ul-Fitr is the biggest religious festival for Muslims, and is expected to fall on March 20 or 21, depending on the sighting of the moon. Federation officials said workers' lives are at risk at construction sites due to unsafe conditions. There are about seven million construction workers in Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi apparel workers protest factory closures

Apparel workers organised by the National Garment Workers Federation held a procession on the Topkhana Road in Dhaka on Thursday, advancing several demands including the reopening of closed apparel factories, payment of wages and the Eid bonus before Ramadan.

They formed a human chain and protested outside the National Press Club in Dhaka, followed by a march along several city roads. Federation officials called on the newly elected Bangladesh Nationalist Party government to take steps to reopen garment factories closed during the 18-month rule of the Yunus's interim government.

A federation spokesperson condemned employers for not releasing special funds provided by the government for workers' salaries and Eid bonuses. The federation warned that the sector could face greater difficulties this year due to unresolved labour issues.

Pakistan: Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar workers protest corruption

Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar employees, organised by the United Municipal Workers Union, held a sit-down protest on Charsadda Road on Monday, stopping traffic for nearly two hours.

Union leaders accused the Capital Metropolitan administration of widespread lawlessness, rampant corruption in local funds, and failure to pay salaries, pensions, overtime allowances, weather allowances, and other dues. They said hundreds of retirees have not received their monthly pensions for the past 18 months, seniority lists remain unresolved, and many officers have been removed from official duties, rendering the office dysfunctional.

Pakistan: Teachers in Waziristan protest over unpaid salaries

Teachers in South Waziristan Lower protested outside the FC Igloo Gate in Wana against lack of an accounts office in the district and the continued delay in the payment of salaries on Tuesday. The All-Teachers Association (ATA) Wana demanded immediate relocation of the accounts office from Dera Ismail Khan to Wana to resolve the financial and administrative issues faced by teachers and other employees of the education department.

Teachers from different parts of the district participated in the protest carrying placards and banners. Demonstrators raised slogans and called upon the provincial government to address long-standing grievances.

Pakistan: Punjab public sector employees protest austerity

The All-Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) protested at the Government High School in Sahiwal against the Punjab government's austerity policies on Tuesday. Provincial and federal government employees participated from Depalpur, Renala Khurd, Arifwala, Sahiwal, Pakpattan, Okara, Khanewal, Vehari, and Burewala.

Protesters chanted slogans against the government's failure to resolve the grievances of around 1.2 million public sector employees. They demanded the immediate withdrawal of the December 2024 notification, which cut pensions by 40 to 45 percent, and called for restoration of the leave encashment and reinstatement of Rule 17-A, which grants employment rights to the children of government employees in the event of sudden death or incapacitation.

AGEGA speakers opposed the planned outsourcing of public schools, saying it undermined constitutional and fundamental rights, and called for an end to outsourcing in the health sector. Workers demanded revision of the government employees' pay scale and merging of all ad hoc allowances into the basic pay scale of public sector employees.

The protest ended with a renewed call for unity among government employees and a commitment to intensify the struggle until their demands are met.

Tasmanian public sector workers escalate industrial action

Tasmanian public sector workers are escalating industrial action in their long-running dispute with the state Liberal government over its proposed enterprise agreement. Thousands of teachers, health workers, firefighters, child safety workers, park rangers and others are involved. They struck for up to four hours over several days across the state in early November against the government's offer of a below-inflation pay increase of 3 percent in a one-year agreement with no improvement in conditions.

The escalated action by the Australian Education Union (AEU), the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members follows their rejection of the government's latest offer of 3 percent increases in years one and two, plus structural reforms, and a 2.75 percent increase in year three. The unions say the offer contained significant cuts to existing conditions, issues not mentioned in previous negotiations.

The unions want significant pay increases to achieve pay parity with public sector workers in other states. Teachers are demanding a wage rise of 5.95 percent and other measures to address worsening workloads not addressed in their current agreement. All the unions are demanding improved staffing, reduced workload and job security.

AEU members voted last week to approve future industrial action that includes work bans and strikes of one-hour or 24-hours duration. The CPSU, covering government office workers, warned of "unprecedented strike action" across the state after March 20 if negotiations remain stalled. The union is also opposing the government restructuring plans, including the dismantling of the Department of State Growth, eliminating around 250 jobs.

On Wednesday, cleaners covered by the HACSU at the Royal Hobart Hospital walked out for four hours. HACSU members across the state have endorsed "Stage 4" industrial action—allowing stoppages of between eight and 24 hours if negotiations are still stalled.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation workers vote for industrial action

About 4,500 workers from the government-funded Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) are currently locked in a dispute with management over its proposed enterprise agreement. The workers are covered by the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance (MEAA) and the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) in what has developed into protracted negotiations that began before the previous agreement expired in October 2025.

An initial management offer in November was narrowly rejected by workers as unions and management went to court over short-term contracts and tensions over workplace culture and management tactics. Workers rejected an earlier offer in July requiring them to forfeit their right to industrial action for 12 months, in return for an immediate 3 percent pay rise.

Earlier this month, workers rejected a revised offer of a \$1,000 one-off payment plus annual pay increases of 3.5, 3.25 and 3.25 percent and limited pay band progression, and voted overwhelmingly to approve taking industrial action, including strikes and work bans.

ABC workers want the pay offer lifted to 16.5 percent over three years, meaningful pay band progression, limits on short-term contracts and concrete commitments on AI and racial and disability pay gap remediation. The unions are restricting industrial action to email protests and limited work bans with threats of further escalation and "possible" strike dates if no progress is made in negotiations.

Pacific National rail workers in Queensland strike for improved pay offer

Over 300 Pacific National (Coal Queensland) (PNC) train crews stopped work for 24 hours on Monday and picketed depots across the state.

Members of the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) and the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Employees (AFULE) were locked out without pay for refusing to do overtime while taking protected industrial action.

Workers began industrial action last November, after six months of failed negotiations. They are opposed to any cuts in conditions and PNC's low pay rise offer in its proposed enterprise agreement. The unions claim that the company has ignored members' key demands.

Ongoing industrial action includes bans on overtime and altered rosters. Management warned on Monday that any worker who chooses to not agree to alter their shift during the protected ban will be locked out. Another 24-hour stoppage is planned from noon on March 18.

Dynelec electricians' strike in New South Wales enters seventh week

A dozen striking Electrical Trades Union (ETU) members employed at Dynelec's electrical equipment assembly plant at Unanderra, an industrial suburb of Wollongong, south of Sydney, are maintaining a strike and picket they began on January 23 outside the factory. The highly skilled workers, who build electrical switchboards for major mining and construction projects across New South Wales, are in dispute with management over its proposed enterprise agreement.

Negotiations have been ongoing since the current agreement expired in September. In response to workers' strike action management reduced its original pay offer from 11.5 percent over three years to 10.5 percent.

Workers want an 18 percent pay rise over three years to achieve pay parity with other employees in the industry doing similar work. Other demands are for basic safety allowances, proper support for apprentices and improved carers' leave.

The union has not called for industrial action by its 15,000 members to support the Dynelec workers but left them isolated, telling other ETU members to visit workers from companies supplying Dynelec to tell them about the ongoing dispute.



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