

# 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.*

## **South Korea: Kakao platform workers to strike over wages and bonuses**

Kakao platform workers in South Korea are to hold a four-hour partial strike and rally at Pangyo Station in Seongnam City on June 10 after wage and bonus negotiations with Kakao Corporation broke down. The action was announced on Monday by the Kakao branch of the Korean Federation of Chemical, Textile and Food Industry Trade Unions, which represents more than 4,000 workers at Kakao's headquarters and four affiliates: Kakao Pay, Kakao Enterprise, DK Techin and XL Games. About 1,200 union members are expected to participate.

Union demands include management reform and accountability, job security and community safety nets, fair performance compensation and profit distribution, and the establishment of universal labor conditions and welfare systems.

A central point of contention is the size of bonuses and whether restricted stock units (RSUs) worth 5 million won (US\$3,270) will be included. One proposal would allocate about 10 percent of operating profits to worker bonuses. Separately, the union is seeking improvements to compensation systems and a halt to sales, spinoffs and restructuring measures that it says threaten job security.

## **Hyundai Group subcontract workers hold second rally demanding negotiations**

On May 27, Hyundai Motor's subcontractor union held a rally of 1,675 workers outside the company's Ulsan plant, where 10 chapters representing in-house subcontracting, logistics and service divisions called for direct bargaining with Hyundai. The demonstration followed an April 15 rally outside Hyundai Group's headquarters in Seocho-gu, where workers made the same demand. The protests were backed by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU).

The August 2025 amendment to the Trade Union and Labour Relations Adjustment Act established a legal basis for subcontracted employees to bargain directly with principal employers.

The union says the workers are essential to Hyundai's operations and argues that the company should therefore negotiate as their employer. On May 26, the Ulsan Regional Labor Relations Commission held its second hearing on the union's request for a correction order over Hyundai's

refusal to publicly announce the bargaining demand. The Korean Metal Workers' Union has announced a general strike for July 15 and said it plans to continue the campaign through September.

## **India: Maharashtra women workers rally in Mumbai to demand government status**

Thousands of women workers from across Maharashtra gathered at Mumbai's Azad Maidan on Monday for a three-day sit-down protest. Protesters included Anganwadi workers, Accredited Social Health Activists, school mid-day meal workers, group facilitators, National Health Mission employees, and workers from the construction, domestic service, beedi, sugarcane and power loom sectors.

Their demands included recognition as government employees, a monthly minimum wage of 30,000 rupees (\$US313), Provident Fund, ESI (Employees' State Insurance), pension and gratuity, measures to address inflation, and the withdrawal of the four labour codes introduced by the Modi government. The Centre of Indian Trade Unions organised the protest.

Many of these women play essential roles in India's rural health, nutrition, and early education systems, yet they are classified as volunteers and receive modest honorariums rather than regular salaries, underscoring the significance of their demands.

## **Municipal auto tipper drivers in Kolhapur strike for wage rise and benefits**

On Tuesday, auto-tipper drivers from the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation began an indefinite strike to protest low pay and lack of benefits. Drivers said they receive only 14,800 rupees (\$US154) per month despite being entitled to approximately 26,000. They also want immediate enrolment in Provident Fund and Employees' State Insurance schemes.

## **Dibrugarh district tea estate workers protest over long-outstanding demands**

Tea plantation workers, mostly female tea leaf pluckers, held hour-long demonstrations at five tea estates in Dibrugarh district on May 28. The workers are organised by the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS).

The simultaneous protests were held at Mokalbari, Kamakhyabari, Ganeshbari, Manabari and Dhalajan tea estates. The primary demands were the filling of vacant posts for permanent employees and sub-employees, and for medical facilities in the garden hospitals to be made fully available.

### **Punjab state-operated service centres remain on strike**

Nearly 2,300 contractual operators at over 540 state-operated service centres across Punjab are continuing an indefinite strike that they began on May 26. The Sewa Kendra Employees Welfare Association said the workers receive a low monthly salary of between 10,000 to 11,000 rupees (\$US104 to \$115) with no financial revisions or meaningful increments over the last decade. The union reported that workers were striking in Ludhiana, Phagwara, Taran Tarn and Jalandhar.

### **INPEX LNG production workers in the Northern Territory walk out for improved pay and conditions**

More than 400 production and maintenance workers at the Japanese-owned INPEX's offshore and onshore LNG processing facilities began a series of work stoppages and work bans on Tuesday as part of an industrial dispute over pay and conditions in the company's proposed enterprise agreement. Action began at INPEX's Ichthys facility near Darwin with two-hour stoppages in the morning and evening and is set to extend to other facilities.

Negotiations last week in the Fair Work Commission between INPEX and the Offshore Alliance (OA), which represents 340 Australian Workers Union members and 80 Electrical Trades Union members, ended without agreement. The OA said that although progress was made, key claims remained unresolved, including benchmark pay and conditions and job security. Workers are seeking annual pay increases of 3 percent.

The Ichthys operation transports gas from offshore fields in Western Australian waters to Darwin for processing through an 890-kilometre underwater pipeline. The facility produces 9.3 million metric tons of LNG a year, making any disruption significant for key export markets: Japan receives 8 percent of its LNG imports from Ichthys, while Taiwan receives 8 percent of its LNG from the facility.

### **Public sector medical scientists in Victoria set strike date**

The Medical Scientists Association of Victoria (MSAV), representing public sector medical scientists, announced on Tuesday that its members would stop work on June 16 and rally outside the Department of Health in Melbourne after negotiations with the Victorian Labor government over a new enterprise agreement stalled.

The dispute involves scientists, pharmacists, audiologists and psychologists, who began their campaign with a strike and rally outside the state parliament in Melbourne on April 1. MSAV members also held snap rallies at the University Hospital Geelong and in the Parkville medical precinct on May 29 and June 2, respectively.

Current bans include not working beyond contracted hours, including early starts and late finishes, performing only explicitly required tasks,

and refusing to work with or be trained to use new software and technology. Workers rejected the proposed agreement, saying it failed to address claims including improved career progression, reduced workloads and greater support for professional development.

The pay rise offer of 3 percent per annum is below the rate of inflation and the minimum safety-net rates determined by the Fair Work Commission, which this week announced a 6 percent increase to the minimum wage and 4.75 percent for workers on award rates. MSAV said it has been in negotiations for 14 months, attended 50 bargaining meetings and has yet to receive an offer that addresses its key claims.

### **Catholic school educators in Victoria rally for improved conditions and fair bargaining rights**

On May 29, hundreds of Catholic school educators participated in a "Day of Action", holding morning and afternoon school-gate rallies across Victoria for improved pay, better conditions and the right to strike. The Independent Education Union (IEU) says it has presented 113 claims in bargaining. Employers have rejected 100 outright and remain vague on pay and conditions.

The union argues that its claims are intended to ensure Catholic sector employees are not left behind their government sector counterparts or the offer the Victorian Catholic Education Authority was prepared to make last year. The claims include 20 weeks' paid parental leave and classification improvements, including for education support staff.

Additional concerns have also emerged in specialist schools, where employers want to increase scheduled class time to primary school levels regardless of year level, while removing limits on meetings held outside the school day.

Victorian Catholic school teachers are legally unable to strike because their employers refuse to bargain as a single entity, forcing the workforce to negotiate across 34 separate employers rather than one cohesive group. The Independent Education Union (IEU) is pursuing a Single Interest Authorisation at the Fair Work Commission, a process that requires it to demonstrate majority staff support across each diocesan or parish employer before protected industrial action can lawfully occur.

### **Workers at eight Melbourne councils to strike again over wages**

The Australian Services Union (ASU) announced this week that about 1,500 members across eight Melbourne metropolitan councils will stop work on June 17 and rally outside state parliament as part of an ongoing multi-employer wage dispute. The planned strike involves outdoor crews, library staff, aged-care workers, maternal health nurses and administrative workers. It follows a 24-hour strike on May 5 that the union described as the largest coordinated stoppage by Victorian council workers.

According to the union, bargaining has stalled across the eight local government areas, with workers yet to receive a pay offer after six months of negotiations. The union said workers are seeking wage increases above inflation, staffing guarantees and measures to address rising workloads, which it attributes to years of cost-cutting and state government rate-capping policies.

An ASU spokesperson said the state's rate-cap policy had resulted in workers effectively losing ground in real wages over the past five years. One council worker said their pay had fallen about 14 percent behind the cost of living.

If an agreement cannot be reached, workers have said they will reinstate partial work bans, meaning bin collections will be heavily disrupted, and parking infringements will not be enforced.

### **Parks Victoria field staff to resume industrial action for pay rise**

Parks Victoria field staff will begin three days of industrial action on Saturday over the state government's low enterprise agreement deal. The Australian Workers Union (AWU) said that, after 12 months of negotiations, Parks Victoria had not presented an offer the union considered acceptable.

AWU members voted overwhelmingly on May 19 to take industrial action after rejecting proposed sub-inflation annual pay increases of 3 percent. Management said it could not increase the offer because of the state government's 3 percent wage cap. This is a wage cut compared to the current official inflation rate of 4.6 percent.

The planned action will include one-hour rolling stoppages and seven selected work bans. It follows a one-hour stoppage on May 25 and a protest outside Parks Victoria's head office in Melbourne.

In a media release on Thursday, the union said it was prepared to do a sellout deal. It said, "The union's position is that the current offer on the table, combined with a firm commitment to ranger reclassification, would meet the core needs of frontline workers and is consistent with the Victorian Government's wages policy."

### **Adelaide nurses and midwives strike for better pay and conditions**

Nurses and midwives at Lyell McEwin Hospital in Adelaide walked out for 24 hours from 7:30 a.m. Thursday. The action is part of a long-running campaign by 20,000 members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) for an improved pay and conditions offer in the state Labor government's proposed enterprise agreement.

ANMF members began industrial action on October 30 last year with a stop-work rally outside the state parliament and continued with ad hoc stoppages and rallies until mid-February, when union bureaucrats suspended strike action following an interim wage offer from the government just before the state election. The ANMF accepted the interim offer and ended industrial action, although the offer was below the members' original wage claim of a 23 percent increase by 2027, with a further rise of 3 to 4 percent if the agreement extends into 2028.

ANMF members recommenced industrial action on May 18 with a revised pay demand of 21 percent over three years, starting with 7 percent this year. Other outstanding issues, including chronic staff shortages, overwork, and worsening delays in emergency departments, were not included in the interim offer. Members are maintaining low-level action, including work-to-rule measures and the promotion of union campaign material.



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