

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

3 July 2026

The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

South Korea: Kakao platform workers hold second strike for higher wage and bonus

Following a four-hour strike on June 10, about 2,100 members of the Kakao branch of the Korean Federation of Chemical, Textile and Food Industry Trade Unions, stopped work for 24 hours on Monday over failed wage negotiations with the mobile platform company Kakao and its affiliates Kakao Pay, Kakao Enterprise, DK Techn and XL Games. Workers participated in a “log-off day” campaign, a form of strike in which employees take leave and sign out of the company’s internal work platforms.

The union covers over 4,000 Kakao employees who are demanding 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 key point of contention is the size of bonuses and whether this includes restricted stock units (RSUs) worth five million won (US\$3,270). The union wants performance bonuses equivalent to 13 to 14 percent of operating profit, arguing that the RSUs excluded from the bonus calculation.

Other concerns involve compensation for employees involved in major service upgrades, including the revamp of flagship messenger KakaoTalk. Kakao Pay members are calling for normalised compensation following the company’s return to profit. The union is also seeking a halt to sales, spinoffs and restructuring measures that it says threaten job security.

India: Sanitation workers in Rajasthan strike for job security

The state-wide strike by Rajasthan sanitation workers entered day three on June 29. Demands are for priority recruitment for sanitation workers from the Valmiki community, an end to contract/outsourcing systems, permanent jobs for workers after two years of employment and timely salary payments. In Jaipur, garbage was dumped at major parts of the city like Badi Chaupar, Choti Chaupar, Johari Bazaar, and Raja Park as part of the protest. The deadlock between the workers and government continues.

Rajasthan Anganwadi workers strike for higher wages and permanent jobs

About 125,000 Anganwadi (childcare) workers in Rajasthan held a state-wide strike on July 1 with demands that included higher honorarium of 13,000 rupees (\$US137) per month on par with Madhya Pradesh Anganwadi workers, permanent jobs, pension benefits, payment of pending wages and reduced workload. The Anganwadi union said they would stop online and offline work from July 1 to 6 and threatened to shut down all Anganwadi centres from July 7.

Punjab: Faridkot Municipal Corporation sanitation workers on strike

Around 450 contract sanitation workers from the Faridkot Municipal Corporation, in Punjab stopped work on June 20 demanding payment of two month’s outstanding wages. Last month, the workers ended a three-week strike for permanent jobs following assurances by the government. The workers returned to the picket line, however, because their demands are still pending.

Odisha Medical Services Association doctors on strike

Government doctors across Odisha began an indefinite state-wide strike on Wednesday, coinciding with “National Doctors’ Day”, called by the Odisha Medical Services Association (OMSA). The strike has heavily disrupted healthcare operations, specifically targeting Outpatient Department (OPD) and Inpatient Department (IPD) services at primary, community, and district hospitals. The OMSA demands are for pay parity, career advancement, reduced workload by filling vacant posts and regional exits and increased incentives.

Bangladeshi apparel workers protest over co-worker’s death

Apparel workers at Islam Garments (Unit-2) in Gazipur held protests following the death of a co-worker, alleging that factory management’s failure to provide timely medical treatment contributed to her death.

The protests began after the death of Rubina Begum, 45, a sewing operator at the factory, on June 27. According to fellow workers, she fell seriously ill while on duty and was initially treated at the factory’s medical centre. She was then taken to a clinic in Konabari and subsequently transferred to the National Heart Foundation Hospital in Dhaka after her condition deteriorated. She died later that day.

Workers allege that delays and negligence by factory authorities in

responding to her illness contributed to her death. They have demanded an independent investigation.

The demonstrations disrupted production at the factory. Management claimed that employees repeatedly stopped work and refused to resume production between June 28 and June 30. On July 1, workers arriving for their shifts found a notice announcing the indefinite closure of the factory and branding the protests as an “illegal strike.”

Gazipur Industrial Police said they are investigating the allegations, including whether there was negligence or delay in providing medical treatment.

Campbell’s Soups factory workers continue industrial action for higher pay

About 100 Australian Manufacturing Workers Union members from the Lemnos Campbell’s Soups factory at Shepparton, Victoria are maintaining industrial action that began on May 7 with a 24-hour strike to protest Arnott’s Group’s sub-inflation pay offer and plans to slash jobs. The company claimed that rolling stoppages at the factory had led to the wastage of 30 tonnes of raw food.

The Arnott’s Group, which owns Campbell’s Soups, has rejected the union’s call for an 18 percent pay increase over the next three years and a fifth week of annual leave. The company has offered a sub-inflation pay rise of just 7.7 percent and demanded that workers agree to lift the current 15 percent cap on employing casual labour.

The current average consumer prices index rate for Australia is 4.6 percent, meaning workers would need a 13.8 percent pay increase over three years just to keep pace with inflation. The union said negotiations are at a standstill with management refusing to budge from its original pay offer.

Australian Capital Territory scientists begin industrial action

Forensic scientists, medical physicists, pharmacists and engineers, represented by Professionals Australia (PA), began a campaign of industrial action on Monday in opposition to the Australian Capital Territory’s pay offer capped at annual increases of 3 percent, delayed improvements to superannuation and no backpay, in new enterprise agreements. Action includes bans on correspondence, electronic messaging, phone calls, out-of-hours work and external meetings.

As well as an improved pay offer above the territory’s current inflation rate of 4.2 percent, forensic scientists from the ACT Government’s Analytical Laboratory are demanding a hazard allowance in line with other frontline government workers such as police, paramedics and firefighters. PA said these workers are regularly exposed to dangerous chemical spills at illegal laboratories, or at factory fire sites being tested for accelerants and propellants. The union said the capital territory Labor government is ignoring their demands.

DXC Technology workers reject latest pay offer

Some 74 percent of over 500 IT specialists employed by IT contractor DXC Technology across Australia voted last week to reject the

company’s latest pay offer. The workers are members of Professionals Australia (PA) and the Australian Services Union who said the deal had no cost-of-living increase, no backpay, and standby rates going backwards by thousands of dollars for some workers. PA said that a one-off \$1,000 payment offer was never going to make up for that loss.

DXC’s software developers, infrastructure specialists and security analysts who provide software design and support for the Commonwealth Bank, Westpac, ANZ and major government agencies began industrial action on May 8 with a five-day strike, followed by a 74-hour strike on May 23 and 24-hour strike on April 2. The workers have not had a pay increase for five years. PA said bargaining will continue until there is an agreement worth signing.

The US-based company’s 5,000 Australian employees generated revenues of \$2.35 billion during 2023–24. DXC has admitted underpaying workers since 2017.

Peabody extends Wambo mine lockout of washery workers

Management at the Peabody Energy-managed Wambo mine in the Hunter region, north of Sydney has indefinitely extended its two-week lockout of 19 coal washery workers which should have expired on June 1. The lockout, which is legal under Australia’s industrial relations law, was in response to the Mining and Energy Union members’ industrial action which started on May 1 with a series of work stoppages and low-level work bans.

Employed under Glencore’s United Wambo Joint Venture, the washery workers are in dispute with Peabody over its proposed enterprise agreement which includes below inflation annual pay increases of 2.5 percent and changes to bonus arrangements that would leave them worse off.

Peabody is also refusing to backdate any wage increase and insists workers go another full year before seeing further increases. It also wants to move to fortnightly pay and reduce crib breaks.

In a separate dispute, MEU members at three Glencore open-cut coal mines in the Hunter Region voted overwhelmingly in three separate ballots on June 17 to approve future industrial action. The mines affected are Ravensworth, Mangoola and Wambo.

Workers oppose the company’s plan to introduce three tiers in new enterprise agreements. The lowest tier has no bonus, with progression controlled by management rather than based on time or experience. The MEU claimed the new lower tiers would lock in cheaper labour-hire rates that could reduce current annual wages by 24 percent, or around \$38,000 per year.



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