Workers Struggles: Asia and Australia

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India: Haryana power workers call off planned three-day strike

A planned three-day statewide strike by Haryana electricity employees and engineers was called off at the eleventh hour after talks with Energy Minister Anil Vij. The strike had been scheduled for August 11–13 by a joint front of four major unions after earlier negotiations at Shakti Bhawan in Panchkula failed.

Workers opposed a proposed parallel private electricity distribution licence in Gurugram and Nuh, the creation of a separate agricultural power distribution company and the rollout of smart meters. They also raised demands including regularisation of contract workers, equal pay for equal work, risk allowances and changes to the ex-gratia employment scheme.

Vij claimed the Energy Department opposed the parallel licence proposal, no concrete action had been taken to establish a separate agricultural distributor, and stakeholders would be consulted before further decisions. He also promised reviews of risk allowances, wage parity for some temporary employees and other service conditions.

Farmers' organisations and village councils in districts including Sonipat, Rohtak and Jhajjar had supported the threatened strike and opposed the electricity-sector changes as steps towards privatisation.

Gurugram municipal workers extend strike

Nearly 2,800 sanitation workers employed by the Municipal Corporation of Gurugram remained on strike this week and extended their action until August 15. The decision was taken at a state-level convention of the Municipal Employees Union, Haryana, and the Fire Department Employees Union in Rohtak.

Workers are demanding regularisation of sanitation and sewer workers, fire department drivers and firefighters; an end to outsourcing of sanitation and sewerage work; recruitment to vacant posts; and restoration of the old pension scheme. They are also seeking the reinstatement of 3,480 retrenched workers in Gurugram, a 5,000-rupee ($US52) risk allowance for sanitation workers, risk and uniform allowances for fire personnel, and 5 million rupees in assistance plus a permanent job for a dependent of any employee killed in the line of duty.

The unions say these issues were covered by an agreement reached with the Haryana government on May 13 but have not been implemented.

Assam National Institute of Technology workers stage hunger strike

Fifty-four muster-roll workers at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Silchar in Assam's Cachar district began a protest hunger strike demanding regularisation of their employment. The protest outside the institute's main administrative office entered its third day on August 12. The NIT Workers' Union says the employees want permanent status and the benefits provided to regular staff in line with a Gauhati High Court order.

According to the union, 122 muster-roll workers have been employed at the institute but only 20 have so far been regularised, while some of the remaining employees have worked there since as early as 1993.

New Delhi sanitation workers protest sewer and septic-tank deaths

Hundreds of sanitation workers, relatives of workers killed in sewers and septic tanks, and supporters demonstrated at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on August 4 under the banner of the Safai Karmachari Andolan.

The protesters demanded an end to manual entry into sewers and septic tanks, full disclosure of the death toll, enforcement of existing safety laws, mechanisation of sanitation work, compensation and rehabilitation for bereaved families, and a time-bound national plan to prevent further deaths.

The organisation says 593 workers died while cleaning sewers and septic tanks between January 2021 and July 2026, compared with 332 deaths acknowledged by the central government over roughly the same period. India's 2013 law prohibits the employment of manual scavengers and hazardous sewer and septic-tank cleaning without prescribed safeguards, but workers and rights groups say dangerous manual cleaning continues.

Tamil Nadu Exide contract workers protest for wage increase

Contract workers at Exide's battery manufacturing plant in Sevaganapalli village near Hosur, Tamil Nadu, protested at the factory gates on August 3 demanding a wage increase. The plant employs more than 700 permanent workers and nearly 2,000 contract workers.

Protesters said permanent employees had recently received a salary revision while they continued to earn only 590 rupees a day, or about 14,000–15,000 rupees a month. The protesting workers refused to enter the plant, disrupting operations and stalling production, after which management invited worker representatives to talks.

Bangladesh: Garment workers demand new wage board

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Garment workers and trade union representatives rallied outside the National Press Club in Dhaka on August 11, demanding the immediate formation of a new wage board for the country's garment industry. The protest was organised by the Asia Floor Wage Alliance Bangladesh Committee.

Workers said the current minimum monthly wage of 12,500 taka ($US101) is inadequate amid rising prices for food, housing, transport, utilities, healthcare and other necessities, forcing many workers to rely on overtime to cover basic household expenses. They demanded that the government establish a new wage board and warned of stronger protests if it failed to act. The 12,500-taka minimum wage was established in late 2023, following mass protests by garment workers over poverty-level pay.

Former Grameenphone employees demand settlement of long-running dues dispute

Former Grameenphone employees protested outside the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority office in Agargaon, Dhaka on August 9 and presented a memo demanding settlement of a dispute over profit-sharing payments and penalties that has continued for about 16 years.

The Grameenphone 5 Percent Delayed Dues Recovery Unity Council says around 4,000 former workers are affected and claims that unpaid amounts connected with the Workers' Profit Participation Fund for 2010–2012, together with penalties for delayed payment, have grown to about 331.47 billion taka. The former employees want payment of the disputed dues, withdrawal of cases against protesters and government intervention to secure a negotiated settlement.

Earlier actions were held at the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission and National Board of Revenue. Grameenphone disputes the workers' claims, says most former employees received their lawful entitlements and maintains that the remaining issues are before the courts.

Sri Lanka: Grama Niladhari officers hold two-day sick-leave strike

Thousands of Grama Niladhari officers across Sri Lanka staged a two-day sick-leave strike on August 10 and 11 over long-standing demands concerning travel allowances and service conditions. The Grama Niladhari Trade Union Alliance said the monthly travel allowance of 600 rupees ($US1.80) has not been increased for eight years, despite rising fuel and transport costs. Cabinet approval was granted in 2024 to replace it with an allowance equivalent to the cost of 20 litres of fuel, but the measure has not been implemented. The unions also want resolution of long-running issues surrounding the service minute, salaries and seniority. Officers suspended most routine administrative duties during the action while continuing to respond to deaths and major disasters on humanitarian grounds.

Australia: Striking allied health professionals rally outside Melbourne hospital

Around 1,500 allied health professionals from Victoria's public hospitals rallied outside Melbourne's Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre on August 11, in their second statewide strike this year.

The workers—including radiographers, physiotherapists, podiatrists, pharmacists, speech pathologists, social workers and occupational therapists—are members of the Victorian Allied Health Professionals Association (VAHPA). They are seeking a 38.18 percent wage increase over four years, along with improvements to working conditions. The state Labor government has refused to meet their demands after 10 months of negotiations.

Workers from major Melbourne hospitals, including Monash, Royal Melbourne, St Vincent's, Dandenong, Western and Northern hospitals, joined the rally, along with members from regional centres including Ballarat, Stawell, Horsham and Warragul. The action followed a joint stop-work by VAHPA and the Medical Scientists Association of Victoria on June 16, when health workers marched on state parliament.

The rally demonstrated widespread anger over low wages, staff shortages and deteriorating working conditions across Victoria's public health system. Hundreds of workers carried homemade placards and banners expressing their demands and opposition to the government's refusal to improve pay and conditions. The strong turnout underscored the determination among allied health professionals to fight for decent wages and staffing levels after years of increasing workloads and pressure.

University of Sydney staff to strike for 24 hours

Academic and professional staff at the University of Sydney (USYD) are planning to hold a 24-hour strike on Wednesday September 2, after National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members voted for the action at a union meeting on Monday.

In addition to real wage rises, workers are seeking improved protections for academic freedom, stronger safeguards around organisational change, greater job security, clearer rules governing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and research, and better conditions for teaching associates and other insecure employees.

The staff have begun industrial action after more than four months of enterprise bargaining, in which NTEU Branch President Peter Chen said, "management have refused the vast majority of members' claims on AI, disability and freedom of expression."

Chen said the university was proposing "new change management clauses which would significantly degrade job security," as well as "new exploitative teaching-only positions involving unsustainable hours of face-to-face teaching."

Monday's meeting was supposed to be a two-hour stop-work, which NTEU members voted for on July 21, but this did not proceed. Chen told campus newspaper *Honi Soit* this was because the "paperwork was not submitted."

BHP Port Hedland mining workers hold two-day strike

Workers at BHP's Port Hedland iron ore export operations carried out a two-day strike on August 8–9. The action had been planned as a 24-hour ship-loading ban on Saturday, then a full strike only on Sunday. But after management threatened to withhold the entire pay of those carrying out the ban, the workers walked off the job.

Around 150 members of the Electrical Trades Union, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and Australian Workers Union participated in the strike across the two days. The action took place in the face of the

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company’s brazen recruitment of strikebreakers and its declaration that managers would cover the duties of striking workers.

The unions say workers are seeking improved base wages, stronger career progression, fair classifications and better working conditions. They accuse BHP of delaying negotiations and attempting to push through an agreement that fails to reflect the company’s enormous profitability or the demanding conditions faced by workers in remote Western Australia.

BHP says it has offered a 16 percent wage increase under a four-year agreement together with improved allowances and a simplified pay structure.

Outsourced water workers strike in Victoria

Outsourced workers at Coliban Water walked off the job for 24 hours on Monday. The government-owned corporation provides water and sewage services to Bendigo and other parts of North-Central Victoria. The water maintenance workforce is outsourced to contractor Service Stream, which posted a $52.8 million profit last year, according to the Australian Services Union (ASU).

The workers walked off the job and rallied outside Bendigo Town Hall. They say they have not had a pay rise in more than two years and are paid significantly less than workers doing the same job at other government-owned regional water authorities.

The ASU said that after several months of enterprise bargaining negotiations, Service Stream has still not made a “serious” pay offer.

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