Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

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India: Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh protests over wages, pensions and labour-code provisions

Members of the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, the trade union federation affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, demonstrated at hundreds of district headquarters across India on August 17 as part of a nationwide protest over wages, pensions and social security.

Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh called for a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 rupees for unskilled workers, restoration of the Old Pension Scheme, a minimum pension of 7,500 rupees under the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995, higher wage ceilings for provident-fund and state-insurance coverage, improved payments for anganwadi and Accredited Social Health Activist workers, and equal pay and job security for contract workers.

The union federation also demanded changes to provisions of the government's Industrial Relations Code and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code and warned of further action if the demands are ignored.

Odisha app-based drivers strike over fares and social security

Thousands of app-based cab and motorcycle-taxi drivers in Bhubaneswar began an indefinite strike on August 17, disrupting passenger services across the city. Drivers working through Uber, Ola, Rapido and other platforms demanded higher fares to cover rising fuel and maintenance costs, lower platform charges, compensation for waiting time and cancellations, higher night fares and social-security protections.

The action continued into August 19, when clashes occurred between protesters and police; local reports said workers and police were injured and dozens of protesters were arrested.

Gujarat embroidery workers call for one day off a week

Around 500 migrant textile and embroidery workers protested in Amroli, Surat, Gujarat, on August 16, demanding a day off each week. The protest escalated when police moved to disperse the gathering. The police, who alleged that stones were thrown and a constable injured, baton-charged and laid criminal charges against workers involved in the action. Worker representatives subsequently submitted their demand to officials, who said it would be raised with the Labour Department.

Mumbai public transport workers begin indefinite action

Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) workers began fresh indefinite industrial action on August 18 over long-pending wage settlements, retirement dues and the financial crisis facing the public transport operator. The BEST Workers' Union wants implementation of wage settlements for 2016–21 and 2021–26, payment of retirement and gratuity dues, and a permanent financial commitment from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation.

The action follows a three-day strike in June which ended after the Maharashtra government offered interim monthly increases of 3,000 rupees ($US31.30) for permanent workers and 2,000 rupees for wet-lease workers, together with assurances over gratuity payments. Workers want a comprehensive settlement rather than further temporary measures.

Tamil Nadu loading workers' strike disrupts ration-supply movement

Loading and unloading workers at Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation warehouses began an indefinite strike in mid-August, disrupting the movement of essential commodities to ration shops. Workers are demanding a long-pending wage revision, inclusion of their names in official attendance registers and identification cards recognising their service and seniority.

Strikes were reported at warehouses in Madurai district, including at Usilampatti and Vadipatti, and Gummidipoondi near Chennai. Workers said assurances made during earlier negotiations had not been implemented.

Tamil Nadu liquor-shop workers protest for permanent jobs and timescale pay

Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) workers protested

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in Theni district in mid-August demanding permanent employment, timescale pay, regular wage increases and benefits comparable with other government employees. The action is part of a long-running campaign by TASMAC employees, many of whom have remained on insecure employment arrangements for more than two decades.

The state government has announced proposals to regularise roughly 23,000 retail and depot workers, but unions continue to demand concrete implementation and improved pay and social benefits.

Karur transport workers protest over overtime and working hours

State transport workers protested outside a government transport corporation depot in Karur on August 19 over working hours and management practices. They demanded double wages for overtime, enforcement of an eight-hour working day and adequate diesel stocks at depots. Workers said excessive hours and shortages were worsening working conditions and disrupting normal operations.

Tamil Nadu garment workers demonstrate against factory closure

More than 400 workers at Triumph International's lingerie factory near Maraimalai Nagar, outside Chennai, staged a sit-in on August 18 against the planned closure of the plant on September 25. The factory employs more than 650 workers. Management, which cited losses for the plant shutdown, proposed compensation of 6,000 rupees for each year of service.

Workers, many of whom have six to ten years or more at the plant, rejected the offer as inadequate and demanded higher compensation and intervention by the district administration and Labour Department to protect their livelihoods.

Delhi sanitation workers protest killing of municipal worker

Sanitation workers in Delhi protested after 27-year-old contract municipal worker Anil was fatally stabbed while on duty in Kalyanpuri on August 16. Colleagues gathered at Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital, while a sanitation workers' union announced a halt to garbage collection by auto-tipper vehicles. Piles of uncollected waste are accumulating in residential areas, sparking fears of disease outbreaks and worsening public health conditions.

Workers are calling for the arrest and prosecution of those responsible, compensation of 10 million rupees for Anil's family, a permanent government job for a dependent and stronger protection for sanitation workers. Police said they were investigating whether Anil had been attacked because of mistaken identity.

Haryana sanitation and municipal workers continue statewide strike

Sanitation, sewerage and other municipal workers across Haryana continued a statewide strike into its second week on August 19, disrupting garbage collection and civic services in Gurgaon, Panchkula and other centres.

Workers locked municipal offices, held demonstrations and observed August 18 as "Betrayal Day," accusing the Bharatiya Janata Party-led state government of failing to implement a 17-point agreement reached on May 13.

Their demands include permanent jobs for contract sanitation, sewerage, fire-service and other municipal workers, an end to outsourcing, recruitment to vacant posts, implementation of minimum wages, reinstatement of retrenched workers and payment of risk allowances. Strikers also want written orders implementing the May agreement and warned of further escalation.

Bangladesh: Ettadee Jeans workers block road to demand unpaid wages

Ettadee Jeans workers in Chattogram blocked the Oxygen-Muradpur road near Aturar Depot on August 19, demanding four months of unpaid wages and allowances. The protest came amid uncertainty over a proposed change of plant ownership.

An August 13 company notice said the current owner would bring a prospective new owner to the factory between August 20 and 22 for talks with worker representatives, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and government officials.

The notice said workers would retain their original employment dates under a new owner, or that the current owner would settle legally required dues if the arrangement failed. Workers said it provided no firm guarantee that their arrears would be paid promptly and warned of stronger action if the money remained unpaid.

Ashulia garment workers demand unpaid wages and service benefits

More than 2,000 laid-off workers from InGenitex BD Limited and InGenitex Active Limited demonstrated in Ashulia on August 18, demanding unpaid wages, service benefits and other outstanding entitlements. Organised by the National Garments Workers Unity, workers gathered at Bogabari bus stand, marched through the industrial area and rallied at Baipail intersection.

Management closed the two factories closed in April but failed to pay workers for the Eid holidays. Although bonuses and 25 percent of one month's outstanding wages were later paid, workers say substantial salary and service-benefit arrears remain, with some employees owed five or six months' wages.

Protesters said two previous settlement agreements had not been implemented and gave the authorities 72 hours to act, warning that they would besiege Labour Ministry offices if payment was not made.

Tea-garden workers intensify campaign for a 500-taka daily wage

Tea-garden workers across Bangladesh have intensified protests demanding a minimum daily wage of 500 taka ($US4.09), a new wage structure, land ownership rights and elections for the Tea Workers' Union. Workers have rejected a recently gazetted 5 percent increase that

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increased the daily wage to 187 taka, saying it is far below what is required to meet rising food, housing, education and medical costs.

Actions since late July have included work stoppages, rallies, processions, human chains and a highway blockade in Sylhet and Moulvibazar. The government has said the statutory wage board will review tea workers' minimum wage in August, while workers have warned of wider action if their demands are not met.

Sri Lanka: Wildlife veterinarians maintain work-to-rule action

Wildlife veterinarians in Sri Lanka are continuing work-to-rule industrial action begun on July 1 to protest pay, staffing and working conditions. Members of the Wildlife and Zoo Veterinarians Association are restricting work to normal weekday hours. They want a risk allowance, additional payments for overtime and extended service, proper arrangements for weekend and holiday work, additional veterinary posts and the resolution of promotion and grading issues.

The dispute has highlighted severe staffing shortages, with recent reports indicating that only about 15 veterinarians were serving in the field, with two more at headquarters. The union says the action will continue until the government provides an acceptable settlement.

Public sector doctors strike in Victoria

More than 1,000 doctors across nine Melbourne hospitals and health services carried out a four-hour strike on Thursday, as part of an enterprise bargaining dispute with the state Labor government. It was the first stoppage by Victorian public sector doctors in 20 years.

The striking doctors rallied in the inner-city suburb of Parkville, demanding a 30 percent pay rise over four years, an end to unpaid overtime, enforceable doctor to patient ratios, caps on shift lengths and consecutive night shifts, as well as improved parental leave. Decades of underfunding and understaffing have left regularly doctors working shifts of 12 to 16 hours, often without adequate breaks.

Thursday's stoppage was originally planned for August 13 but postponed at the eleventh hour by the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF), purportedly after a legal threat by the state government.

ASMOF says the government has still not made a pay rise offer, despite more than a year of bargaining. Further action has not yet been officially notified, but workers at the Parkville rally endorsed a 24-hour statewide strike on September 15.

Arnott's workers reject meagre company offer

Workers at the Arnott's biscuit factory in Adelaide, South Australia, have resoundingly rejected the latest pay offer from the company, a meagre $1,000 sign-on bonus on top of the previously rejected offer of a 9.5 percent pay rise over two years.

More than 90 percent of UWU members at the facility voted down the proposed deal and called for further strike action. On August 4, around 160 workers at the site stopped work for 24 hours, their first strike in more than three decades.

The offer falls far short of what workers need to keep up with the soaring cost of living, let alone make up for previous real-wage cuts. The last union-brokered enterprise agreement contained annual pay increases of just 2.5 percent over the past four years, during which inflation rose as high 7.8 percent.

One worker said, "The cost of living in Adelaide has increased significantly, while our pay has not kept up. Higher costs for groceries, childcare, utilities and fuel have made it harder to afford everyday expenses."

The United Workers Union (UWU) has not publicly advanced a concrete wage claim, merely calling on the company to "return to the bargaining table with a fair pay offer."

Brisbane CityCat ferry workers continue industrial action

Brisbane CityCat ferry crews are carrying out a series of two-hour stoppages, as part of their ongoing dispute with RiverCity Ferries, a subsidiary of Kelsian Group.

Members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) walked off the job from 9–11 a.m. and 4–6 p.m. yesterday, with further stoppages planned for various times on Saturday, Monday and Tuesday. This follows three previous two-hour stoppages since the action began on July 31.

Workers say the dispute centres on wages, fatigue management and work-life balance. The unions accuse RiverCity Ferries of refusing to improve on its below-inflation wage increases, while senior executives have received substantial salary increases. The company has also failed to improve rostering arrangements, contributing to fatigue and long working hours.

Pacific National train crews continue industrial action

Train crews employed by freight operator Pacific National have expanded industrial action after enterprise bargaining negotiations failed to resolve disputes over rostering, safety and wages. Members of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) on Wednesday began a 7-day overtime ban, as well as a ban on driving any locomotive that does not display an RTBU campaign sticker.

The dispute centres on Pacific National's rostering practices, which allow management to alter shift start times to respond to operational disruptions. The union argues these arrangements undermine work-life balance, contribute to fatigue and create unnecessary safety risks. Workers are also seeking more weekends off, stronger disciplinary protections, tighter controls on unsafe driving practices and annual wage increases of 5 percent.

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