

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: Bank unions plan nationwide strike action

The United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), representing seven major bank employee and officer unions, has called a one-day national strike for September 11, followed by a three-day walkout from September 28 to 30 and an indefinite strike from October 26 if its demands remain unresolved.

The unions want immediate implementation of a five-day banking week, which was agreed with the Indian Banks' Association in the March 2024 industry settlement but still requires government approval.

UFBU is also opposing a revised performance-linked incentive scheme for senior officers, which it says creates discriminatory differences between officer grades, and is pressing other outstanding pension and service demands.

Chennai sanitation workers continue protest

Around 80 sanitation workers organised by Uzhaippor Urimai Iyakkam continued protests at the Tondiarpet zonal office in Chennai on August 23, the fourth consecutive day of action.

Workers want permanent jobs, an increase in the daily wage to 832 rupees (\$US8.72), paid weekly leave, maternity benefits and basic workplace facilities. They also demanded the reinstatement of 13 workers excluded from a group of 1,400 whom the Greater Chennai Corporation had previously agreed to take back.

Police detained about 80 protesters on August 23 before releasing them without charges. Corporation officials said the 13 workers would be reinstated, but the broader demands remained unresolved.

Punjab National Health Mission workers continue strike

National Health Mission (NHM) employees in Punjab remained on strike on August 24 for the twelfth consecutive day. Organised by the NHM Employees Union Punjab, workers are demanding permanent employment for contract staff, equal pay for equal work, release of gratuity payments and an increase in the retirement age limit.

In Jalandhar, employees protested outside the Civil Surgeon's Office,

accusing the Aam Aadmi Party government of reneging on promises made to workers who have served under the health program for 15 to 20 years. A government meeting scheduled for August 24 was postponed to August 28, and the union said the strike would continue until then.

Mumbai autorickshaw drivers begin three-day strike over Marathi rule

A section of Mumbai autorickshaw drivers began a three-day strike on August 24 against a Maharashtra government requirement that auto, taxi and cab drivers demonstrate a working knowledge of Marathi. Drivers blocked Kandivli Link Road and said the rule particularly threatened older workers with little formal education.

Protesters said they were willing to learn basic Marathi but opposed penalties of 15,000 to 20,000 rupees (\$US157–\$209) and possible action against licences before workers had been given adequate time and assistance to comply.

Haryana sanitation workers continue statewide strike

Sanitation, sewerage and fire-service workers across Haryana continued their statewide strike into its 21st day on August 26. Roughly 14,000 contractual municipal and fire-service workers have been involved in the action, which has severely disrupted garbage collection in cities including Gurgaon, Hisar, Karnal and Bhiwani.

The strikers want permanent jobs, abolition of contract labour in sanitation and sewerage, recruitment to vacant posts and implementation of agreed wage and service benefits.

The unions accuse the Bharatiya Janata Party-led state government of failing to issue orders implementing a 17-point agreement reached on May 13. Workers have staged marches, demonstrations and effigy burnings and warned that the action would continue and intensify unless the agreement is implemented.

Pakistan: Faisalabad waste workers protest unpaid wages

Suthra Punjab Agency sanitation workers and loader-rickshaw drivers protested at the District Council Chowk in Faisalabad on August 24 over unpaid wages and other dues.

The Pakistan Labour Qaumi Movement said loader-rickshaw drivers are

owed one month and 16 days of wages, while sanitation workers and drivers had not received Eidul Azha bonuses and allowances.

Organisers said social-security contributions for thousands of sanitation workers in Faisalabad City, Saddar and Tandlianwala had also not been deposited, affecting access to medical treatment for workers and their families. They demanded immediate payment of wages, bonuses and allowances and warned of a sit-in protest outside the commissioner's office on September 7 if the claims were not settled.

Bangladesh: Educators demand inclusion in Monthly Pay Order scheme

Teachers and educational institutions employees excluded from Bangladesh's Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme held a day-long sit-in and human chain at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka on August 24.

Organised by the Bangladesh Non-MPO Teachers and Employees Council, the protesters demanded simultaneous MPO registration for all eligible institutions, benefits calculated from teachers' dates of appointment and assistance for teachers who have worked for years without government salaries and allowances.

The previous interim government had shortlisted 1,719 institutions for MPO registration, but final approval is still pending. The current education minister has said shortlisted and new applications will be reviewed during the 2026–27 fiscal year, subject to merit and budget allocations. Organisers warned of broader protests if the government does not implement its commitments.

Outsourced public-sector workers demand permanent jobs

Outsourced public-sector workers formed a human chain outside the National Museum at Shahbagh in Dhaka on August 22 demanding permanent employment, higher wages and an end to unequal treatment compared with directly employed government workers.

The Bangladesh Outsourcing Employees Welfare Council has seven demands, including a national pay scale for daily-wage and project-based workers, a minimum monthly wage of 30,000 taka (\$US244), reinstatement of dismissed workers, payment of arrears and abolition of the contractor system.

Organisers said around 600,000 outsourced employees work in public institutions and claimed the contracting system wastes 6.6 billion taka in public funds. A protest procession followed the human chain.

Sri Lanka: Public health inspectors intensify industrial action

Public health inspectors across Sri Lanka intensified industrial action on August 24 by suspending the submission of administrative reports and updates to official data systems. The action followed a nationwide sick-leave protest on August 21 over the transfer of public health inspector B.H. Meegasdeniya from the Bandaranaike International Airport Health Office.

The Public Health Inspectors Association alleges Meegasdeniya was transferred after raising concerns about corruption and irregularities at the airport office and is demanding that the transfer be cancelled and

independently investigated. The association is also opposing proposed reductions to the approved number of inspectors at the Colombo Port Health Office and the airport health office and says the action will continue until the issues are resolved.

Newcastle Coal terminal workers take industrial action

Waterfront and electrical workers at Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG), Kooragang Island, are taking protected industrial action for the first time since the terminal was built in 2010.

The workers operate machinery to load bulk cargo ships for coalminers BHP, Yancoal, Whitehaven, Peabody and Banpu, which jointly own the company.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), which, along with the Electrical Trades Union (ETU), covers the around 40 workers involved, say the workforce has been working under the same enterprise agreement throughout its 16-year existence.

The workers are seeking a pay rise in line with the cost of living, as well as fairer rostering arrangements, fairer recognition when working public holidays and various other improvements to their working conditions. The MUA says workers at NCIG are paid less than workers performing similar roles at nearby operations.

The industrial action follows an attempt by the company to push through an enterprise agreement without union approval, which was voted down by 98 percent of the workforce.

Canberra sonographers strike against Labor government's real wage cuts

Public sector sonographers at The Canberra Hospital and North Canberra Hospital walked off the job Monday, in what they say will be the first of an indefinite series of weekly strikes until the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Labor government makes an acceptable pay offer.

The government has offered a real-wage cutting 9 percent nominal pay rise over three years, with a meagre one-off payment of \$600 if inflation in the territory reaches 3.5 percent or \$1,000 if the consumer price index reaches 4 percent.

The medical professionals, covered by the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) and Health Services Union (HSU), are seeking an immediate 15 percent pay rise. In addition to the weekly strikes, the workers are carrying out other industrial action, including a ban on data entry and answering phones.

Scope disability support workers begin industrial action

Disability support workers at Scope Disability Services began protected industrial action on Monday with various limited work bans. On Wednesday, workers at the company's Supported Independent Living sites in the Melbourne suburbs of Kew and Hawthorn walked off the job for two hours, holding a rally in Kew.

The workers are covered by the Health and Community Services Union. They are seeking an improved pay offer and demanding that the company

reverse its decision to sell the buses currently used to provide accessible transport to residents with complex mobility, communication, behavioural, or support needs.

The industrial action had been set to begin in the first week of August, but was called off at the eleventh hour after the company sought intervention from the Fair Work Commission, which ordered that the action would be considered unprotected if it went ahead.

FedEx workers hold two-hour strikes around Australia

FedEx transport workers stopped work for two hours at the company's sites around the country on Friday, as part of an enterprise bargaining dispute. Over 1,200 workers covered by the Transport Workers Union (TWU) voted in a protected action ballot earlier this month, with almost 90 percent voting in favour of strike action.

The union says workers are seeking "fair pay and job security" from "a company that had \$US88 billion in revenue last year." While the TWU has not outlined a more specific wage claim in relation to FedEx, public statements by the union indicate that it is seeking nominal annual pay increases of around 4 percent at several major transport companies, barely higher than official inflation, and far short of what is needed to keep up with the rising cost of living and recoup previous losses.

University of Melbourne staff strike over pay and conditions

Hundreds of University of Melbourne staff stopped work for five hours on Thursday, as part of an enterprise bargaining dispute. The staff, who rallied on campus together with students, said they were taking the protected industrial action because the university had refused to meet key bargaining demands, including paid sick leave for casuals and safer workloads for academic staff.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), which covers the striking staff, is demanding a 20 percent wage increase, academic control of workloads, a four-day work week with no loss of pay and restrictions on insecure work.



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