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: Haryana sanitation and fire workers continue statewide strike

More than 14,000 contract sanitation and fire workers across Haryana have been on strike since August 6, disrupting garbage collection and other civic services. The Nagar Palika Karamchari Sangh and Fire Department Employees Union accuse the state government of failing to implement a 17-point agreement reached on May 13.

The strikers want regularisation of about 13,000 contract municipal workers and 1,175 fire personnel, an end to private outsourcing, reinstatement of 3,480 retrenched sanitation workers in Gurgaon, a 5,000-rupee ($US52) monthly risk allowance, medical and uniform benefits, revised ex-gratia provisions and retirement gratuity. The strike has involved demonstrations and clashes with police in several districts and, after repeated extensions, is still ongoing.

Hingna Mahindra trainee workers strike for permanent jobs

More than 250 trainee workers, including women, at Mahindra & Mahindra's tractor plant in Hingna, Nagpur, struck on August 25, partially disrupting production and blocking access to the factory for around three hours. The trainees said they perform the same work as permanent employees but receive lower wages and lack long-term job security.

The workers want regularisation, pay parity and employment benefits, including provident fund and Employees' State Insurance coverage. The protest ended after talks with management, but worker representatives said further action would follow if the company failed to provide a written assurance.

Jammu and Kashmir medical interns strike over low stipends

Medical and dental interns across government colleges in Jammu and Kashmir began an indefinite strike on August 31, demanding an increase in their monthly stipend from 12,300 rupees ($US130) to 30,000 rupees. The stipend, equivalent to about 400 rupees a day, has remained unchanged for nearly seven years even though interns perform emergency, night and rural duties.

Workers pointed to much higher stipends in other Indian states and demanded a written order rather than another verbal assurance. A government committee established in 2023 had recommended a substantial increase, but no revision has been implemented.

West Bengal court employees strike for 48 hours

Court employees across West Bengal struck for 48 hours on August 24 and 25 over severe staff shortages, unfilled vacancies, inadequate infrastructure and growing workloads.

The action was called by the West Bengal Court Employees Association and other employee organisations. In Darjeeling district, for example, workers said only around 50 employees were serving against approximately 135 sanctioned posts and that no recruitment had taken place since 2019 despite retirements. Employees demanded prompt recruitment and improvements to court staffing and infrastructure.

Punjab thermal plant outsourced workers demand direct employment

Around 1,800 outsourced workers at the state-owned Guru Hargobind Thermal Plant at Lehra Mohabbat, Bathinda district, have been involved in prolonged strike and protest action demanding direct employment by the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited rather than through private contractors.

Workers blocked the Bathinda–Zirakpur highway outside the plant on August 24 and held talks with authorities the following day, complaining that earlier assurances from management had not been implemented. The dispute contributed to major disruption at the 920-megawatt plant, where three of four generating units were non-operational for about two weeks, although management said technical problems were also responsible.

Bangladesh: Moulvibazar tea workers demand 500-taka daily wage

More than 100 workers at the Dakhsingul Tea Garden in Barlekha, Moulvibazar, stopped work for about 90 minutes on August 30 and held a march, human chain and rally demanding a daily wage of 500 taka ($US4.07). They rejected a recently announced 5 percent wage increase and demanded land rights and a free and fair election for the Bangladesh

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Tea Workers Union without Labour Department interference.

Workers said low wages were making it increasingly difficult to pay for food, healthcare and children's education, while the garden also lacked adequate medicines and a doctor.

Narsingdi fertilizer workers protest unpaid wages and dismissals

Around 200 workers and employees from the bagging section of the Ghorashal-Palash Fertilizer Factory in Narsingdi protested on September 1, demanding outstanding wages, fair pay and the reinstatement of long-serving workers dismissed without notice.

Workers alleged that contractor Messrs Zahirul Islam had previously left large wage arrears and, after securing the contract again, excluded employees who had worked at the factory for decades. They also opposed the reported hiring of replacement workers at 300 taka ($US2.44) a day, compared with the 500 taka previously paid. The protesters demanded an impartial investigation, immediate payment of arrears and reinstatement without discrimination.

Sri Lankan development officers protest nationwide over salaries

Development officers in Sri Lanka's state and provincial public services held nationwide protests on August 31 over longstanding salary grievances. The State and Provincial Development Officers Trade Unions Alliance demanded a wage increase reflecting higher living and fuel costs, calling on the government to release a Cabinet paper which informed the parliament in June that it was preparing to address the issue. Union representatives said previous salary increases were only nominal and warned that continued inaction would lead to further industrial action.

Brisbane ferry workers hold 24-hour strike

CityCat and KittyCat ferry crews in Brisbane began a 24-hour strike at 4 a.m. this morning, after RiverCity Ferries (RCF) put to the vote a proposed enterprise agreement that the unions say is worse than the one workers almost unanimously rejected earlier this year.

After several weeks of sporadic two- and four-hour stoppages, the strike is timed to coincide with the city's Riverfire event, part of the Brisbane Festival, which involves military flyovers and fireworks.

The Australian Maritime Officers Union (AMOU) and Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) bureaucracy met with the company yesterday in an eleventh hour attempt to head off the strike, but said RCF refused to "accept our offer of settlement."

According to the AMOU, the company's latest offer would increase the first-year pay rise from 3.5 percent to 4.75 percent, but eliminate backpay, meaning the difference would be, at most, around $360 over the whole year, and less if the deal is not approved immediately.

The proposed agreement would also cut overtime pay, by averaging ordinary hours of work across the whole roster cycle and introduce a lower pay tier for newly hired casuals.

In addition to real pay rises and the defence of their existing conditions, workers are seeking a 12-hour break between shifts to address fatigue, proper protections for heat and wet weather and improved paid parental leave provisions.

Ferry workers strike in Sydney over wages

Sydney Ferries workers employed by Transdev stopped work for five hours on Wednesday, opposing a sub-inflationary pay rise offer from the company. They are seeking a 5 percent pay rise this year, and guaranteed annual increases in line with inflation in the years that follow.

The workers, covered by the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), walked off the job and held a mass meeting at Circular Quay. The action impacted ferry services to Manly, Parramatta and other destinations. After the stoppage ended at 2pm, workers turned off Opal fare-collection machines for the remainder of the day, as another part of the industrial action.

The MUA said further industrial action could follow if Transdev does not make an offer that is acceptable to workers.

Public sector sanitation workers continue industrial action in Canberra

General Service Officers (GSOs) employed by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) government are carrying out a rubbish collection, street-cleaning and maintenance ban for the fifth consecutive weekend. The stoppages, which were initially limited to the central business district have been expanded to inner-city Braddon, as well as the suburban town centres of Belconnen and Tuggeranong.

The workers, covered by the Construction, Forestry and Maritime Employees Union (CFMEU) are seeking a 5 percent pay rise this year, followed by 4 percent in 2027 and 3 percent in 2028, plus a $5,800 yearly "essential work in person" allowance.

The ACT Labor government has put its latest meagre offer—1.5 percent nominal increases every six months, plus possible one-off payments in 2027 and 2028, of $600 if inflation exceeds 3.5 percent, or $1,000 if it exceeds 4 percent—to an all-staff ballot, which closes Tuesday afternoon.

Downer train maintenance strikes cause rail delays in Melbourne

Workers who maintain Melbourne's High Capacity Metro Trains (HCMT) at Downer's Pakenham East depot have stepped up their industrial action, which has been ongoing since July 24, in a dispute over pay and conditions.

The ongoing action has reportedly resulted in a maintenance backlog and a fleet shortage on the Metro Trains network. Last week, dozens of services were cancelled and replaced with buses.

Around 110 workers covered by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and Electrical Trades Union (ETU) are holding half-day strikes each day and full-day strikes every Monday. The unions say Downer has sent workers from its facilities in Western Australia to serve as unwitting strikebreakers in Victoria.

Workers say they are seeking industry-standard wages and conditions that match those received by employees performing the same work at Metro Trains Melbourne and V/Line. The unions also want stronger protections against changes to rosters, improved rights for workplace

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delegates and greater certainty over working arrangements. They argue Downer's current proposals would leave maintenance workers performing identical work for significantly lower pay than comparable employees elsewhere in Victoria's rail network.

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