

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: Thousands of Gujarat autorickshaw and taxi drivers stage four-day strike

Autorickshaw and taxi drivers in Ahmedabad staged a four-day strike from September 7 to 10 over declining earnings and competition from app-based transport platforms. Twelve driver organisations said around 200,000 drivers were involved.

Strikers demanded minimum fares for online bookings, controls on high commissions charged by aggregators, restrictions on compressed natural gas price increases and tighter regulation of motorcycle-taxi services such as Rapido.

Drivers argued that app-based fares were undercutting regulated street fares and eroding their livelihoods. The action caused widespread transport disruption and sharp increases in some online cab fares.

Haryana sanitation workers continue state-wide strike

Municipal sanitation and fire workers across Haryana remain on strike after walking out on August 6. By September 9, the action had entered its 34th day and the union extended protests after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state government failed to issue written orders implementing concessions it said had been accepted. The workers want regularisation of contract employees, an end to contract labour in sanitation and sewer work, creation of permanent posts, implementation of a May 13 agreement, reinstatement of dismissed and suspended workers and withdrawal of police cases.

The BJP government has attempted to break the strike through return-to-work orders and disciplinary action. By September 9, 62 contract workers had been dismissed and 10 regular employees suspended.

Telangana power-loom workers strike for higher piece rates

Power-loom workers and master weavers in Sircilla began an indefinite strike on August 31 over piece rates which remain unchanged for over two years. Around 500 power looms, involving about 200 workers and 100 master weavers, were impacted.

Workers are demanding an increase from 82 rupees to 100 rupees

(\$US0.86 to \$US1.04) per sari, while master weavers are seeking 150 rupees instead of 132 rupees. The action, led by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, halted cotton-sari production and included road blockades, motorcycle rallies, community meals and demonstrations.

Andhra Pradesh drinking-water workers strike over unpaid wages

Sri Sathya Sai drinking-water workers in the former Anantapur district went on strike on September 5 over more than five months of unpaid wages. The scheme supplies drinking water to a large rural population.

Workers warned that continued non-payment threatened both their livelihoods and water supplies. They demanded immediate payment of wage arrears and a permanent funding arrangement to ensure salaries are paid on time. The strike follows repeated wage disputes on the scheme. In 2024, authorities released arrears to 536 workers after a separate stoppage over seven months of unpaid wages.

Kerala migrant highway workers strike over wage arrears

About 500 migrant workers employed on national-highway construction in Kannur stopped work in early September over delayed wages, bringing work on the project to a standstill. The workforce included construction labourers, drivers, helpers, mechanics, electricians and cooks, many from Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Workers said they had not been paid for about two months, while truck owners contracted to the project reported arrears stretching to seven months. Strikers ended the stoppage later that day after Vishwasamudra Engineering, the main contractor, agreed to pay one month of wages immediately and the remaining dues later.

Tamil Nadu liquor shop workers protest suspensions and working conditions

Employees of the state-owned Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation closed liquor shops on September 4 as part of a wider protest over disciplinary action against workers accused of overcharging customers.

Statewide reports said 136 shops were closed after more than 150 employees were suspended. Workers demanded the withdrawal of suspensions and opposed what they described as arbitrary disciplinary action.

Longer-running demands include ending the empty-bottle collection scheme, filling vacant posts and requiring the government to cover shop rent, electricity and other operating expenses rather than shifting these costs onto employees.

Punjab health workers begin 11-day strike

Accredited Social Health Activist workers and facilitators at the Manupur health centre in Samrala began an 11-day work stoppage in early September over long-pending wage and employment demands. They are seeking a minimum monthly wage of 24,000 rupees, a threefold increase in their fixed honorarium and benefits comparable with those provided to similar workers in Haryana.

The workers, who perform village-level maternal and child health, vaccination and tuberculosis-related duties, warned that the stoppage would affect these services. They said further protests would be organised later this month if the Punjab government failed to address their demands.

Punjab ministerial employees suspend pen-down strike after assurances

Punjab government ministerial employees began a pen-down strike on September 8 over pending dearness allowance arrears and disciplinary action taken against workers who joined the August 27 state-wide strike. The government responded to the industrial action with a “no work, no pay” order after employees extended the action through September 11.

On September 9, however, the workers suspended the pen-down strike after the chief secretary assured them that show-cause notices and punitive measures connected to the earlier action would be withdrawn. Broader demands remain unresolved, including payment of dearness allowance arrears, implementation of the Old Pension Scheme and regularisation of contractual employees.

Maharashtra sanitation workers continue indefinite strike in Manwat

Seventy-four sanitation workers employed by Manwat Municipal Council began an indefinite work stoppage on August 27 over long-pending service conditions. The strikers want time-bound promotions after 10 to 30 years of service, written details of provident-fund deductions, timely approval of leave and permanent paid work orders.

Led by the Marathwada Municipal Workers and Employees Union Lal Bavta, they also staged a sit-down protest outside the municipal office. By September 2, the strike had entered its seventh day, disrupting garbage collection and prompting workers to take their demands to the Parbhani district collector after local negotiations failed.

Jammu and Kashmir health mission workers begin 72-hour walkout

More than 12,000 National Health Mission employees across Jammu and Kashmir began a 72-hour strike on September 9 over long-standing

employment and pay demands. The action involved workers at district headquarters, hospitals, health centres and field programmes across both divisions.

The strikers’ main demands are for a secure employment policy, salary revision, retirement benefits and social-security protection, including provident-fund coverage. Many have worked under contractual arrangements for years without a comprehensive regularisation or job-security framework. The stoppage follows a 48-hour action in April that ended after the government promised to examine the same grievances.

Pakistan: Larkana primary teachers escalate campaign for service structure

Primary school teachers in Larkana, Sindh, held a workers’ convention and rally on September 6 as the fourth phase of a campaign demanding formal notification of a service structure for primary teachers across the province. The action was organised by the All-Sindh Primary Teachers Association, whose leaders said the government had already recognised the demand but failed to implement it.

Earlier stages of the campaign included a signature drive, three-day sit-ins and hunger strikes at the taluka level, followed by district demonstrations. The association warned that, if no notification is issued, teachers will organise a foot march to the Karachi Press Club and may continue to Bilawal House for a sit-in.

Sri Lanka: University lecturers stage nationwide one-day strike

Lecturers at Sri Lanka’s state universities staged a nationwide one-day strike on September 9, demanding action on staff shortages, inadequate facilities and other long-standing problems in the university system.

The Federation of University Teachers’ Associations said nearly 1,000 lecturers had left the system in recent years, while annual student admissions had risen from about 25,000 in 2015 to around 45,000. Around 5,800 lecturers were employed in state universities in 2015, and the subsequent loss of staff has increased workloads and strained teaching capacity.

The federation called on the government to strengthen the existing 17 state universities and provide permanent solutions before pursuing plans for new institutions.

Transport workers at 5 major trucking companies hold 24-hour nationwide strike

Thousands of transport workers across Australia stopped work on Thursday, in a 24-hour strike involving truck drivers, forklift operators and warehouse workers employed by FedEx, Border Express, K&S ChemTrans, Qube and Sadleirs.

The Transport Workers Union (TWU) claim the action is Australia’s largest ever road strike. While workers are covered by separate enterprise agreements at each company, they are all currently in negotiations, enabling them to legally carry out the simultaneous action within the country’s draconian industrial relations framework.

Workers are seeking real wage rises above inflation as well as improved

job security and safeguards against increasing use of artificial intelligence and automation.

FedEx, where more than 1,600 of the strikers are employed, responded to the stoppage by locking workers out for 24 hours on Friday. The US-based delivery service carried out the same harsh retaliation late last month, after workers struck for just two hours.

The TWU has been promoting the prospect of an industry-wide strike for several years as a panacea for trucking workers, who have been hard hit in recent years by the skyrocketing price of fuel. But even before Thursday's strike began, the union bureaucracy demonstrated it is preparing to sell workers out.

Weeks ahead of the strike, before protected action ballots were complete, the TWU announced it had already struck deals with some of Australia's largest trucking companies—Linfox, Toll, Team Global Express and Bevchain—limiting the number of workers involved in the strike.

These TWU-company agreements will deliver nominal pay rises of 10–11 percent over three years, with possible additional increases linked to inflation in later years. This is far short of what is needed to keep up with the real rise in the cost of living or recoup previous losses.

Victorian Arts Centre workers hold 24-hour strike

Around 200 workers at the Victorian Arts Centre in Melbourne stopped work for 24 hours on Friday, holding a rally in the evening. This was the first 24-hour stoppage at the Arts Centre in decades.

The workers, covered by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) and Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU), have rejected a nominal pay rise of 3 percent, under the Labor government's wage cap policy, which is less than the current rate of inflation.

In addition to a real pay rise, they are seeking back pay to October 2025, when the previous enterprise agreement expired, sick leave for casual workers—two-thirds of the workforce—increased shift penalties and protections against the use of artificial intelligence.

A planned concert at Hamer Hall by Macy Gray, as well as Friday's performances of *GRIMM* and *Burn the Floor: Luminous* were cancelled as a result of the strike.

Sydney Ferries workers continue industrial action

Sydney Ferries workers employed by Transdev began a fare collection ban on Friday, switching off Opal card readers until Tuesday October 6. The action is part of an ongoing campaign against the company's real-wage cutting pay offer.

The workers, covered by the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), are seeking a 5 percent pay rise this year, and guaranteed annual increases in line with inflation in the years that follow.

The Opal ban follows a half-day strike on September 2 and limited overtime bans, which the union says "have already disrupted several services," due to Transdev's heavy reliance on overtime.

Bridgestone tyre fitters begin six-day strike

Around 40 Bridgestone Tyre Centre workers began a six-day strike on Thursday, demanding wages that keep up with the cost of living. The workers also implemented overtime bans.

The United Workers Union (UWU) said the company reported profits of around \$3 billion last year, but its latest enterprise agreement offer "would leave workers struggling to keep up with the cost of living for another three years." The company is seeking to impose further real wage cuts, even though productivity has improved.

Emergency department nurses strike in Gisborne

More than 30 Emergency Department (ED) nurses from Gisborne Hospital on New Zealand's East Coast struck for an hour on September 9 over unsafe staffing levels. Chronic understaffing, winter illness and exhausted staff are pushing the ED to breaking point.

The department has lost 10 senior nurses in the past year, while remaining staff are dealing with influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and seriously ill patients, particularly children. ED nurse Clara Dolman-Tuhou told Radio NZ the "absolute chaos" is placing patient safety and staff wellbeing at risk. "The staff are absolutely exhausted doing back-to-back 12-hour shifts," she said.

The strike followed a large public meeting in Northcote, Auckland on September 3 after North Shore Hospital's ED nurses declared a "state of emergency" over staffing, funding and support. Nurse Sophie Tomes told the meeting the workloads can be crushing and she had worked shifts which were "traumatic."

The conditions emerged nationwide even before flu cases peaked but the NZ Nurses Organisation (NZNO) has organised no unified industrial action to fight the escalating crisis. The National Party-led government's Health Minister Simeon Brown absurdly claimed that conditions in the hospitals are "improving."



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact