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: Delhi bus workers strike for higher wages and benefits

Drivers and conductors employed by private operators running Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) buses began strike action on September 15 over wages and working conditions.

The DTC Karamchari Ekta Union estimated that around 12,000 workers joined the action on September 16. It wants an increase in daily wages from 862 rupees to at least 2,000 rupees ($US20), paid public holidays, an annual bonus and medical and social-security benefits. The union said dearness allowance had not been revised for 18 months and that a basic wage increase, last implemented in 2019, had been due since 2024.

The stoppage left buses idle at several depots and disrupted services across the capital. Transport Minister Pankaj Singh has directed the private operators to address the workers' demands.

Himachal Pradesh university teachers protest over autonomy and promotions

Himachal Pradesh University teachers continued their Save University Campaign this month, demanding protection of institutional autonomy and academic freedom and restoration of promotions under the Career Advancement Scheme.

Organised by the Himachal Pradesh University Teachers Welfare Association, the campaign included demonstrations outside the vice-chancellor's office in Shimla and solidarity protests at the university's Dharamshala regional centre. The association opposes changes to university governance and recruitment under the state's Universities Amendment Bill, arguing that they bypass statutory university bodies and increase government control.

The government claims that the changes are intended to improve oversight and recruitment transparency without interfering in academic affairs. Teachers have said they will continue their campaign until their demands are addressed.

Kerala estate workers strike after colleague's death and harassment allegations

Harrison Malayalam estate workers in Palappilly, Thrissur, went on strike on September 22, following the reported death by suicide of 41-year-old watcher Chembuchira Manjusha. Workers and supporting organisations demanded action against officials accused of workplace harassment and announced protest marches for September 23.

A note reportedly left by Manjusha alleged repeated harassment by supervisors, including abusive messages and assignment to solitary field duty despite health problems.

Local reporting said she had previously been injured by an electric fence while working and had subsequently been assigned duties within the factory compound. Police have conducted an inquest.

Kolkata temporary health workers protest low daily wages

Temporary health workers employed by Kolkata Municipal Corporation protested in Chitpur on September 21, surrounding the vehicle of West Bengal Urban Development and Municipal Affairs Minister Agnimitra Paul after a dengue-awareness event. They demanded higher daily wages and a review of their pay structure, saying their remuneration did not reflect their responsibilities in civic health services.

Paul acknowledged that the workers received only 303 rupees a day and said the government would examine their demand for an increase, while citing financial constraints.

Haryana roadways workers begin indefinite sit-in over unpaid allowances

Roadways employees in Hisar and Hansi began an indefinite sit-in outside the general manager's office on September 22 over a 15-point charter of demands. The Joint Struggle Committee wants payment of outstanding travel and daily allowances, timely wages for contract staff engaged through Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, and reconstruction of demolished workplace rooms.

Talks with General Manager Rahul Mittal on September 21 ended without a settlement, with committee representatives leaving after receiving no firm assurance over their demands.

Workers held gate meetings at both sub-depots before beginning the sit-in, which affected bus services. The committee said the action would continue until the demands were met.

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Lucknow nursing students end protest over colleague's death

Around 300 nursing students at King George's Medical University in Lucknow ended a two-day sit-in on September 22 after the vice-chancellor promised an impartial investigation and action on their demands within 48 hours.

The protest followed the death of nursing student Divyanshi Yadav from dengue. Students alleged that Yadav had not been granted leave promptly despite illness, and that other unwell students were required to perform ward duties. They demanded accountability, changes to the treatment of sick students and action against senior nursing administrators.

While the nursing college principal resigned during the protest students continued demanding the nursing dean's resignation before accepting the vice-chancellor's assurances.

Jammu and Kashmir daily-wage workers demand permanent jobs and higher pay

Casual and daily-wage workers from Jammu and Kashmir government departments protested at Polo View Park in Srinagar on September 22, demanding permanent employment, higher wages and pension benefits. Organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Casual/Daily Wagers Forum, the workers announced plans to surround the legislative assembly on September 28.

Forum president Sajad Ahmed Parray criticised delays in resolving their demands and said workers had continued providing public services during floods and the pandemic. The government has said a committee established in March 2025 is examining the financial, legal and humanitarian aspects of regularisation. Workers want a settlement rather than further delays.

Pakistan: Medical officers' strike continues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Trainee Medical Officers (TMOs) and House Officers (HOs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have been on strike for two weeks to demand a 30 percent increase in their monthly stipends. The ongoing strike in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is led by an independent alliance of neutral Trainee Medical Officers and House Officers.

According to a TMO and HO spokesperson, a centralised Core Committee of All KP TMOs & HOs have been organized to manage the strike across different teaching hospitals.

Bangladesh: Chattogram port workers oppose proposed terminal concession

Port workers held a human-chain protest near Chattogram Port on September 22 against a proposed concession transferring operation of the New Mooring Container Terminal to Dubai-based DP World. The action was organised by the Chattogram Bandar Rokkha Sangram Parishad and involved labour organisations affiliated with the Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

The port workers want the concession process halted, withdrawal of cases against 15 port workers and activists, the filling of vacant posts and removal officials involved in the proposed deal. Speakers called for talks with workers' representatives before the government makes a decision. The organisers also announced a protest procession for September 27.

Separately, the Chattogram Port Protection Committee and participating labour federations called for a daylong sit-in outside port headquarters on October 5. At a September 20 meeting, they demanded disclosure of the proposed concession's economic consequences and a national dialogue, saying the decision would affect thousands of workers. They warned of further action, including blockades and strikes, if their demands were ignored.

Gazipur garment workers protest unpaid wages

Hundreds of workers at Honeywell Garments in Konabari, Gazipur, blocked roads on September 21 and 22 to demand payment of outstanding wages. Factory and police sources cited by the *Business Standard* said around 1,300 employees were affected by the arrears. Workers said August wages promised for September 10 remained unpaid after repeated postponements, and that management had declared a factory holiday instead of settling the debt. They reported difficulty paying rent, shop debts and children's school expenses.

On September 22, police dispersed protesters with sound grenades after workers approached a neighbouring factory to seek support. Local reporting described an argument after the industrial police intervened. The police claim that protesters were attempting to attack the neighbouring premises. Workers remained near Honeywell Garment's factory and demanded immediate payment. A garment-union representative also called for the factory to reopen.

Qantas ground workers strike at four airports

Hundreds of Qantas ground workers held a 24-hour strike on September 24 at Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth airports. The strike covered workers at Qantas Ground Services, Australian Air Express and QantasLink, and was called by the Transport Workers Union (TWU). Planned action at Melbourne Airport was postponed at the last minute by the TWU without explanation.

The workers want pay in line with industry standards, more full-time jobs, and an end to Qantas's use of outsourcing and separate subsidiaries to divide the workforce. Around 600 ground workers remain directly employed at Qantas, after more than 1,800 were illegally sacked and their jobs outsourced in 2020.

At the same time, around 400 Certis Security screeners at Sydney Airport held two two-hour stoppages on September 24. The workers want better conditions and pathways to full-time employment, according to the TWU. A three-hour stoppage has been called for 10 p.m. on September 28 to 1 a.m. on September 29.

Jetstar staff refuse to charge fees

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Airport staff employed by Qantas subsidiary Jetstar held a “No Weigh Day” on September 23, refusing to charge fees for excess baggage, seat changes or late check-in. This followed a ban on wearing uniform footwear that began on September 18.

On September 24, the Australian Services Union (ASU) said Jetstar had asked for an urgent meeting on September 28 to present a revised offer, until which time no further industrial action would be called.

Cleanaway rubbish collection workers walk off the job in Dandenong

Cleanaway commercial and industrial rubbish collection workers in Dandenong, Victoria, held a one-hour strike on the morning of September 24, walking off the job and protesting outside the company’s corporate offices.

The workers, covered by the TWU, say Cleanaway’s enterprise agreement offer would leave them worse off in comparison with inflation. Workers also raised safety concerns, after five workers have been killed on the job in the past two years across Cleanaway’s Australian facilities.

Canberra teachers shut down public schools for two hours

Staff at Australian Capital Territory (ACT) public schools stopped work from 8.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. on September 24, closing schools for two hours. It was their third industrial action this year, including a full-day strike on June 11.

The ACT Labor government has offered educators a meagre 9 percent salary increase over three years, plus an additional increase for teachers at the top of the classroom pay scale and some school leaders. This would amount to a real-wage cut for educators already earning around $4,000 less in real terms than they did in 2022.

Angela Burroughs, president of the Australian Education Union’s ACT branch, said another full-day strike may be called if the government does not improve its offer. She said teachers had reported supervising up to 90 students at once.

Tasmanian nurses begin work bans and walkouts

Tasmanian public-sector nurses started industrial action this week, after the state government refused to put forward an acceptable pay offer. Members of the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) began workplace bans on September 21, seeking fair wages, safe staffing and decent conditions.

Members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) held a mass meeting at Royal Hobart Hospital on September 22, which turned into a stop-work walkout, while nurses and midwives at Launceston General Hospital carried out similar industrial action the following day.

Victorian allied health workers hold rolling hospital rallies

Victorian public-sector allied health workers held rolling lunchtime rallies outside hospitals from September 21–24. The 1.5 hour demonstrations were held at the Royal Women’s, Northern, Monash, Alfred, Western, Austin, Bendigo and Grampians hospitals.

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 11 months of negotiations, and is offering just 19–21 percent over four years.

This week’s rallies follow a 24-hour strike on August 11 and two weeks of rolling stoppages. VAHPA has called another 24-hour strike for October 1.

New Zealand nurses strike at Wait?kere Hospital

About 60 nurses and healthcare assistants working in the specialist Muriwai Ward at Wait?kere Hospital in West Auckland went on strike for two hours on September 21. Neil Warrington, who has worked at the ward for 23 years, told Radio NZ that staff walked out because they cannot give vulnerable stroke and older patients the care they deserve overnight.

Nurses had been raising concerns for months that short staffing was putting patients at risk. “We are exasperated,” Warrington said. The striking staff are demanding one more night-shift nurse from Health NZ.

Chronic understaffing, winter illness and exhausted staff are also pushing hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) nationwide to breaking point. At Whanganui Hospital during the week of September 2-9 patient turnover was 680 percent over capacity. More than 30 ED nurses at Gisborne Hospital struck for an hour on September 9 over unsafe staffing levels. The NZ Nurses Organisation has not organised unified industrial action to fight the escalating crisis.

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