Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

2 October 2026

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India: Delhi bus workers continue strike as government bans industrial action

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) contract drivers are continuing strike action they began on September 15 in a dispute over wages and service conditions. Drivers who have reported receiving just 862 rupees ($US9) a day want a minimum 2,000-rupee daily wage, payment for government holidays and an annual bonus and social-security benefits. The DTC Karamchari Ekta Union has also demanded implementation of a long-pending dearness-allowance revision and the absorption of drivers employed by private operators onto DTC payrolls.

On September 30, the Delhi government invoked the Haryana Essential Services Maintenance Act, as extended to Delhi, declaring the DTC and Cluster Bus Scheme services essential and prohibiting strikes and protests by the workers for six months.

Andhra Pradesh contract health workers continue strike for regularisation and wages

Contract medical and health department workers in Kurnool remain on strike after more than 35 days of industrial action over long-standing employment issues. Workers demonstrated outside Kurnool Government General Hospital with their demands written on their palms. They want job regularisation, payment of 100 percent gross wages, normal transfer rights and job security. Another state health employees' organisation has voiced its solidarity with the strikers.

Madhya Pradesh outsourced public-sector workers protest poverty wages

Outsourced and temporary Class IV workers from government departments held a two-day protest in Bhopal on September 28 and 29 to demand statutory minimum wages and regular employment. The workers included school and hostel cooks, office attendants, sanitation workers, security guards and pump operators. Some said they had worked for more than 20 years while receiving only 2,000 to 5,000 rupees ($US21–$US52) a month. The protest was organised by the Temporary Outsourced Employees Front, who denounced the Madhya Pradesh state government for its increasing use of temporary labour instead of filling permanent Class IV posts.

Karnataka sugar workers rally for wage agreement

Sugar-mill workers from across Karnataka held a state-level convention and protest rally in Belagavi on September 27. The events were organised by the Karnataka United Sugar Workers Federation.

Workers want implementation of the Seventh Tripartite Wage Agreement and resolution of long-standing workplace grievances. Other demands include removal of legal obstacles to the agreement, establishment of an eighth wage board and payment of arrears, an end to contract labour in direct production work and permanent jobs for long-serving contract and seasonal workers. The All-India United Trade Union Centre participated in the mobilisation.

Kerala financial enterprise workers postpone planned day-and-night protest

Trade unions representing employees and officers of the state-owned Kerala State Financial Enterprises postponed a day-and-night protest planned for September 24 and 25 after talks with the company's newly appointed managing director. The action was called over unresolved workplace demands.

After taking office on September 23, managing director P. N. Abhilash asked the unions for time to review the issues, promised formal trade-union talks and said matters requiring government intervention would be raised with Kerala's chief minister. The unions said further action would be considered after the negotiations.

Pakistan: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa doctors escalate pay strike

Around 6,000 house officers and trainee medical officers across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continued strike action through September, demanding a 30 percent increase in basic salaries. By September 30, the dispute had continued for 24 days.

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The Neutral Doctors Community said emergency coverage would continue but routine duties would remain boycotted until the provincial government issued a formal notification approving the increase. Doctors escalated the action after alleging that security personnel assaulted protesters at Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar on September 29.

Lahore pharmacists protest unemployment and recruitment delays

Pharmacists demonstrated outside the Lahore Press Club on September 25, World Pharmacists Day, over unemployment and delays in public-sector recruitment. Protesters said more than 7,000 trained pharmacists were unemployed and demanded new jobs in hospitals and basic health units, legal recognition of pharmacists' professional scope and mandatory appointment of clinical and hospital pharmacists.

They also demanded that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan publish results and complete recruitment for more than 100 assistant-director posts after repeated examination delays. Protesters called for other vacant technical posts to be filled and for at least one pharmacist to be employed at every basic health unit.

Swat teachers protest proposed school outsourcing

Teachers affiliated with Jamiat-e-Asatiza Swat demonstrated outside the Swat Press Club in late September against the proposed outsourcing of government schools and changes to pension arrangements. Speakers argued that outsourcing public schools would restrict access to education for children from low-income families. They also demanded improved employment benefits and opposed pension reforms and taxes affecting teachers. Union leaders warned that the campaign would be expanded across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if the government failed to address their demands.

Bangladesh: Chattogram port workers oppose proposed terminal concession

Chattogram port workers continued protests late month against plans to hand operation of the New Mooring Container Terminal to Dubai-based DP World. Port-worker organisations demanded that the concession process be halted, cases against 15 workers and activists be withdrawn, vacant posts filled and workers' representatives consulted before any agreement is finalised. A protest procession was held on September 27, following a human chain on September 22.

Labour organisations also plan a day-long demonstration outside Chattogram Port headquarters on October 5, warning of further industrial action if the government proceeds without public disclosure of the deal's economic consequences and broader consultation.

Primary teacher candidates demand pending appointment letters

Candidates selected for appointment as government primary-school assistant teachers staged a sit-in at Shahbagh in Dhaka in late September demanding immediate appointment letters.

A total of 14,384 candidates had been recommended for appointment after the January recruitment examination, and appointment letters began being issued on September 24. By September 29, the education minister said 817 candidates were still awaiting letters while police and document verification continued. Protesters objected to the prolonged vetting process and demanded that all eligible candidates be appointed without further delay.

Chattogram engineering university teachers and students continue shutdown

Teachers, students, officers and employees at Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET) continued industrial and protest action in late September demanding the reinstatement of former vice-chancellor Professor Abu Sadat Muhammad Sayem. The government removed Sayem on September 21 after 56 days in office and appointed Professor Sheikh Shariful Alam in his place.

Students began a campus shutdown and suspended classes and examinations, while the CUET Teachers' Association moved to a full work stoppage from September 24. By September 27, teachers and staff were holding sit-ins with students continuing the shutdown for six days, rejecting the new appointment and demanding withdrawal of the government gazette.

Nurses continue stop-work actions across Tasmania

Nurses in the Royal Hobart Hospital's Mental Health Inpatient Unit stopped work for 30 minutes on Wednesday and rallied outside the hospital. The Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) says the unit has the highest rate of patient violence towards staff in Tasmania's public health system.

Nurses are seeking an occupational violence allowance for mental health nursing, in line with allowances already paid to nurses in forensic settings.

A day earlier, HACSU-covered nurses at the hospital's Medical Specialist Clinics stopped work for two hours and held a protest as part of ongoing industrial action. They unfurled a list showing some 4,000 patients waiting to see the specialist nurses, underscoring the deepening crisis of the Tasmanian public health system, amid deepening budget cuts by the state Liberal-National government.

Oncology nurses at Royal Hobart also stopped work for 30 minutes on September 25. HACSU said the stoppage was over the government "stalling" on pay, parking and safety.

The stoppage is part of a wider campaign by Tasmanian public sector nurses and midwives. Members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) held a mass meeting at Royal Hobart 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.

Melbourne parking officers refuse to issue fines on grand final day

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Parking officers employed by the City of Melbourne implemented a ban on checking parking meters and issuing tickets around the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) from noon on Saturday September 26, AFL Grand Final day. Australian Services Union (ASU) members have subsequently put in place a ban on issuing parking fines around Melbourne Zoo in Parkville until midnight Sunday, the last day of the school holidays.

The actions are part of a long-running campaign against real wage cuts by workers at eight metropolitan Melbourne councils. Recent actions have included rubbish collection bans in Hume and Merri-bek, and limited work bans by public librarians.

The councils have insisted they cannot offer workers more than the 3 percent nominal annual pay rise stipulated by the state Labor government's punitive wage policy, well below current official inflation of 4 percent. The ASU has put forward a claim for a 22 percent rise over four years, which would itself fall far short of the soaring cost of living, especially for basic essentials such as housing and fuel.

Sydney Airport workers strike four nights running

Up to 50 work safety officers employed by contractor Certis at Sydney Airport walked off the job from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. each night from Monday September 28 to Thursday October 1, in an enterprise bargaining dispute over wages and job security.

The workers are responsible for closing off the tarmac and airfield and escorting contractors and emergency vehicles in preparation for the airport's overnight curfew.

The nightly strikes follow a three-hour stoppage on Monday and action last week by about 400 security screeners also employed by Certis at Sydney Airport. The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) said many of the workers are on "insecure part-time hours and poor pay."

Jetstar airport staff escalate work bans

Jetstar airport staff covered by the ASU and United Services Union (USU) began stepped-up protected action on Friday October 2. They are implementing a ban on non-safety announcements and disruption management, holding one-hour stoppages at eight locations and the airline's operations centre, and will refuse to charge passengers excess baggage, seat change and late fees until 11:59 p.m. on Sunday.

This followed a "no weigh day" on September 23 and a ban on wearing uniform footwear that began on September 18.

Workers have rejected the company's real-wage cutting offer of a 2.1 percent nominal pay rise from the commencement of a new enterprise agreement, with an additional increase of 3 percent in April.

Newcastle coal terminal workers walk off the job

Workers at Newcastle Coal Infrastructure Group (NCIG) walked off the job and rallied outside the Kooragang coal terminal on Tuesday September 29.

The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) says the workers have been employed under the same agreement for more than 16 years and are paid less than comparable sites. They are seeking a pay rise of 20 percent over four years and improved rostering.

Queensland child safety and youth justice workers strike

Thousands of child safety and youth justice workers across Queensland walked off the job for about two and a half hours on the afternoon of Friday September 25. Together Queensland, a section of the Australian Services Union, said members stopped work in Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Ipswich and across Brisbane.

Some workers took air mattresses to MPs' offices, highlighting the issue of children in state care sleeping in government offices while they waited for a placement.

The union says child safety officers are routinely responsible for 30 or more children each, despite an agreed safe caseload of about 16, and that more than 100 positions are vacant, leading to workers doing large amounts of unpaid overtime.

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