

Workers Struggles: Asia, Australia and the Pacific

9 October 2026

The World Socialist Web Site invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

India: Karnataka garment workers protest pension and provident-fund restrictions

Around 2,500 workers at Shahi Exports' Unit 26 in Maddur stopped work for several hours on September 29, while workers at Laguna Clothing and other garment factories joined related protests across Karnataka. The workers were opposing new rules requiring employees with fewer than 10 years of eligible service to wait 36 months, instead of two months, to withdraw savings from the Employees' Pension Scheme. Workers who lose their jobs can initially withdraw only 75 percent of their provident-fund savings, with the remaining 25 percent withheld for a year.

The protesters demanded the immediate withdrawal of the restrictions and submitted a memorandum asserting their right to access their own savings. The campaign was supported by the Karnataka Independent Garment Workers' Union and Unions United, both affiliates of IndustriALL.

Tamil Nadu sanitation workers end four-day Madurai strike

Around 3,000 sanitation workers, drivers and other municipal employees in Madurai began an indefinite strike on October 5, halting door-to-door waste collection and other civic services. Organised by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions and other sanitation-worker unions, the strikers demanded an end to privatisation, repeal of Government Orders 152 and 139, increased minimum wages and phased regularisation of employees with more than two years of service. Garbage accumulated across the city as the corporation deployed replacement workers and rented vehicles.

The workers ended their walkout on October 8, following five hours of talks with state and municipal officials. Union representatives said the government agreed to issue a revised minimum-wage order within a week, with workers to receive either the new standard rate or the rate fixed by the district collector, whichever is higher. They also said private outsourcing agencies would be phased out within a month and that workers would be brought under direct administrative supervision through the National Urban Livelihoods Mission. A corporation official, however, said outsourcing would continue temporarily while the proposed arrangement was assessed.

Tamil Nadu nurses suspend hunger strike after government talks

More than 500 nurses employed as mid-level healthcare providers began a protest hunger strike near Rajarathinam Stadium in Chennai on October 5, demanding permanent employment, job security and equal pay for equal work.

The 4,848 contract nurses, who were recruited in 2021 and are only paid about 21,000 rupees (\$US218) a month, want a monthly salary of 45,000 rupees. Other demands include paid maternity and medical leave, promotions, payment of incentives outstanding from 2023 and 2024, and implementation of a promised 5 percent annual increment. Police detained hundreds of protesters and attempted to clear the demonstration.

The Tamil Nadu Mid-Level Healthcare Providers' Union suspended the protest following three hours of talks with Health Secretary Darez Ahamed. While the government said most of the demands would be considered at another meeting, union president N. Sundari warned that state-wide protests would resume from November 3 if the assurances were not implemented.

Kerala cashew workers demand unpaid gratuity and benefits

Around 50 permanent workers from the closed Sharon cashew factory at Puthenpura in Ezhukone, Kollam, protested on October 4 to demand unpaid gratuity and other employment benefits. The factory has remained closed for more than five years, but workers say they have not received their statutory entitlements, despite the court attachment of its land and buildings.

The action was led by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions-affiliated Kottarakkara Taluk Cashew Workers Union, which demanded the immediate distribution of all benefits owed to the long-serving employees.

Jammu community health workers protest for higher pay and regularisation

Accredited Social Health Activist workers demonstrated at Dogra Chowk in Jammu on October 3 over low pay, insecure employment and unpaid benefits. They demanded implementation of the health minister's July 2025 statement providing a fixed monthly incentive of 3,500 rupees, backdated to April 1, 2025, with payment of all arrears. The workers also demanded that the monthly incentive be raised to 6,000 rupees, in line with payments in Madhya Pradesh.

Other demands included maternity and medical leave, 20 days of casual

leave, payment and revision of outstanding incentives, a monthly mobile-phone allowance of 500 rupees, preference in recruitment to permanent health positions and social-security benefits including gratuity and pensions. The workers called for regularisation of all Accredited Social Health Activist employees and payment of statutory minimum wages until permanent positions are provided.

Premier coal mine workers walk off the job after rejecting Yancoal deal

Workers at Yancoal's Premier coal mine at Collie, Western Australia, began an indefinite strike on October 3, after 91.5 percent voted to reject the company's proposed agreement.

The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and Mining and Energy Union (MEU), which cover around 200 workers at Premier, say the agreement will likely be the last before the mine closes around the end of the decade. The MEU claims the company has told workers they cannot have both decent pay rises and protection for existing redundancy entitlements.

The unions say roster changes in the proposed agreement could leave workers "thousands of dollars worse off." The AMWU also wants paid time for workers to train for their next jobs.

Tasmanian nurses stop work at four hospitals

Members of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) held stop-works at the Royal Hobart Hospital on October 6 and Launceston General Hospital on October 7. On October 8, they held 30-minute walkouts at the Mersey Community Hospital in Latrobe and the North West Regional Hospital in Burnie. Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) members at Beaconsfield District Health Service also walked off the job on October 7.

The stoppage is part of a wider campaign by Tasmanian public sector nurses and midwives. Amid a deepening crisis of public health across the state, they are seeking higher pay, more annual leave, legislated nurse-to-patient ratios, and measures against violence and aggression toward staff. After six months of bargaining, the government has not tabled an offer.

Brisbane university staff hold joint stop-work

More than 500 university staff at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), the University of Queensland (UQ) and Griffith University held a joint half-day stop-work on October 8, with a rally in Queens Gardens, Brisbane.

The National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) is seeking a 20 percent pay rise over three years. UQ management has offered 13.5 percent over four years, a real wage cut in comparison with current inflation of 4 percent. Workers are also seeking job security for fixed-term and casual staff, 17 percent superannuation for casuals and workload protections.

Air Radiators workers stop work as data centre orders boom

Around 30 workers at Air Radiators in Victoria held a half-day stoppage on October 2 and stopped work again early on October 6, as part of their fight for a new enterprise agreement (EA). The previous EA expired in June.

The AMWU says rolling stoppages and bans will follow, after members voted near-unanimously last month to approve industrial action, including stoppages of up to 12 hours as well as bans on overtime and call-backs.

Air Radiators, based at Lara near Geelong, supplies cooling systems for data centres. It is owned by the ASX-listed Adrad Holdings. For the year to June 30, Adrad reported underlying earnings of \$19.5 million, up 10.8 percent, and an underlying net profit of \$7.9 million, up 9.7 percent, off the back of soaring demand for data centres.

Bridgestone workers begin 96-hour strike

Around 40 Transport Workers Union (TWU) members at Bridgestone in Western Australia rallied outside the company's Kewdale facility on October 8 and began a 96-hour strike the following day. They want fatigue protections, a living wage and better allowances, stronger superannuation and better parental leave.

New Zealand university and polytech staff vote for unified strike

About 9,500 New Zealand university and polytechnic staff, including lecturers, tutors, professors and librarians, have voted to strike later this month. The strikes may include half-day or full-day walkouts and withholding of student grades or new enrolments.

It will be the first time that university and polytechnic staff have struck together. Tertiary Education Union (TEU) national secretary Amy Ross said university staff were being offered pay rises well below inflation, which is currently running at 4.1 percent.

The union is seeking a six percent pay rise for members at six universities and wants to see "more money on the table." Sector workers also want more secure employment rights. Current Official Information Act data shows that half of all tertiary education staff are not permanent.

The polytechnic employees are resisting attempts to retain a single collective employment agreement covering the entire sector, which is currently being restructured. The TEU has asked the Employment Relations Authority to provide facilitated bargaining for a multi-employer collective agreement for 11 independent institutions.

Staff from the universities of Otago, Canterbury, Victoria, Massey, Waikato and Auckland will be involved in the strike. So too are polytechnic staff from the NZ Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST), MIT/Unitech, Wintec, Toi Ohomai, Eastern Institute of Technology, UCOL, Open Polytechnic, Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology, Ara, Otago Polytechnic and Southern Institute of Technology.

With exam periods due to begin on about October 16, no dates have been announced for the action to begin.



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