

India: Over 30,000 government employees boycott work on second day of nationwide strike

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Workers from banking, steel, oil, telecom, coal, postal, income tax and insurance sectors are participating in the protest.

Over 30,000 employees of government-owned companies boycotted work on Tuesday as part of the two-day nationwide strike against policies of the central government, PTI reported.

About 15,000 employees of the Steel Authority of India Limited, 10,000 of the National Mineral Development Corporation and around 8,000 non-executive employees of the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited went on strike on Tuesday.

The [two-day countrywide strike](#), which began on Monday, has been called by a joint forum of ten trade unions, including the Indian National Trade Union Congress, the All India Trade Union Congress, the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, the All India United Trade Union Centre and the United Trade Union Congress.

Workers from banking, steel, oil, telecom, coal, postal, income tax, copper, and insurance sectors are participating in the strike.

The decision comes following a meeting on March 22 where the trade unions said that they would protest against the Centre's "anti-worker, anti-farmer, anti-people and anti-national policies".

The unions have asked the central government to scrap proposed changes in labour laws, privatisation and the National Monetisation Pipeline. They are also seeking increased allocation of wages under Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act and regularisation of contract workers.

Under the [National Monetisation Pipeline](#), the government plans to raise Rs 6 lakh crore till 2025 by leasing out state-owned strategic assets in sectors such as power, road and railways to private entities.

Shops remain closed in Puducherry in view of the Bharat Bandh called by various central trade unions on 28th and 29th March 2022.

Government offices functioned as usual and government buses were operated. Police security deployed across Puducherry. pic.twitter.com/ehAFEnRZxt

— ANI (@ANI) [March 29, 2022](#)

On Tuesday, at the Steel Authority of India Limited, the staff at its plants in Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal did not attend work, PTI reported, citing an unidentified employee of the company's Bhilai Steel Plant.

Rajesh Sandhu, secretary of National Mineral Development Corporation Sanyukt Khadaan Mazdoor Sangh said that all non-executive workers of the iron-ore company boycotted work.

"Intensifying their protest against government policies, NMDC workers stopped state transport buses in Chhattisgarh for about six hours from 5 am," Sandhu said, according to PTI. He said the strike would result in a loss of about Rs 200 crore to the company.

Echoes in the Rajya Sabha

The nationwide strike echoed in Parliament as well on Tuesday, as several MPs of the Opposition parties urged the central government to look into the demands of those protesting.

Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu did not accept the notices by some Opposition members to discuss the matter, PTI reported. However, he allowed three members to briefly mention the matter related to the nationwide strike during the session.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) John Brittas told the House that the livelihood of people is in great turmoil and the government should take remedial measures.

Communist Party of India leader Binoy Viswam said that the House has a responsibility to take note of the strike of the working class. "The government, even if it is late, should find time to discuss the issue," he said, according to PTI.

Congress leader Shaktisinh Gohil also urged the Centre to hold talks with the unions with a "positive approach".

Public transport, banking services hit

Banking and transport services across the country were hit on Tuesday.

All India Bank Employees Association General Secretary CH Venkatachalam said that about 20 lakh cheques worth nearly Rs 18,000 crore could not be cleared nationwide due to the strike, according to PTI.

"As per our reports, in the Southern Grid functioning in Chennai, during our strike yesterday and today, about 6 lakh cheques/instruments worth about Rs 5,000 crore could not be sent for clearance as branches did not function," he told the news the agency.

The bank unions are protesting against the government's decision to privatise public sector banks and also demand speedy recovery of bad loans, higher deposit rates by the lenders, lower service charges on customers as well as restoration of the old pension scheme for the staff.

The strike has also disrupted [public transport](#) in several states including Tamil Nadu, Haryana and Kerala, *The Indian Express* reported. In Haryana, bus services remained suspended at several depots of Haryana Roadways as their employees held protests as part of the strike.

Sarbat Singh Punia, a leader of a joint forum of 10 unions of roadways employees, told PTI that bus services will resume from Wednesday morning. He said that employees and workers of some other departments, including public sector banks and municipal bodies, also joined the nationwide strike

on Tuesday.

In Kerala, protesters prevented bus services from running and forced shops to down shutters, according to *The Indian Express*.

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