Labour Update
労組周辺動向 No. 228

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This bulletin contains information on law changes that have either passed, or are being discussed, in parliament, court decisions, and other labor issues in Japan that are of interest to activists.

1. Law/Policy

(1) "Development and Employment" Program to Start April 2027 - Government Decision

The government decided at a Cabinet meeting on September 26 to launch the "Development and Employment" program, a new system for accepting foreign workers to replace the "Technical Intern Training" program, on April 1, 2027. The revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act, which was enacted in June 2024, will be enforced on the same date. The Technical Intern Training program will be abolished accordingly.
Chief Cabinet Secretary Hayashi Yoshimasa pointed out at a press conference after the Cabinet meeting that labor shortages have become serious domestically and international competition for human resources has intensified. He stated, "The Technical Intern Training program has been criticized for the gap between its stated purpose and actual operation. We will build a system attractive to foreigners and secure human resources to support industries over the long term."

(2) Immigration Services Agency Announces Operational Guidelines for Permanent Residence Cancellation - "Illness, Disaster, or Unemployment Will Be Excluded"

Regarding provisions in the revised Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act that allow cancellation of permanent residence permits for those who deliberately fail to pay taxes or social insurance premiums, the Immigration Services Agency announced operational guidelines on September 29 specifying when the provisions will be applied.
These provisions were established through last year's legal amendment and will be enforced in April 2027. Permanent residence permits are generally granted to those who have resided in Japan for at least 10 years, comply with laws, and pay taxes, with 918,000 holders as of the end of last year. However, since there are no renewal procedures, some cases have emerged of people failing to pay taxes after obtaining permanent residence.
At an expert committee meeting on September 29, the Immigration Services Agency presented its criteria for judging "deliberate failure to pay," indicating that both of the following conditions must be met: ①failure to pay without unavoidable circumstances, and ② failure to pay while aware of the payment obligation.
On the other hand, those judged not to be malicious, such as those who respond to payment during the Immigration Services Agency's inquiry process, will be changed to statuses that require renewal, such as "long-term resident."
Additionally, even in malicious cases, humanitarian considerations may lead to status changes for those requiring special attention, such as people undergoing treatment for serious life-threatening illnesses.

"On the Optimization of the Permanent Residence Permit System" September 29, 2025, Immigration Services Agency

https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/content/001447347.pdf

(3) Balancing Work and Childcare: Employers Obligated to Inquire About Workers' Preferred Working Styles

From October 1, companies are required to introduce systems to balance work and childcare and to individually inquire about how workers wish to work, enabling flexible working arrangements for workers raising children from age 3 until elementary school enrollment.
This follows amendments to the Child Care and Family Care Leave Act, with two major initiatives being mandated from October 1.
Among these, to achieve flexible working styles during childcare periods, employers must implement at least two of five systems:
▽flextime or staggered working hours
▽telework available for 10 or more days per month
▽shortened working hours
Workers raising children from age 3 until elementary school enrollment can select and use one of these systems.
Employers must explain the systems to eligible workers at an appropriate time before the child turns 3 and confirm their intentions regarding usage.

2. Legal Violations/Disputes

(1) Court Rules Dismissal Based on Union Membership Invalid - Woman Sues Private High School in Kitakyushu

In a lawsuit where a woman who served as office director and was dismissed last year from private Gyosei Gakuen High School in Kitakyushu City sought confirmation of employment status and payment of unpaid wages, claiming the dismissal was unfair as it was based on union membership, the Kokura Branch of Fukuoka District Court ruled by September 26 that "it is recognized the dismissal was triggered by union membership," declaring the dismissal invalid and ordering the school corporation to pay unpaid wages. Dated September 25.

(2) Labor Negotiations Transcending Corporate Boundaries Deemed Legitimate - Business Side Loses Lawsuit Alleging Antitrust Violations

Labor negotiations with an industry-wide union consisting of port workers nationwide pose a risk of violating the Antimonopoly Act—the company side made such claims and appealed for legitimacy of refusing negotiations in a trial. The judgment on September 16 at Tokyo District Court rejected the company's claims.
The lawsuit was filed by the Japan Harbor Transportation Association (Nikkokyo), an organization to which almost all port business operators belong. Its executives include management from major port companies such as Sumitomo Warehouse, Mitsui Warehouse, Kamigumi, and Konoike Transport.
Meanwhile, the defendant was not the labor union party to negotiations, but the Central Labour Relations Commission (CLRC), a national agency aimed at resolving labor-management disputes. This lawsuit structure reflects the 10-year history of labor-management conflict between the union and company side.
The union side is represented by the National Federation of Dock Workers' Unions of Japan (Zenkoku Kowan) and the All Japan Dock Transport Workers' Union (Koun Domei), which participated as auxiliary parties in the lawsuit. These are industry-wide labor unions for port workers, recognized as unions by labour relations commissions.
The dispute stemmed from the industry-wide minimum wage. Collective agreements had been concluded since around 1980, with the union side demanding annual increases in spring wage negotiations. By fiscal 2015, the rates were 164,000 yen per month and 7,130 yen per day.
However, from 2015 onward, Nikkokyo changed its stance and began withholding responses. The basis was the Antimonopoly Act, which prohibits cartels. The argument was that responding to collective bargaining would constitute communication among companies in the employer organization, affecting corporate wages, and further determining price guidelines for port business, thereby violating antitrust law.
Consequently, the union side filed a relief petition with the labour relations commission on February 10, 2020, claiming Nikkokyo's refusal to respond constituted an unfair labor practice. The Tokyo Metropolitan Labour Relations Commission issued a relief order on Ju-

ly 20, 2021, prohibiting Nikkokyo from "refusing to respond" and requiring sincere responses. Nikkokyo applied to the CLRC for review seeking cancellation, but it was dismissed on December 20, 2023, leading to the administrative lawsuit.

(3) "Multiple Pavilions Face Unpaid Wages and Legal Violations" - Expo-Related Union Announces, Some Labor Disputes Underway

The labour union "Kansai Expo-Related Union" (Nishi-ku, Osaka City), consisting of staff working at the Osaka-Kansai Expo, announced on September 29 that at least four pavilions, including the Jordan Pavilion, have received complaints from part-time workers and employees with employment contracts with private contractors regarding unpaid wages and other labor law violations, with some labor disputes underway.
According to the union, at the Jordan Pavilion, wages for training days were not paid to part-time workers, and part-timers who pointed out the non-payment had their work days reduced. While the employing contractor states it will pay wages, the timing and amount have not been specified.
At the Saudi Arabia Pavilion restaurant, overtime pay has remained unpaid, with some months exceeding 10 hours. Including both pavilions, complaints about non-payment and wage deductions not stipulated in contracts have been received from at least four pavilions including the Korea Pavilion and Australia Pavilion, with some cases involving ongoing labor disputes.
On the same day, the union requested the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition to investigate working conditions at the Expo and instruct each pavilion and private contractor to comply with labor laws. Secretary-General Minami Naoto stated, "As the organizer, we want the association to respond responsibly."

(4) 200,000 Protest Across France Against "Painful" Budget Plan - "Only Common People's Taxes Rise, We Can't Take It Anymore!" - Third Demonstration Since Last Month

On October 2, protest demonstrations involving approximately 200,000 people were held across France, opposing the government's "painful" budget plan that includes effective cuts to social security spending.
Opposition is directed at the painful budget plan that includes effective pension payment reductions, public service cuts, and elimination of two public holidays to increase revenue. This marks the third protest demonstration since last month.

(5) Principal and Another at Tsukuba Shuei High School Referred to Prosecutors for Labor Standards Act Violations

At Tsukuba Shuei High School in Tsukuba City, Ibaraki Prefecture, the Labour Standards Inspection Office referred the principal and another person to prosecutors on suspicion of violating the Labor Standards Act for having two teachers work overtime last year without properly concluding a so-called "Article 36 Agreement."

3. Situation/Statistics

(1) July Real Wages Revised Downward to -0.2% in Final Figures - Seventh Consecutive Month of Decline

According to the Monthly Labour Survey (final figures, establishments with 5 or more employees) for July announced by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on September 26, real wages excluding the effects of price fluctuations decreased 0.2% year-on-year. While the preliminary figures showed a 0.5% increase, this was revised downward by 0.7 percentage points. Real wages declined for the seventh consecutive month.

"Monthly Labour Survey July 2025 Final Results" September 26, 2025, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/itiran/roudou/monthly/r07/2507r/dl/pdf2507r.pdf

(2) Average Salary at Private Companies Last Year Hit Record High But "Can't Keep Up with Prices"

The average salary for people working at private companies last year was approximately 4.77 million yen, an increase of 180,000 yen from the previous year and a record high, according to a National Tax Agency survey. Experts point out, "While salaries are rising, the reality is they cannot keep up with price increases."
According to the "Private Sector Salary Survey" announced by the National Tax Agency on September 26, the average salary for approximately 51.37 million company employees and part-time workers who worked at private companies throughout last year was 4,775,000 yen.
Compared to the previous year, this increased by 180,000 yen, or 3.9%, exceeding the previous year for four consecutive years and marking the highest amount since statistics began using the current method in 2014. The growth rate was also a record high.
Breaking it down:
▽Regular employees: up 2.8% to 5,449,000 yen
▽Non-regular employees: up 2.2% to 2,063,000 yen
Salary growth was higher for regular employees.
By gender:
▽Men: up 3.2% to 5,867,000 yen
▽Women: up 5.5% to 3,332,000 yen

"FY 2023 Private Sector Salary Survey Results" September 26, 2025, National Tax Agency

https://www.nta.go.jp/information/release/kokuzeicho/2024/minkan_2024/pdf/01.pdf

(3) Food Price Increases in October: 3,024 Items According to Credit Research Company

Private research shows that food price increases in October will exceed 3,000 items, the highest level in six months since April.
According to a survey by private credit research company Teikoku Databank of 195 major

domestic food manufacturers, 3,024 food items will see price increases in October, up 3.4% from the same month last year.
This marks the first time exceeding 3,000 items since April, six months ago.
The cumulative total of food items announced for price increases by major food manufacturers for the one-year period through December 2025 reached 20,381 items, approximately 1.6 times last year's annual total.

"Price Revision Trend Survey (October 2025)" September 30, 2025, Teikoku Databank

https://bit.ly/tdb20250930

(4) Same-Sex Partners Also Eligible for Disaster Condolence Money - "May Be Included" Under 33 Laws and Regulations

Following a Supreme Court ruling in March last year that "same-sex partners may be eligible" for survivor benefits under the Act on Payment to Crime Victims, the government compiled interpretations on September 30 indicating that same-sex partners may also be included under nine laws and regulations, including the Disaster Condolence Money Payment Act, which provides up to 5 million yen to bereaved families of disaster victims.
Under the Act on Payment to Crime Victims, eligible spouses are defined to include "persons in circumstances similar to marriage in fact," and the question was whether this could include same-sex partners. Following the Supreme Court ruling, the government investigated whether similar interpretations could apply to laws with similar provisions.
According to the Cabinet Office, disaster condolence money paid to spouses and others of natural disaster victims had not previously recognized same-sex partners as eligible. The Cabinet Office notified local governments of the legal interpretation change. However, this will not apply retroactively to bereaved families from past disasters.

(5) Kansai Region to Face Shortage of Approximately 4.3 Million Workers by 2050 - Private Estimate

A private estimate indicates that labor shortages in the Kansai region will become more severe in the future, with approximately 4.3 million workers lacking in fields such as construction, services, and medical care/welfare by 2050.
This estimate is included in the "Kansai and the Asia Pacific Economic Outlook 2025," published by the Asia Pacific Institute of Research, a private think tank.
Based on population forecasts and projected growth rates by industry, estimates of labor supply and demand in 2050 indicate shortages of 547,000 workers in "construction," 1,831,000 in "accommodation and food services," and 1,927,000 in "medical care and welfare."
Based on these estimates, the white paper notes that to resolve labor shortages totaling approximately 4.3 million across these three fields, "how to accept foreign workers is crucial." However, even if the foreign population ratio in the six Kansai prefectures increases from the current 7% to just over 14%—close to Germany's current level—labor shortages would persist, the analysis shows.

(6) Japanese Teachers Have Longest Working Hours - "Teaching Time" Is Short Though - OECD International Survey

Japanese teachers have the longest working hours among major countries and report significantly increased perceptions of staff shortages.
This situation was highlighted on October 7 in results from the 2024 international survey published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
Working hours have decreased due to recent work-style reforms. However, as in the 2018 previous survey, they remained the longest among participating countries and regions.
The survey is the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). It examines teaching and school environments once every five years, centered on OECD member countries. The first was in 2008, making this the fourth. Delayed one year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was six years since the last survey.
Fifty-five countries and regions participated for lower secondary, and 16 for primary schools. Approximately 200 schools each for primary and lower secondary were sampled. In Japan, a total of 7,316 principals and teachers from national, public, and private schools responded.
Weekly working hours for Japan were 55.1 hours for lower secondary (full-time) and 52.1 hours for primary schools (full-time). Both decreased by 4 hours from the previous survey.
However, they were 14.1 hours longer than the international average (OECD average for lower secondary, participating country average for primary schools) for lower secondary and 11.7 hours longer for primary schools.
For lower secondary, compared to major countries, Japanese teachers worked 9.8 hours longer than the United States, 12.0 hours longer than South Korea, and 16.4 hours longer than France. Japan's long working hours stood out.
Looking at types of work, characteristics become pronounced.
Teaching time was 17.8 hours, shorter than the international average (22.7 hours).
Other time was longer.
While Japan decreased from the previous survey by 2.5 hours for extracurricular activities, 0.7 hours for lesson preparation, and 0.9 hours for administrative work, these remained longer than overseas.

"Current Status and Challenges of Japanese Teachers – From TALIS 2024 Results –" October 7, 2025, National Institute for Educational Policy Research

https://www.nier.go.jp/kokusai/talis/pdf/talis2024_point.pdf

(7) August Real Wages -1.4%, Eighth Consecutive Decline - Special Payments Turn Negative = Monthly Labour Survey

According to the August Monthly Labour Survey (preliminary) published by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on October 8, real wages excluding the effects of price fluctuations from nominal wages decreased 1.4% year-on-year. This marked the eighth consecutive month of decline, with the negative margin expanding from -0.2% in July. While price growth has somewhat moderated, special payments corresponding to summer bo-

nuses turned negative year-on-year, slowing nominal wage growth.

"Monthly Labour Survey August 2025 Preliminary Results" October 8, 2025, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/itiran/roudou/monthly/r07/2508p/dl/pdf2508p.pdf