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## HIGH COURT CONFIRMS PUBLIC SERVICE STRIKE INTERDICT VALID DESPITE CHALLENGE



The National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) employees embarked on a national strike in Pietermaritzburg yesterday. The East Boom Clinic was closed, forcing patients to go home unattended. **PHOTO: NWABISO DLAMINI**

Members of Nehawu are pictured seating outside the East Boom Street Clinic yesterday. **PHOTO: NWABISO DLAMINI**

### LONDIWE XULU

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) said the national public servants' strike was again yesterday interdicted by the Johannesburg high court.

Addressing the media in the afternoon, the acting minister of the DPSA, Thulas Nxesi, said they went back to court after Nehawu appealed the court's interdict granted on Saturday.

"The court said the strike is interdicted even though they were trying to challenge it.

"We expect workers to go back to work. We appeal to the leadership of the union that they should abide by the decision of the court.

"We are continuing with engagements with other unions.

"If we reach an agreement with the other unions, we will implement it and that's why we appeal to those

striking on the street to come back to the negotiations and engage with us," said Nxesi.

The department said there were disruptions in some provinces, but not in the Harry Gwala Region, whose members are based in Pietermaritzburg as well as the region.

Patients at the East Boom Community Health Centre, in Pietermaritzburg, were among those affected by the strike as they were locked out of the clinic by employees who they said told them they were not working.

Nehawu secretary in the Harry Gwala District, Mazwi Ngubane, said the strike was due to a wage dispute with government and its employees.

Ngubane said employees under Nehawu decided to embark on a national strike and closed their workplaces demanding a 10% increase.

"Last year, government implemented a three percent increment even though our demand was 10%, and this didn't sit well with the employees.

"It's enough now, the cost of living is increasing and employees are suffering.

"The protest will continue until government gives us the percentage we want, which is seven percent from last year and then discuss this year's increase," said Ngubane.

He said a number of government departments were closed yesterday, including Doris Goodwin Tuberculosis Hospital, uMngeni Hospital, local emergency medical services, the KwaPata and Azalea clinics, Department of Education, Department of Public Works and other departments.

"Grey's Hospital was not affected in the morning but no one will be working the night shift after en-

gaging with the workers," said Ngubane.

Although it was a peaceful strike with workers singing outside their workplaces, tyres were burnt in some areas, including outside uMngeni Hospital.

The department said some of the Nehawu members were arrested yesterday across the country.

Pietermaritzburg police spokesperson, Sergeant Sifiso Gwala, said there were no reported major disruptions in Pietermaritzburg.

A number of patients who were outside the closed East Boom Community Health Centre said the strike had a huge impact on their health.

One of the women, who was carrying a baby, said both of them ran out of medication and had an appointment to collect more.

The woman, who asked not to be named, said she was from France and there were no clinics close by

which is why she attended East Boom.

"I arrived around 7 am and we all waited at a tent before they told us they were not working. They said all clinics were closed and they were not sure when the protest will end but we'll hear on the news.

"My child has flu and I was hoping we'd get medication and I also had a doctor's appointment," the woman said.

Another woman, who said she was down to her last pill, said she felt defeated when she was told the clinic was closed. She said she was at the clinic by 5.30 am hoping she would get her medication early and leave.

"This is an inconvenience for us because we had appointments. We don't know when or where we'll get our medication now since we were told no one knows when this strike will end," she said.