

Master of the High Court's office in KZN too hot for work, staffers complain

IOL - 19 Feb 2020

Master of the High Court's office in KZN too hot for work, staffers complain News / 19 February 2020, 3:31pm / Mervyn Naidoo Some of the workers from the Durban Master's office who are unhappy with their working conditions DURBAN - Employees of Master of the High Court's office in Durban downed tools on Monday over the "unconducive working conditions" they have been subjected to for the past 10 years. The employees' "sit-in" reached day three on Wednesday. They plan to continue with their protest until next Monday, February 24, unless an amicable resolution is reached with their employers, the Department of Justice. A major gripe for the workers are some of the air conditioning units in their building that has been on the blink for as long as 10 years. They have now resorted to protest action because their discontent had reached "boiling point", which has been exacerbated by Durban's recent scorching conditions. Despite reporting complaints to their bosses, the workers claimed that their appeals had fallen on deaf ears. The impasse between the workers and the department has resulted in service delivery at the Masters Office on Devonshire Place, near Anton (Smith) Street, being halted. Some of the affected services provided by this office include the handling of deceased estates, liquidations, registration of trusts, and the administration of guardian funds (minors and mentally challenged persons). Kisten Subbadu of the Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) said the recent high temperatures had made working conditions for workers unbearable. "We have also noticed that the building's windows are fixed and cannot be opened, which makes for a fertile breeding ground for airborne bacteria and viruses. Subbadu said he visited the building on Tuesday and within a few minutes he experienced discomfort. "I found the humidity index levels inside the building to be very high," Subbadu said. He said he understood that fixing the building couldn't be done overnight, but the PSA required a firm commitment from the various parties involved as a way forward. "The landlord has given us a commitment that the water cooling tower will be installed by Monday. We welcome that as a step forward, but we are yet to receive official confirmation." Subbadu claimed that the plight of the workers, regarding the building's conditions, were raised with the employer over the past 10 years but all they got was "empty promises" . "We walked out on Monday and we will continue with the sit-in until Monday (February 24). The workers will only return to work on condition the building is fit for human occupation. "The matter has now reached boiling point," said Subbadu. The Department of Justice and the Department of Labour are yet to respond. SUNDAY TRIBUNE