

## Nehawu slams government over payment of workers

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Picture: African News Agency (ANA).Nehawu slams government over payment of workers By Loyiso Sidimba 40m ago Share this article: ShareTweetShareShareShareEmail Johannesburg - The country's biggest public sector trade union has slammed the government for blaming the Covid-19 pandemic and the country's economic woes for its plans not to increase its 1.3 million employees' salaries from Wednesday. Cosatu affiliate, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu), described the government's claims that the coronavirus outbreak, the declaration of a technical recession and the recent credit rating downgrade by Moody's, have brought much more pressure on depleted state resources as "very disingenuous and insulting". The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) has indicated that it continues to look for solutions including from more engagements between the government and labour to try and deal with present realities. The DPSA warned that there would be no short cuts and options to deal with the deadlock were extremely limited. "We want to reiterate that government remains committed to the implementation of the 2018 wage agreement notwithstanding the aforesaid difficulties, at stake is how to do it, and this matters most," said Public Service and Administration Minister Senzo Mchunu in a statement. However, Nehawu has expressed its unhappiness with the government, saying it is clutching at straws in trying to explain its inability to pay workers what is due to them and in the process using blackmail to absolve itself. "Every excuse that government is trying to use to justify renegeing on the implementation of the agreement happened way after they made their intention to opt out of the agreement," the union stated. Nehawu has threatened the government with major and unprecedented consequences if the government does not implement the agreement, which is in its final year, and also accused it of undermining collective bargaining processes. "We will be mobilising our members for the mother of all fights against the onslaught by the government," said the union, reminding the state that the national lockdown was not perpetual. Nehawu also warned that after the lockdown its members and workers will emerge militant, strong, energised and inspired to pick up a real fight with the government either to render the system unworkable or the state ungovernable. Mchunu said his department is seized with the matter and recognises the need to handle everything with utmost sensitivity, respect and integrity. The DPSA has undertaken to adhere to all protocols of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council. On Wednesday, Independent Media reported that the 230 000-member Public Servants Association also warned the government not to exploit the Covid-19-forced lockdown not to implement pay hikes between 4.4% and 5.4% depending on salary level from April 1. Political Bureau \* For the latest on the Covid-19 outbreak visit IOL's #Coronavirus trend page \*\* If you think you have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus, please call the government's 24-hour hotline on 0800 029 999 or go to SA Coronavirus for more information