

North MCD doctors threaten strike

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SENIOR AND resident doctors employed at hospitals under the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) staged a mass casual leave on Friday demanding payment of their salaries for the past three-four months, and said that they would launch an indefinite strike from Monday if authorities did not relent.

Last week, the resident doctors' association of the NDMC had written to the commissioner making the demand and informing him of their plans for a strike.

This is the second time during the pandemic that doctors of the MCD have protested against non-

payment of salaries — the earlier strike began in June and continued till October.

At Hindu Rao Hospital near North Campus, a general body meeting was held Friday afternoon, attended by the members of Municipal Corporation Doctors' Association (MCDA), which represents around 1,200 doctors across health centres of the North MCD, as well as the Resident Doctors' Association.

Dr R R Gautam, president of the MCDA, said, "We have not been paid for three-four months, and we are defaulting on loans and payments for our children's education. I had to borrow for my daughter's education — after three decades of service. It is deeply unfortunate that we have

to do this to get our basic due."

Dr Maruti Sinha, the general secretary and a doctor at the Kasturba Gandhi hospital, said, "We are defaulting on loans, and are not able to save for our children's education... If the MCD cannot afford to keep the administration running, they can hand the hospital over to the state or central government, or find some solution to this. Irregular payments have become a norm since 2015."

When contacted, NDMC mayor Jai Prakash told *The Indian Express*, "It is not right to call strike at every small matter. We shall give them their salaries by next week — at least a month's salary."

Dr Dharmender, treasurer of the MCDA, said that if salaries are not paid by Monday, an indefinite

strike will begin. "We worked through Covid, with doctors dying of the disease, and now we seem to be entering a second wave. The vaccination process is going on. All services shall be hit if we go on strike."

Resident doctors of the North MCD as well as healthcare staff such as nurses will join the strike. Indumati Jamwal, president of the nurses' welfare association, representing around 700 nurses across the MCD, said they have not been paid for January and February.

Abhimanyu Sardana, president of the resident doctors' association, said, "Today, only emergency services were running. As of now, we haven't received any word from the administration on payment of salaries."