

National health mission workers demand regularisation of jobs

DEHRADUN: Over 2,600 employees of the National Health Mission (NHM) in Uttarakhand went on a strike on Friday, crippling the health facilities in the hilly areas of the state. The workers are demanding regularisation of jobs in the health department where they have been working on contract for over a decade.

More than 400 doctors, 465 nurses, 145 pharmacists, 395 Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) and 230 data entry officers protested outside the chief medical officers in their respective districts. With workers not reporting for duty, facilities in far-flung ANM centres, Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres were hard-hit.

The 10 hill districts are heavily dependent upon NHM workers to provide health facilities. Disappointed patients in various centres had to return as vaccination of newborns, check-up of expecting mothers and distribution of medicines came to a halt.

Sanjay Chouhan, chairman of the NHM employees' association, said, "We want all those workers who have been working for over five years in the department to be regularised. We will not call off the strike unless the state government takes some positive step in favour of NHM workers."

The workers are also demanding a Human resource policy and removal of disparity in the salary of NHM workers and those who are regular employees of the health department.

The workers have protested several times in the past as well but were assured by the health minister and the chief minister that their demands would be looked into.