

## UIF intervenes in Qebherha taxi industry protests over Ters benefits

The Department of Employment and Labour has begun an intervention process into the stalemate between the taxi industry and other groupings in Qebherha over Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (Ters).



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In a statement, the department said it had on Monday deployed a team of senior managers to meet the leadership of various taxi associations and taxi drivers, Eastern Cape South African National Taxi Council and the Provincial Department of Transport. The meeting was chaired by Nelson Mandela Bay executive mayor Nqaba Bongo.

This intervention came two weeks after taxi drivers in the city embarked on a strike complaining about the irregular disbursement Ters benefits.

“In the meeting, the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) outlined the Covid-19 Ters application and payment process, and indicated that a payment of R19.7 million was paid to Eastern Cape Transport Tertiary Co-operative, which submitted the Ters application on behalf of various companies including bus companies and taxi associations,” the department said in the statement.

In preparation for the meeting, taxi associations were requested to provide ID copies of all taxi drivers to enable UIF to check status of claims submitted on their behalf.

The Fund confirmed that about 5,963 copies were received and 5,757 claims were paid to the tune of R25 million.

The department said some identity numbers from individual taxi drivers were tested against the Covid-19 Ters online system during the meeting, and it was clear that for some taxi drivers Covid-19 Ters claims were never made because they could not be found in the system.

The executive mayor stressed the importance of individual drivers to check their status on the Ters online portal themselves.

"We appreciate that the Department of Employment and Labour has provided objective tools that will enable taxi drivers to check for themselves if an application was made for them, and secondly they can also be able to see how much they have been paid," he said.

He requested that taxi associations assist drivers by making the Ters payments information available and encouraged those with grievances to first consult with the taxi associations, and if dissatisfied, take the matters to the department.

"The UIF indicated that a team of auditing firms was appointed to follow all payments done on all applications received since the inception of Ters, and where fraud is suspected payments are immediately blocked and initial investigation is carried out by the Risk and Fraud Prevention Unit of the UIF.

"In cases where fraud is confirmed, the case is referred to law enforcement agencies for further investigation and possible prosecution," said the department.

A follow up meeting will be scheduled where all stakeholders will be invited to apprise the leadership of taxi drivers and associations about further details on Ters payments.

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