

Two-Month Strike in Brazil Harms Blood Banks and Medicine Imports

Contributed by Vladimir Platonow
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The directorate of Brazil's National Health Surveillance Agency (Anvisa) sent a proposal yesterday, April 25, to reopen negotiations with its employees, who have been on strike since February 21.

This information comes from Anvisa's manager of Health Surveillance in Ports, Airports, and Borders, Paulo Ricardo Nunes.

According to Nunes, negotiations will only resume when the strike ends. When it does, the government pledges to submit to Congress a project to restructure posts and, within 30 days, to discuss salary equivalence between older employees and the recently hired ones admitted by civil service exams.

"We know that the strike is causing problems for the population, but we are adopting all possible measures to minimize the impact, guaranteeing that a minimum of 30% of the employees are working and releasing essential medications," Nunes told reporters.

In consequence of the strike, various items, mostly medicines, have been retained in ports and airports for lack of inspection. According to Cláudio Marques, executive secretary of the Brazilian Association of Importers of Medical and Hospital Equipment, Products, and Supplies (ABIMED), around 11 thousand laboratory exams are not being performed in São Paulo alone for want of reagents.

Marques says that the strike has also affected São Paulo blood banks, which are unable to release blood, because they don't have the material they need to analyze blood quality.

He estimates that the pharmaceutical industry has incurred losses exceeding US\$ 330 million (700 million reais). "The one hurt the most is the consumer, who needs medications and doesn't have them," he observed.

Yesterday, Anvisa employees undertook a slowdown operation at the Tom Jobim Airport, in Rio de Janeiro. They took a stricter approach to inspecting hygiene conditions on board airplanes.

According to the communications office of the Airport Infrastructure Company (Infraero), the operation did cause delays in takeoffs and landings.

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