

Public univ shutdown continues

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Teachers of public universities across Bangladesh continued their indefinite work abstention programme for the eighth consecutive day on Monday, pressing for the cancellation of the new universal pension scheme made mandatory for new recruits.

On the same day, road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader, also the general secretary of the ruling Awami League, held a meeting with five other ministers and state ministers regarding the ongoing teachers' movement and students' protests against the quota system in government jobs.



Leaders of the protesting teachers, however, reported that no one from the government contacted them after the meeting. Consequently, no classes or examinations were held in the universities, and the general staff, who joined the strike, also continued their work stoppage, paralysing academic activities.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association called for a boycott of classes, examinations, and administrative work starting from July 1, when the pension scheme 'Prattay' came into effect. The teachers termed it discriminatory and demanded its cancellation, alongside advocating for an independent pay structure for public university teachers.

The protesting teachers argued that the Prattay scheme would discourage meritorious students from joining the teaching profession, labelling it as a conspiracy to destroy the education system.

The ministers present at the meeting with Obaidul Quader included law minister Anisul Huq, education minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, state minister for primary and mass education Rumana Ali, state minister for information and broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat, and deputy education minister Begum Shamsun Nahar. The meeting took place at the Awami League president Sheikh Hasina's political office at Dhanmondi in Dhaka, sources in the party said.

None of the ministers, however, spoke to journalists after the closed-door meeting.

Prior to the meeting, at a press briefing held at the office, Quader mentioned that they maintained communication with the teachers, although no formal meeting had yet taken place.

He emphasised that decisions should be based on practical situations and positions.

A scheduled meeting between the protesting teachers and Obaidul Quader, meanwhile, was not held on July 4.

Professor Md Akhtarul Islam, president of both the teachers' federation and the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Teachers' Association, stated that as of Monday evening, no one from the government had contacted them for a meeting.

New Age Dhaka University correspondent reported that university teachers, officers, and employees observed the work abstention for the eighth consecutive day, paralysing academic and administrative activities.

At a noon sit-in protest, DU Teachers' Association president and secretary general of FBUTA professor Md Nizamul Hoque Bhuiyan declared that they would not return to classes until their demands were met.

Officials and employees of DU also held a large procession on the campus.

Jahangirnagar University correspondent reported that the university teachers and employees continued their strike, with the JU Teachers Association and JU Officers' Association holding separate sit-ins on the campus and warning of tougher movements if their demands were not soon met.

Rajshahi correspondent reported that academic and administrative activities at Rajshahi University and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology were halted on Monday as teachers, officials, and employees continued their strike, including holding a sit-in programme on campuses.

Chattogram correspondent reported similar strikes by teachers, officials, and employees at Chittagong University, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University.

New Age Sylhet correspondent reported that teachers, officers, and employees of SUST and Sylhet Agricultural University continued the strike with rallies and demonstrations.

Barishal correspondent reported that the strike of teachers at Barishal University also continued.

United News of Bangladesh reported that members of Muktijoddha Santan Command organised a human chain on Bangladesh Agricultural University campus, calling for the withdrawal of the pension scheme.

Teachers of the university also continued their strike on the same day.