

# Public univ teachers in Bangladesh mull new programme as strike on

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The teachers of public universities are planning for new programmes to press for their demand for cancellation of the new universal pension scheme made mandatory for new recruits.

'Very soon we will take a new all-out programme after discussing with the teachers' leaders of all public universities,' Professor Md Akhtarul Islam, president of the Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association told New Age on Wednesday.



He said that no teacher would go back to classes until their demands were met.

The teachers of public universities continued their indefinite work abstention programme for the 10th day running on Wednesday, while sit-in programmes were staged on some campuses on the day.

No classes and examinations were held in the universities and almost all administrative work was also closed on the day.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association enforced a boycott of classes and examinations starting from July 1, when the pension scheme 'Prattay' came into effect. The general staff of the universities also joined the strike, halting the administrative activities.

Terming it discriminatory, the teachers demanded its cancellation while 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.

As till Wednesday evening no one from the government contacted them for a meeting, now they were planning for a new programme, said Professor Akhtarul Islam, also president of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology

Teachers' Association.

'Soon the teachers' associations at the universities will send recommendations to the federation on new programmes after holding meetings,' he said, adding, 'we will announce our new programme soon.'

A scheduled meeting between the protesting teachers and road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader was not held on July 4.

New Age Dhaka University correspondent reported that the teachers' federation and the Dhaka University teachers' association jointly staged a sit-in in front of the main gate of the Faculty of Arts building on the campus on Wednesday afternoon.

Dhaka university teachers' association general secretary Professor Zeenat Huda said that their movement was clearly not against the government.

The university's employees and officers unity council also joined the work abstention on the day.

New Age Rajshahi correspondent reported that the teachers, officials and employees of Rajshahi University and the Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology on Wednesday continued their indefinite strike.

Addressing a sit-in, Rajshahi University Teachers' Association president Professor Habibur Rahman said that after retirement their only support would be the pension money which the government wanted to take away.

'It is also being taken away now,' he said, adding, 'we will not return to the classrooms until our demands are met.'

Due to the teachers' strike, service seekers, especially those who were processing academic papers for going abroad for higher studies, faced serious setbacks.

Sabrina Doris, who has recently completed her post-graduation in English from Rajshahi University, told New Age that several Australian universities asked her to submit academic documents for a scholarship for higher studies.

'I went to the university twice in the current week only to be turned away. The staff said that they could not help me until their strike ends,' she said.

Jahangirnagar University correspondent also reported that the striking teachers staged a sit-in front of the social sciences faculty building on the campus while its officers' association and employee association held another protest programme in front of the new admin building on the day.

Chattogram correspondent reported similar paralysing situation as teachers, officials and employees continued the strike at Chittagong University, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University.

Teachers, officials and employees of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Jagannath University, SUST, Barishal University, Khulna University of Engineering and Technology and Bangladesh Textile University also observed the strike for the 10th consecutive day along with other public universities.

Among the 55 public universities in the country, 35, which are represented by the teachers' federation, had been affected by the strike, the federation leaders said.

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