

Public univ teachers determined to continue shutdown

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Public university teachers across the country decided on Sunday to continue their indefinite work abstention programme until all their demands, particularly the demand for cancellation of the new universal pension scheme Prattay, were met.

Same day, prime minister Sheikh Hasina at a press conference at her official Ganabhaban residence said that the protesting teachers had some confusions about the pension scheme.



She said, showing a file on her desk, that she had kept notes and already informed the teachers about the points. 'Still they are continuing the strike and so be it,' she said, adding, 'let them become tired, then I will say something.'

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Associations enforced a boycott of classes and examinations from July 1, the day when the pension scheme came into effect.

They continued the strike on Sunday for the 14th day running shutting all academic activities.

The general staff of the universities also joined the strike, halting the administrative activities.

Terming the scheme discriminatory, they also demanded inclusion of public university teachers in super grade in which the senior secretaries get salary and an independent pay structure for public university teachers.

The teachers took the decision of continuing the strike after a meeting on Saturday with ruling Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader who urged the teachers to call off their strike, assuring them of considering their demands later.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, told reporters at the AL president's Dhanmondi office that the teachers would come under the pension scheme from July 2025, not from this year.

A gazette notification issued on March 14, however, made it mandatory for all officials and employees who would join state-owned autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies from July 1, 2024 onwards to be included in the new pension

instrument.

Professor Akhtarul Islam, president of both of the teachers' federation and the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Teachers' Association, told New Age on Sunday that their prime demand was to keep the teachers out of the purview of the scheme and not to defer the inclusion process.

'As none of our demands are met till now we will continue the strike,' he said and mentioned that the decision was taken at an online meeting held by the federation with all its members.

Among the 55 public universities in the country, 35 are represented by the teachers' federation as these have vice-chancellors and other key officials and have ongoing academic activities, the federation leaders said.

Professor Akhtarul Islam about the prime minister's speech said that they were happy that the primer was already aware of their strike.

'Though we are not confused, we will wait to meet the prime minister to uphold our demands,' he added.

New Age Dhaka University correspondent reported that the Dhaka University Teachers' Association staged a sit-in on campus on Sunday.

The university's employees and officers unity council also joined the work abstention on the day by holding a demonstration in front of the university registrar's building.

Jahangirnagar University correspondent reported on the day that the university's teachers' association held a sit-in on the campus.

'As our demands have not been met yet, we will carry on the protest', said association president Professor Motahar Hossain.

The university's officers' association and staff association also observed a half-day work abstention on the day pressing for the same demands.

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

As the strike continues, service seekers particularly those who were planning to go abroad for higher studies and job aspirants, all coming to their universities to collect academic documents, continue to suffer.

Md Sumon, a former student of the Rajshahi University English department who visited the campus on Sunday, told New Age that he went to the university administrative building to collect his graduation and post-graduation mark-sheets as he was required to submit them for a job.

'The authorities that will recruit me have asked me to submit the academic certificates and transcripts within the next two weeks. However, the university staff told me that I will not get any academic documents until the strike ends,' he said.

New Age Chattogram correspondent reported a similar situation as teachers, officers and other staff continued the work abstention programme at Chittagong University, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University.