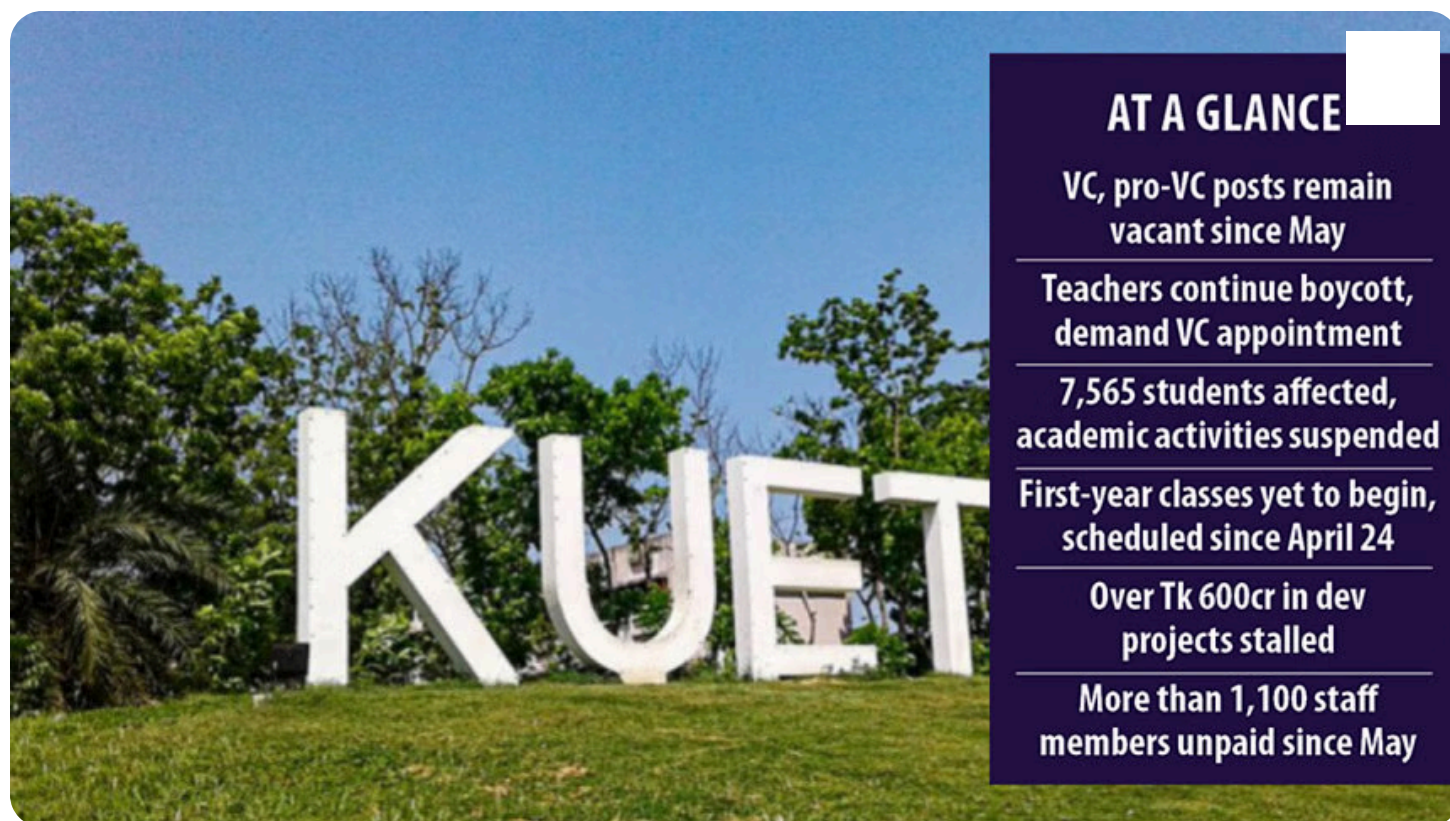


# Kuet shutdown drags on for 133rd day

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The suspension of academic activities at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) entered its 133rd day today, following violent clashes involving students and teachers on February 18.

In response to the unrest, the Ministry of Education removed then vice-chancellor Prof Muhammad Masud and pro-VC Prof Shariful Alam on April 25, appointing Prof Md Hazrat Ali of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology as interim VC on May 1.

However, he resigned on May 22, citing pressure and lack of support from the Kuet Teachers' Association.

Since then, both the VC and pro-VC posts have remained vacant, paralysing the university's administrative functions, including salary disbursements, project payments, and academic decisions, as the VC's signature is mandatory for all official transactions.

Despite a directive from the education ministry to resume academic activities from May 4, the teachers' association has boycotted all academic and administrative responsibilities.

Prof Md Faruq Hossain, the association's general secretary, said, "Our previous stance remains unchanged. We've discussed in detail how academic and administrative decisions cannot be made without a VC. In his absence, it is not possible to overcome the ongoing crisis. Therefore, we urge the government to immediately appoint a new VC to resolve the stalemate at Kuet. Until then, classes will not resume."

The teachers have also reiterated their demand for justice, calling for disciplinary action against some students and "outsiders", who allegedly harassed faculty members during the earlier unrest.

The stalemate has left the academic future of 7,565 students in limbo, with all classes and examinations suspended. Newly enrolled first-year students, scheduled to begin classes on April 24, are yet to commence their academic journey.

"We are lagging behind in studies due to the prolonged shutdown. We prayed to our teachers to resume classes but they did not respond," said Rahatul Islam, a student of the Civil Engineering department.

Meanwhile, administrative and financial functions remain stalled due to the vacant top positions. The paralysis threatens infrastructure projects worth over Tk 600 crore, including a 10-storey academic building, separate 10-storey dormitories for male and female students, a five-storey foreign student and visiting faculty dormitory, residential quarters for staff and faculty, roads, substations, solar systems, green boundary walls, and drainage systems.

Since Ramadan, contractor payments have been halted due to the lack of a VC's signature.

Dr Zulfiqar Hossain, director of Kuet's Infrastructure and Academic Expansion Project, warned that all development work may come to a halt unless a new VC is appointed soon.

More than 1,100 teachers, officers, and staff have not received their salaries since May.

The education ministry issued a circular on June 4 inviting applications for the VC's post. The deadline ended on June 26, leaving little time for resolution before the end of the fiscal year on June 30. If the university fails to utilise its allocated revenue budget by then, it risks forfeiting the funds.

On June 22, officers and staff leaders sent a letter to the education adviser requesting interim measures to allow salary disbursement and continuation of administrative activities.

Earlier, registrar Engineer Md Anisur Rahman Bhuiyan wrote to the ministry on May 29 regarding the matter, but no directive has been issued so far.