

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Teachers threaten non-stop strike

Ask govt to meet their demand by this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing an ultimatum to the government, agitating teachers of public universities yesterday threatened to go for an indefinite work stoppage from November 1 if their demands, including implementation of a separate pay scale, are not met.

"We hope and believe that we'll get a fair and acceptable solution by October 31. Otherwise, we'll have no other option but to

go for a non-stop work stoppage as we've been under intense pressure from our colleagues," Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed, president of FBUTA, told newsmen after a meeting with the education minister.

He, however, said they will conduct all examinations and admission tests to be held this month.

Earlier in the morning, the leaders of Federation of Bangladesh University

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Teachers Association (FBUTA) at a central committee meeting at Dhaka University decided to go for the non-stop agitation.

A 15-member FBUTA delegation, led by Prof Farid, met Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at the latter's office at the secretariat around 3:30pm. It was the second meeting between the minister and the university teachers since the cabinet approved the eighth national pay scale on September 7.

"We categorically said that we are not waging a movement for salaries and allowances. Rather, we want to ensure our dignity. The teachers would not accept if their dignity is compromised," Prof Farid said.

He said they are concerned about students' education and do not want their studies and exams get disrupted. "But we're under pressure from the teachers. Five months have passed. If no solution is reached after six months, things will be out of our control."

The teachers said their main

demand is a separate pay scale. If the government forms a commission to implement the pay scale, there would be permanent solution to the problem, they observed.

The minister said he learnt about the teachers' demands and will take them to the cabinet committee of which he is also a member.

"Once the finance minister returns home from abroad, a meeting of the committee will be convened. I will present and discuss our teachers' demands there," mentioned Nahid.

The government on September 18 reconstituted the committee to review the complaints of discrimination in the eighth pay scale.

Nahid said he will try to do everything possible to keep the dignity of teachers unimpaired as the government gives utmost priority to them.

Asked whether he agrees with the teachers' four-point demand, the minister said he would not have sat with the teachers if he had not agreed on the demands.

Queried whether the teachers have any reservation over the finance minister being at the helm of the cabinet committee, Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, secretary general of FBUTA, said they would greet the committee if their demands are met by October 31.

Teachers of all 37 public universities under the banner of FBUTA have been staging protests since May to press home their demands.

They intensified their agitation after the approval of the national pay scale as they complained that the post of selection grade professors (senior teachers) has been abolished in the new pay structure, although bureaucrats have got a special grade for themselves.

The teachers demanded revision of the pay scale and fixing of salaries of senior professors in grade-1, professors in grade-2, associate professors in grade-3, and assistant professors in grade-4 until the government formulates a separate pay structure for them.