

# Teachers continue pay-scale protest

World Teachers Day today

WASIM BIN HABIB

As more than a hundred countries observe the World Teachers Day today, around 4.5 lakh teachers in Bangladesh are waging movement over pay and due dignity.

The teachers -- from government primary schools to state-run universities -- have been observing work abstention and other protest programmes for around a month in protest against the eighth pay scale.

They say the new pay scale has scrapped some benefits

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## Teachers continue

FROM PAGE 16

they have long been enjoying and demanded that government fulfil its electoral pledges of constituting a separate pay scale for them.

They have also threatened to go for a non-stop movement and refrain from admission tests and public examinations, but the government seems to be "indifferent to diffusing their dissatisfaction".

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid sat with the university teachers and assured them that the government was working to solve their problems. His assurance, however, did not pacify their grievances.

He will sit with them tomorrow again.

Amid such realities, the day will be observed with the slogan "Empowering teachers, building sustainable societies".

Teachers of all 37 public universities under the banner of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association (FBUTA) have been voicing protests since May and abstaining from work to press home their four-point demands including a separate pay scale.

Terming the new pay scale to be effective from July "discriminatory", they said the post of selection grade professors [senior teachers] has been abolished, although bureaucrats have got a special grade for themselves.

At loggerheads with the government, the agitating teachers warned that if their demands were not met soon, the university admission tests starting from October 9 might be hampered.

"We hope that we won't have to go for a tougher movement as he [the minister] has assured us of meeting our demands. Let's see what happens in the meeting," said Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, secretary general of FBUTA.

"We'll announce our next programme on that day [October 6]," he told The Daily Star.

The other demands include keeping senior professors and senior secretaries on the same level of pay structure and ensuring benefits enjoyed by the same grade of government officials.

There are more than 13,000 teachers at 37 public universities in the country, around 15,000 teachers at public colleges and around 4 lakh teachers at around 63,000 government

primary schools.

Teachers of government colleges are also waging a movement protesting against cancellation of selection grade and time scale. They also observed work abstention three times last month.

BCS General Education Association, a platform of teachers and officials belonging to the education cadre, organised the demonstration to press home their four-point demand, including reinstating the selection grade and time scale and upgrading salary of different posts under this cadre.

IK Selim Ullah Khondaker, secretary general of BCS General Education Association, said they would form human chains at all government colleges on October 7 and refrain from taking classes on October 14-15.

The teachers are going to stage a sit-in before the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education on October 18.

As per their pre-announcement, assistant teachers of the government primary schools yesterday observed work stoppage for four hours to press home their demands including upgrading their salary up to 11th grade and reinstating the selection grade.

The teachers, under the banner of Primary Assistant Teachers Federation, a platform of four organisations of assistant teachers, said they would observe a daylong work abstention on October 10 at all state-run schools.

"The head teachers do mostly managerial jobs. It is us who mainly teach the children, but we are deprived," said Shahinur Al-Amin, president of the federation.

The trained assistant teachers are now enjoying 13th grade and the non-trained teachers the 14th grade in pay structure.

"We will assemble 50,000 teachers from across the country and observe a token hunger strike on October 15 in front of Jatiya Press Club," he said.

The teachers are set to boycott the primary terminal examinations if their demands are not met.

The head teachers of government primary schools have also been staging protests under different banners to press home a seven-point demand including upgrading their status.

In a unique protest, the head teachers cover their office chairs with a piece of black cloth and keep standing during office hours every day.