

Teacher strike paralyses public universities across Bangladesh

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BUET Teachers' Association stages a demonstration, demanding the cancellation of the universal pension scheme, on the university campus in Dhaka on the first day of public university teachers' strike on Monday. | Sony Ramany

Academic activities in public universities in Bangladesh came to a standstill on Monday as teachers started work abstention for an indefinite period, demanding the cancellation of the universal pension scheme made mandatory for newly-appointed teachers.

No classes or examinations were held in the universities, while in most of the universities, administrative work also remained suspended.



The teachers vowed to continue their protests until their demands were fulfilled. The general staff of different universities also joined the strike, expressing solidarity with teachers.

The newly introduced pension instrument is meant for newcomers to state-owned autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association called for a boycott of classes, examinations, and administrative work a day before the start of the implementation of a scheme titled Prattay.

Teachers said that the new pension instrument introduced by the National Pension Authority was discriminatory and demanded the cancellation of the scheme and an independent pay structure for university teachers.

Meritorious students will feel discouraged from taking teaching as a profession, they said, calling the new pension scheme a conspiracy to destroy the education system.

New Age correspondents from different universities reported that the strike was enforced on Monday morning.

Dhaka University correspondent reported that the teachers, officers, and employees observed a full-day work abstention on the first day by boycotting all classes and examinations, leaving academic activities at the university at a standstill.

All official work was also suspended on Monday.

Earlier on Sunday, the DU examination controller's office postponed the examination through a notification.

At a rally held on the campus, DU Teachers' Association general secretary, professor Zeenat Huda, said that they were yet to hear from any level of the government regarding their demands.

DU pro-vice-chancellor (administration) professor Md Samad said that they would take further steps by observing the situation for a few more days.

The DU Officers and Employees Unity Council also joined the strike on Monday.

Many officers and employees were seen chanting slogans in front of the Registrar's Building against the scheme.

The DU administration, however, observed “Dhaka University Day” at TSC on Monday in the presence of some teachers, marking the founding anniversary of the university.

New Age correspondent in Chattogram reported that academic and administrative activities at Chittagong University, Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology, and Chittagong Veterinary and Animal Science University came to a standstill on the day.

Regular classes and exams, evening programmes, professional programmes, online classes and offline classes, and administrative activities at these universities have remained suspended since morning.

Jahangirnagar University correspondent reported that all academic and administrative activities were boycotted by teachers under the banner of the JU Teachers Association.

Along with classes, the teachers suspended the scheduled final examination of the Institute of Business Administration.

At least 14 departments of the university suspended their tutorials as part of the protest.

The acting teachers of the university central library, provosts of halls, deans of faculties, directors of institutions, and directors of research centres, among others, halted their administrative activities.

The JU Officers’ Association also observed a half-day work abstention programme on Monday.

New Age correspondent in Rajshahi reported that teachers at Rajshahi University and Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology boycotted all classes and examinations for an indefinite period starting Monday.

However, the offices and classrooms of most departments were seen open on both campuses.

Professor M Humayun Kabir, RU pro-vice-chancellor (academic) of Rajshahi University, said that though they had boycotted all classes, some administrative work had been done on the day.

New Age correspondent in Sylhet reported that teachers at the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology joined the strike on the first day of their indefinite work abstention.

Officials and employees of the university also joined the strike, expressing their solidarity.

Besides, teachers at Sylhet Agricultural University and Habiganj Agricultural University also began observing the indefinite work abstention.

Teachers at Jagannath University, Khulna University, Barishal University, and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology also observed the strike.

In a statement issued on Monday, the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front expressed their solidarity with the teachers’ movement, by terming the scheme discriminatory.

Published on March 14, the gazette made it mandatory for all officials and employees who will join state-owned autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies from July 1, 2024 onwards, to be included in the new pension instrument.

The new pension scheme will not apply to government officials.

The new teachers under the Prattay would have to contribute around 10 per cent to the pension scheme and a similar amount to the provident fund, which teachers said would be burdensome for them at the start of their careers.