

PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Muhith, Nahid discuss teachers' demands

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The government is now looking for alternative ways to give public university teachers the benefits of selection grade and time scale which have been dropped from the national pay scale.

The cabinet committee, formed on September 16, will work to find alternatives so that the dignity of teachers remains unimpaired.

The development came at a closed-door meeting between Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday, said a highly placed source in the education ministry.

"Since the provisions of selection grade and time scale have been dropped for all the government employees, the government is searching for alternatives to make sure that the teachers will have the benefits," he told The Daily Star.

The finance minister sat with the education minister at the latter's office as per directives of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

At the end of yesterday's cabinet meeting, the PM asked both the ministers to find out a way to put an end to the ongoing movement by public university teachers.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said he discussed the teachers' four-point demand with the finance minister.

"We talked on how to solve the problems of teachers.... He [finance minister] was sincere and positive about the teachers' demands," he told The Daily Star.

"The government is sincere in meeting teachers' demands as they are the main driving force. So I request them not to create any tension or instability in the universities."

Teachers under the banner of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) have been demonstrating since May 14 to press home their demands, including introduction of a separate salary structure for them.

There are around 13,000 teachers at 37 public universities in the country. They stepped up agitation after the government approved the 8th national pay scale for the government employees on September 7 with a retrospective effect from July 2015.

The teachers stayed away from work for three days since September 7 complaining that the post of selection grade professors (senior teachers) has been abolished in the new

pay scale although bureaucrats have got a special grade for themselves.

Their other demands include revision of the new pay scale and keeping senior professors and senior secretaries at an equal level of payment and benefits as enjoyed by the same grade of government officials.

On September 19, a delegation of teachers met the education minister who assured them of reaching a "proper solution" soon.

The teachers of government colleges also observed work stoppage for three days at all the public colleges to press home their four-point demand, including reinstatement of selection grade and time scale and upgradation of salaries of different posts under the BCS education cadre.

BCS General Education Association, a platform of teachers and officials under the cadre, organised the demonstration.

About their protest, the education minister said the teachers and officials started agitation without informing him about their problems.

"Yet, I will tell them that a solution can be reached through talks. There's no need to go for an agitation," added Nahid.