

Teachers' agitation hurts education

No solution in sight

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Academic activities in public schools, colleges and universities are being badly affected as teachers continue their protest over the new pay scale, but the government has yet to take any visible measure to diffuse the unrest.

More than 2.5 lakh teachers of government primary and secondary schools, colleges and state-run universities across the country are involved in the movement.

Though the government reconstituted the cabinet committee to review complaints of "discrimination" in the pay scale, public university teachers said they would not sit for talks as long as Finance Minister AMA Muhith headed the seven-member body.

The teachers' movement, which gained momentum after the cabinet approved the 8th pay scale on September 7, has left students and guardians in a grave concern.

The agitation also casts a shadow over the upcoming admission test to

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public universities as teachers hinted they would boycott the test on Thursday if their demands are not met.

Primary school headmasters also threatened to shun primary terminal examination scheduled for November should their call go unheard.

College teachers, who held a work stoppage on September 10 at all government colleges, will again stay away from classes today and tomorrow.

Worried, parents sought government's intervention.

"The government should take immediate steps to solve the problem. Otherwise, it's the students who will bear the brunt," said Anwar Parvez, a guardian from Mohammadpur.

PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Teachers of all 37 public universities, under the banner of Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers Association (FBUTA), already abstained from work on three days since September 7, demanding revision of the 8th national pay scale and a separate salary structure for them.

During Thursday's work abstention, federation leaders at Dhaka University threatened to launch a nonstop work

stoppage after Eid holiday if the government did not sit with them.

Against this backdrop, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid is scheduled to sit with a delegation of teachers at his residence today, said a source.

"We've informed the government about our problems. We've to take a firm stance if any solution doesn't come through talks," said Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, secretary general of FBUTA.

Teachers under the banner of FBUTA have been demonstrating since May 14 to press home their four-point demand, but they intensified their agitation after the government approved the new pay scale.

They say 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.

They demand, among other things, that senior professors and senior secretaries be given the same payment and other benefits.

There are over 13,000 teachers at 37 public universities in the country.

SECONDARY SCHOOL, COLLEGE

Around 14,000 teachers of 305 government colleges will observe a daylong

work stoppage today and tomorrow at all the state-run colleges.

BCS General Education Association, a platform of teachers and officials under the education cadre, will organise the programme.

Selim Ullah Khandakar, general secretary of the platform, said professors are grade-4 officers, but they could go on retirement while in the same grade because of the selection grade.

College and secondary school teachers warned of tougher programmes after Eid.

PRIMARY SCHOOL

Head teachers of government primary schools have been staging protests under different banners. They will observe a work abstention tomorrow to press home a seven-point demand, including upgrading their status.

Assistant teachers of primary schools have been staying away from classes on Saturdays since early this month to press home their 11-point demand that includes a pay hike.

They threatened to go for a "tougher movement," including a token hunger strike on October 15.