

Students' meeting with minister fails to end BUET crisis

Mohiuddin Alamgir

THE education minister's meeting with BUET students on Wednesday aimed at resolving the crisis in the university ended inconclusively.

The students, who have been rallying for the removal of the vice-chancellor, SM Nazrul Islam, and the pro-vice-chancellor, Habibur Rahman, for their alleged irregularities, stood their ground at the meeting with the minister, Nurul Islam Nahid.

The minister after the

meeting in his ministry office told reporters that he had urged the students to get back to classrooms and had told them that no action in any form would be taken against the students who were rallying for the removal of the two top university officials.

The minister gave the assurance after the students had demanded security as they were feeling insecure with Nazrul Islam in office as he might initiate academic and disciplinary action against students rallying against him.

Nahid said that the the government had already started honouring the commitments it made at the meeting with teachers on Monday night to resolve the crisis.

BUET students coming out of the meeting said that they would make their decision after they spoke with their fellows on the campus. Shuvo Chakrabarty, a student of BUET who attended the meeting, told New Age, 'The education minister assured us of our security and we will decide the next

course of action after consulting with our fellows on the campus.'

He added that that they would sit with their fellows today to discuss their meeting with the minister.

Sources who attended the meeting told New Age that Nahid had urged the students to agree to the removal of Habibur Rahman as pro-vice-chancellor for now and the decision on the removal of SM Nazrul Islam as vice-chancellor could be made later.

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Students' meeting

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But the students were firm on their demand for the removal of both the vice-chancellor and the pro-vice-chancellor, one of them said.

The meeting between the education minister and 16 representatives of BUET students lasted for three hours. The students at a press conference on Tuesday sought to meet the education minister.

Mechanical engineering teacher Muhammad Ehsan and industrial and production engineering teacher AKM Masud, the education secretary, Kamal Abdul Nasser Chowdhury, and the University Grants Commission chairman, AK Azad Chowdhury, also attended.

The BUET crisis has lingered as the government decided to remove the pro-vice-chancellor, keeping the vice-chancellor in office although the teachers and students of the university were demanding that both of them should be removed.

The teachers have in principle agreed to get back to classrooms but the students were still undecided.

The BUET Teachers' Association general secretary,

Ashraful Islam, told New Age that they had decided in principle to return to the classes.

After a meeting with the teachers Monday, the minister announced that BUET's pro-vice-chancellor Habibur Rahman would be removed and cases filed against BUET teachers and students would be withdrawn to resolve the crisis.

When asked whether SM Nazrul Islam would be removed as vice-chancellor, the minister said that the necessary steps would be taken after discussion.

The minister earlier held two other meetings, with teachers on July 16 and with BUET alumni on July 30 but all the meetings ended without any major headway in breaking the stalemate.

Academic activities in the university, a seat of learning for about 8,000 students, were yet to resume till Tuesday, the 12th consecutive day since August 25, when the university reopened after 44 days of closure in face of teachers' movement.

The government, however, is yet to remove the pro-vice-chancellor Habibur Rahman.

The education secretary told New Age that the pro-

cess for the removal of Habibur Rahman had begun but it would need some time.

The vice chancellor told New Age that he did not get any direction about the removal of Habibur Rahman till 5:00pm.

Two cases filed against teachers and students were withdrawn on Tuesday.

The crisis in the university began on April 7 when the teachers' association began a movement, including abstention from work and sit-ins, and levelled 16 allegations against the two top university officials. Students and other university officials joined them in mid-July.

The protesters began rallying on July 11 for the removal of the vice-chancellor and the pro-vice-chancellor after the authorities on the night of July 10 closed the university.

The same day all the five deans and the 17 department heads and directors of three institutes under the university resigned as the vice-chancellor and the pro-vice-chancellor refused to quit. The teachers rallied against the administration between April 8 and May 5, demanding removal of the two top officials.