

## BUET crisis lingers

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THE situation in the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology took a turn for the worse due to the rigid stance adopted by anti-vice-chancellor students and top administrative figures of the university.

Agitating BUET students were uncompromising in their demand for the removal of the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor on Tuesday, and demanded that the education minister come to the campus and listen to their demands.

The government, however, is yet to remove pro-vice-chancellor Habibur Rahman from his post but the concerned authorities have withdrawn the two cases filed against some agitating teachers and students of the BUET.

At a meeting held in the early hours of Tuesday, education minister Nurul Islam Nahid announced that BUET's pro-vice-chancellor Habibur Rahman would be removed and cases filed against BUET teachers and students withdrawn in order

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 to resolve the protracted crisis.

When asked whether or not vice-chancellor SM Nazrul Islam would be removed, Nahid said the necessary steps would be taken after discussion.

Education secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury at about 5:00pm told New Age that the process of removing Habibur Rahman had started but would require some time, as it was decided at the meeting that finished in the early hours of Tuesday.

'We have already asked the concerned authorities to withdraw the cases' he added.

The BUET's chief security officer filed two cases with the Shahbagh thana on Sunday night, accusing about 100 students and teachers of attacking the offices of the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor, ransacking the records and looting Tk 3 lakh.

'I have ordered withdrawal of the cases,' BUET's vice-chancellor SM Nazrul Islam told New Age.

The Shahbagh police confirmed that both the cases were withdrawn when contacted by New Age.

Rigidly sticking to their demands, the agitating students at a joint press conference of teachers and students in the BUET's auditorium requested the education minister to heed their demands.

'We request the education minister to come to our campus and listen to our demands and take due ac-

tion as he is our guardian,' said Marina Jahan, a student of chemical engineering, at the press briefing.

A student of electrical and electronic engineering, Monirul Islam, said, 'We are sticking to our lone demand for the removal of the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor but we are willing also to continue discussion.'

When asked whether they would go back to their classes, the students said they would decide after talking to the minister.

'We have no confidence in the VC and we feel insecure under him,' Sudipto Saha, a student of mechanical engineering, told New Age.

Students had criticized teachers for accepting removal of only the pro-vice-chancellor at the meeting in the morning, called by teachers to inform students of the discussion they had with the education minister on Tuesday.

A number of members of the BUET Teachers Association told New Age that they had differences of opinion regarding Nurul Islam Nahid's decision to remove only the pro-vice-chancellor and about continuing the protest movement against the vice-chancellor.

The BUET Teachers Association's general secretary, Ashraful Islam, said, 'We have decided in principle to return to the classes. We are optimistic that the vice-chancellor will also be removed in accordance with the com-

mitment of minister Nahid who assured us that necessary steps would be taken about resignation of the vice-chancellor after discussions.'

Ashraful said that the education secretary would come to campus today (Wednesday) to discuss the issue with the students.

The crisis in the BUET has lingered as the government decided to remove its pro-vice-chancellor but kept the beleaguered vice-chancellor in office although the teachers and students of the university had been demanding removal of both of them.

Normal academic activities of the university, a seat of about 8,000 students, were yet to be restored till Tuesday.

The protracted crisis in the university started on April 7 this year when the BUET Teachers' Association launched an agitation, including abstention from work and sit-ins, and raised 16 allegations against the two top university officials. Students and university officials joined them in mid-July.

No classes were held on Tuesday. Many students and teachers told New Age that they were not happy with the minister's assurance of removal of Habibur Rahman only, keeping SM Nazrul Islam undisturbed.

'End of stalemate in BUET will not be possible if the current vice-chancellor is not removed,' said a teacher of the civil engineering department.

'Most of the BUET's teachers and students are not happy about the decision of removing only pro-vice-chancellor.'

Faisal Hossain, a student of chemical engineering, told New Age the solution of BUET's crises lies in the removal of both the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor, as everyone in the BUET has expressed no confidence in them as 'the duo were involved in irregularities, number tampering and many other objectionable actions'.

'BUET is virtually stagnant and normal activities will not be resumed until the removal of both of them,' said Professor Humayun Kabir of the civil engineering department.

The education minister held two meetings with BUET's teachers and alumni on July 16 and 30 respectively but the meetings ended without making any headway to end the stalemate.

The protestors began rallying on 11 July 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 from April 8 to May 5, demanding removal of the two top officials.