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Fresh edn ministry meeting fails to end BUET stalemate

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ANOTHER meeting of the education ministry, held on Monday on the crisis bedeviling the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, ended without making any major headway to end the stalemate.

The BUET teachers, agitating for removal of vice-chancellor Professor SM Nazrul Islam and pro-vice-chancellor Habibur Rahman, decided to continue their sit-in programmes until their demand was met.

The BUET Teachers' Association also suspended the decision of the teachers' en masse resignation till August 6, when it will sit again to make a decision in this regard.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid on Monday held a meeting over the issue at the ministry which was attended, along with others, by state minister for science and technology Yeafesh Osman, University Grants Commission's chairman AK Azad Chowdhury, and education secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury.

After the hour-long meet-

ing, Nahid said, 'Some decisions were taken in the meeting.' But he refused to elaborate any further.

'We are trying our best to resolve the crisis,' he said. 'We sat to discuss the BUET situation. The meeting was important for us.'

On July 16 Nahid met some BUET alumni and some of the 25 teachers who had resigned, on July 11 in protest against the vice-chancellor closing the university for 44 days.

After that meeting Nahid said a solution of BUET crises would be worked out after discussions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President Zillur Rahman, who is also chancellor of the BUET.

The BUET Teachers' Association's president, Mujibur Rahman, after the meeting reiterated that no solution of the BUET crisis is possible without removing the vice-chancellor and pro-vice-chancellor.

He said the teachers association would review the programme and the condition of the BUET in a meeting on August 6.

The teachers association's

general secretary, Ashrafur Islam, told New Age that they would review their decision to resign en masse at the August 6 meeting.

Both the leaders said they would continue their sit-in programme on the campus everyday from 11:00am to 1:00pm.

The teachers' association, at a meeting on July 21, postponed their decision of mass resignation till July 30.

BUET teachers on July 16 decided to resign en masse on July 22 if their demand was not met by 4:00pm on the day.

Teachers' association's leaders told New Age that during their meeting on Monday they discussed their movement which was progressing toward success.

They said that in reply to their memorandum submitted to the President on July 15, the President had sent a letter to the education ministry, directing it take the required action. The education ministry is holding a series of meetings, their representatives are contacting the teachers' association's leaders, which proves that their movement is on the right track.

A high official of the BUET teachers' association told New Age that Nahid had sent columnist Syed Abul Maksud to act as a mediator between the agitating teachers and education ministry.

Abul Maksud held two meetings with BUET teachers' association and told them that the government was interested in removing one of the two persons against whom they were agitating, said the association's leaders.

When contacted, Abul Maksud admitted that he had met BUET teachers' association's leaders, but refused to make any further comments.

The teachers and students staged the sit-in on the campus for the tenth consecutive day on Monday to underline their demand.

They began the fresh round of protests in front of the council building on July 21 after a break of two days on 18 and 19 July.

Meanwhile, the High Court will hear a writ petition today (Tuesday) that seeks a High Court directive, calling for re-opening of the BUET in 24 hours.

The High Court bench of Justices Naima Haider and Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar fixed the date on Monday after hearing a petition.

Supreme Court lawyer Younus Ali Akond, the father of a BUET admission-seeker, also sought a rule on the authorities concerned to explain why the ongoing agitation, the strike and the closure of the university should not be declared illegal.

He also wanted the BUET authorities to be directed to begin the admission process.

The BUET protestors 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 from April 8 to May 5, pushing for removal of the two top officials.