

JU teachers suspend agitation, free VC

Decision follows talks with education minister

WASIM BIN HABIB and SM NAJMUS SAKIB

The agitating Jahangirnagar University teachers last night suspended their movement for 15 days following the education minister's assurance that a committee would be formed to probe the allegations against the VC.

They announced the decision at a press

briefing in the conference room of the VC's office at 11:45pm. A team of teachers then met the VC at his office and informed him of their decision.

Around half an hour later, Vice-Chancellor Prof Anwar Hossain walked out of his office where he was kept confined for four days.

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Earlier in the evening, the agitating teachers had a five-hour meeting with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid at his Minto Road residence.

At the press briefing, teachers said the education minister took note of their allegations against the VC and assured them of forming a high-powered probe committee. The probe report will be submitted to the authorities within 15 days.

Prof Anwar could now perform his duties as the VC for the next 15 days, said Kamrul Ahsan, member secretary of Sadharon Shikkhak Forum, a teachers' platform that organised the agitation.

The minister also assured the teachers of withdrawing writ petitions against three teachers of the university, he added.

The teachers, however, said they would announce fresh programmes if the government took no action. They said their allegations against the VC are genuine.

"But if the probe committee finds him [VC] innocent, we will accept him," said Hanif Ali, convenor of Sadharon Shikkhak Forum.

Asked about the composition of the probe body, he said they did not want to know this as they have faith in the education minister.

MEETING WITH MINISTER

A 17-member delegation of the teachers met the minister around 5:00pm. They informed him in detail about 18 allegations against the VC.

"We have discussed everything openly and the teachers informed me about their problems, complaints and demands," the minister told The Daily Star after the meeting.

He assured the teachers of forming a probe committee to look into the matter and the authorities will take necessary action after that.

"We have urged them to suspend their movement and return to classes as the students are ultimately becoming the victims of the crisis," said Nahid.

Talking to reporters last night, the VC hoped that this would be the permanent solution to the crisis.

The crisis at JU began on April 6 when the Chhatra

League's JU unit general secretary Rajib Ahmed Rasel assaulted a teacher.

Following the incident, teachers met the VC and demanded punishment to the BCL leader. The VC had assured them of expelling Rajib.

As he backtracked on his stance and took no action against the assaulter, the teachers launched a fresh movement on April 14 under the banner of Jahangirnagar University Teachers Association (Juta).

But the Juta had to stop their agitation following a High Court order on July 24. On July 30, the Sadharon Shikkhak Forum was formed with Juta members and the movement resumed.

Yesterday, around 150 agitating teachers staged a sit-in with black flags in their hands for around 20 minutes in front of the JU administrative building demanding resignation of the VC.

The teachers also continued their strike refraining from taking classes. All the administrative activities remained suspended. However, the scheduled examinations and only a few classes were held.

The university transport service remained out of the purview of the strike.

Progressive Students Alliance along with some general students brought out a procession on the campus demanding resumption of classes and examinations.

The procession paraded different streets on the campus demanding immediate solution to the deadlock.