

JU deadlock takes toll on students

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The ongoing deadlock at Jahangirnagar University is taking a heavy toll on its students, as they have been missing classes and examinations one after another, leaving timely completion of their studies in doubt.

The students have so far missed 47 days from their academic calendar due to the unrest on the campus, particularly the teachers' movement that began soon after the appointment of Prof Anwar Hossain as vice chancellor in May last year.

Apart from that, the country's lone residential university has enjoyed 118 days of official holidays since then.

Already behind schedule by around three to four months, students and teachers fear that with only two months left of this academic session, the ongoing stalemate will prolong session jams.

The students demand an immediate end to the deadlock. "We don't want our academic lives to be ruined like this," said Manzurul Hossain of the anthropology department.

Meanwhile, the teachers agitating under the banner of "Sadharan Shikhhak Forum" yesterday released Registrar Abu Bakar Siddique and Deputy Registrar Abu Hasan from confinement in their offices.

They had confined the two for the last eight days in protest at the appointments of three deans to the faculties of law, business administration and biological science.

In another development yesterday evening, a delegation

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of teachers met Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury at the NAEM building in response to the latter's call, said the demonstrating teachers.

Around one and a half months ago, they had confined the VC to his office for four days. He was released after Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid promised on August 24 to form a committee to probe the allegations the teachers had brought against the VC.

The committee submitted its report four days after its scheduled date on September 29.

From the next day, the registrar and the deputy registrar had been con-

finned by the teachers, who have been staging sit-ins before the VC's residence since the beginning of this month. The VC also started holding sit-ins right beside them hours later.

At a press conference yesterday, the teachers expressed dissatisfaction over the education ministry's statement on Monday, which warned that the government would take "appropriate action" to ensure an academic atmosphere.

"The only solution to the problem is the VC's resignation. We had to resume other agitation as the government did not keep its promise to break the stalemate within 15 days," said Prof Kamrul Ahsan, member secretary of

the forum.

The crisis began on July 20 last year, after the VC panel elections that were held more than a month after the VC was appointed. Most of the teachers did not accept Anwar because he was an outsider, said some teachers.

JU Teachers' Association (Juta) came up with the demand of the VC's removal on February 13 this year, after the death of a student the day before, arguing that the VC had failed to provide security to the students and teachers.

The crisis deepened on April 6, when the VC backtracked from taking steps against a Chhatra League leader who had physically assaulted a

teacher.

On April 27, the association went out on strike to press for the demand. The teachers also observed strikes at different times and staged sit-ins before the administrative building. Administrative activities also remained suspended for 43 days.

Because of the protests, the university could not hold its annual senate meeting, where the yearly budget is approved, as well as four syndicate meetings and two academic council meetings.

Juta stopped its agitation following a High Court order on July 24 this year, when the teachers formed the Sadharan Shikhhak Forum and resumed their agitation.