

Rangpur mayor helps to end BRUR hunger strike

Cops sue 200 unidentified strikers over Wednesday's clash; Ruta condemns locals' attack on protesters, demands removal of BRUR's VC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

After a 26-day nonstop hunger strike, the teachers, students and staff demanding removal of the vice chancellor of Begum Rokeya University Rangpur (BRUR) called off their protest yesterday when the city mayor intervened and assured them of supporting their cause.

In a brief address during his visit, Mayor Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhantu said he would request the prime minister to order steps for appointment of a new VC, replacing the incumbent Prof AKM Nurun Nabi.

Before that, he called for staging other forms of peaceful protest other than a fast unto death.

The Rangpur city mayor also asked the protesters not to let the VC, who has been staying in Dhaka since January 26, enter the campus.

In response, President of BRUR Teachers Association Dr RM Hafizur Rahman Selim said they would now hold a sit-in, from 9:00am to 9:00pm every day, till their demands were met.

The hunger strike had been going on since February 8, with the demands that the VC take steps to give retrospective benefits to the teachers newly promoted to assistant professors, ensure smooth academic activities, and confirm the jobs of

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152 employees. The VC, however, maintains that all these decisions lie with the University Grants Commission and the syndicate.

When asked whether as a mayor he could call for preventing the entry of the VC, Jhantu said, "I didn't say I would not let him enter. I asked the protesters to do that."

The VC declined to talk about this. "I will give my reply after coming to the campus," he told The Daily Star by phone.

Meanwhile, police sued 200 unidentified protesters on charges of attacking them, obstructing their work, and vandalising vehicles during a clash on

Wednesday.

The clash started when some local people pressed for calling off the strike. At least 20 people were injured when police used rubber bullets and batons to contain the fighting.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi University Teachers Association (Ruta), worried about the long-running deadlock at BRUR yesterday condemned the attack on the hunger strikers, and demanded a fair investigation into it and removal of the BRUR vice chancellor, said a press release.

In a separate statement, Ruta demanded immediate arrest of those who killed secular writer Avijit Roy on the Dhaka University campus on February 26.