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JU VC impasse puts contractual workers' salary on hold, pension trouble feared

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Kolkata: Most contractual employees at Jadavpur University have not yet received their last month's salary owing to the impasse over the vice-chancellor's post and the uncertainty around the signing authority. Teachers and officials pointed out the payments had been held back as they were not sure whom they should seek the clearance from and the current stalemate would affect disbursement of pension and gratuity of teachers and employees slated for retirement now.

Raj Bhavan on December 23 terminated Buddhadeb Sau's tenure as JU's officiating VC, though the higher education department said Sau "may continue to exercise and perform the duties..."

The tussle has cast a shadow on the contractual staffers' lives. A lift operator said he did not know how to run his family, pay the rent and provide for his kids' education. Another contractual staffer associated with JU for over two decades pointed out he had not faced such a situation even during the pandemic. Some professors are thinking of helping them out in this crisis.

"We are told without the VC's approval, the salaries could not be released this month," secretary of Jadavpur University Contractual Workers' Union Balaram Saha said. "We will submit a letter on Tuesday to end the crisis or

we will start a strike.”

Jadavpur University Officers' Association (JUOA) staged a protest at Aurobindo Bhavan on Monday. “Even convening meetings of statutory bodies, such as students' welfare board, EC and finance committee, has become a problem and it is stalling payments to agencies, contractual employees, labourers and for students' services,” said JUOA president Rajat Ray. “We want to know when we can expect a regular VC.”

Teachers, too, showed solidarity with the officials and pointed out that daily running of JU would soon turn tough. Bengali professor Rajyeswar Sinha, also JUTA assistant general secretary, said, “Teachers and staffers retiring now will have to face harassment for their pension and gratuity as JU does not know if there is a VC or not. If any HoD's term ends, the pro-VC or the registrar can't take a decision on it. Academic decisions will come to a halt, affecting students' future.” Many said if there was a VC, he/she should take a stand.