

64 Polytechnic Lecturers Terminated After 23-Day Hunger Strike for Job Regularization



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In a controversial move, the Assam government has terminated 64 lecturers from polytechnic institutes who were protesting for the regularization of their jobs. These lecturers had been on a hunger strike for 23 days, demanding that their temporary positions be made permanent. They were initially appointed during the tenure of Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Education Minister.

The lecturers, who have been working as founder faculty members in polytechnics for eight years, had come to Guwahati during the budget session to appeal to the government regarding their demands. However, the government's refusal to regularize their jobs forced them to stage a protest under the open sky. Their demonstration, which began on the first day of the budget session, continued for 23 days. Despite their relentless efforts, including tearful appeals, the government remained unmoved and ultimately decided to terminate their services.

On the night of March 10, the principals of the polytechnic institutes issued termination notices to the protesting lecturers. The decision left the lecturers devastated, as they felt that instead of addressing their concerns, the government had chosen to dismiss them. They have now appealed to the Chief Minister to intervene, emphasizing that they are highly qualified individuals, with many having students who scored above 84%, postgraduates, and even rank holders in examinations. They demanded the reinstatement of their jobs, stating that they were initially hired on contractual terms that prevented them from seeking other employment and required them to submit their original certificates.

Rajib Kalita, President of the All Assam Polytechnic Founder Faculty Association, highlighted that the lecturers were appointed on a temporary basis when the polytechnics were established in 2017. The government had obtained approval from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) by presenting them as regular employees, despite their temporary status. Kalita accused the government of misleading the AICTE and now terminating their services based on directives from the Directorate of Higher and Technical Education.

The lecturers expressed their frustration, stating that many positions remain vacant, and classes are not being held regularly. They had hoped for some assurance from the government during their protest but were instead met with termination. After eight years of service, they now face an uncertain future, having lost their prime working years. Out of 451 protesting faculty members, only 64 founder lecturers continued the protest until the end. These lecturers had been working since the inception of the institutes, even when basic facilities like chairs, benches, and bathrooms were absent. They questioned how they could now appear for recruitment exams at their age, especially when their own students have secured jobs in organizations like ONGC and oil companies.

The lecturers had submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during their protest, but neither the CM nor any government representative responded. Instead, the government imposed harsh punishment on the lecturers, who were fasting in unhygienic conditions under makeshift tents. The All Assam Polytechnic Founder Faculty Association had also been on a hunger strike for 23 days, expressing their anger through anti-government slogans. They reiterated that they were founder faculty members appointed in 2017 when the polytechnics were established, but the government failed to regularize their jobs. They have been struggling to receive their salaries on time and feel that the government has done them a grave injustice.

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