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Komolapur

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The Bangladesh Railway Running Staff and Workers Employees Association began the work stoppage at 12am on Tuesday, bringing train service to a halt.

No trains have left Kamalapur Railway Station since midnight on Tuesday, said Station Master Md Anwar Hossain.

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In addition to Dhaka, trains are not running from Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and other major cities. However, those trains that set off before 12am on Tuesday, will still reach their destinations on Tuesday.

Passengers are leaving train stations after discovering that the trains are not running.

The Ministry of Railway said the passengers would be reimbursed for their tickets if the trips were cancelled.

A press release from Ministry of Railways spokesman Rezaul Karim Siddiquee said that the railway running staff did not stop their announced protest programme despite most of their demands being met. As such, train services could be disrupted from Jan 28, 2025.

Bangladesh Railway will reimburse ticket prices to passengers if the trips were cancelled, it said.

, the running staff held a press briefing in Chattogram and announced a work stoppage from Jan 28.

The railway ministry invited them for a meeting on Monday. However, the protesting running staff did not attend the meeting.

However, a separate meeting was held at Dhaka’s Kamalapur Railway Station on Monday between protesting staff and railway officials on Monday.

After the meeting, the association’s Executive President Md Saidur Rahman declared their programme would continue.

“Railway officials asked for more time, but we are not willing to grant it anymore.”

“We have demanded that the ministry provide us with approval documents before midnight. Our allowances must be reinstated as they were.”

He continued, “We have been protesting for four years over this matter, but despite repeated assurances, our demands have not been met. This time, we will not withdraw our programme.”

“We are discussing the issue with them. We are trying and hoping that it will be resolved,” he told bdnews24.com at 7pm on Monday.

However, the discussion was not fruitful.

WHO ARE THE RUNNING STAFF AND WHAT ARE THEIR DEMANDS?

Railway running staff include guards, locomasters, assistant locomasters, sub locomasters, and TTEs. They are directly related to running trains. More than 1,700 running staff work on providing rail service across the country.

On average, the running staff need to work for 15-18 hours per day. Earlier, they used to get special financial benefits for the extended hours, which was called mileage. This mileage was part of their salary.

The running staff used to get an additional amount equivalent to their one-day basic salary for each 100 km distance their trains covered. If a work day is considered to be eight hours, the work done by running staff work in a month becomes equivalent to 2.5 or 3 months for other workers. Their salary was calculated accordingly.

In addition, they used to get pensions with an additional 75 percent of their basic salary.

In 2022, the Ministry of Finance scrapped all these benefits for the running staff. Since then. the Bangladesh Railway Running Staff and Workers Employees Association has been staging regular protests.