

Vets launch indefinite strike

• Special Correspondent



Veterinary surgeons across the State began an indefinite strike on Monday demanding rectification of anomalies in the Pay Commission recommendations. The call for strike was given by Kerala Government Veterinary Officers Association, affiliated to the Indian Veterinary Association.

KGVOA organised dharnas at all the district headquarters on Monday. The members of the association had staged a dharna in front of the Secretariat last week and went on a one-day strike. They had boycotted the monthly review meeting of the veterinary officers, conducted by the department earlier this month, in protest. About 1,400 veterinary surgeons are taking part in the strike, according to the association.

The veterinary surgeons are demanding parity in pay with allopathy doctors. There was parity in pay earlier, but it was removed a few years ago. Now, the Pay Commission recommendations have done more injustice by reducing the pay, according to the organisation.

Indian Veterinary Association vice-president Sangeeth Narayanan told *The Hindu* that the organisation was apolitical. The strike on Monday was total and had paralysed the functioning of all veterinary centres in the State, he said. Livestock inspectors authorised to handle artificial insemination projects are not taking part in the strike.

Veterinarians who complete a five-year professional course are placed in the same pay scale as of those in the assistant engineer and assistant public prosecutor categories. But after 15 years of service, vets' scale is lesser by about Rs.23,000 than with the other two, the organisation's district secretary S. Santhosh said.

Special Correspondent writes from Kollam: KGVOA State president K.R. Arun Kumar said at a press meet here that even the risk allowance enjoyed by the vets over the years has been withdrawn in the new Pay Commission. This includes even the risk allowance for tranquilising captive elephants that run amok. He said that during the strike period the veterinarians would not cooperate with any panchayat level veterinary programmes.