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Non-govt teachers won't attend govt functions Hunger strike called off

Staff Correspondent

The teachers of non-government high schools and colleges called off their programmes of hunger strike unto death and sit-in demonstration in front of the National Press Club on Friday evening at the request of the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Strongly condemning the attitude of the government towards their demands, the leaders of the Liaison Committee of the striking teachers announced that teachers of non-government high schools and colleges would not participate in any election duty under the present government. They also declared that teachers would not attend any programme of ministers in their respective areas. They also decided that they would not lift SSC and HSC examinations scripts from the education boards. The Liaison Committee leaders said that they will announce their next phase of action programme on June 30 if the government refused to implement their four-point demand.

The Liaison Committee leaders said that the teachers would join their duties on Sunday and take special classes on holidays. They decided to hold talks with different Opposition political parties and professional bodies before announcing

their fresh programme on June 30. Liaison Committee leaders Kazi Farooq Ahmed, M. Amanullah and Dr Akhteruzzaman announced the programmes after breaking the hunger strike of the teachers.

Thousands of teachers started their sit-in demonstration in front of the National Press Club on Saturday last and went on the hunger strike unto death on Wednesday noon demanding implementation of their four-point demand. An eight-hour hartal was also observed in the Capital City from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesday at the call of Liaison Committee of striking teachers.

Over two hundred teachers fell sick following hunger strike. Of them, about 80 were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and different clinics in the city till Friday noon.

As the condition of hunger striking teachers was deteriorating and a number of them were rushed to hospitals in critical stage, Awami League Chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina came to the venue and gave a personal call to the teachers to call off their hunger strike and sit-in demonstration. Responding to her dispassionate call, the leaders of the Liaison Committee and teachers present there agreed to break their hunger strike and called off their

present phase of action programme that started on Saturday last.

Sheikh Hasina then offered water to the teachers to break their fast. Prominent Opposition leaders including Rashed Khan Menon, MP, of Workers Party, Khalequzzaman Bhuiyan of Bangladesher Samjtantrik Dal, Nirmal Sen of Krishak Sramik Samajbadi Dal, A.F.M. Mahbubul Haq of Bangladesher Samjtantrik Dal and Sheikh Asad of Jatiya Janata Party, were present on the occasion.

Earlier, on Thursday night the talks between the government and leaders of the Liaison Committee of teachers failed. The Liaison Committee leaders blamed the government for its repression and inhuman behaviour to the teachers and rejected the government's offer to raise five per cent salary in the next fiscal year. The striking teachers originally demanded 30 per cent rise in the government's contribution to their salary from present 70 per cent but later softened their stance asking for 10 per cent increase from the 1994-95 fiscal year.

For the failure of Thursday night's talks the government apportioned the blame on the Liaison Committee leaders. Criticising the rigid stand of the striking teachers, the government

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said that ten per cent increase was not possible in one fiscal year due to budgetary constraints.

Addressing the teachers in front of the National Press Club, the leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina assured the striking teachers of Opposition's total support in the implementation of the minimum demand of teachers. Expressing sympathy to sufferings of the teachers during the last two days of their hunger strike and sit-in demonstration programmes, she gave a fervent call to the teachers to go home. "We pledge our support to realise your demands", she told the hunger striking teachers. She said that teachers would never forget the repressible and undemocratic behaviour of the present BNP government. She urged the teachers to give a befitting reply to government's inhuman behaviour.

Opposition leaders Rashed Khan Menon, MP, also expressed solidarity with the movement of the teachers. He strongly criticised the government for mishandling the issue of striking teachers.

Thousands of teachers who were squatting on street in front of the National Press Club day-and-night braving rain and heat for the last seven days to press home their demands left for home in groups chanting anti-government slogans. They also burnt pictures of the government leader demonstrating their anguish.