

Teachers urged to call off programme

Govt ready to raise salary grants: Sircar

By A Staff Reporter

Education Minister Barrister Zamiruddin Sircar Wednesday said the government was ready to increase its contribution to the salary of non-government college and school teachers from the existing 70 per cent to 75 per cent provided they call off their strike and

join duties.

"We are ready to increase five per cent in accordance to the demand of the leaders of the striking teachers to complete the package deal", Barrister Sircar said at a press briefing held at his Jatiya Sangsad Chamber.

Post and Telecommunication Minister Tariqul Islam and State Minister for Education Principal Md. Yunus Khan also spoke at the briefing.

The Education Minister rejected the demand of the teachers to raise their retirement age to 70 years describing it as an "impossibility". The demand does not carry any substance, he said.

Barrister Sircar said an additional amount of Tk. 168 crore would have to be paid annually from the government's exchequer if the demand for paying 100 per cent of the teachers' salary is implemented.

He informed that the government contribution to non-government school and college teachers amounted to Tk. 368 crore in 1992 and it has increased to Tk. 540 crore this year. Without the proposed 5 per cent increase, the total government contribution would rise to Tk. 690 crore in 1995.

referring to series of negotiations with the leaders of the striking teachers, Barrister Sircar said the government had already accepted 13 out of the total 15 demands of the teachers.

"In principle we don't differ with the teachers on their demand for 100 per cent government grants, but we can not do it because of financial constraints", he said.

He said teachers now at the time of their retirement go empty handed. But, he said, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has allocated a fund of Tk. 25 crore to the teachers's welfare fund so that they can get gratuity equivalent to one month's basic pay for every year of their service.

He said if all the demands of the teachers are implemented, the total government spending on the non-government teachers would ultimately rise to Tk. 1500 crore annually.

The Education Minister said donors have already warned that they might not provide assistance to the education sector if the government takes steps contrary to free market economy.

He said to meet the full demands of the teachers, the govt.

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ernment would have to go for additional taxation. This will not only make the government unpopular but also impose additional tax load on the people.

Telecommunication Minister Tariqul Islam said the present government allowed the teachers the benefit of the revised pay scale beginning in the July, 1992, which increased the salary of the teachers on an average by 30 per cent.

He said the government agreed to give the teachers the benefit of one time scale and raised the medical allowance from Tk. 100 to Tk. 150 from July this year.

Mr Tariqul Islam said teachers were on strike for long 125 days in 1974, but the teachers' benefit was not increased by the then government not even by a taka.

He said the government acceptance of the demand for time scale would cost Tk. 100 crore annually.

Principal Yunus Khan said when fallen dictator Ershad was the Chairman of the Non-Government Teachers Association, the salary of the teachers had increased by only 20 per cent. But over a period of only three years under the present government, the salary increase of teachers was 77 per cent.