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Primary teachers call off hunger strike

By A Staff Reporter

Primary teachers who began a mass hunger strike on December 24 to realise their three-point demands have called off their strike at 7:30 p.m. on Monday at the Central Shaheed Minar.

In all, 306 teachers of them two ladies, fasted long 101 hours and 35 minutes while two students who started later fasted for 53 hours in support of the teachers' demands.

The three-point demands were release of Prof. Abul Kalam Azad, President of the Association, fixation of their pay-scales and implementation of the agreement with the government signed on March 6.

A meeting was arranged by the Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association on the fifth day of the hunger strike on Monday at the Central Shaheed Minar and was attended by leaders from almost all the political parties in the country.

Presided over by Mr. Shamsher Rahman, Vice-President of the Association, the meeting was addressed by Mr. Abdur Razzak of Bangladesh Awami League, Kazi Zafar Ahmed of United People's Party, Mr. Oli Ahad of Democratic League, Maulana Abdul Matin of Bangladesh Labour Party, Mr. Nurul Huda Mirza of Ganotantrik Party, Mr. Shahidul Alam Prochan of Ganotantrik Party, Mr. Nazrul Islam of Workers Party, Maulana Abdus Sobhan of Islamic Democratic League, Mr. Muhfuz Bhuiyan of Bangladesh Janainukti Party, Mr. Matiur Rahman of Progotishil Ganotantrik Sakti, Mr. Noor Mohamed Kazi of People's League.

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Mr. Nurul Huq Chowdhury of Ganotantrik Karmi Shibir, Mr. Saiful Islam of Ekota Party, Mr. Nurul Islam of Bangladesh Communist Party, Mr. Shafiqur Rahman Majumder of Bangladesh Majdur Party, Babu Panjkoj Bhattacharya of NAP, Mr. Abdus Sobhan of NAP, Bhashani, Mr. Gorib Newaz, Chairman of People's League, Mr. Abdullah Sarkar of BSD, Mr. Sultan Raza of JSD, Mr. Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui of AL and Mr. Abul Kashem Fazlul Huq, Secretary, Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association.

The Association members read out the allegations made by the government against their President, described them as 'silly' grounds and asked if there was any valid reason they would not keep him in detention.

They criticised the Press Note as misleading because, increments, house rents and other benefits were never given as per accord. Mr. Azad was arrested because of initiating teachers' movements for their right and not corruption, as stated by the government.

At the end of the meeting at the request of the political leaders the hunger strikers agreed to call off their fast. The teachers first said they would do so if their leader Mr. Altafur Rahman, a Vice-President, who was also fasting agreed to do so. When the leaders of Political Parties went to Mr. Raitman he wanted assurances of co-operation for their three-point programme before he was ready to break his fast.

Finally as a result of the assurances by leaders he and all others broke the hunger strike.

3 POINTS PROGRAMME

The Bangladesh Primary Teachers' Association and the National opposition political leaders jointly announced the three-point programme to realise the teachers' demands.

The programmes are (a) they will arrange a protest meeting at Baitul Mukarram Square on December 30, (b) if demands are not met within the time they will observe demonstration day on January 15, (c) and they would resort to hartal and gherao to realise their demands.

J. N. VARSITY

Earlier, Jahangir Nagar University Teachers' Association held an emergency meeting of the Executive Committee on Monday and called upon the government to fulfil demands of the primary teachers.

Stating the three-point demands as "genuine" they said that government would be responsible for any serious consequence arising out of the hunger strike situation.

Expressing solidarity with the primary teachers against the government they demanded immediate release of Prof. Azad, President of the Primary Teachers' Association.

The teachers have also decided to cancel their strike programmes from December 31.