

Doubts grow over primary examinations

Teachers demand salary hike, threaten to boycott tests set to begin Nov 17

473
Shares



Primary school teachers stage demonstration on the premises of Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka on October 23, 2019. They threatened to boycott PEC exams if their demands are not met. Photo: Anisur Rahman

Mohiuddin Alamgir

Uncertainty looms over invigilation during the coming Primary Education Completion Examination as a meeting between protesting teachers and ministry officials failed to resolve the stalemate.

An association of primary school teachers on October 23 announced that they would boycott the PECE and its madrasa equivalent Ebtedayee exams if their demand for better pay is not met by November 13.

The PECE and Ebtedayee exams are scheduled to begin on November 17. Almost 30 lakh students have registered for the exams.

Twenty-three leaders of Bangladesh Prathomik Shikkhak Oikya Parishad, a coalition of 14 primary teachers' bodies, met Primary and Mass Education Secretary Akram-Al-Hossain at the secretariat to discuss the matter yesterday afternoon.

“We told them in the meeting that we would boycott the exams unless we can meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and tell her what our demands are,” Oikya Parishad Member Secretary Samsuddin Masud told The Daily Star.

Government primary school teachers have been protesting for several years for 10th grade salary for headteachers and 11th grade for assistant teachers.

Currently, trained and untrained headteachers get 11th and 12th grade salaries while assistant teachers get 14th and 15th grade salaries.

There are 349,217 teachers in 65,593 government primary schools.

“After listening to the teachers demand, Akram-Al-Hossain said officials would try to help them get an appointment with the PM,” said an additional secretary who was present at the meeting.

“We requested them to work as invigilators in the coming exams for the students’ sake,” Additional Secretary Badrul Hassan told this newspaper.

Ministry officials believe that the teachers would eventually call off the strike.

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Primary Education has started making alternative arrangement for the PECE invigilation. The DPE on Tuesday sent a letter to local administrations asking them to pick exam centre secretaries and invigilators from secondary school and madrassa teachers.

DPE officials said exams will be held at 7,458 centres across the country. Of those, 3,931 will be at government primary schools and 3,527 at secondary schools and madrasas.

“We cannot sit idle. We have to have an alternative plan,” said Badrul.

PECE was introduced in 2009 and its madrasa equivalent Ebtedayee in 2010.