

Hectic lobbying for MPO listing

Ruling party MPs, influential leaders exert pressure on education ministry

WASIM BIN HABIB

Ruling party lawmakers and influential leaders are mounting pressure on the education ministry to incorporate non-government educational institutions of their choice into a new list for receiving the government's monthly pay order (MPO) facilities.

The list of non-government schools, colleges and madrasas is likely to be published today six years after the government suspended updating the annual listing on charges of massive corruption.

After assuming office, the Awami League government formed a committee

in June last year to devise a policy for the MPO and set criteria for educational institutions for getting MPO facilities.

But many of the institutions the ruling party men have been lobbying for do not qualify for the MPO.

The lobbyists have been hanging around the education ministry for the last 20 days. Their rush intensified so much yesterday that regular activities at the ministry were severely hampered, said sources at the ministry.

Each lawmaker was seen pressing for over 10-15 institutions of their choice.

"We are under extreme pressure. We have been receiving requests from many

quarters including our honourable members of parliament," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Selecting institutions under the monthly pay order facility is a complicated task as the number of teachers and their salary structures vary from institution to institution. We are trying to complete it as quickly as possible," he said.

"At least 12 lawmakers came to meet the minister today (yesterday)," said a ministry official, preferring not to be named.

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and madrasas get the financial support from the government only if the institutions apply for it. Under the MPO, teachers and employees of an educational institution will get 10 percent basic salaries and other benefits from the government.

The government has allocated Tk 112 crore for the MPO for this year. The government has so far received over 7,500 applications while it plans to include around 1,000-1,100 institutions under its payroll.

During a visit to the ministry yesterday, a few people were seen insisting the education minister to receive their applications while the minister was repeatedly telling them he could not help them as the committee concerned had almost finished the listing process.

Some teachers identifying themselves as relatives of influential ruling party leaders were also insisting the minis-

ter and other ministry officials.

The committee preparing the list has been working outside the ministry to avoid the pressure. The ministry also hung a notice asking everybody not to meet with its officials for MPO entitlement.

"Our work is being severely hampered. Sometimes such people are coming who are difficult to avoid," said an official.

At least 20 members of parliament went to the ministry on Tuesday, he said, adding that some high profile persons are also lobbying.

"The list might be published on the website of the education ministry tomorrow (today)," said another official.

A teacher from Pirozpur told this correspondent that his institution does not fulfil the criteria but he came to meet the minister with the hope that his school will be included in the list.