

## Education ministry needs to enforce new rules strictly

WITH a huge public outcry over exorbitant admission fees charged by different non-government schools in the capital over the recent weeks, the education ministry has eventually decided to set limits for those schools. As mentioned in a New Age report on Tuesday, in line with the decision taken by the ministry on Monday, the non-government Bangla medium schools that are partly under the monthly pay order scheme, a financial support from the government, are restricted to charging no more than Tk 8,000 for admission, while the English medium schools can charge at best Tk 10,000. Moreover, no schools are permitted to charge more than Tk 3,000 as development fee. The ministry also directed the schools, which have already taken more than the stipulated amount, to return the extra money to the respective guardians or adjust with the next month tuition fees.

It may be pertinent to recall here that the education ministry issued some guidelines on December 14 for the private schools, which get MPO facilities fully, asking them not to charge more than Tk 5,000 as tuition fees. But most of these schools in the capital, especially the ones that are popular apparently for their outstanding academic performance, failed to live up to those guidelines. In addition, many of them refused to follow them on the plea that they were not fully under the MPO scheme. Reportedly, all of them imposed freewheeling charges upon the students under the cover of development fee and the like leading to a huge uproar amongst the guardians. That apart, the situation was aggravated further when a ruling party lawmaker, also the chairman of the managing committee of a renowned school in the capital, along with his associates, pounced on a television reporter inquiring about the issue in that school on January 3.

The number of schools, public and private, that provide somewhat quality education is insufficient for the students seeking admission. More importantly, most of the students belong to fixed monthly income groups. It would be better if the government increased the number of public schools. Unfortunately, however, no effective steps have been taken in this regard ever since the independence. Even the incumbent government has failed to keep electoral pledge thus far to set up 'more government secondary schools' in the capital. The private schools appear to have cashed in on the overall situation. The government thus needs to enforce the decisions in question in a sustained and strictest manner.