

26,192 primary schools nationalised

Mohiuddin Alamgir

THE government has nationalised 26,192 primary schools employing 104,000 teachers in the face of a movement non-government schoolteachers have carried out for two decades.

The prime minister, Sheikh Hasina, made the formal announcement at a rally of non-government primary schoolteachers in the National Parade Square in the capital on Wednesday.

The Bangladesh Non-Government Primary Teachers' Association organised the

rally marking the occasion.

The home minister, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, and the state minister for primary and mass education, Motahar Hossain, urged the teachers to vote for the Awami League in the next general elections and give Hasina a chance to serve people for another term.

The primary teachers' association president, Aminul Islam Chowdhury, and the secretary general M Monsur Ali, who addressed the rally, vowed to work to vote Hasina to power again.

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A total of 22,981 registered schools enrolled for monthly pay order, 388 permanently registered, 361 temporarily registered, 720 with teaching permission, 653 non-MPO community schools, 130 NGO-run schools, 151 schools recommended for teaching permission and 809 schools waiting for teaching permission, will be nationalised in three phases.

Jobs of about 1,04,000 teachers of these schools will also be nationalised.

Hasina immediately after making the official announcement at the rally said that she had been delighted to announce the nationalisation of non-government primary schools and jobs of teachers. She also called on teachers to work hard to improve the quality of education.

She said that no new primary school would be set up in the country under a private initiative with hopes for government fund. If required, the government will set up primary schools.

'We conducted a survey based on the number of villages, children and communications and saw how many primary schools we need. Nobody will be allowed to set up any primary school here and there,' she added.

The quality of education has improved as the government took huge programmes

in this regard and it is reflected on the results of public examinations,' Hasina, also the ruling Awami League president, said. Hasina, however, called on all to work to minimise the drop-out rate.

Referring to different programmes the government has taken to develop the education sector, Hasina said that they were giving the highest priority to education.

When Hasina made the nationalisation announcement about 12:45 teachers shouted chanted slogans saying that the government of Hasina was needed again.

The primary and mass education minister, Afsanul Amin and the secretary to the ministry, M M Neazuddin, also spoke at the rally. Thousands of teachers from across the country attended.

According to Afsanul Amin, the nationalisation of schools would take place in three phases. In the first phase, 22,981 schools already on the monthly pay order will be nationalised and 91,024 teachers of these schools would get benefits as government school teachers do from January 1.

A total of 2,252 schools and jobs of 7,023 teachers of the schools yet to be on the monthly pay order but having permanent or temporary registration, or approval, community schools, and government-funded NGO-run schools will be nationalised

in the second phase beginning on July 1.

The nationalisation of the remaining 960 schools and jobs of 3,796 teachers of the schools, either having or waiting for approval, will take place in the third phase, beginning on January 1, 2014.

After the nationalisation of the schools, teachers will get the same salary and benefits as teachers of government primary schools do.

A nationalised government primary school teacher is entitled to a monthly entry-level basic salary of Tk 4,700, house rent allowance, medical allowance, refreshment allowance, rest and recreation allowance, yearly increment, time-scale and pension.

An additional Tk 691 crore would be needed for the nationalisation process.

Primary and mass education ministry officials, meanwhile, said that of the 1,04,000 teachers of the schools, whose jobs would also be nationalised, 21,522 did not have the required educational qualification.

They said that the government decision on the job nationalisation would cover 21,522 non-government primary schoolteachers who fell short of the minimum required qualification — a secondary school certificate or equivalent degree with second division.

Afsanul Amin told New Age that jobs of teachers

would be 'nationalised under the rules [of Primary Schools (Taking Over) Act 1974]. We will check the certificates of teachers, if needed.'

Hasina on May 27 assured the teachers of meeting their demand and directed the primary and mass education ministry to draft a policy.

The ministry then set up a committee that worked out the draft and submitted it in July 2012. It was sent to the Prime Minister's Office and was approved.

In 1973, the government first nationalised 36,165 primary schools. Later, 1,507 more schools were nationalised at different times.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, there are about 79,000 government and non-government and various types of primary schools and 37,672 of them are government primary schools.

Non-government teachers started rallying for their demands in 1991. They held hunger strike, sit-ins, work abstention, processions, rallies and submitted memorandums to the prime minister to push for their demands.

The primary and mass education secretary, Neazuddin, said that kindergartens, schools run by different agencies, primary schools attached to high schools, would remain out of the nationalisation process.