

MESSAGE

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No compromise on quality of teachers

THE announcement made by the prime minister on Wednesday to nationalise 26,193 non-government primary schools—registered and unregistered—across the country allowing the teachers to get the same salaries and benefits as their peers in government primary schools looks set to give a huge boost to the education sector as a whole. According to the government's plan already made public, the decision will take effect in three phases. While some 91,024 teachers of 22,981 schools that are at present included in the monthly pay order scheme of the government will get the facility from January 1, 2013, 9,025 teachers of 2,252 schools that are permanently or temporarily registered, have teaching permissions and run by community or non-government organisation will be entitled to enjoy the facility from July 1. Moreover, jobs of 3,796 teachers of 960 schools, either having or waiting for teaching permissions, will start to receive the facility from January 1, 2014. The announcement came at a time when the non-government primary schools mostly located in rural areas have long been facing a plethora of challenges, including low wage for teachers, in ensuring quality education for their students that predominantly belong to low-income and marginalise groups.

It may be pertinent to recall here that teachers of non-government primary schools demanding nationalisation of their jobs have struggled over decades, and hence the announcement in point marks a victory for that movement which we, like all other education loving quarters, have reasons to share. However, the revelation that the teachers whose jobs are set to be nationalised also include 21,500 teachers having no minimum teaching qualification has indeed let us down about, at least in part, the likelihood of the nationalisation initiative producing the desired result. As mentioned in a New Age report on Wednesday quoting education ministry officials, buoyed by blessings of the management committees of the schools concerned, all these incompetent teachers joined the jobs before 1992 who passed the Secondary School Certificate or equivalent exams in third division, while the minimum required qualification for the post was a second division. Besides, they have missed repeated deadlines given by successive governments to acquire the required qualification. Worse still, they have even failed to pass a minimum competency test conducted in 2007 while many of their colleagues with similar qualification were successful. Overall, it is clear that these 21,500 teachers are devoid of any quality to render a responsibility like imparting proper education to children, regarded as the future of the nation.

As the manager of the state, the government is obligated to ensure adequate pay and perks for all teachers as the latter are the key to building up an efficient and enlightened nation. But it is also true that for the same reasons, it has no scope to compromise on the skills of teachers. Thus, the incumbents would be well advised not only to exclude the incompetent teachers from its nationalisation of the jobs of non-government teachers but also not to give in any pressure to be mounted by any quarters in this regard in the years to come.