

Keep tuition fee rise within 30pc

Education ministry asks non-govt schools

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Any private educational institution, wishing to hike salaries of its teachers and staff, cannot increase the monthly tuition fees of students more than 30 percent of the existing fees.

The institutions, whether they enjoy government's Monthly Pay Order (MPO) facilities or not, would also have to discuss with the guardians and consider their (financial) capabilities before raising the fees, said an education

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Keep tuition fee rise within 30pc

FROM PAGE 1

ministry circular published yesterday. The fees can be hiked only by the institutions which are having a financial crunch, it said.

The circular, applicable to non-government schools, colleges, madrasas and vocational institutions, came months after an outcry from guardians over a sudden increase in students' monthly tuition fees by a number of renowned private schools in Dhaka.

After the government announced the new pay scale for civil servants in December last year, these schools, without any prior notice, hiked the tuition fees by 50 to 100 percent this January, showing the salary hike as an "excuse".

Protesting the schools' move, many guardians even took to the streets. They demanded an immediate solution to the problem.

In February, the education ministry asked the school authorities to stop collecting the increased fees and refund the extra money. It also asked

the schools to come up with specific reasons for hiking the fees.

The ministry also sat with the educational institutions several times over the issue.

"Institutions getting MPO facilities fully and partially and those which are not enjoying the facilities at all have abnormally been increasing the tuition fees in the context of implementing the new pay scale for civil servants, and it is totally unacceptable," said the ministry circular.

In no way, an institution can raise fees beyond 30 percent of the current fees, it said.

The institutions also cannot charge session and development fees more than what are described in the admission regulations.

Meanwhile, talking to The Daily Star, some guardians said the government circular was not "clear" and had scopes for misinterpretation.

"The circular did not make it clear when and how many times schools can

increase the fees. Will they hike the fees every year?" said Gias Ahmed, a man from Kakrail who has a school-going daughter.

"If this is to be the case, it will be an extra burden on us," he said.

Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, a platform of guardians, said the government circular did not specifically say which schools could raise the tuition fees.

"The governing bodies of many schools had increased the fees and did not pay heed to the government's call to stop collecting the extra fees. Now these institutions will increase 30 percent of the already-increased fees," he explained.

The ministry should set the tuition fees before making such proposals, he suggested.

According to the circular, the institutions wanting to have the fees increased will have to send the proposal to the district education officer after it is recommended by the head of

institution's management committee.

"The district education officer will analyse the proposal and present it before the additional deputy commissioner [education] if the officer finds the reasons [for the hike] justified. Once the additional deputy commissioner approves it, the institutions would increase the fees," it said.

It also said the number of teachers and staff at private institutions must follow manpower guidelines and the institutions cannot introduce new branches without approval from the education ministry.

"Appointment of teachers and staff will not be legal if the branches are unapproved. Fees cannot be collected from students for paying salaries of teachers and staff appointed without approval," said the circular.

The circular also said the salary and allowances of a non-MPO-listed teacher would not be higher than that of an MPO-enlisted teacher of the same scale.