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"Stop charging" Stop charging hiked fees

Govt asks private schools

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday ordered the private schools to immediately stop collecting hiked tuition and other fees from students until further notice.

The directive came in an official order issued by the education ministry amid a huge outcry of guardians over a sudden rise in monthly tuition fees. The order said the government would soon give necessary directive in this regard.

Most of the renowned private schools in the capital suddenly hiked the tuition fees by 50 to 100 percent showing the increase in public servants' salaries as an excuse.

The move triggered uproar among the guardians who staged demonstrations, formed human chains and observed sit-ins in the past two weeks. But the schools did not budge from their decisions, as there are no specific guidelines on monthly tuition fees.

The ministry in its order said the private education institutions were collecting

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monthly tuition and other fees defying the government's directives.

"As a result, an adverse reaction has been created among the students and their guardians," said the order signed by Additional Secretary Chowdhury Mufad Ahmed.

Twenty-six eminent citizens have meanwhile strongly protested and condemned the "ill-attempt" of the private education institutions of collecting additional fees.

In a statement, they said such incidents of increasing the fees defying the government policy were gradually going to an unbearable level.

The guardians took to the streets as the rigidity of the authorities concerned of the education institutions created the unrest, they said.

"We are deeply worried over the situation," reads the statement, expressing the hope that the government will take immediate steps to stop such "illegal and discriminatory attempts."

Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Prof Nazrul Islam, Selina Hossain, Sultana Kamal, Rasheda K Chowdhury, Syed Manzoorul Islam, Hossain Zillur Rahman, M Hafizuddin Khan, Iftekharuzzaman and Shaheen Anam, among others, were the signatories to the statement.

Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, a national

platform of guardians, has meanwhile thanked the government for issuing the directive.

"The government should monitor the situation to ensure that the schools return the already collected hiked fees or adjust it in the coming months," he said.

Among the Dhaka-based schools that hiked the fees most are Willes Little Flower School and College, Viqarunnisa Noon School, Udayan Higher Secondary School and College, BIAM Model School and College, Mohammadpur Preparatory Higher Secondary Girls' School and College, Shaheed Police Smriti School and College, Shaheed Bir Uttam Lt Anwar Girls' School and College, and Bangladesh Bank High School and College.

Every year, the schools of répute increase the admission and tuition fees, citing rise in maintenance and other costs. But this year, they increased the fees exponentially.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in an investigation found that Willes Little Flower School and College charged 49 percent additional fees from the students.

The tuition fees in Class-II rose to Tk 1,500 from Tk 675. Similarly, the tuition fee in Class-V increased to Tk 2,550 from Tk 1,500.

Similar additional fees were slapped on students in other private schools as well.