

MPO-listing as it stands now

Any more wavering would do more harm than good

THE task of Monthly Pay Order (MPO)-listing, that is, putting schools on the government's payroll under the present education minister Nurul Islam Nahid has proved to be a roller-coaster ride this year. And the delay caused has been due mainly to the complaints made by the MPs to the prime minister, under whose instruction her political and education adviser prepared another list incorporating the demands of the MPs. But that list, too, was found to be controversial for what they said it accommodated instances of alleged fraudulence, inclusion of institutions chosen by opposition BNP, and, even Jamaat MPs. The education minister was again asked by the prime minister to prepare another MPO list, which was submitted on June 16 last.

Obviously, the long delay in MPO-listing has been made at the cost of the suffering of the teaching staff and also of the students of the institutions concerned. But can we still claim that the last prepared list is a faultless one? For the allegation of forgery and politicisation has already been raised against the listing process.

But in the first place to complete the MPO-listing properly and in an impartial way, certain criteria were set by the education ministry, such as taking into consideration the pass percentage, presence of qualified teachers on the staff, teacher-student ratio, the number of schools in the locality and so on for the schools concerned. But some MPs being critical of it, the PM had it reviewed which again is in for a second revision. But in actual practice, the objective could hardly be fully achieved, if only due to the allegations of corruption, lobbying and politicisation.

What is the way out of this vicious circle in the MPO-listing process? Meanwhile, the incumbent education minister must have become wiser and, that is, good intent alone is not enough to complete a tricky task like MPO-listing of educational institutions, which involves accommodation of competing interests. In point of fact, there should be a professional body to determine the eligibility criteria of the educational institutions under the education ministry, which the government should stick to. And while meeting the set criteria, we must ensure that no discrimination is made between the opposition and ruling party MPs in the process.

Last but not least, one cannot lose sight of the fact that, the entire exercise is meant to facilitate education of our children. But if the work of MPO-listing becomes something of a scramble for a slice of the government pie by fair means or foul, then the whole purpose of the task risks being defeated. Hopefully, the authorities would finalise the list soon and go about implementing it in right earnest.