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Ill-paid teachers barely make ends meet

Non-govt teachers get Tk 100 as house rent

Mohiuddin Alamgir

ABOUT 4.8 lakh teachers of non-government schools, colleges, technical institutions and madrassahs under monthly pay order have been receiving only Tk 100 as house rent per month for 28 years and Tk 150 as medical allowance for 18 years.

They draw 25 per cent of their basic salaries as festival allowance and a one-time increment of Tk 35 to Tk 200 in the entire service length and no pension benefits.

About one lakh teachers, who are not enrolled in the MPO, get no salary, house rent and medical allowance from the government.

Low pay and benefits force the neglected teachers to try to find means to earn extra money to meet their expenses, said their leaders.

Against this backdrop, the country observes World Teachers' Day today with the theme 'Take a stand for teachers'.

The National Front of Teachers and Employees chief coordinator, Quazi Faruque Ahmed, told New Age that no one could live on such meagre salary and benefits amid a galloping cost of living.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid said the government had a plan to increase house rent and medical allowance for the teachers.

At present, there are 4.70 lakh teachers and employees in nearly 28,000 non-government post-primary educational institutions who get salaries and other benefits from the exchequer in the form of monthly pay order.

In Bangladesh, most educational institutions were established under private initiatives. Later the government introduced MPO setting certain conditions for schools to get the benefits.

Nearly 8,000 non-government educational institutions

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are now in the queue for MPO enlistment.

Teachers' leaders said salaries and benefits for teachers of government schools were increasing almost regularly but the authorities remained indifferent to the legitimate demands of non-government school teachers who were struggling for survival.

The teachers' leaders said they had been drawing a monthly house rent of Tk 100 since 1984, monthly medical allowance of Tk 150 since 1994, 25 per cent of the basic salary as festival allowance since 2004 and increment under the 1991 pay scale.

According to the amended MPO Directives of August 2012, the highest monthly gross salary of a college principal might be Tk 33,750 while that of an assistant teacher was Tk 9,305.

A government high school teacher receives Tk 700 as medical allowance, 40 to 60 per cent (varies according to the place of posting) of basic salary as house rent, at least Tk 450 as yearly increment and pension benefits.

A teachers' leader said benefits of government teachers were restructured in 2009 in the seventh pay scale when the medical allowance increased from Tk 500 to Tk 700 and yearly increment was also raised.

Bangladesh Shikkhak-Karmacharri Oikya Parishad coordinator Ranjit Kumar Saha said the teachers of non-government schools, colleges and madrassahs were receiving only Tk 100 as house rent whereas the government teachers were drawing 40 per cent of the basic salary as house rent, which was discriminatory.

He urged the government to eliminate the disparity in the pay and perks of the teachers of government and non-government educational institutions.

'Nowadays when you see doctor, you have to pay him Tk 500 in fee and the house rent we are paid is not enough even to rent a room in a upazila town,' said Shikkhak Karmachari Oikya Jote chairman Selim Bhuiyan.

Education minister Nurul Islam Nahid, after a meeting with the teachers on September 23, had said that the government was thinking about a hike in house rents and medical allowances of teachers enrolled in the MPO.

But leaders of the National Front of Teachers and Employees questioned the government's sincerity. They said they had heard that the government was going to increase their house rent to Tk 500 and medical allowance to Tk 300 per month which would not be acceptable.

The teachers demanded the same amount as house rent, medical allowance and festival allowance as enjoyed by government school teachers.