

# MPO teachers continue hunger strike

They announce procession with empty plates for today

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*MPO-listed teachers and employees hold a black flag procession from the Central Shaheed Minar to the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka as they continue sit-in protest for the seventh consecutive day on Saturday, pressing for a three-point demand. | Sony Ramani*

Non-government teachers and employees on the monthly pay order scheme continued their hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka for the second consecutive day on Saturday, demanding a pay increase.

They, under the banner of 'MPO-bhukto Shikkha Jatiyakaran Pratyashi Jote', continued their non-stop sit-in there for the sixth day on Saturday.

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Several hundred MPO teachers and employees from different districts demonstrated there on the day and more than 100 protesters continued their indefinite hunger strike.

The protesters on Saturday evening announced a procession carrying empty plates from the Central Shaheed Minar for today to press home their three-point demand.

Their demands include allocation of 20 per cent of their basic pay for house rent allowance, Tk 1,500 for medical allowance and an increase in the festival allowance for employees from the current 50 per cent to 75 per cent.

Earlier in the day, they brought out a procession carrying black flags from the Central Shaheed Minar and met in a brief rally near the National Press Club.

Addressing the rally, the organisation's member secretary, Delawar Hossain Azizi, criticised education adviser Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar for what Azizi called 'misbehaviour with the protesting teachers'.

He alleged that people like an education adviser were trying to foil or delay the upcoming national elections by pitting teachers against the government.

Azizi also expressed a mixed reaction regarding Bangladesh Nationalist Party secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's Saturday statement.

He welcomed that statement as it said that the BNP and its acting chairman Tarique Rahman agreed in principle with the fair demands of the teachers.

He, however, rejected another part of the statement where it was said that if the BNP got the chance to run the country again through people's votes, it would positively consider expanding teachers'

financial security, making their jobs permanent, and nationalising all educational institutions gradually as per the state's capacity.

Azizi termed this part of the statement a 'political rhetoric'.

He also protested at another part of the statement where it was said that the BNP would resist the event if the associates of the fallen autocratic regime tried to misuse the teachers' logical movement to create chaos and instability in the country ahead of the election.

He said that the protesting teachers were not the associates of the fallen autocratic regime and that they were protesting for their rights.

Gono Odhikar Parishad general secretary Rashed Khan addressed the rally, expressing his party's solidarity with the protesters.

Protesters are organising different programmes simultaneously to press home their demands, such as an indefinite hunger strike since October 17, and a continuous sit-in at the Central Shaheed Minar and countrywide work abstention since October 13.

They also blocked roads and held a march towards the Bangladesh Secretariat during their protests.

The recent spate of protests by the MPO teachers and employees started on October 12, when the police used force to disperse them from the National Press Club.