

# MPO teachers issue two-day ultimatum

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Warn of tougher movement if demands not met



- Teachers demand a 20% rise in house rent allowance
- Term govt's 5% offer unrealistic
- Protest continues for the ninth consecutive day
- Protesters to march from Shaheed Minar to Shahbagh today
- BNP expresses solidarity with teachers

MPO-enlisted teachers of non-government educational institutions have given Education Adviser CR Abrar a two-day ultimatum to implement their demand for a 20 percent increase in house rent allowance.

Continuing their protest for the ninth consecutive day at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, the demonstrators demanded that the government issue a gazette accepting their three-point demand.

On behalf of the teachers, Delwar Hossain Azizi, member secretary of the Alliance for Nationalisation of MPO Institutions, announced that they will stage a sit-in and march from Shaheed Minar to Shahbagh today, wearing black cloths over their mouths.

Azizi said, "We will wait until October 22. If our demand remains unmet and the government fails to issue the gazette by then, the situation will turn into something Bangladesh has never seen before. We will bring teachers from across the country to Dhaka and lay siege to Jamuna [the chief adviser's residence]."

He said their protest has now turned into a hunger strike unto death.

"Four teachers have already fallen sick and received hospital treatment, and many others are unwell. If any teacher dies due to the hunger strike, the responsibility will lie with Education Adviser CR Abrar," he added.



Under the scorching October sun, protesting MPO teachers huddle beneath umbrellas and banners for shade at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, as their demonstration over a three-point demand entered its ninth consecutive day. Photo: Prabir Das

Azizi also said they no longer recognise the education adviser's authority. "If he cannot fulfil our demand, he must resign," he said.

The alliance further announced that teachers unable to join the central programme in Dhaka will hold a one-hour sit-in at district and upazila headquarters every day from 11:00am to 12:00pm.

Azizi urged all teachers to suspend ongoing training programmes and join the movement.

The demonstrators termed the government's decision to fix house rent at five percent of the basic salary or a minimum of Tk 2,000 as "unrealistic" and vowed to continue their protest until their demands are met.

The teachers reiterated their three-point demand: 20 percent of the basic salary as house rent allowance, an increase in medical allowance from Tk 500 to Tk 1,500, and raising the festival bonus for staff from 50 to 75 percent.

Meanwhile, the BNP expressed solidarity with the agitating teachers.

BNP Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie visited the protesters at the Shaheed Minar yesterday and urged the government to consider their demands.

"I would urge the government to reconsider -- five percent is not enough. You must show special consideration for these teachers," Annie said.

MPO-listed teachers are those working at private schools and colleges that receive government funding under the monthly pay order system.