

The Bangladesh Times

Dhaka Wednesday, March 5, 1986

Striking teachers

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More than 400,000 students will sit for the secondary school certificate examination tomorrow throughout the country. The examination is crucial in every student's life because it marks the end of nearly twelve years of schooling and forms the foundation of his higher studies in later years. A bad grade at the secondary level can affect the prospects of a future educational career. It is not surprising that parents and guardians are worried that a section of school teachers have decided to go for agitation to realise an impossible goal at a time when the important examination is going to take place. By taking recourse to an industrial action despite assurances from the authorities that their demands would be considered, the striking teachers have shown their lack of consciousness about their moral responsibilities.

On the face of it, the two demands of the striking teachers are impossible to fulfil. The implementation of a programme for nationalisation of the country's 15000 private schools at one go will entail an annual expenditure of about 300 crore taka. This money will have to be paid by the tax payers which includes the large number of guardians of the students who are today being held as captives of the situation. No responsible government can hastily take such a step because this will inevitably bring a serious economic pressure on the national exchequer.

The society admits that the school teachers ought to be better paid and that they should have a higher standard of living commensurate with the responsible duties they perform. But the striking teachers must appreciate that a major programme of nationalisation of private schools can only be done in phases and after due considerations of all aspects of the issue. It is very unfortunate that a section of the school teachers are trying to put pressure for realising the demands without taking into account the difficulties.

The government has taken all steps to ensure that the examinations take place in a peaceful manner and that no student is deprived of the opportunity of facing the crucial tests. But one hears that a section of teachers are issuing threats of disrupting the examinations by creating a law and order situation at the centres.

Finally, the teachers have the right to go on strike as much as the students have the right to appear at the SSC examinations. Therefore, it would be highly illegal and immoral if teachers take to anarchy at the examination centres. The government would be justified in taking any measure to ensure that the examinations are held without any incident. Such actions are demanded by parents and guardians.