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Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association stages a sit-in at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding nationalisation of jobs.

Poor salaries keep bright job-seekers

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an agriculture officer's. A government primary teacher's salary is also four grades lower than a government compositor's salary, five grades lower than a stenographer's salary and three grades lower than a chauffeur's salary.

"How can we expect meritorious students to become primary school teachers? Bright students don't come to the teaching profession willingly not only because of poor salaries but also because of low social status of the profession," said AK Fazlul Huq, general secretary of Bangladesh Primary Teachers Association.

He also said a teacher of a government primary school now starts the job with a monthly salary of only Tk 3000 while a peon with an education up to class eight starts the job with Tk 2600, an upper divisional clerk with Tk 2850 and a chauffeur with Tk 3150.

Primary school teachers alleged that five wage commissions were formed for reforming the pay scale of government officers in the last 32 years while no commission has yet been formed for reforming the pay scale of government primary school teachers.

Education Minister Osman Farruk said an additional Tk 75 crore will be required to implement the new pay scale. "Well, it is not enough for the teachers but what else can we do with a small fund?" he said.

Teachers of secondary schools are getting much higher salaries although primary school teachers have the same ranking and academic qualifications, said Prof Abul Kamal Azad, president of Bangladesh Primary Teachers Association.

He pointed out, "A government high school teacher gets Tk 5,100 per month while a government primary school teacher previously received only Tk 2600 and will get only Tk 3000 from now on."

Academicians emphasised the need for raising the salaries and other benefits of primary school teachers as it is very important to attract brilliant and talented people to the profession to ensure quality education for all.

"Ensuring quality in primary education will not be possible without making the job of primary school teachers more attractive," said renowned academician Prof Serajul

Islam Chowdhury.

Awami League's Education and Human Development Secretary Nurul Islam Nahid said the quality of primary education should be improved as it is the first stage in grooming of good citizens because people learn the most at the primary level.

All the six education commissions formed from time to time suggested modest salaries and allowances for primary school teachers.

The latest education commission report submitted to the prime minister in 2003 and prepared by Prof Maniruzzaman Mian, also suggested higher salaries for primary school teachers so that they can maintain a good social status.

Education of about one crore children in 37,000 government primary schools depend on around 1,80,000 teachers who have been carrying out different programmes including hunger strikes for the last three decades demanding elimination of wage discriminations.

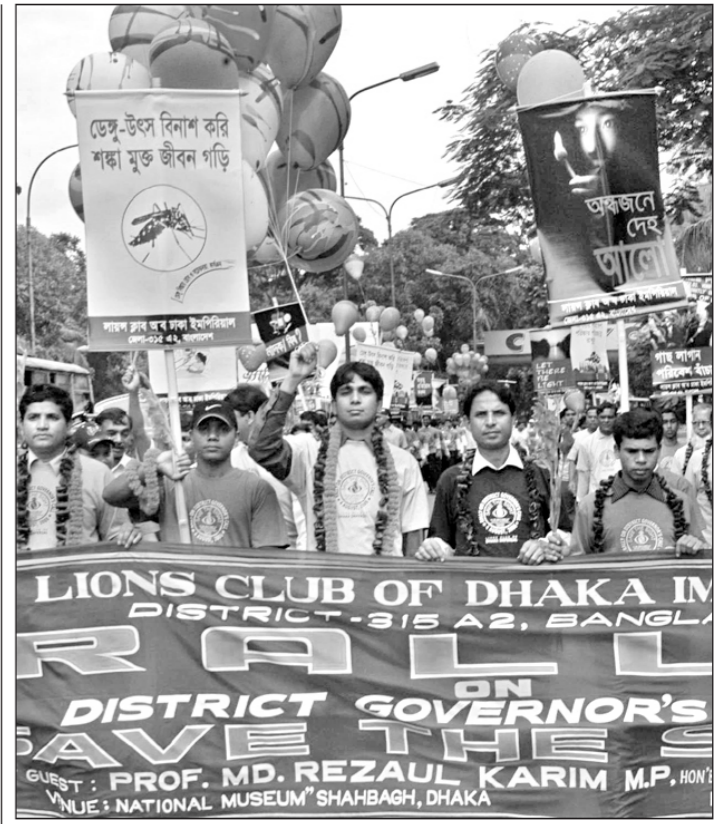


PHOTO: STAR

Lions Club International takes out a colourful procession with the slogan 'Save the sight' at Shahbagh in the city yesterday.

