

EDUCATION



Additional Class Teachers (ACTs) have been demanding regularisation of their job since November 2017.

PHOTOS: MD RAHAT KABIR

# Caught up in RED TAPE

Fate of 5,200 model teachers, trained under the World Bank funded SEQAEP project, is hanging in the balance

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

"Would you dream of being a model teacher? Are you interested to take teaching profession for career building? Do you take it as a challenge to work at rural areas anywhere in Bangladesh?" This was the call for applications for the recruitment of additional class teachers (ACT) in 2,100 disadvantaged secondary schools of 250 upazilas in Bangladesh to ensure quality teaching-learning of mathematics, science and English.

From 2015 to 2017, 6,200 teachers who have Bachelor's degrees in English language and literature, mathematics or science subjects (physics, chemistry and biology) were recruited based on their merit scores. Of them, 5,200 are still teaching in schools located in some of the remotest areas of Bangladesh.

Unfortunately, these teachers, who were trained and recognised as "model teachers" by the Ministry of Education (MoE), did not get a single taka as remuneration over the last 13 months. According to the Association of Additional Class Teachers, Bangladesh, these recruits were promised regularisation of their jobs on several occasions by ministry officials and instructed to continue classes. Those promises were never fulfilled.

As a result, 5,200 teachers, most of whom are young graduates of different universities, have had to leave their classrooms for the streets. Since November 2017, hundreds of them have

been protesting in front of the National Press Club demanding regularisation of their job. Sultanul Muslimin, an English language and literature graduate of Begum Rokyea University, Rangpur is one of them. He used to teach communicative



**ACTs have been promised of regularisation or inclusion into the MPO system from the very beginning of their employment.**

English at Pathanpara Alia Madrasa located at Joldhaka upazila of Nilphamari district. He says, "I was the only teacher of that madrasa who was a university graduate. Thanks to our training, I used to prepare daily and monthly lesson plans

for my students. Besides taking regular classes, I used to engage my students in group activities where they had to practice communicating in English. In this way, I tried to cure their fear of English."

According to Maolana Tofazzol Hossain, principal of that madrasa, students were so impressed by the unique and participatory teaching methods of Sultanul that they would request him to continue the class even after the designated class time. "Our students, particularly of grades six, seven and eight, where Sultanul took regular classes, showed remarkable improvement in English. Even teachers of other subjects learned a lot of teaching techniques from Sultanul. Our students and us still miss him a lot. It is really unfortunate that he had to leave us."

Sultanul did not want to leave. He continued to teach them for six months without any payment. "Due to promises from the MoE, I hoped that I would get a renewed contract or be regularised. In Joldhaka upazila there were 78 ACTs like me. We were told by the ministry officials to continue classes and they requested our principals to give us some conveyance allowance until we are regularised. However, those were all oral promises. When nothing happened even after six months, I had to leave the institution. My father is a farmer. I am the eldest among my four siblings. I need to support my family."

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