

Lessons on democracy, election in textbooks

EC seeks inclusion in books for class VI-X

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The Election Commission wants the education ministry to introduce new chapters on the election system and democracy in the textbooks for class-VI-X.

It also wants that similar chapters be included in the teacher's training courses.

Currently, there is a separate chapter on election and democracy in the textbooks of class-IX and X. Besides, there are some paragraphs on elections in the textbooks of class-VII and VIII.

But now the EC wants similar chapters in the textbooks of all classes from VI to X so that students can get a better idea about the importance of election, voting rights and democracy, said EC officials.

However, education and election experts say it is not necessary for children to acquire knowledge on political issues at such an early age.

Talking to this newspaper, EC officials said they have already sent a letter to the education ministry, expressing their wish that the ministry includes the chapters.

The EC has recently formed a four-member committee led by one of its deputy secretaries in this regard.

"We've already started work. After scrutinising necessary documents and conducting an elaborate research, we will submit a report to the election commissioners," said Farhad Ahmad Khan, head of the committee.

EC's Additional Secretary Moklesur Rahman said, "We want to make children aware of the country's electoral system, importance of election in democracy and other related issues."

About this initiative, National Curriculum and Textbook Board Member (Curriculum) Prof Mosiuzzaman said, they received a letter from the EC regarding the issue.

"We'll consider it during revision of curriculum next year," he told The Daily Star.

"More discussions with stakeholders and experts are required to determine whether it [such chapters] should be included in secondary level textbooks," he added.

Besides, the commission also wants that similar chapters be included in the curricula of different training programmes of Primary Training Institute (PTI), National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) and BED (professional) courses.

"We already have the curricula of these training programmes from the authorities concerned. Now we are studying those, and working on how we can include new chapters there," said Farhad Hossain, a member of the committee and also a senior assistant secretary of the EC.

About the initiative, eminent child education expert Prof Manzoor Ahmed said, "A new trend has emerged in our country that we incorporate all the issues in textbooks. Our children are already overburdened."

The government could take up separate projects or programmes to make children aware of democracy and elections instead of incorporating the issues in textbooks, he viewed.

Noted election and local government expert Tofail Ahmed is of the opinion that there is no need to include chapters on elections in children's textbooks, as it is absolutely a political issue.

"There are many issues which we need to teach children. For example, we should teach them how to be a good citizen with values. We can teach them about our history, culture and the Liberation War. Children should not be overburdened with such political issues," he told The Daily Star.