

Banned guidebook sales thriving

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BANNED guidebooks are being sold in every nook and corner of the country.

There are allegations that due to unholy alliance with publishers, many teachers compel students to buy the guidebooks.

Bookshops in the capital and elsewhere in the country are openly selling the guidebooks and notebooks

defying a government ban in place since 1980.

There are also allegations that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board turn a blind eye to the illegal sales of the guidebooks.

Over the last year and a half, the NCTB never carried out drives against the errant publishers, sellers of guidebook.

Officials said that the NCTB was neglecting its

statutory responsibility by not carrying out the drives against the offenders.

Each year, guidebooks worth about Tk 1500 crore are sold in the country.

This year, the government spent Tk 750 crore for providing 4.5 crore textbooks to students from class one to ten free of cost.

Teachers said that the illegal business of guidebooks

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and notebooks could grow due to aggressive marketing by publishers, parents' desire that their children earn better grades and absence of quality teaching in the class rooms.

By encouraging students to memorize rather than comprehend their lessons, guidebooks destroy children's creativity, said academicians.

Professor emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury, BUET professor Mohammad Kaolbad and Biswa Sahitya Kendra chairman Abdullah Abu Sayeed said that notebooks and guidebooks were destroying education.

Academicians demanded steps by the government and NCTB to stop the publication and sales of the banned guidebooks and notebooks.

No regular drives could be conducted against the publication and sales of the banned guidebook and notebooks due to manpower shortage, NCTB chairman Narayan Chandra Saha told

New Age.

The Notebooks (Prohibition) Act 1980, prohibits printing and marketing of notebooks for students.

In December 2009, the Appellate Division upheld a High Court verdict which banned guidebooks and notebooks and directed the government to take action against anyone found flouting the ban.

In recent years guidebooks are being sold even in remote villages, said an NCTB member.

The Prime Minister's Office in letter on February 8, 2015 alerted the education ministry against the growing menace of the guidebooks and notebooks. The PMO letter pointed out that a section of teachers across the country were bribed by 55 publishers to push sell the banned guidebooks and notebooks they print to students.

The PMO letter sensitized the education ministry about the issue of notebooks and guidebooks hampering the government's education

policy objective of development of students' creative faculties.

Teachers said that students learning from guidebooks containing serious errors can never overcome their mistakes.

As reliance on guidebooks detaches pupils from textbooks they get used to rote learning which destroys their creativity and analytical faculties, said Serajul Islam Choudhury.

Creative system of education adopted by the government increased students' dependence on guidebook and notebooks, he said.

An NCTB official said that the outset of each academic year publishers offer bribes to teachers to encourage their students to buy notebooks and guidebooks.

During random visits to bookstores in the capital and five outlying districts, New Age saw that guidebooks published by at least 20 publishing houses were on display at bookstores.

Parents and students are

lured to buy guidebooks seeing the inscriptions on the covers that proclaim lofty promises to pupils that they would find all the answers to creative and other questions.

Abdullah Abu Sayeed said that as many school-teachers rely on guidebooks as they cannot prepare their pupils for creative questions.

Bangladesh Publishers and Books Sellers Association president Alamgir Sikder said that printing and selling guidebooks were not illegal.

He said, 'We print and sell practice books and not the guidebooks and notebooks which are banned under the law.'

'We print the practice books as there is a huge demand for them,' he said.

He admitted that some of the publishers bribe school-teachers and the teachers' association to motivate students to buy notebooks and guidebooks.

The NCTB chairman said he would launch drives against guidebooks soon.