

# Pry, secondary schools: Millions of students still without textbooks

Govt misses deadline again



File photo

**Despite repeated assurances, the interim government has once again failed to distribute textbooks to crores of students across the country, with the 40-day Ramadan and Eid vacation already underway.**

After missing the usual January deadline, then education adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud stated that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) would complete the distribution of all 40.15 crore textbooks by February. However, this deadline was also missed.

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With students now on their Ramadan and Eid holiday, Wahiduddin, on his final day as adviser yesterday, once again promised that the books would be delivered by March 10.

NCTB officials, however, have indicated that this deadline may also be missed due to a scarcity of paper.

Amid these repeated promises and missed deadlines, students remain the worst affected.

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## Perks, bonuses of MPO teachers set to increase



Crores of children began their academic year without essential textbooks, and now, as they enter their long holiday, their studies have been severely disrupted.

**“It's true that we aim to print all the books by March 10. However, we need help from the printing industry owners. As far as we know, there is a scarcity of paper, which has contributed to the delay.”**

— NCTB Chairman Prof Reazul Hassan

Secondary school students commenced their vacation on February 27, while primary school students began a day earlier. By that time, only 66 percent of secondary school textbooks -- out of 30.96 crore -- had been cleared for distribution. For primary students, over 90 percent of their 9.19 crore textbooks were ready, according to NCTB officials.

Board sources indicate that the shortages are particularly severe for students in grades five, eight, and nine. Out of 5.20 crore eighth-grade textbooks, only 2.96 crore had been printed. Similarly, as of February 25, only 2.20 crore of the 6.12 crore ninth-grade textbooks were available.

Rihad Islam, a sixth-grade student at Bhatai High School in Jhenidah's Shailakupa upazila, has received only three textbooks, including Bangla and English. He is still waiting for crucial books such as Mathematics, Science, and Bangladesh & Global Studies.

"Our teachers only conduct classes for the subjects we have books for. After that, they send us home. I've heard that students in other schools are facing the same issue," Rihad told this newspaper.

His elder sister, Jasmine Ara, expressed frustration, saying, "Teachers have given study assignments for the holidays, but how can he study when he only has two books? When I asked this, they suggested printing PDFs of the books as a temporary solution."

Jahid Hasan, an eighth-grader at Gaibandha Government Boys' High School, has received only four out of 14 textbooks.

"Teachers are assigning chapters from books we haven't even received yet. How are we supposed to study?" he asked.

A teacher at Bhatari High School in Jhenidah, speaking on condition of anonymity, admitted, "We're trying to follow the academic calendar, but without books, we're struggling. If we don't assign tasks, it will lead to significant learning gaps. That's why we printed PDF copies of some of the more important books and distributed them to certain classes."

Sharmin Sultana, the mother of a ninth-grade student at Rajdhani High School in the capital, said, "The delay in January due to national issues was understandable, but February has ended, and some books are still missing. Now, with Ramadan, Eid, and SSC exam holidays, half the academic year will be lost. How will students catch up?"

The situation has also forced many parents to bear additional costs.

Liton Karmaker, the father of a ninth-grade student at Dinajpur Zilla School, said, "My son's teachers told him to print out PDFs and complete assignments. I may be able to afford it, but many parents can't. Some don't even know where to find these PDFs. This is an extra burden on parents, caused by the government's failure."

NCTB member (Textbook) Riad Chowdhury claimed that, as of Monday, around 84 percent of all textbooks were ready for distribution.

He stated that approximately 98.25 percent of primary-level books and 80 percent of secondary-level books were completed and ready for delivery. "The remaining books will be ready soon and will be delivered in the coming weeks."

When contacted, NCTB Chairman Prof Reazul Hassan said, "It's true that we aim to print all the books by March 10. However, we need help from the printing industry owners. As far as we know, there is a scarcity of paper, which has contributed to the delay."

He acknowledged the learning gap that may result from the delay but claimed it would not exceed a month. "If we can cut short some holidays and if teachers take more responsibility in their classes, we can catch up."