

# NCTB split into two entities appears right step forward

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THE government's initiative to put the task of printing pre-primary and primary textbooks, which the National Curriculum and Textbook Board has so far done, at the hands of the primary and mass education ministry appears problematic. The government has drafted the amendments to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board Act 2018 to transfer the responsibility for the printing, publication and distribution of pre-primary and primary textbooks and uploaded the draft on the web site of the Secondary and Higher Education Division to elicit public opinions. The initiative is understandably born out of the mess that the printing and distribution of textbooks runs into. The textbook board printed 410.5 million copies of textbooks for the current academic year. But, the board could distribute 27.8 per cent of the textbooks by the first week of January whilst all students are reported to have received the textbooks by March, three months into the academic year. Officials are also reported to have said that the initiative is meant for 'a smooth distribution of textbooks,' which is a major reason. National Curriculum and Textbook Board officials have objection to the move.

But what complicates the matter is that the initiative, if put into force, is highly unlikely to resolve the problem of printing and distribution. The textbook board this year printed about 410.5 million copies of textbooks — 6.2 million pre-primary, 85.5 million primary, 192,000 national minority language and 308.1 million secondary textbooks. With the job of printing pre-primary, primary and national minority language textbooks being transferred to the primary and mass ministry, the textbook board would still need to deal with about 310 million textbooks. Besides, the textbook board would continue to design the curriculums, work on the syllabuses and prepare the textbooks after the printing and distribution tasks for pre-primary and primary textbooks are invested in the primary and mass education ministry. Whilst the National Curriculum and Textbook Board would continue to remain overburdened, the printing and distribution of the textbooks by the ministry might open up new avenues for mismanagement. The curriculum and textbook board, as education experts suggest, should be a fully academic institution. It should not be engaged in the printing and distribution of textbooks and should remain focused on curriculums, syllabuses and textbook preparation. The separation of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board into two entities, one with the task of curriculums, syllabuses and textbook preparation and the other with the printing and distribution of textbooks, as has been heard for quite some years, appears to be the right step forward.

The government should, therefore, not proceed with the initiative and, rather, create two entities out of the textbook board for a better functioning of the curriculum, syllabus and textbooks and an efficient printing and distribution of the textbooks.