

Irregular supply of paper, text books suffer

By A Staff Correspondent

The publication of books of Bangladesh School Text Book Board has suffered a major setback due mainly to irregular supply of paper from the country's three paper mills managed by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC). This is not the first time that dislocation in publication of text books has been caused much to the inconvenience of the students. This is almost a regular feature every year.

Last year UNICEF agreed to supply paper for publications of books by the Text Book Board from Class I to Class IV under its universal literacy programme. The Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM) run by the BCIC got the order from UNICEF to supply 3000 metric tons of different varieties of paper worth over two million U.S. dollar equivalent to about Tk. six crore.

The KPM which was kept closed for three months at various period last year failed to supply the total quantity of paper to Text Book Board. The KPM was due to supply the total quantity of paper to the Text Book Board by December last year. Till now the BCIC could not supply over 300 metric tons of paper.

As a result, the prospect of getting further order from UNICEF for BCIC paper has become bleak. The UNICEF has also invited international tender this year for supply of 3,300 metric tons of paper for the Bangladesh School Text Book Board. When contacted an official of BCIC said that the delay in supply of UNICEF paper to the Text Book Board was mainly due to dislocation in paper production at KPM for shortage of pulp. Moreover, there was delay in receiving the pulp from Canada owing to dock workers strike there the official added. With regard to suspension of production at KPM for three months last year the official pointed out that the mill

See page 12 col 4

(From page 1 Col. 3)

was kept closed for Balancing Modernisation and Replacement (BMR).

A senior official of School Text Book Board told me that the blame cast upon the Board for delay in production of text books is largely due to irregular supply of paper from local source.

Other factors responsible

Some other factors responsible for the delay in production of text books are irregular power supply, workers unrest, and general apathy to publication of books by the publishers following lower rate of profit provided to them. The publishers, appointed by the Text Book Board, are reluctant to produce the text books in time as they earn little profit of it, a Text Book Board source said.

Several leading publishers of the city whom I interviewed said that the Text Book Board always supplies them the manuscripts at the fag-end of the year and as such the production is delayed.

rate in black market, it is alleged. Often they cannot complete the production of books for the shortage of binding paper, the publishers regretted.

The BCIC is a top-heavy organisation headed by its Chairman who is holding the position for the last eight years.

The import of paper is now banned in the country so the crisis is acutely felt by the publication industry.

Meanwhile, UNICEF is trying to obtain special government permission for the import of paper for the Text Book Board.

On the other hand the suspension of production in the paper mills for Balancing Modernisation and Replacement (BMR) undertaken by BCIC from time to time is not also necessary according to knowledgeable source. Some publishers viewed that the BMR measures are taken periodically by BCIC as a measure to manipulate the market so that paper can be sold at a higher price, it is alleged.

Some publishers resented that BCIC has so far failed to export paper in the world market and even could not make significant progress to meet the local demand.