

Primary schools yet to receive text books

By JAGLUL ALAM

Following some usual delay in publication the primary schools throughout the country have yet to receive the assurance that they would be provided with textbooks even by the end of next February while the academic sessions of the primary schools have already begun.

Earlier the government in its policy decision announced that with a view to encouraging primary education, students of primary level up to class five would

be supplied textbooks free of cost and those would be distributed by the respective primary schools under the direct guidance of the respective district administrations.

The names of about 46 thousand primary schools, including 32 thousand government primary schools, were accordingly enlisted to be provided with the books. It was also decided that about 40 million textbooks of about 11 million sets would be distributed throughout the country.

The government also earmarked that by December 30, 1986 all the sets of primary textbooks would be sent up to the district level and distribution would be completed by January 10 this year.

It was also decided that the concerned department would spend about Tk. 260 million to publish 3.5 million sets of books for class one, 2.8 million sets for class two, 2.1 million sets for class three, 1.5 million sets for class four, and 1.2 million sets for class five students.

A decision was also taken to maintain a reserve stock of 900 thousand sets of textbooks of different classes with a view to meeting emergency requirements.

But the National Curriculum and Textbook Board through one of its official letters on December 10 informed the Directorate of Primary Education that following some unavoidable circumstances the concerned department would not be able to publish and supply the complete sets of books for all the classes before December 25.

In the letter the Textbook Board authority said that the reasons for the delay were non-cooperation from the printers and inadequate transportation facilities along with delay in binding the books.

When the matter was conveyed to the printers they said that the delay in printing the books was caused by frequent power disruption, inadequate supply of newsprint and delaying tendencies of the textbook authority to issue final print orders of the copies.

On the other hand, the binders alleged that in many cases the textbook Board

indulged in appointing binders in an irregular manner.

However, to arrest the situation, the Textbook Board, the printers and the binders came to a mutual understanding and accordingly a fresh target was set to send the complete sets of textbooks up to the district level by January 30.

According to sources in the Textbook Board, since last week only 15 out of the 64 districts of the country had received complete sets of textbooks for classes one, two and three, while the textbooks for class four and class five were still under publication.

It is also learnt that completion of publication of all the sets of textbooks would require at least another two months while the students of the primary level would be compelled to attend their classes without textbooks in many places of the country.

A senior officer, in charge of publication of textbooks for the primary classes, told Holiday last week that the concerned department was trying its best to complete the supply of textbooks by the end of January. He said that the printers and binders were frequently reminded to complete their work by the stipulated time.

He added that arrangement was being made to send the textbooks to the district level and the board authority has already contacted a large number of transport vehicle owners to ensure smooth supply of books particularly outside Dhaka District.

As the textbooks for the primary students are provided free of cost, the government through one of its circular had restricted selling of primary textbooks by the book sellers. But it is alleged that many of the primary textbooks are now available on the open market.

There are sufficient reasons to believe that a section of primary school authorities and managements is applying to the textbook authority for their non-existent students and after receiving the consignments of books are selling them to the black-marketeers to earn without investment.

In many places the newly-supplied textbooks

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Textbooks

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for primary classes are being sold in the name of 'used books,' it is alleged.

While the government has restricted publication or marketing of notebooks up to class ten, it is alleged that some of the publishers have already published notebooks written by "expert headmasters" and untraceable publishers and the students and guardians looking for textbooks are being forced to purchase those notebooks at an exorbitant price and in most cases the sellers of textbooks refuse to sell the textbooks unless the notebooks are also bought, it is further alleged.