

Textbook supply to pry. students now uncertain

Staff Correspondent

The Government plan to supply textbooks to students of primary classes from September 15 is now facing uncertainty following dispute between the National Education Curriculum and Text Book Board and the Bangladesh Printing Industry Association, National Book Binding Association and the Book Publishers and Sellers Association.

The National Education Curriculum and Text Book Board had plan to publish seven crore books for primary classes. Accordingly, the board placed orders to the affiliated printers and publishers for printing only two crore 75 lakh books, which was only 46 per cent of the total books. The orders for the rest four crore 25 lakh books has not yet been given.

The National Education Curriculum and Text Book Board placed orders for printing the two crore 75 lakh books in May, on the basis of price of inks and printing materials existed in the market. But the tangle started when the National Budget proposed tax increase on ink and other printing materials. This resulted in the increase of all printing materials including ink.

It is learnt that the price of imported ink increased by more than 1.5 US dollar per pound after the budget. The price of a pound of imported ink increased to Taka 200 from Taka 100. Simultaneously, the locally produced ink also increased to Taka 40 as against Taka 34 before the budget. The resultant increase in (See Page 10 Col. 8)

Textbook

(From Page 1 Col. 1)

taxes contributed to the price hike of the coloured ink. After the budget the price of coloured ink rose to Taka 70 from Taka 55 per pound. The printing industry sources said that the mobil oil per gallon also increased to Taka 160 from Taka 100 and the price of kerosene oil also rose to Taka 20 per kg from Taka 12. After the budget each plate cost Taka 255 as against Taka 195. The price of blanket per square rose to Taka 120 from Taka 80 and each kg types increased to Taka 70 from Taka 60.

All these taken together, the printing cost of per one thousand books has now increased by Taka 35 over the cost as offered to the printers during the placing of orders in May.

The Printers Association apprehending the rise in printing cost submitted a memorandum to the National Education Curriculum Board. After much persuasion, the board assured the printers and publishers that their demands would be looked into. Following assurances from the authorities, the publishers went ahead with their printing work.

But after the budget when the price of printing materials increased, the Association met the Chairman of the Board and informed him of the increased cost of printing. But the board refrained from giving any positive reply to their demands. In spite of repeated appeal from the Printers Association, the board authorities remained completely silent.

At ones stage, the board authorities asked the Association to submit a list of the printing items whose price has increased following the budget. The Association accordingly submitted the list and informed that the price of printing cost per one thousand books had increased by Taka 35. But the board after receiving cost estimate rejected the demand of the printers to enhance the printing cost. The affiliated printers of the board urged the authorities to supplement the increased production cost of books, being rejected the printers stoppad printing work of the books from August 15.

When the three Association stopped their work, the board floated a fresh tender. But the board had to cancel the tender in the face of strong protest from the printers.

The board on Saturday instructed the printers to reach the printed books to the godown of the board by Tuesday (today) but the printers and publishers urged the board not to issue any ultimatum and called for settling the issue through negotiation. It is not known what the board has taken so far. The order for 46 per cent of the 7 crore books. The printing of the 46 per cent of the seven crore books has not yet completed following the dispute between the printer and the board. The board is scheduled to supply books to the students of primary classes from January 1992. The order for the rest four crore 25 lakh books is yet to be placed. It would be impossible to complete publication of the required seven crore books during the next four months.

It is expected that the Ministry of Education would intervene immediately to resolve the crisis.