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Over 6 lakh books unsold Textbook Board may incur Tk 20cr loss

By Gobinda Bar

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board faces a loss of more than Tk. 20 crore as over six lakh books remain unsold in its 'buffer stock' created in 1996 due to their 'high price', sources concerned said.

Pirated books being sold at lower price have, meanwhile, flooded the markets.

The NCTB's 'illegal' decision to create a 'buffer stock' is allegedly responsible for such a situation.

"The illegal buffer stock is now causing loss on two counts — the books are not being sold as those are over-priced and taking advantage of this, many people are pirating the secondary level textbooks selling at a lower price," a leader of the

Press Owners' Association (POA) said.

"A huge amount of money would have been saved if the books were not published at that time at a higher production cost than it is now," he added.

When contacted, a NCTB official requesting anonymity said, "At the time of creation of the buffer stock, production cost of books was higher than it is now. Books are being pirated causing further loss to the government as NCTB has to sell books at a higher price because production cost of those in 1996 was higher than it is now."

A POA leader said "Production cost of the books printed in 1996 was Tk 1.18 per

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6 lakh books unsold

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forma while it would cost 82 paisa per forma this year. Production cost remarkably decreased as prices of papers fell. A huge amount of money could have been saved if the 'buffer stock' was not created violating government instruction.

Creation of the 'buffer stock' was violation of an Education Ministry decision in 1996, a source in the NCTB said.

A probe body was formed last year to investigate alleged violation of the ministry decision but no progress in this regard was reported, he said.

Asked on the issue, NCTB Chairman Mohammad Shaokat Ali said yesterday that the books were stocked as per directive from the Education Ministry to meet crisis of secondary level textbooks in 1996 and afterwards.

About the rampant piracy of textbooks, he admitted that "pirated books have flooded markets and the government is being deprived of huge revenue due to the piracy."

NCTB has started taking legal action and launched a countrywide drive against those involved in piracy, he claimed.

"We have already confiscated some illegal books from various markets and a six-member 'piracy prevention committee' has been formed to face the situation."

Shaokat Ali, however, said NCTB did not have enough 'teeth' to handle the issue effectively. "We have asked for magistrates and police to launch operation at various places but the process takes time. If any press is found involved in piracy, it will be blacklisted and its guarantee money with the NCTB will be forfeited," he added.

Urging the teachers and guardians not to buy pirated books, the chairman said that a 37-member monitoring committee was keeping watch on the markets across the country to check piracy.

He also urged all to inform police if pirated books are found on sale. "NCTB books can be identified by the 'reddish security paper' and the Board's monogram," he said.

POA leaders, however, said if NCTB cannot supply books at a 'convenient and contemporary' price, any move to check piracy is bound to fail.