

## No monitoring on govt ban on kids carrying overweight schoolbags

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THE High Court on Monday said that there was no enforcement and monitoring mechanism on the government directive on heads of all primary schools to not burden students with additional books and stationery outside those approved by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

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A bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Ashish Ranjan Das also said that the government had not imposed any punishment for errant schools for violation of the directive.

The hearing was adjourned till August 16.

The bench made the remarks after the Directorate of Primary Education's director in an affidavit informed the court that it had issued a circular on December 11, 2014 prohibiting primary students from carrying books outside those approved by the government, in their school bags.

The court said that private schools, with a commercial motive, forced students to purchase many books and other ancillaries outside those approved by the National Curriculum

and Textbook Board.

The circular was issued in the wake of a rule the High Court issued on the government asking it to explain why a direction would not be given to formulate a law or a guideline putting a cap on the weight of school bags at 10 per cent of the student's body weight.

The government circular said that books approved by the government did not weigh more than 10 per cent of a primary school student's body weight.

As the bench began hearing of the rule on Sunday, assistant attorney general Purobi Saha placed the circular and argued for rejecting the rule issued on August 9, 2015 following a public interest litigation writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyers SM Masud

Hossain Dolon, Ziaur Rahman and Anarul Karim.

The petitioners, referring to newspaper reports, submitted that physicians reported back pain and other health problems of school-going kids as a result of carrying of overweight bags.

The newspapers, referring physicians, also reported that parents often come to them with their children complaining of pain in the waist or back, they said.

On the Supreme Court directive, the Indian government had issued a circular to school authorities to reduce weight of school bags of primary students. The circular also set the responsibility on principals and school managements to follow the directive, and would take action against those found in violation of the rule.