

Textbook crisis

Govt intervention urged to avoid delay

Staff Correspondent

Drawing attention to the snail's pace in publishing textbooks, leaders of Book Publishers' and Sellers' Association (BDSA) on Tuesday sought government's intervention to avoid a possible mess in supplying books at primary and secondary levels.

The association leaders cautioned that the students would not get books even three months after the beginning of next session. Sufficient number of books have not been published although the new session will start on January 1, 2001, they added.

This year, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) gave the contract for publishing 6.7 crore textbooks, out of the total 8.13 crore, to three business

firms under the BEXIMCO Corporate, instead of some 700 publishers in the previous years.

Addressing a press conference held at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity office, the leaders of Book Publishers and Sellers Association vehemently criticised the NCTB for giving contracts to what they said some inexperienced organisations in violation of certain rules and regulations.

They pointed out that out of total 8.13 crore copies of book for Class I to IX, the NCTB gave the permission to 'Shuktara', 'Free Press' and 'Pustaka' - all affiliated with BEXIMCO Group - to publish 6.77 crore copies of book.

'Pustaka' was given permission

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to publish all 2.51 crore copies of book for class VI to IX. But, the publisher managed to complete publication of only 6.94 per cent of the books, after the end of the stipulated timeframe on November 30. The association leaders, however, said if the government gave the spot contract, they could try to solve the crisis by publishing the books within next one month. "It will take at least one month to publish the total books if we are supplied with adequate papers and positive films," association leader Abu Taher said adding students would not get books even paying nine times higher price under the present circumstances. The association leaders blamed member (Textbook) and former BNP MP Anwar Hossain Khan Chowdhury, a relative of the Education Minister, for conspiring to stop compilation of the complete history of the war of liberation in the Secondary level books. Md Abu Taher read out the written statement at the press conference while Md Rabbani Jabbar, Osman Gani, Nagibul Islam Dipu, AFM Shah Alam and Shaheed Semibai were present.

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