

Book supply delayed Country-wide Pry Edn likely to face setback

Staff Correspondent

The primary education of the country is likely to face set back due to the failure of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in supplying books to the students in due time. The new academic session has already begun but the NCTB is yet to publish books for about 50 per cent students due to shortage of papers. The production and supply of papers were hampered seriously due mainly to repeated hartals called by Opposition political parties.

The current academic session began by January but about two crore and 75 lakh books are yet to be published and distributed. Confidential sources in the NCTB said that the publication and distribution of books might not be completed even within March. This year the government would distribute about 5.5 crore books free of cost to one crore and 80 lakh students of 65,000 primary schools across the country.

Sources in the NCTB pinpointed administrative and financial complexities as the main causes for the failure of publication and distribution of books in time. The government gave order to 590 publishing houses to publish 5.5 crore books in October last year after a long dispute over the pricing mentioned in tender quotation with the enlisted printers of NCTB. The publishing houses assured the government of publishing all the books within January but they failed due to a

number of reasons insufficient supply of papers, repeated hartals called by Opposition political parties, the sources said.

Education Minister ASHK Sadique formally started distribution of textbooks among the primary school students at a simple function held at Manikganj on January 4. At the book distribution ceremony the minister expressed his hope that books would be distributed among all the primary school students within February. According to a reliable source, publication and distribution of books would not be completed by March. He further apprehended if the production and supply of papers are affected seriously due to hartal then more time might be required to complete distribution of all books.

A source in the Ministry of

Education said the causes of the unexpected delay are the complexities in publication and distribution of the books. He also said that it took much time in giving order to the publishing houses after complying with the prescriptions set on by the World Bank.

About 8000 tons of papers are required to publish the 5.5 crore textbooks for the primary school students. Of the total required papers Hindustan Paper Mills in Asham, India has so far distributed 4000 and 100 tons of papers while 2000 and 800 tons of papers have been made available from Karnafuli Paper Mills in Chittagong. Besides, about 400 tons of papers are still stored in the Karnafuli Paper mills.

The World Bank and the Asian
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Development Bank are financing for the papers required for the publishing of the 5.5 crore textbooks while Bangladesh Government would bear the expenditure for printing, binding and transportation.