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Donors to stop funding text-book printing

Donor agencies are planning to withdraw their financial support to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) for textbook printing programme despite a US dollar 13 million commitment till 1993, reports UNB.

The move has already forced the government to seek new donors for printing nearly five crore textbooks supplied free to the country's 43,992 primary schools, sources who spoke on condition of anonymity said.

NCTB decision of changing the contents of the books every year resulted in additional printing costs which eventually compelled the donors to withdraw their support, the sources said.

Sources also hinted that many donors were reluctant to continue their support because of some flaws in implementing the textbook printing project and alleged malpractice of replacement of supplied quality papers by inferior grade papers.

UNICEF has committed an assistance of US dollar 13 million for the period 1988-93 of which US dollar 9.7 million was expected to come from a supplementary funding from different donor agencies.

Sources at the UNICEF, however, pointed out that the donors were refusing to fund as it was a sustainable programme which many would not like to support infinitely.

The NCTB, in cooperation with the Education Ministry, has so far supplied nearly 480 million books to different schools of the country during the current academic year, according to available figures.

Many private school teachers were reportedly opposed to the idea of NCTB determining the compulsory booklist. "They can give us a curriculum, but it should be left to the schools and the teachers to decide what books the students should follow", said a teacher.

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A lady teacher stated, requesting anonymity, that some of the textbooks prescribed by the NCTB were not up to the mark.

The government's earlier decision to discard foreign books in schools has been contradicted by inclusion of Indian books in the prescribed booklists, she alleged.

She further observed that the private sector should also be involved in the publishing of textbooks as suggested earlier by a World Bank expert to ensure availability of quality books in the country.