

New books on New Year's Day

Free school textbook distribution almost complete before year ends; students to get books from tomorrow

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More than four crore students of primary and secondary schools are going to get new textbooks on the first morning of 2017, as the government has made all preparations for distributing over 36 crore copies of textbooks free of cost.

With only a day to go, almost 100 percent of 17.68 crore textbooks for secondary students and 95 percent of 10.52 crore textbooks for primary students have reached all upazilas.

Upazila education officers have been sending the books to schools and madrasas across the country over the last few weeks, say officials of the education ministry and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

"All textbooks have been printed and dispatched to the educational institutions. The children, who will go to school on the first day of the year, will return home with a set of new textbooks," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

This year, the government has printed around 36.21 crore copies of textbooks against 33.37 crore last year.

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The government, for the first time, will distribute pre-primary textbooks in five ethnic languages to children from ethnic minorities free of cost. The books have been printed in Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Sadri and Garo languages.

New books

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The books will be distributed among 4.26 crore students of primary and secondary schools, ebtedai and dakhil madrasas, and technical institutions.

"Following various initiatives, parents are now more aware of the importance of education than before," Nahid said, referring to the rise in enrolment and fall in school dropout.

As in the past, the first day of the New Year would be celebrated as the "Textbook Festival Day" across the country, he said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the festival by handing over books to students at the Gono Bhaban at 10:00am today.

The education ministry will launch the festival at Azimpur Government Girls School and College at 9:30am tomorrow. The primary and mass education ministry will also hold a separate programme at Dhaka University central playground at 10:00am.

The main feature of this year's celebration is that the government, for the first time, will distribute pre-primary textbooks in five ethnic languages to children from ethnic minorities free of cost.

Besides, the NCTB will distribute around 9,000 braille books to visually impaired students, said officials.

As part of efforts to end persisting textbook crisis, the government in 2009 decided to give textbooks to students of primary and secondary schools free of cost.

The government started distributing textbooks in 2010, and gave students 225.43 crore books in the last eight years.

"We have sent almost all copies of textbooks to the upazilas. We hope there will be no problem with their distribution," Mia Inamul

Haque Siddiki, member (textbook) of the NCTB, told this correspondent.

NCTB sources, however, said around five percent of the pre-primary and primary textbooks are yet to be sent to some upazilas.

Pre-primary and primary textbooks are printed by international bidders and secondary books by local publishers.

Wishing anonymity, an official of the NCTB said around 30 lakh copies of pre-primary textbooks, printed in China, remained stuck at Chittagong port for more than a week due to customs complications.

The books were sent to the destinations on Thursday, added the official.

Inamul said trucks carrying some 1.82 crore copies of textbooks, printed in India, were stuck in a long queue at Petrapole port. They entered Bangladesh yesterday.

BOOKS IN 5 ETHNIC LANGUAGES

For the first time, the government will distribute around 52,000 copies of pre-primary textbooks in five ethnic languages to more than 24,600 children from ethnic minorities.

The books have been printed in Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Sadri and Garo languages, and a major portion of those has already been sent to the upazilas, said NCTB officials.

Besides, the NCTB will provide 25,000 materials to facilitate teaching in these languages.

In 2012, the government made a plan to publish textbooks for children from ethnic minorities. But the NCTB couldn't publish those for lack of funds and other problems.

NCTB officials now say they would gradually publish textbooks in more languages in the future.