

Students won't get new text books before March

School students will not be able to get text books for the new educational year before next March because of the acute paper crisis. Printing of text books are completed by November every year and delivery to different schools generally start before 15 December. This is not being done this year. As a result students will face difficulty in the next educational year.

According to concerned sources, the cost of newly printed text books will increase by 30 per cent next year because of VAT.

Of the 3 thousand 5 hundred metric tonnes needed they had only received 3 hundred. 20 tonnes of paper so far Book Publishers and Sellers Association told Media Syndicate Monday. Only 10 per cent of text books have been printed with this paper. Printing of the remaining 90 per cent books is uncertain. The paper is generally supplied every year from June to September.

Interministerial meetings have been held on the matter a number of times. Dates for supply of paper were decided at every meeting. But none of them was implemented. In the last meeting it was decided that 700 metric tonnes will be supplied on 30 November and 700 metric tonnes on 1 January. But Book Publisher and Book Sellers Association doubt whether this decision will be implemented. Even if it is implemented, only 50 per cent will have been supplied by January.

Twelve thousand reams of white paper is need to print books on agriculture for classes IX and X. So far only 3 thousand 6 hundred reams of paper have been supplied. The book publishers had deposited Tk. 4 crore with the Text Book

Board about a month ago.

Though import of newsprint has been allowed, no businessman in this sector had shown any eagerness to do so. None has, as yet, opened any LCs for importing newsprint according to sources close to this sector. Massive imposition of duties is the reason. With 15 per cent duties, 15 per cent VAT and two and half per cent license fees the cost of importing a tonne of newspaper comes to Tk 40 thousand. Newsprint can be had only at Nayabazar with this kind of money. Under the new Import Policy paper importers will have to pay Tk 20 thousand more than the price fixed by BCIC.

Though the businessmen are reluctant to import newsprint, white paper from India is flooding the local market. They are fetching high prices too. Four bales of white paper is selling at Tk 10 to 12 thousand more than normal price. The profit earlier used to range from Tk 5 hundred to Tk 1 thousand. Now the profits is Tk 8 to 10 thousand.

The paper merchants have alleged that though they had deposited Tk 14 crore for paper six months ago the BCIC was not supplying paper from its mills. This had led to the present crisis and rise in prices.

Though there is paper crisis all over the country, paper is available if you are ready to pay a high price. If you pay Tk 40 to 45 thousand for a tonne instead of Tk 19 thousand mill rate, newsprint will be available to you. Some BCIC officials have accused the paper merchants of causing the crisis by hoarding paper in their godowns. But observers feel BCIC is yet to take effective step to resolve the crisis and decrease the price of paper.