

Free text books

The government has announced its decision to supply text books free to students of classes one to three of all government and private schools from January, 1984. Each student will receive one full set of the books. Those who would need more may also have them from market. But the covers of the books, which will be made available in the market, will be different from those of the free ones—which apparently is a preventive measure against any possible entry of the latter into the market. The Directorate of Primary Education and the Bangladesh School Text Book Board have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring publication and supply of the books by January next. The Upazilla Parishads (which have already undertaken the management and administration of primary schools) will fulfil the task of distributing them among the students throughout the country.

The above decision and arrangements for distribution of free books will certainly be appreciated by all. Everyone would, however, like to see that these are acted upon properly. For one thing, similar decisions had been taken in the past, but they had either not been implemented timely or implemented halfway. Time factor, we stress, is very important for the actual beginning of instruction of an academic session. The supply of books to all the areas by the agencies concerned should, therefore, be completed by mid-December, and not January, as the distribution of books to students has to be done from January. For another thing, there may be attempts to mix up dishonest trading with the free distribution of text books. For instance, covers of free copies may be replaced by those which are meant for the books to be marketed—a trick that may make corrupt deals possible by diverting the government supplies to private traders. There may be various other dishonest practices. Precautionary measures, therefore, need to be taken against all conceivable malpractices and lapses in the work of printing and publication, supply and distribution of free books.

What we would like to impress upon all concerned is that this gigantic task involving tens of thousands of primary school children all over the country must be taken proper care of and that the job of reaching free text books to them from next January must be executed in such a manner that it augurs well for it in coming years.