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Press owners refuse to take part in bidding Printing of primary school books likely to suffer setback

Staff Correspondent

Printing and publishing of books for the primary students are likely to suffer a setback as the press owners have categorically refused to participate in the bidding under the newly introduced package system.

Education Minister A.S.H.K. Sadek held a meeting with the press owners at his residence on Thursday but failed to reach consensus as the printers are as the adamant to their demands for cancellation of the new system, meeting sources said.

The National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) invited tender on July 1 for publishing textbooks for the primary students for the year 2000. July 30 and August 1 were fixed as the last dates for buying of tender documents and submission of it. But no firm took part in the bidding on Thursday. Virtually Thursday was the last day for buying of tender documents as the next two days are government holidays.

Sources said, at the meeting the

press owners apprised the minister of their problems for which they did not participate in the bidding. The minister, however, assured them of looking into their problems and said measures would be taken after August 1 if any firm does not take part in the bidding.

The members of three associations - Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers Association, Bangladesh Textbook Printers and Sellers Association and Bangladesh Printing Industries Association - in a united move refrained from submitting any tender protesting the newly introduced package system in the tender, sources said. Publishers and press owners identified the newly introduced package system as the main reason for which they could not participate.

According to sources, the NCTB invited tender in 111 packages. Of them value of 4 packages is taka about 94 lakh each while the value for the rest 107 is taka about 5.75 lakh each. Unlike previous years, those who contested in the bidding

had to submit tender for each work this year. Besides, the bid money has been enhanced to Taka 10,000 from Taka 4,000 and the price of tender documents has been fixed between Taka 750 and Taka 2,500. The previous price was taka 400 only.

The sources said if any press owner wants to participate in all works he needs Taka 16 lakh as bid money. Earlier, the press owners could participate in all the works through only one tender. Moreover, the security money for the papers was only 10 per cent of the total money earlier but in the present system it has been raised to 30 per cent, the sources added.

Talking to The Bangladesh Observer Osman Gani, a press owner, said this year the government has introduced the package system as per the prescription of the World Bank which has made it impossible for the press owners to participate in the tender. "This year The World Bank will provide taka

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Pry books

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seven crore as loan out of total Taka 60 crore for publishing primary text books," he said, adding that with the loan the World Bank has imposed some conditions and if those conditions are to be met the press owners of the country would incur a huge loss.

The meeting was also attended by Secretary of the Primary and Mass Education Division Dr. Sadat Hossain, NCTB Chairman Dr. Swokat Ali and press owners Abu Taher, Syed Serniabat, Rabbani Zabbar, and Shah Alam.