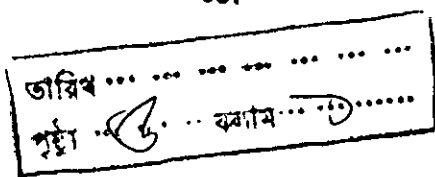


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No Respite From Text-Book Bungling

For quite a number of years now the same sad story of an inordinate delay in publication of text books for students at the primary and secondary levels repeats. So endemic has become the problem that the teachers and students, instead of beginning their academic year on an enthusiastic note, dejectedly notice their cause getting repeatedly frustrated. All because the authorities have somehow managed not to supply the required books in time. This year there has been an additional problem in that some changes will have to be made to a number of text books.

The changes have been ordered by the BNP government because it resents 'Jatir Janak' before Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's name as introduced by the previous Awami League government and would like to introduce a chapter on Ziaur Rahman. So printing of as many as one crore 25 lakh books for the primary students and 40 lakh books for the secondary level have remained suspended. Additionally, the three per cent books earlier set aside for reuse cannot this time be available because of the changes. This means one crore 31 lakh books more will have to be printed.

On the other hand the organisations that have received order for printing books, are known to have followed almost the same pattern as of last year's in obtaining the tender. The only difference is that the lucky few are having the books printed from other printing presses on sub-contract. All this has put a big question mark before the availability of books in time.

Now two highly sensitive issues are involved here. One is the beginning of the academic year smoothly and properly and the other is the introduction of contentious matters belonging to history. The AL government formed a commission headed by an eminent teacher of Dhaka University to review the distortion of history and get it corrected. The present government is doing it on its own, betraying rather an attitude of highhandedness. This could be avoided.

As for making the books ready in time, some vested interest is always at work to frustrate the effort. After all, involved here are crores of Taka. How unimaginable and also unbelievable that country cannot reach the new books at the hands of the young learners at the start of their academic year. This is a good enough measure of our national character. A nation such as this needs no enemy to defeat itself.