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Textbooks to be available in market by March: Board

Bangladesh Textbook Board authorities hope that secondary level students will get all their books by the second week of March while the concerned printing and marketing group "Pustaka" say the books will be available in market by February 25, reports BSS.

The Textbook Board executives could not be optimistic about Pustaka's assurance as the Chairman thought that it could even go beyond the second week of March to print and market all the books.

Meanwhile, 25 text books, including Bangla, English, Mathematics, Social Science, General Science and Islamic Studies are available in the market. Fourteen essential books came to the market on Sunday while 18 others among the remaining 35 will be there by February 18. Pustaka authorities assured the Textbook Board. They also hoped that the printing of all books will be completed by February 25.

About 1.5 crore books out of

the total 2.5 crore are in the market now, concerned sources said.

In an exclusive interview with the BSS, Chairman of the Board, Dr Tapon Chowdhury spoke about different aspects of the textbook crises, including the alleged controversy over tender.

"Pustaka was given the responsibility of printing and marketing a total of 2.51 crore textbooks for being the lowest bidder. Three associations linked with book business had also submitted tenders in the name of different business houses," he said, adding, they proposed Taka 99 for each 1000 forma while Pustaka's proposed rate was Taka 54.

He said although Pustaka was the lowest bidder, other publishing houses were requested to print the books at the proposed rate of Pustaka. At first they declined, but when everything was at the final stage for giving the responsibility of printing the books to Pustaka, the association leaders expressed their desire to print the books, he said.

Referring to the legal battle over the 'sensitive' issue, the Board Chairman said the verdict of the highest court of the country proves that their decision was absolutely right. He also said that about Taka 80 crore will be spent for printing the 2.51 crore textbooks, but the figure might cross Taka 105 crore if the associations were given the responsibility.

Earlier the Book Publishing Association filed a case in the High Court against the decision of the Board authorities, but the Court rejected their appeal. Their legal move also failed when the Appellate Division dismissed their plea, he said.

When asked about the crises, Dr Chowdhury said it would not be fair to blame only Pustaka as 60 new plates had to made.

"The textbooks were also revised in view of the recommendations of the committee formed to include the real history and spirit of the War of Liberation in the text books," he said.

He also pointed out that Pustaka was bound to print the books by November 11 last year, but the deadline was extended for one month as they failed to do the job on time.

Pustaka could not print the books even by the extended period, he said. Giving some previous examples, he also added that it took at least March when the books were revised earlier.

When asked whether the Text Book authorities would take any action against Pustaka for failing to print and market the books in time, Dr Chowdhury said their main concern is now to supply the books to the students within the shortest possible time.

He will consider the issue later