

Textbook job done well

School students to get textbooks on Jan 1

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With seven days to go before the start of distribution, free textbooks for primary school students have reached upazilas across the country while 11 percent of secondary school textbooks are about to reach there.

The government aims at distributing more than 26.17 crore copies of new textbooks to over 3.68 crore students of primary, secondary, (class VI-X), ebtedai (primary level of madrasa), dakhil (secondary level of madrasa) and vocational classes of the 2013 academic session.

"With the cooperation of all, we hope to observe January 1 as the Textbook Festival Day like we did last year," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday told The Daily Star.

The minister will open the festival at

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the capital's Residential Model School and College by distributing new textbooks to the students.

As of yesterday, more than 99 percent of around 10.78 crore primary and 89 percent of some 11.47 crore secondary level textbooks had been printed and sent, National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) statistics show.

Over 93 percent textbooks for ebtedai and dakhil students have already been dispatched, according to the statistics.

Although the NCTB set December 15 as the deadline for all textbooks reaching the upazilas, a portion of the secondary textbooks missed the deadline.

NCTB officials attribute this to transport constraints created mainly by the recent political programmes like hartals and blockades. They hope that the rest will be sent to the destinations by December 28.

Printing such huge numbers of textbooks for a new curriculum was a massive challenge, the education minister said, adding the NCTB will make corrections if they find any errors in the books.

This time, major modifications have been made to

111 textbooks of class I-IX after 17 years.

With suggestions of 550 teachers, academics and experts, the government modified the textbook curriculum in line with the recommendations of national education policy of 2010.

"There is nothing to worry about textbooks," NCTB Chairman Prof Mostafa Kamal Uddin told The Daily Star. "We tried to get the printing job done smoothly and, having learned from our past mistakes, we were able to get over the hurdles."

This year the total number of textbooks has hit a record high as the government for the first time is providing supplementary textbooks on English and Bangla grammars to class VI to IX free of cost.

It has already printed around 3.29 crore copies of supplementary textbooks on the subjects, said NCTB sources.

They said distributing these books free of charge will save the 8.55 crore secondary students around Tk 256 crore.

The number of textbooks distributed was over 22.10 crore last year and 18.68 crore in 2010, when the government started free

distribution among the primary and secondary students at the very beginning of the academic session.

Previous governments provided books only to primary students while secondary students had to buy theirs. They had to buy the books well into the first quarter of the academic session due to an artificial crisis created reportedly by a syndicate of printers and government officials.

The NCTB officials said it took a little more time to print the secondary level books as they were printed under the new curriculum.

Wishing anonymity, an NCTB official who is responsible for textbook distribution said, "After getting the curriculum, we first printed textbooks for class VI and VII and then those for class IX."

He said they are planning to send the remaining secondary level books first outside Dhaka as the capital has already got more than 76 percent of the books it needs.

This year, three Indian printers won the contract for the supply of some 3.29 crore copies while 13 local organisations printed the rest. They have all delivered the copies on time, said NCTB officials.