

Textbook trouble continues

IT IS indeed unfortunate that, contrary to the claim made recently by the education minister in parliament that all school students across the country had received textbooks by January 1, many schoolchildren in different areas are yet to get textbooks more than two months into the academic year. As mentioned in a New Age report on Tuesday, almost all the 64 district education officers, prompted by different school authorities of the areas under their jurisdiction, sent separate letters to the office of the director general of secondary and higher education last month, asking for more copies of school textbooks for different classes. For instance, Dhaka DEO wants an immediate supply of more than 30,000 copies of textbooks on science and computer studies while Barisal DEO requires 10,423 copies of class VI textbooks and 15,252 of class IX. Worse even, not a single copy of any textbook has still been sent for the schools located in the haor-baor belt mostly home to poor and marginalised people. Overall, there is at present a demand for over 53 lakh more copies of textbooks all over the country.

It is not clear if the demand for textbooks will be met soon as it seems to have occurred due to some mismatch in terms of fixing the actual demand for school textbooks for this academic session. It is also important to note that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board is to print and distribute school textbooks in line with the demand set by the DGSHE in consultation with the DEOs and upazila secondary education officers and heads of the relevant educational institutions. That apart, as the secondary education director pointed out, they ascertained the demand for textbooks for this year keeping in mind that more than one crore copies of textbooks remained undistributed last year as they were far in excess of the actual demand.

Be that as it may, the authorities concerned must pay heed to the demand for extra school textbooks mentioned earlier. After all, the incumbents are pledge-bound to distribute textbooks from class I to class IX to all students around the country free of cost which has indeed a potential to play a key role in ensuring education for all at least up to the secondary level. At the same time, the education ministry top brass needs to take the relevant officials to task for the reported mismatch to prevent such an uncalled for situation in the years to come.