

Why changes in textbooks?

HC questions, asks authorities to explain in 4 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the legality of bringing changes in the textbooks of primary and secondary levels by excluding write-ups of some reputed authors.

The court issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to show cause in four weeks as to why the changes in the textbooks should not be declared illegal.

The education secretary and chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman came up with the rule following a writ petition filed last week by former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Anwar Hossain and curriculum expert Momtaz Jahan challenging the legality of the changes in the textbooks.

The petition said some write-ups of several acclaimed and progressive authors, including Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Golam Mustafa, Humayun Azad and Sanaul Haque, have been removed from the books.

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Some write-ups, which are already in the religion studies books, have been included in the Bangla curriculum for class-I to class-IX following the demand of Hefajat-e Islam, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, added the petition.

The contents that have been dropped are — *Prarthona* by Golam Mostafa and *Boi* by Humayun Azad for class-V; *Ranchi Bhraman* by S Wazed Ali, *Lal Goruta* by Satyen Sen, *Lalu* by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, *Ramayan Kahini* by Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury and *Sabha* by Sanaul Haque for class-VI.

The petition read that some new contents, which are in the religion studies books, have been included in the Bangla textbooks. *Sobai Miley Kori Kaj* has been added to the Bangla textbook for Class-II, *Khalifa Hazrat Abu Bakr (RA)* class-III, *Khalifa Hazrat Umar (RA)* class-IV and *Biday Hajj* and *Shaheed Titumir* to that for class-V.

Such changes in the curriculum are the reflection of communalism and this is unlawful, petitioners' lawyer Syed Mamun Mahub told The Daily Star.

The government is facing widespread criticism from various quarters over some embarrassing blunders in textbooks and dropping of some contents.

Hefajat and Bangladesh Awami Olama League have all along been demanding exclusion of some of the poems written by "Hindus and atheists".

Many have alleged that some poems, including *Boi* by Humayun Azad, have been dropped from Bangla textbooks for different classes as per the demand of the two organisations.

Eminent citizens and different organisations strongly condemned the anomalies in textbooks and demanded withdrawal of the "error-ridden textbooks" immediately.

Following criticisms and media reports, the education ministry made NCTB chief editor Prithish Kumar Sarkar and its senior expert Lana Humayra Khan officers on special duty (OSD), a status regarded as a punishment.

Several committees have already been formed to identify the mistakes in textbooks and also those responsible.