

E-textbooks spark huge interest among students

NCTB website crashes several times due to heavy traffic

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E-textbooks of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) has sparked so much interest among the students and guardians that its website has crashed several times due to an overload of incoming traffic in the last two weeks.

For the first time in the history of the country, the NCTB has uploaded 83 textbooks of both primary and secondary school subjects in its official website (nctb.gov.bd), from where they can be downloaded by anyone from anywhere in the world.

NCTB officials said they have been 'overwhelmed' by the people's interest in the books, which forced the website to collapse within 76 hours of its opening for downloads on January 4.

A record number of 3,000 people from over 40 countries hammered the website to force the collapse, followed by three more crashes over the next two weeks. However, the website was revived each time.

While many parents, students downloaded the books and printed them out, many could not gain access to the website as it remained collapsed for several days in intervals.

NCTB Chairman Prof Md Mustafa Kamaluddin said they had had hundreds of inquiries about the books. "The

response has been totally overwhelming," he said.

"We expanded the website's bandwidth limit up to 110 GB for expected increase in demand for the books. But the bandwidth limit was exceeded within a few days as more people tried to visit the website to download the books," he said.

According to NCTB sources, from January 7 to 18, another 11,629 people visited the website, consuming a total of 438.81 GB of bandwidth. A staggering 6,86,720 hits came from within the country while 55,214 hits from the USA and 40,176 hits from Saudi Arabia.

Bandwidth refers to the amount of data that can be passed along a communications channel in a given period of time.

According to sources at Internet hosting companies, 95 percent of websites in the Bangladesh rarely ever need 10 GB of bandwidth in a whole year. However, NCTB website have exceeded 438.81 GB of bandwidth within two weeks, making it a crashing record for any website of the country.

"The servers have been on meltdown," said Murshid Aktar of NCTB, who is responsible for maintaining the website.

"We never expected this sort of response. Hopefully things will be better

and less inconvenient for everyone next year," he said.

According to Murshid, the decision to upload the books on the website was taken in August last year. A total of 33 books of primary level education, and another 50 for higher-level education was modified, digitalised and uploaded to the website.

Works on editing and uploading another 23 books of higher-level education level is underway, said Murshid Aktar, research officer (curriculum wing) of NCTB.

According to the sources, the organisation do not have any designated department or people to look after the website. Due to the lack of technical know-how and experience in technological matters, the organisation was not adequately prepared to face such a situation.

The sources added that website is maintained by only one official although it does not even fall under his responsibility.

It was the first time the NCTB has experimented with making books available online and it was a good learning curve for us, an official said, adding that the organisation needs an ICT department.

NCTB Chairman Prof Md Mustafa Kamaluddin said they are planning to form an ICT department soon.