

Textbooks on time

Govt hopes to provide free books to 4.4cr students on first day of 2016

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More than 44 million primary and secondary level students are set to receive new textbooks on the first morning of 2016, as around 33 crore copies of textbooks are ready for free distribution.

"I'm telling you with conviction that all textbooks have been printed and dispatched to the doorways of the respective education institutions. All arrangements have been made to distribute the books on January 1," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told reporters at a press briefing at his Secretariat office yesterday.

The minister added like the previous years, the first day of the New Year would be celebrated as the "Textbook Festival" day across the country.

"All education institutions will remain open that day with books to be handed over to the students," Nahid said. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to formally



TOTAL TEXTBOOKS
33,37,62,760



TOTAL STUDENTS
4,44,16,728
FROM PRE-PRIMARY
TO CLASS-X

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inaugurate the celebration tomorrow by handing over books to students of different classes at Gono Bhaban in the capital at 10:00am.

On the New Year's Day, the education ministry would open the festival at Govt Laboratory School in Dhanmondi at 9:00am. The primary and mass education ministry would also hold a separate programme at National Bangla Govt School in Mirpur at 10:00am.

In the wake of persisting textbook crisis, the government in 2009 decided to distribute textbooks free of cost. It has been distributing free books to both primary and secondary level students at the very beginning of academic session since 2010.

This year, the government would distribute 33.37 crore copies of new textbooks of 291 subjects for pre-primary, primary, ebtedai [primary

level of madrasa], secondary, dakhil [secondary level of madrasa] and vocational students.

Education officials at the grass-roots level had worked round the clock to send the books to destinations for several days, said officials at the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), the apex body looking after the government's book distribution scheme.

The education minister said printing work started late due to some complexities this year. "We have been printing primary textbooks before the secondary books. But this year we had to start the work late."

"Yet all books for primary level were printed and sent to the destinations," he observed.

On complaints of poor quality paper being used for primary textbooks, Nahid said they would examine the quality after distribution.

"We will take punitive actions if we find substandard paper was used."

Printing of primary textbooks hit a snag in mid-August when the World Bank set some conditions for the winning bidders, who submitted the bid much lower than the estimated cost.

The WB, which lends around 10 percent costs of primary textbooks, sought to check the quality during printing and wanted to pay the printers only if their work was satisfactory.

The bidders rejected outright the conditions but finally agreed to do the work in the first week of September upon assurance from the government high-ups that some of the conditions would be relaxed.

Nahid said there would be no problem if some books were damaged as they had five percent extra books in buffer stocks.