

# Textbook publication could be delayed

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UNCERTAINTY is looming over publication and distribution of 7.41 crore copies of secondary textbooks in time after a paper mill refused to sign contract with National Curriculum and Textbook Board and another mill is delaying supply of paper to the board.

Over the last five years, distribution of textbooks to the students on January 1 was seen as one of the successes of the government.

Two private paper mills

— MAF Newsprint Mills Limited and TK Chemical Complex Ltd — along with state-owned Karnaphuli Paper Mills won the bidding for supplying 17,500 tonnes of paper to NCTB for printing 7.41 crore copies of secondary textbooks for 2016.

TK Chemical Complex Ltd which won the bidding for providing 5,000 tonnes of paper did not sign the contract for unexplained reasons while MAF Newsprint Mills Limited, which won the bidding for 9,500 tonnes of paper, did not start

supplying paper till Sunday,' said a top official of the NCTB.

MAF Newsprint Mills Limited was supposed to supply 200 tonnes of paper daily to NCTB from July 1.

The official said that TK Chemical's refusal to sign the contract would force the NCTB to retender the supply of 5,000 tonnes of paper and the process would require until October while the new bid winners would need at least two months to supply the paper thus the whole process of printing and dis-

tribution might be delayed until December.

'Supplying textbooks to the 1.12 crore secondary students on January 1, 2016 is uncertain as the NCTB has to reach the books to the schools and madrassahs through the upazila education offices,' the official said.

Confirming the matter, NCTB member textbooks Ratan Siddique said that the board had already confiscated the Tk 1 crore caution money deposited by TK Chemical Complex Ltd and

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it was pressing MAF Newsprint Mills Limited for supplying the paper.

'NCTB has begun the process for floating fresh tender. There is nothing to worry about. We will do everything possible to publish and reach the textbooks to the students in due time,' he said.

If needed, NCTB would contact Karnaphuli Paper Mills for increasing supply of paper on an emergency basis, he added.

Chittagong-based TK Chemical Complex Ltd is a sister concern of TK Group

of Industries. New Age tried to contact TK Chemical project director Reazul Hoque and TK Group of Industries managing director MA Kalam on Monday but none of them was available on phone for comments.

NCTB sources said that the government would have to print 14.82 crore copies of textbooks for 1.12 crore secondary level students this year. MAF Newsprint Mills Limited, TK Chemical Complex Ltd and Karnaphuli Paper Mills Ltd won the bidding for supplying paper for 7.41 crore copies

while the rest of the books would be supplied by some others printers and publishers.

The government started the bidding process in January which ended in March. MAF Newsprint Mills Limited and TK Chemical Complex Ltd won the bidding with lowest rates. They were supposed to sign contract by June 24 for work order. TK Chemical Complex Ltd did not sign the contract till June 24 and did not even show any reason for it, said NCTB officials.

The government celebrates textbook festival on

January 1 each year in all schools and madrassahs across the country marking free distribution of textbooks among students.

This year the government has a plan to distribute around 34 crore copies of textbooks among 4.5 crore students of primary and secondary schools, madrassahs and technical institutions.

In 2010, the government began distributing free textbooks among students of secondary schools. Free distribution of books among the primary school students began in 1981.