

# PRIMARY TEXTBOOKS Distribution in time uncertain

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THE authorities' failure to reach 30 per cent of the textbooks at upazilas for primary school students timely distribution of the reading materials is facing uncertainty. Officials said that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board plans to distribute 10.47 crore textbooks among 2.45 crore students of primary schools.

Until Wednesday, they said, the printers supplied 70

per cent of the books to the upazila education offices.

It would not be possible to supply the remaining 30 per cent of the books to the upazila education offices by December 25, the extended deadline, admitted Bangladesh Mudran Shilpa Samity chairman Shahid Serneabat and NCTB member (Text Book) Mia Inamul Haque Siddiki.

Both, however, said that the books would be supplied

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to the education offices before January 1, when the reading materials are scheduled to be distributed.

This year the government could stumble after showing remarkable success in distributing the textbooks on the schedule over the last five consecutive years.

The problem arose this year as printing the textbooks for the primary school students began in the first week of September, one month behind the schedule.

The delay in printing occurred over the government convincing the printers to provide 15 per cent security deposit instead of 10 per cent and to agree to the condition that no payments

would be made unless they ensured the quality of the books.

The conditions were set by the World Bank to ensure the quality of the books.

Another reason cited by the printers as well as officials was that the paper mills did not supply paper to them in due time and also that they received less of paper than they had ordered for.

Printers also said that the paper mills attached priority to supply the papers to the illegal guidebook industry.

NCTB extended the deadline for the printers to supply the textbooks to December 25 anticipating that it would not be possible to

supply the books by November 30.

This year 22 local bidders jointly secured NCTB's orders to print the books for the primary school students after the tenders they had submitted proved the lowest.

They offered to print the books for Tk 221 crore, which was 32 per cent less than the estimated cost.

To meet a WB condition, the government put in place strong joint monitoring by NCTB and the government to ensure that the printers did not compromise with the quality of the textbooks.

Some of the textbooks already supplied by the printers were found by teachers and NCTB monitoring offi-

cials as 'not readable.'

Shahid Serneabat admitted the issue and said some of the books were printed low quality papers supplied by the paper mills.

The printers found to have supplied low quality books would have to pay fines, said education minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

In 2010, the government began distributing free textbooks to students of secondary schools.

Free distribution of books for the primary school students began in 1981.

The problem would not affect the students of the secondary schools as 99 per cent of their textbooks already reached the destinations.