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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"The robbed that smiles steals something from the thief."
— William Shakespeare, in 'Othello'

SNAPSHOT

OPINION

A major success that the Bangladesh government can boast about is the distribution of millions of copies of textbooks to school children on the first day of every New Year. Photographs of children waving their brand new books with blissful smiles and the education minister himself busy in supervising the distribution process – the highlight of every newspaper. However, for the last couple of years, this achievement of the government has been tainted seriously.

Like every year, school children from grade I to X receive text books on the first day of January. But these text books seem to come with many embarrassing misprints, factual errors and inappropriate content. Why does the government not look into this?

Every year, the National Curriculum and Textbooks Board (NCTB), the largest state owned publishing house in the world, publishes around 41.5 million copies of primary textbooks, 18.6 million copies of *Ebtedaye* (primary equivalent in Madrasas) textbooks and 17.3 million copies of secondary textbooks. For this mammoth task, a huge budget of 976.2 million takas is allocated to NCTB every year. When our government has been employing so much resource to improve textbook quality to prevent students from reading illegal guide books, NCTB is grossly foiling this effort by publishing defective, poorly edited textbooks.

In 2013, NCTB published textbooks according to the new curriculum adopted in 2012 under National Education Policy 2010 which faced immense criticism from the civil society. Besides thousands of factual errors in the textbooks, many renowned works of Bangladeshi litterateurs were replaced by the works of foreign and less known litterateurs – mostly being Indian. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Education summoned a meeting and called for immediate steps to correct the errors. It was also recommended to incorporate the literary works of Bangladeshi authors stating that, "Poetry by Bangladeshi poets were never included in Indian syllabus." (The Daily Prothom Alo September 11, 2013)

In this year's textbooks, NCTB finally removed those disputed contents and replaced them with the works of authors and poets like Kazi Nazrul Islam, Abdul Hakim and Abu Jafar Obaidullah. However, the tendency of making misprints and factual errors in the textbooks could not be removed at all. In the back cover of Hindu Religion and Moral Education book of grade III, there is a quote which says, "Do Not Heart

NCTB'S TEXTBOOK BLUNDER: A LOSS HARD TO RECOVER

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

PHOTOS: STAR FILE



Anybody"; in the textbook of grade one, it has been stated that goat climbs the mango tree to eat mango which is quite absurd. In Bengali book of grade III a whole poetry titled "Adarsha Chhele" by Kusumkumari Das has been wrongly edited and distorted. There are also hundreds of spelling mistakes. In the general mathematics textbook of grade IX-X as many as 76 spelling mistakes has been counted by this writer.

Although NCTB has removed poetry and prose of lesser known Indian writers from this year's textbooks, it did not include any work of any Bangladeshi writer in the Bengali rapid reader book for grade VIII students. All the stories of this book are translated and abridged versions of different international classics such as stories from Arabian Nights, Shahnameh of Ferdousi, The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare etc. The quality of translation and editing is also poor and many teachers have stated this book to be the graveyard of foreign literature.

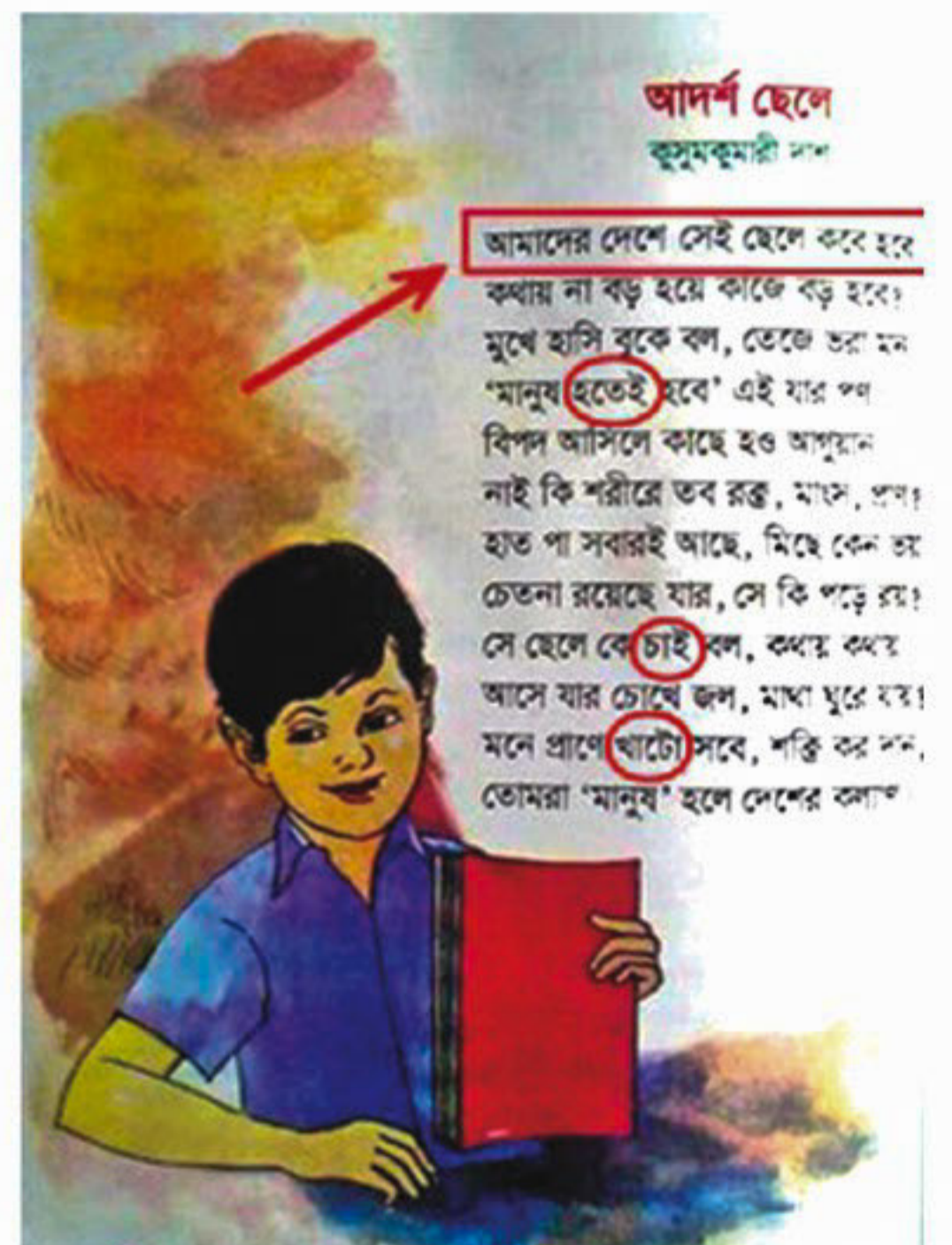
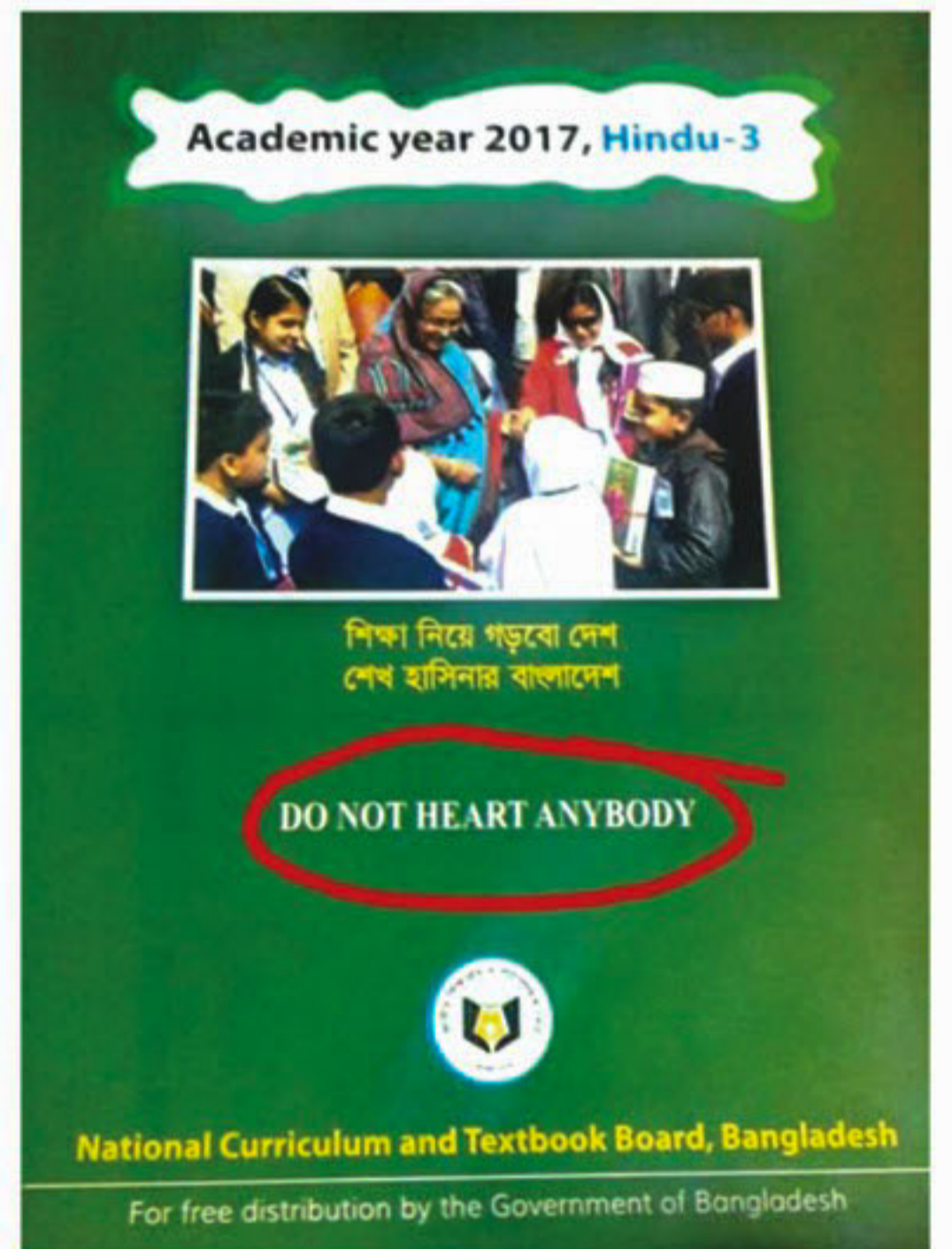
When asked about these errors,

Professor Narayan Chandra Saha, chairman of NCTB said, "We are taking steps to remove the errors. With so much of work to do round the year, making several mistakes is normal."

With millions of copies already distributed all over the country, NCTB has to take another massive project to correct the errors costing millions of takas. Repetition of similar kind of mistakes every year has now questioned NCTB's process of publishing textbooks. How does the writers' panel at the NCTB select the textbook contents and how do the editors edit these books – requires monitoring and supervision by an independent and external evaluation committee.

Textbooks are the reflection of a nation's knowledge- society and national identity. The reasons behind so many mistakes, distortions and negligence in publishing these books must be investigated and relevant officials should be held responsible so that never again our students have to acquire wrong information. ■

ক্রমিক	বিষয়	লেখক
১.	কিশোর কবি	(শাহাবা ঈশরাসন বকলম্বাদে)
২.	রাজস্বয়ং ও তিথ্যটির হেলে	মার্ক টোয়েন
৩.	রবিন্দ্রনাথ রূপে	ডাঃসিমে ডিমে
৪.	সোহরাব রোস্তম	মূল : মহাকবি শালু কলেম কোরোপৌ হুগুত্তর : মনোজাটনীন বাহমন
৫.	মার্চেন্ট অব ভেনিস	উইলিয়াম শেক্সপিয়ার
৬.	রিপ্তাস উইকেল	কম্বুদ্বায়ান গৌপ্তী (গোপীপট্টন ভারতিনঃ স্রীতিঃ পাম বকলম্বাদে)
৭.	সাত্বে তিন হাত ছাতি	মূল : গুন্তে তলসয়া হুগুত্তর : গুন্তেসর ড. সনকর আবলুল মাদান



MAILBOX

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The Village of the Roses

Last week's spotlight titled "Roses, Everywhere" (published in January 6, 2017) was one of the most amazing articles I have ever read in recent months. The photographs of rose blossom, acres of land full of vibrant red roses and farmers busy taking care of the plants were so relieving for my eyes and mind that I decided to preserve this issue of the *Star Weekend*. I would like to thank the writer for giving detailed description of the ways to reach this beautiful village of rose cultivators. However, tourists visiting the village should be careful so that their sightseeing activities should not disturb the farmers and harm the plantations. I would like to thank *Star Weekend* for giving us the opportunity to know about this amazing place so close to Dhaka.

Samia Rahman
Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Dhaka's Pandora's Box

There are very few market places in Dhaka where people from all walks of life can go and buy their daily necessities. Dhaka's huge number of urban poor and middle class cannot afford the luxury shopping malls. Dhaka's New Market is one of the few places where these people can find their daily necessities at an affordable price to run their lives in this expensive city. However, quality and diversity of products sold in this government owned market attract customers from all parts of Dhaka's urban society, from the richest to the poorest. DCC Market at Gulshan which has been closed recently due to the unfortunate fire incident was also a government owned market that used to sell a wide range of products at a very reasonable price. Government should establish market places like these so that price of daily necessities can stay within the reach of growing number of Dhaka's lower and middle income families.

Abraar Islam
Faridabad, Dhaka



PHOTO: KAZI TAHISIN AGAZ APURBO

In the Hope of Enlightenment

I was really moved by the *Star Diary* piece titled "In the Hope of Enlightenment" published in January 6 on *Star Weekend*. Like the writer, I also do believe that we have undeniable responsibilities towards the deprived street children. Many of these children are very enthusiastic to study in a school. If we could provide them with education and a suitable environment for learning we might get great scholars like Isaac Newton, Ishwar Chandra Biddyasagar in our society. It is a matter of great regret that we are ignoring our responsibilities and we are losing millions of human potential. I would like to convey the message that if you really want to prove your patriotism, send a street child to school and support the child to continue their education instead of posting a photo on the social media wearing red-green dresses. Ensuring education for these deprived children is the most effective way to serve Bangladesh.

Md.Noman Hossan khandker
SUST, Sylhet

The opinions expressed in these letters do not necessarily represent the views of the *Star Weekend*.

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