

Publishing pundits 'guide' Std IV students

BOARD EXAM Companies rake in the moolah with guide-books, model question sets

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RUPEES 10 crore. Born from the state's board examination for Standard IV, is a new market. The target is 20 lakh nine and 10-year-olds.

Months before the 300-mark primary school certificate (PSC) examination in April, a Standard IV student's school bag is heavy with a new load: Guide books for the 'regular' annual examination, guide books for the PSC (some neatly split into Volumes I and II), model papers per subject in three sets and PSC practice books — each from almost 15 publications to choose from.

Here's a quick calculation on the potential economics: If even half, or 10 lakh students, shell out Rs 100 for a package of Navneet digest (Rs 55 for Volume I, 384 pages, Rs 25 for Volume II, 176 pages) plus a practice work-book at Rs 25, this business



touches a tidy sum of Rs 10 crore. Add up parents queueing up for additional texts from an estimated 15 publications available in Marathi, English, Hindi and Urdu medium and the numbers bloat.

The market is abuzz with whispers that several schools recommend that parents pay up for this extra cramming. In contrast to the public outcry against the PSC, publishing companies, quick to flood the mar-

ket since August, have spared no words to thank the government for making the exam compulsory.

Pragati Prakashan says it is their "moral responsibility toward society" to release a PSC guide book — 50,000 copies, Rs 60 to 80 for 110 pages published at breakneck speed. "Previously, only intelligent students appeared for the middle school scholarship exam. The State has made this opportunity available to students who were neglected or not considered to be intelligent," states Pragati's preface.

"This market is very competitive. It was a rush job. As soon as the government decision was announced we put three-four authors per subject on the job of content development. We are already revising the edition. I estimate 14-15 publishing companies are selling PSC guides," says I D Pawar, head of development at Pragati Prakashan. Pragati has included model question papers strictly for

teachers and parents to test children at home.

Navneet Publications and Jeevandeep refused to divulge the number of copies available state-wide or comment, but in stores spread across Dadar to Vashi, business is brisk. In Airoli, Prashant Book Stores is catering to students of two schools. Proprietor Shubhangi Vanarase is worried about limited stocks. "My stock is over. Even my distributor does not have supply at the moment. Teachers are buying the guides and telling children to buy them too."

"Many schools are recommending these books so parents line up to buy them. Sale is very good," says Jayesh Shah, at Readers Way in Vashi. At Purnima Book Centre, Vile Parle, owner Hitesh Chhada says, "When an examination is compulsory, parents don't think about the price involved. School teachers are also buying the guide-books and recommending them."