

Govt urged to reconsider decision on resuming scholarship exams

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Academicians and researchers on Saturday said that the government's decision to resume primary and junior scholarship examinations would add to the existing burden of public exams in a further boost to coaching and guidebook businesses.

In a call to the government to reconsider its decision to resume the scholarship exams, they also urged for extending primary level education up to Class VIII, while making it free and mandatory.

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Their call came at a press briefing organised under the banner of 'non-government education family' when they also upheld their proposals on 12 education reform agenda recently announced by the ministries of education and primary and mass education.

Campaign for Popular Education, CAMPE in short, in association with Education Watch organised the briefing at the National Press Club in the capital.

Earlier, the just past interim government, after a five-year break, held the junior scholarship exams 2025, following which the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led new government announced to hold primary scholarship exams of 2025 this year.

One of the 12 reform agenda in the education sector the government has announced just after assuming power is brining reforms in the exam method under which dependence on memorisation is aimed to reduce.

Regarding the 12 agenda, CAMPE at the briefing proposed ensuring classroom-based continuous assessment and separate classes for weaker students; additional allowances for teachers taking extra classes; and taking the opinions from teachers, students, guardians and civil society representatives before finalising the curriculum review.

'It should be a priority for the government to ensure that our students do not become trapped in the web of numerous exams and do not become dependent on coaching and guide books,' according to the written brief CAMPE presented at the press event.

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BRAC University professor emeritus Manzoor Ahmed, attending the event, stated that young students needed school-based assessment, rather than public exams.

By bringing back the scholarship exams the education system was again returning to the days of public exams, said Manzoor, also head of two consultation committees on quality improvement of primary, non-formal and secondary education formed by the previous interim government.

The professor stressed that scholarship exams would not help students improve their learning quality as only around 20 per cent students with good results in school exams were allowed to appear in the scholarship exams, excluding the rest 80 per cent who did not do that good.

'Attention should be given on the huge number of students who are not doing good,' he said, 'I'd say the decision of scholarship exams was not well considered. I hope the government will reconsider the decision.'

CAMPE executive director Rasheda K Choudhury said that by imposing exams one after another, the authorities made classroom-based continuous assessment less important.

She also said that guidebooks for different subjects targeting the participants of scholarship exams had already started hitting the market.

Having mentioned 'bridge courses', one of the government's 12 reform agenda to facilitate students' transition from one educational stream to another, Rasheda stressed that before doing it, primary education should be extended up to Class VIII.

They had already submitted their proposals to the government, she added.

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The participants also reminded the government about its promise to give the education sector high priority, calling for saving education from all destructive political influence.

Education Watch convener Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Chowdhury, Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research professor Shah Shamim Ahmed and Bangladesh Catholic Education Board executive secretary Jyoti F Gomes also spoke at the press briefing.