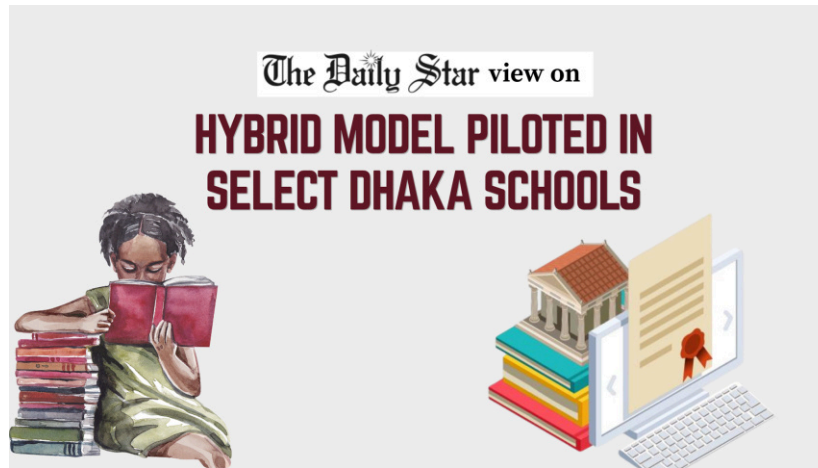


Piloting hybrid classes a good move

Parents', students' concerns should be considered

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Amid an ongoing energy crisis, the government is set to introduce a blended learning model in selected schools in Dhaka from Saturday, combining physical and online classes in an effort to reduce energy consumption. Students will attend physical classes on Saturdays, Mondays, and Wednesdays, while classes will be held online on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. This schedule will not be applicable to primary schools. Given our previous experience of fully online classes during the pandemic, it will be prudent for the government to assess the pilot project's effectiveness carefully and in detail before making broader decisions about primary schools and institutions outside the capital.

Earlier cabinet-level discussions explored ways to adjust academic schedules to save energy while ensuring continuity in education. While the blended model has emerged as one option, it has faced resistance from stakeholders. At a recent seminar attended by the education minister and the state minister for primary and mass education, students, teachers, guardians, and educationists opposed the reintroduction of online classes at this stage. They argued that remote learning risks widening learning gaps and cannot match the effectiveness of in-person teaching. Teachers, too, raised concerns about student engagement, assessment, and maintaining instructional quality in a hybrid format.



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During the pandemic, prolonged school closures exposed deep structural weaknesses in our education system. Many students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and even many in urban areas, struggled with access, logistical support, and learning continuity. Studies show that learning losses from that period have remained largely unaddressed. A 2022 Education Watch report found that most students did not receive adequate remedial support when schools reopened after the pandemic, while a large

proportion had to rely on private tuition to catch up. The current situation differs in that the energy crisis is not as much of an emergency as the pandemic was, nor is it as out-of-control. Still, reintroducing online classes, even partially, must not reproduce the aforementioned inequalities.

We appreciate the government's restrained approach to introducing a hybrid model and its awareness in including only well-established schools with large student populations in the pilot programme. Nevertheless, we urge authorities to ensure adequate logistical support, including reliable electricity and internet access for all students. Equally important is proper teacher training to make online instruction effective. The success of blended learning relies on infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and digital access—areas where gaps still persist. Unless these are addressed, hybrid education risks creating further inequalities in education.