

Students to end up with session loss *O & A-level exams could be cancelled for 60-hour shutdown*

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Four O-level and A-level exams will be cancelled if the opposition-called 60-hour-long shutdown that began this morning is continued.

Examinees and teachers of different English medium schools fear the authorities in Bangladesh will be unable to hold the tests, which are taken simultaneously around the world.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, they said in case an exam is cancelled due to hartal, the session will be lost and the students will have to wait for the next available slot to take the test.

Already in a difficult situation, the students and their parents are concerned that the political programmes may disrupt more examinations that already began this month.

The October-November session of O- and A-level exams under the Cambridge International Examination (CIE) Board started on October 7 at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

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FROM PAGE 16

three centres in the capital. The exams, administered by the British Council in Bangladesh, will end on November 29.

Nazifa Tarannum, who is taking the A-level exams under private arrangements, said she has an accounting test tomorrow but she doubts whether she will be able to take it.

"I could not concentrate on my studies properly in this situation," said Nazifa. "My admit card states that the examination will be cancelled if hartal is enforced on consecutive days."

Teachers involved with the CIE board said the total number of examinees according to their subjects is 2,975 this session. Schedules for the exams of four papers, which some 269 candidates are supposed to take, fell into the 60-hour-long shutdown.

They added that though the authorities usually cancel exams in case of consecutive hartals, there is a chance that the CIE board will inform candidates by 2:00pm today whether it will make any special arrangements for the exams.

"If the shutdown is enforced, we will request the authorities to make special arrangements to hold the exams considering the future of the students since their session will be lost," said Dr Mohitur Rahman, a senior teacher at Dhanmondi Tutorial in the capital.

The current political unrest has also heightened anxiety among the students of class-V and -VIII, as their tests, the biggest public examinations in the country, are slated to begin next month.

Around 50 lakh students of these levels will

take the Primary and Ebtedai Terminal examinations and Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations.

JSC and JDC examinations will begin on November 4 while Primary Terminal on November 20.

Examinees, teachers and parents expressed deep frustration over the current political turmoil and urged the political parties not to go for programmes like hartal and blockade during public examinations.

They said they had noticed how the candidates of the last SSC and HSC exams had faced difficulties when many of their examinations had to be rescheduled due to hartals. The SSC and HSC exams were held in February and May respectively.

"We are not sure whether our children will suffer a similar fate," said Wasiquel Rahman of Mirpur, whose son is going to take the primary terminal examination.

"We are gravely concerned about the situation. If it goes on like this, we don't know when the exams will be over and the results will be published," he added.

The political unrest also leaves uncertain the fate of the ongoing admission tests at different public universities.

Contacted, Prof Taslima Begum, chairman of Dhaka Education Board, said the next month is scheduled for public exams, school annual exams and those for university admission.

"We are also concerned about the situation. We would appeal to the political parties not to announce such programmes that disrupt the academic lives of the students."