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No terminal exams after fifth grade

Govt concedes to guardians' demand

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In the face of educationists and guardians' demands, the government has decided to scrap the primary terminal examination for fifth graders from this year.

"This year, there will be no terminal exam at the end of class-V. We will send a proposal soon to the cabinet for scrapping the test," Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I am certain that the cabinet will discard the exam," he said, adding that they need the cabinet's approval as the test was introduced following the cabinet's decision.

From now on, there would be only one public examination after class-VIII, said the minister. "We would hold the exam at the end of class-VIII this year. We haven't decided the name of the exam yet."

The cabinet will fix the name of the exam, he added.

Last year, around 30 lakh students sat for the primary terminal test, which was

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introduced in the country in 2009 replacing the scholarship exams. The test for the students of ebtedai (primary level of madrasa) began the following year.

The test, which was the first gateway to the secondary level for several lakh youngsters, became a matter of prestige for many parents, as scholarships were given to the students on the basis of results of terminal exams.

For months, parents got their children prepared, engaged tutors and sent them to the coaching centres so that the kids get good grades in the exam.

Asked about the scholarships, the primary education minister said, "We will certainly have an evaluation after class-V. We are working on it."

The government on May 18 elevated the level of primary education to class-VIII from class-V, and made a decision in principle to scrap the terminal examination due to the elevation. But it did not say when the test would be scrapped, leaving thousands of students and their parents anxious for a month.

A section of guardians then started demonstration demanding the scrapping of the exam from this year. They held protest rallies at different schools for the last couple of weeks. They pointed out that the terminal test after class-V has already become obsolete with the elevation of primary level to class-VIII.

"If the primary terminal exam is held this year, the students would have to take similar tests again in class-VIII. Why would a student take a similar test

twice?" asked Habibur Rahman, a father whose daughter studies at Motijheel Ideal School and College.

On Monday, parents, under the banner of Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, organised a press conference where they announced that they would form human chains at different schools in Dhaka on July 20 if their demands were not met by July 10.

Yesterday, the guardians hailed the government's decision.

"We believe that there will be an end to the coaching business that thrived centring the terminal exams," said Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of the forum.

There has been a strong criticism against the primary test from educationists and parents who said the examination put "extra pressure" on the kids.

Thanks to the exam, most of the guardians get engaged in an unhealthy competition so that their children can secure the highest grades and therefore making their children dependent on the coaching centres and guidebooks, they viewed.

According to a Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) report, private expenditure on class-V students increased after the introduction of the test, as the students became heavily dependent on coaching, private tuition and guidebooks.

On an average, a family spends Tk 8,212 for an examinee of the primary terminal test, said the report titled "Education Watch Report 2014: An assessment of Primary Education Completion Examination in Bangladesh", launched last year.