

Hartal takes toll on students

Today's O & A-level exams postponed

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O-level and A-level students are likely to bear the brunt of political unrest as their January session exams are set to begin amid the opposition's blockade and hartal.

British Council Bangladesh, which administers the examinations, has postponed the first two A-level tests scheduled for today since those coincide with the BNP-led alliance's 48-hour nationwide hartal.

Two O-level examinations are scheduled for tomorrow. If any further announcement of hartal is made before that the authorities will have to decide whether to postpone these exams too.

As many as 7,000 students from across the country registered for this session, which will end on January 29. They are set to take the exams at centres in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Chittagong and Sylhet.

The worries of the students and their guardians are unlikely to end with the end of this ongoing hartal, as the opposition alliance plans to enforce more hartals to realise its demand for a cancellation of the results of the 10th national election held on Sunday.

Examinees, their parents and teachers of English-medium schools have expressed their concern that the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Hartal takes toll

FROM PAGE 16

authorities will finally be unable to conduct the tests in the face of consecutive hartals.

In case an exam is cancelled due to such programmes, the students will miss this session altogether, said a number of guardians while talking to The Daily Star.

Some A-level examinees said they were having the last session of exams held simultaneously around the world under General Certificate Education system and that if any exam was cancelled, their suffering would increase as from the next session exams would be held under a new system.

The exams may be cancelled for security reasons if a continuous shutdown is declared, a student said.

"If an examination is cancelled, it will not be deferred to any other date and the money we have spent for registration will not be refunded," he added.

"Politicians say that we, the students, are the future of this country. Where is their responsibility about looking after our future?" an A-level examinee posted on The Daily Star's facebook page.

Students could not attend classes because of hartals and blockades, but "we still hope we can do well. Killing our hopes, our future... is it

politicians are up to?"

A few parents said they had spent their hard-earned money on their children's education, and if such a political situation continued it would deal a blow to them.

Children faced tremendous problems during the October-November session due to violent political programmes.

"We are scared this time as well. We don't know when the politicians will stop [these]," said Fahadul Alam, a guardian from Gulshan.

"We request the political parties not to extend the hartal for the sake of the children's future," said another guardian from Lalmatia.

Mohitur Rahman, a teacher of Dhanmondi Tutorial in the capital, said the British Council would be requested to hold the tests at any cost.

Meanwhile, five guardians submitted a memorandum to the security personnel of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, urging her not to enforce hartal or blockade from January 7 to January 29 so that A- and O-level students could take their exams uninterruptedly.

The team went to the BNP chief's Gulshan residence around 6.00pm but failed to meet her as they did not have any prior appointment, said Suraiya Alam, one of the guardians.