

CBSE brainstorming when and how to conduct board exams twice a year

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
NEW DELHI: The CBSE is in a dilemma over scheduling the two rounds of board examinations as recommended in the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF) - its options being January-February, March-April and June.

Another option the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is exploring is a semester system involving biannual exams. Currently, the board exams for Classes 10 and 12 are conducted in February-March.

According to officials, consultations are on and no decision has been made yet about when and in which format the plan to conduct board exams twice a year will be implemented.



"The three possible options that have been discussed is conducting the exams in a semester system, with the first board exam in January-February and the second one in March-April or conducting the second set of board exams in June with the supplementary or improvement exams," an official said.

"The way our academic calendar is designed, plus the schedule of competitive exams and geographical challenges since CBSE schools

are spread across the country and even abroad, the semester system seems less feasible," the official added.

The board has told the Union education ministry that more than 150 steps are required to conduct board exams of Classes 10 and 12 in the current system.

"The process involves a minimum of 310 days, starting from filling of the list of candidates, centre notifications, release of roll numbers, conduct of practicals, theory

exams, result declaration, verification and revaluation. At least 55 days are required to conduct the two exams," the board has informed.

The challenge before the CBSE now is when to replicate the massive exercise for a second round and how.

"Conducting exams before February also has its own challenges because some states have difficult winters. Currently, the schedule of board exams begins around February 15, so dates have to be worked out accordingly to provide a considerable gap," the official said.

"Another option can be to conduct the second set of exams in June alongside the supplementary or improvement exam. However, none of these options are final. We are still brainstorming and widespread consultations are on. It is possible that more options would emerge during the process," the official added.

The ministry's initial plan was to introduce biannual board exams from the 2024-25 academic session. However, it has been pushed back by a year.

Prepared by the Union government-appointed national steering committee, led by former ISRO chairman K Kasturirangan, in line with the National Education

Policy (NEP) 2020, the new NCF proposed a semester system for students of Classes 11 and 12.

The framework, which was released by the ministry in August last year, also proposed that students be given the option to write their board exams twice a year.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan told PTI in an interview last October that appearing for board exams twice a year won't be mandatory for students.

"The students will have the option of appearing for the (class 10 and 12 board) exams twice a year just like the engineering entrance exam JEE. They can choose the best score... but it will be completely optional, no compulsion," he had said then.

However, this is not the first attempt at reforming board exams. The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) was introduced for Class 10 in 2009 but was revoked in 2017 and the board reverted to the old model of year-end exams.

The board exams for Classes 10 and 12 were also split into two terms during the Covid pandemic as a one-time measure, but the old format of year-end exams resumed this year.

Gujarat govt's 'Cooperation among Cooperatives' initiative to be rolled out in all 33 districts

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
AHMEDABAD: After successfully launching the "Cooperation among Cooperatives" initiative in two districts on a pilot basis, the Gujarat government has decided to implement it across all 33 districts of the state, officials said on Wednesday.

The initiative aims to enhance the cooperation among Gujarat's thousands of cooperative societies by centralising their bank accounts and deposits in various district and state cooperative banks.

The initiative was envisioned by Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah and launched on a pilot basis in Banaskantha and Panchmahal districts of Gujarat, the state government said in a statement.

Gujarat Cooperation Minister Jagdish Vishwakarma said the success of the pilot project has led the government to decide on implementing the initiative across all 33 districts of Gujarat.

As part of the pilot project in these two districts, over 4 lakh new accounts were opened by cooperative societies and their active members in the district cooperative banks, resulting in a jump of over Rs 966 crore in the bank deposits, it said.

To further strengthen this, more than 1,700 micro ATMs were installed at cooperative societies in these two districts, it said.

"The district cooperative banks will be able to extend their services on the village level and ensure that the capital and funds of Gujarat cooperatives' stay within the community and come to the aid of other cooperative societies," Vishwakarma said.

"The initiative consolidates the existing bank accounts of cooperatives and their members operating in various commercial banks and brings them under a centralised district/state cooperative banks," the government said.

This helps consolidate the collective capital of these cooperative societies under one centralised bank, resulting in enhanced deposit pool for loans and increased financial liquidity among cooperatives.

This helps address the credit needs of the cooperative societies and ensure that the collective capital of cooperatives comes to the dedicated use of other cooperatives, Vishwakarma said.

"In this way, the capital and deposit of one successful cooperative society comes to the use of other societies, benefiting the entire cooperative sector of Gujarat," he said.

The pilot project was launched between June 2023 to January 2024 in two districts, the government said in its statement.

During the pilot project period, the existing bank accounts held by 1,048 milk societies were consolidated into the district co-operative banks along with the complete transfer of surplus funds into their new bank accounts.

The two districts saw the opening of over 4.7 lakh new savings accounts in cooperative banks, enhancing the existing deposits of these banks by a whopping Rs 966 crore, it said.

A total of 3.32 lakh RuPay debit cards were also issued to the societies and their active members, it said.

In order to enhance banking facilities and financial liquidity at village level, a total of 1,736 societies in these districts, including prominent milk societies affiliated with dairy unions, were also equipped with micro-ATMs and affiliated as "Bank Mitra".

To help members access financial services, over 1,631 employees associated with the cooperative societies were given a comprehensive training on digital transactions, including micro-ATM operations, cash withdrawals, and deposits, it said.

Delhi Industries Min meets factory owners over development of 27 industrial areas



■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
NEW DELHI: Delhi Industries Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj on Wednesday held a meeting with representatives of factory owners' associations from 27 industrial areas to discuss the government's plans to revamp those areas.

According to an official release, Bharadwaj said the Delhi Government is very serious about the development and maintenance of 27 unplanned industrial areas.

He mentioned that the government has been working with trade organisations for a long time to develop these

areas and has come up with a scheme for their revamp. Under this scheme, 90 per cent of the costs associated with the layout plan for the development of these industrial areas will be borne by the Delhi Government, while 10 per cent will be borne by the factory owners..

During the meeting, Chamber of Trade & Industry (CTI) Chairman Brijesh Goyal requested the minister to consider reducing the high fee for MCD map approvals in these 27 unplanned industrial areas. Goyal highlighted that there are 29 authorised industrial

areas and 27 unplanned industrial areas in Delhi, the statement said.

Factory owners from these unplanned areas have requested the government to include the cost of MCD map approvals under the scheme..

Bharadwaj agreed to this demand and instructed officials to consider a policy where map approval fees are in line with the government's scheme, it added.

Vijay Virmani, the President of the Delhi Manufacturing Federation, who was also present in the meeting, said there are small factories in industrial areas like Dabri, Khayala, Hastals, Nangli Sakravati, etc., where middle-class traders run their businesses..

He added that the development of these industrial areas will not only benefit the trader community but also promote industries, create new job opportunities, and improve Delhi's economy.

Heavy rains continue in Kerala; red alert in one district, orange alert in 8

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Kerala can expect to receive moderate to heavy rainfall with thunder and lightning for the next five days, the India Meteorological Department said on Wednesday as it issued a red alert for one district of the state.

The IMD said that a low pressure belt from the north Kerala coast to Gujarat and strong westerly-north westerly winds along the coast of the southern state were the reasons for the expected moderate to heavy rains in the coming days.

The red alert was sounded in Wayanad and orange alerts in Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts for the day.

It also issued a yellow alert in the remaining five districts of the state for the day.

A red alert indicates heavy to extremely heavy rain of over 20 cm in 24 hours, while an orange alert means very heavy rain (6 cm to 20 cm). A yellow alert means heavy rainfall between 6 to 11 cm. As heavy rains caused landslides, property damage, waterlogging of roads and flooding of acres of farmland, the Central Water Commission (CWC) issued a warning about a dangerous rise in levels of various rivers in the southern state.

The CWC issued warnings with regard to a dangerous rise in water levels of various rivers, including Achankovil in Pathanamthitta and Thodupuzha in Idukki districts of the state.

It cautioned people living close to the rivers to be careful. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) advised people to be careful in view of the strong winds accompanying the



heavy rains in the state.

It cautioned people against standing or parking vehicles under trees, saying they could get uprooted or their branches may break and fall down due to strong winds.

The IMD, meanwhile, cautioned fishermen against venturing into the sea for fishing in the Kerala, Karnataka and Lakshadweep coastal areas from July 17 to July 21 due to the possibility of bad weather and strong winds.

In Ernakulam, a home was damaged in a landslide, but no one was injured and the family living there was moved to a safe location, the district administration said.

The Kottayam district administration said that 45 people were moved to camps following incessant rains there throughout Tuesday night.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) chief K Sudhakaran, in a statement, urged party workers and members to aid in relief work where people have suffered property damage and other losses due to the heavy rains. He also urged the Youth Congress, the Kerala Students Union to come forward and help in the relief work. There should be a strong presence of Congress workers wherever help is needed, he said.

Goa targeting new markets for tourism through international trade fairs: Minister

■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
PANAJI: Goa is looking forward to tap new and emerging markets through participation in global trade fairs after international tourism was affected due to the Russia-Ukraine war and other problems, minister Rohan Khaunte said on Wednesday. During COVID-19, the international foothold in Goa was only 33,000, which has now increased to 4.5 lakh for this particular year (calendar year), Tourism Minister Khaunte said in the state assembly. Responding to a question raised by Goa Forward Party MLA Vijai Sardesai in the assembly, he said after the COVID-19 pandemic, the perception about tourism in the state is changing, taking it away from beaches. Sardesai said Goa spent Rs 63

crore in the last four years (on various events), including Rs 29.84 crore to promote the state within the country. Former chief minister late Manohar Parrikar had emphasised on the pre-audit of roadshows and that accountability parameters should be framed, he said. Khaunte said after the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism department in 2022 decided to change the perception of Goa "beyond beaches" as earlier the impression about the coastal state was only about its beaches and party life. "We needed to see that quality people come in. Since 2021-22, Goa tourism board headed by Chief Minister Pramod Sawant discussed about the emerging markets and tapping of new markets," he said. "Problems with the UK market and the Russia war impacted

international tourism to a big extent," the minister said, adding the Israel military campaign (in Gaza) also resulted in a dip in the number of tourists from that country. "We had to ensure that we tap the emerging markets like South East Asia, South Asia, the US, UAE and Germany," he said. The state tourism department participated in the WTM (World Travel Mart) London, ITB, Berlin, IITF and other events, Khaunte said. "We are presenting ourselves to the world through these events where players from the emerging markets also come," he said. Earlier, only Goa used to participate in these events but now Ladakh and states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka are attending the international marts, he noted.

IAF tells SC it has deposited compensation to HIV positive veteran



■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
NEW DELHI: An Indian Air Force (IAF) soldier, who contracted AIDS due to transfusion of contaminated blood at a military hospital in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba in 2002, has received Rs 18 lakh and the residual amount of over Rs 1.41 crore awarded to him as compensation has been deposited with the apex court registry, the IAF has informed the Supreme Court. The apex court, in a judgement delivered on September 26 last year on a plea by the veteran, had directed the IAF to pay him around Rs 1.5 crore as compensation.

The former soldier had taken ill during "Operation Parakram", launched in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001, and was admitted to the hospital where he had to be administered one unit of blood.

The top court had in April this year dismissed a plea seeking review of its September 2023 judgement in the matter. The veteran's petition alleging contempt of the directions issued by the top court in its 2023 verdict came up for hearing before the bench on Tuesday. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Vikranjit Banerjee said they have filed a compliance affidavit in the matter. The bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and K V Viswanathan, observed that the amount deposited in the court registry be released to the veteran. An advocate, who is assisting the top court as an amicus curiae in the matter, spoke about the soldier's regular medical check-up and said the bench can consider referring him to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi, for it.

The bench said since the man resides in Ajmer, a good medical facility can be found in Jaipur to ensure he is not inconvenienced.

It asked the amicus to discuss the issue with the ASG so that it can be sorted out and posted the matter for hearing after two weeks. On March 5, the apex

court had directed that an amount of Rs 18 lakh towards attendant expenses be paid to the man and the remainder be deposited in the court's registry within two weeks.

The bench had also directed that his disability be considered as 100 per cent for paying him the disability pension.

In its 2023 verdict, the apex court had said, "It is held that the appellant is entitled to compensation, calculated at Rs 1,54,73,000 towards compensation on account of medical negligence of the respondents, who are held liable for the injury suffered by the appellant."

It had said since individual liability cannot be assigned, the respondent organisations (IAF and Indian Army) are held vicariously liable, jointly and severally.

"The amount shall be paid to the appellant within six weeks by the IAF, his employer; it is open to the IAF to seek reimbursement, to the extent of half the sum, from the Indian Army. All arrears related to disability pension too shall be disbursed to the appellant within the said six weeks period," the apex court had said.

The top court had passed the verdict on an appeal by the IAF veteran who challenged an order of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) rejecting his claim for compensation.

UP CM Yogi Adityanath meets ministers to discuss upcoming assembly bypolls



■ **STATE TIMES NEWS**
LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday met ministers from the state at his residence here to discuss the upcoming Assembly bypolls in 10 constituencies.

The floods in the state, which have so far affected more than 700 villages across 17 districts, were also discussed during the meeting.

The meeting comes weeks after the Lok Sabha elections in which the ruling BJP performed poorly. The party was reduced to 33 seats, a drop of 29 seats from 2019.

The INDIA bloc gained ground with the Samajwadi Party (SP) securing a win on 37 seats, a jump of 32 seats as compared to 2019, and the Congress winning on six seats.

"The meeting today was especially held to discuss the upcoming elections and we will win all the 10 assembly seats where by-elections are to be held," Finance Minister Suresh Khanna said after the meeting.

All the Uttar Pradesh cabinet ministers and ministers of

state were present in the meeting, sources said.

Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh, who also attended the meeting, said "discussions were held on floods along with developmental works".

The 10 assembly seats, which are set to go to bypolls, are Katehari (Ambedkar Nagar), Karhal (Mainpuri), Milkpur (Ayodhya), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Ghaziabad, Mahawan (Mirzapur), Sasman (Kanpur Nagar), Khair (Aligarh), Phulpur (Prayagraj) and Kundarki (Moradabad). Nine of the 10 seats fell vacant after the MLAs resigned following their victory in the Lok Sabha polls.

Prominent among these seats was Karhal (Mainpuri), which fell vacant after SP chief Akhilesh Yadav resigned following his elections to the Lok Sabha from Kannauj.

SP's Irfan Solanki's Sisaman assembly seat in Kanpur Nagar was declared vacant following his disqualification in view of his seven-year imprisonment by MP/MLA court.