

Bihar madrasas bring in science, arts: 'students must compete with world'

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THE BIHAR Madrasa Education Board has decided to adopt a "modern and mainstream syllabus" in the academic session that began this April, including options for students to choose from science, arts and commerce after Class 10, and adoption of SCERT and NCERT textbooks. Over 10,000 teachers were given online

training during the lockdown, by experts including the Unicef, to be able to teach the courses.

The Bihar madrasa board has over 4,000 madrasas affiliated to it, including 1,942 government-aided, with over 15 lakh students. It has been holding online classes for the students.

As per the new syllabus, the language of instruction would be Urdu and school texts will be also in Urdu. Students, however, will have English and Hindi as

separate subjects. The entire syllabus has been uploaded online on their website for the help of students, Bihar Madrasa Education Board Chairman Abdul Qaiyum Ansari told *The Indian Express*. An app has also been launched for students to access the material.

Like students enrolled in the Bihar board, the madrasas would prescribe SCERT textbooks till Class 10 and NCERT ones in

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Class 11 and 12. Islamic studies would remain a part of the curriculum from Classes 1 to 10.

Chairman Ansari said, "We realised that only studying Arabic would not suffice. We want our students to learn all subjects, like others, while studying Islamic courses. We want them to compete with the world."

Ansari said the uploaded content includes over 800 videos on the new syllabus. "We are also booking slots on Doordarshan to run our classes. We have been taking online admissions as well."

The Bihar madrasa board is an autonomous body under the state government and is fully funded by it.

SAMoin, a senior consultant with Unicef, Bihar, said "the complete paradigm shift" in the state had been in the works since a 2017-2018 Unicef study called for sweeping changes in the ex-

isting system. "Starting November 2019, the madrasa board started workshops with experts. After several rounds of workshops, we revised the syllabus." He pointed out that there is hardly any syllabus in the current system. "Books are randomly referred for subjects. We now have a combination of pragmatic syllabus and Islamic studies. Those who want to be *maulvis* and excel in religious studies have a separate stream."