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Bihar madrasas start modern & mainstream syllabus from current academic session

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PATNA: The students of Madrasas in Bihar will learn English, Hindi, Maths and Science along with the traditional course in Islamic studies and Arabic from this academic session that started in April, a top official of the state Madrasa Education Board said Saturday. The board has added "modern and mainstream" syllabus along with the traditional studies in the madrasas to help students keep pace with the society, he said.

Around eight lakh students, enrolled in 4,000 madrasas across the state will now be able to learn English, Hindi, Science, Social Science and Maths right from Class 1 to Class 12 apart from the Arabic and Islamic studies they are taught, Bihar Madrasa Education Board Chairman Abdul Qayum Ansari told .

"In order to keep pace with the society, we started the modern and mainstream syllabus from the current academic session in all the madrasas of the state. The efforts to start modern syllabus based on SCERT and NCERT curriculum would not have been possible without the help of UNICEF and UNFP," Ansari said.

Students of madrasas can now choose science, arts and commerce subjects after Class 10, as SCERT textbooks have been prescribed till Class 8 and NCERT textbooks from Class 9 to 12, he said.

The language of teaching would be urdu and the school texts would also be in that language for better understanding.

Asked about the need for it, Ansari said, "If modern and mainstream education is not followed, then we will be cut off from the society."

He said, "If we have to live in the society, then we will have to learn English, Hindi, Science, Social Science, Maths and all technological advancement... students will get to learn science, social science, etc. in Urdu language which will help them in understanding concepts in a better manner".

Efforts are being made to improve skills of students studying in madrasas so that they are not confined to study Arabic, rather they will get to learn how to translate from Arabic to English and vice versa so that they get a job in foreign countries as well, he said.

The board chairman gave credit to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for the initiative, saying "it is Kumars resolve to bring them into the mainstream as he (CM) thinks that Bihar will not move ahead if they (minorities) remain laggard".

The board has also started distributing books in the madrasas of the state through 'Mukhya Mantri Madrasa Pustak Vitran Vahan', he said, adding that all the course materials right from class I to Class 12 are also available on boards website www.bsmeb.org from where one can get it.

Madrasas are also holding online classes through its Youtube channel for its students, he said, adding that an 'app' has also been launched for students to access the materials.

Around eight lakh students are enrolled in 4,000 madrasas affiliated to the Madrasa Board, he said, adding 1,942 madrasas are funded by the state government.

Another 1000 madrasas will also start getting grant soon from the government, he said.

Of the 15,000 teachers of madrasas, 5,000 teachers were given online training during lockdown period through zoom app and other modes, Ansari said.

Pramila Manoharan, education specialist with UNICEF, Patna, said that the world body carried a study in 2018 which recommended sweeping changes in the existing education system of madrasa education and submitted a report to the Madrasa Board and the state government, to which the board agreed.

"In our study, we found that children at madrasas are keen to learn subjects like science, social science and maths like any other children.

"After three years of hard work, we were successful in changing the curriculum of madrasas where studies based on modern and mainstream syllabus began in the current academic session," Manoharan told .

The UNICEF study showed that the madrasas in the state had no teachers for science and maths, she said adding that none of the madrasas had either a laboratory or a library.

The state madrasa board is also planning to develop an app to monitor teaching as per the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 norms, the UNICEF official said. They have already conducted an online orientation programme for 5,000 teachers of madrasas during the lockdown, the official added.