

# Panel wants CBSE to shorten exam season

**PLUGGING LEAKS** Suggested rejig could cut Boards duration from 7 to 4 weeks

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**NEW DELHI:** Reducing the board exam season from the current seven weeks to around a month could be one way to improve the process and also prevent leaks of papers, a committee formed by the human resource development ministry after the recent CBSE papers leak incident is likely to recommend, Hindustan Times has learnt.

Doing so would involve considerable logistical juggling, though, because CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) offers 168 courses in Class 12 and 70 in Class 10, and multiple permutations and combinations are possible. Given that there are no restrictions on what students can opt for, conducting these exams usually takes about seven weeks, a member of the committee said.

The way out, added this person who spoke on condition of anonymity, may be to pick courses that have been opted for by very few students and have the schools where these students study be the

## PROPOSED CHANGES

To prevent leaks such as that of the Class 12 Economics and Class 10 Mathematics question paper this year, a committee formed by the HRD ministry has recommended shortening the process of exams. Here are some suggested steps:

- 1 Hold exams for subjects opted by very few students in the school of the examinee before the main board examinations
- 2 Follow double-encryption for exam papers
- 3 Print the paper at the examination centre
- 4 Provide watermarks on question papers for every exam centre
- 5 Offer baskets of subjects from which students can choose

base for the board exams in such courses that can actually be held before the other board exams begin. For instance, in 2018, only three students opted for a course in music production, one for a course in maternal and child health, and one for a course on fundamentals of nursing.

“For such courses and other similar courses we can set the school itself as the centre (currently external centres are

selected). This will ensure that these exams are held earlier and those that have more number of students we can hold it in March and complete them within a month’s time,” this person said.

This could reduce the exam period from seven weeks to four or five weeks. The committee has also suggested following a double encrypted system for exam papers which is foolproof.

“Under the system the exam

paper will be doubly encrypted and will be printed at the centre itself. Logistics of electricity, printers and manpower will be taken care of. This will reduce the chances of any paper leak substantially,” added the member.

Another suggestion by the panel is that the question papers should have watermarks depending on the exam centres. That way, if there is a leak, it becomes easy to identify the centre from which the leak has happened.

Meanwhile, the panel has also had a subsidiary discussion on whether CBSE should offer baskets of subjects and the students can pick from various baskets. ICSE and IB, two other boards, offer around 30 to 35 subjects in board exams.

The panel headed by VS Oberoi, a former secretary of the ministry of human resource development, and comprising seven others, was formed in April after the Class 10 mathematics and Class 12 economics papers leaked, which triggered criticism of the way the board held exams.

**CONTINUED ON P 6**

## CBSE

A re-test was held for Class 12 students, but CBSE decided against one for Class 10.

The HRD had tasked the committee with reviewing all aspects related to security checks built in to the examination system to ensure that question papers reach the examinees without being tampered with. The panel was also asked to assess potential points of weakness in the present system of transporting question papers from the printing presses to the examination halls.