

POLL DUTY HITS ROUTINE

Bus crunch pushes schools to go online

JHINUK MAZUMDAR

Calcutta: Schools are tweaking schedules and weighing short-term shifts to online classes as election dates draw near.

Bengal will vote on April 23 and 29. However, several schools said their transport services are already affected as buses are requisitioned for election duty. Schools are worried that without transport, running in-person classes will be difficult.



A central force jawan outside a north Calcutta school

Most schools will remain closed on April 29, when Calcutta votes. But if school buses are off the roads days earlier, students may not be able to attend classes.

“Our children come from as far as Dakshineswar and Howrah. Without buses, we cannot hold classes in school. We decided to hold online classes from April 27 to 30, while April 29 will be a holiday,” said Ambica Mehra, principal of Delhi Public School, New Town.

The Newtown School is also considering a shift online. “Bus service isn’t compulsory in our school, but nearly 50% of students use

it. The service provider has informed us about the requisition, and we are working on alternative plans,” said Sunil Agarwal, founder of The Newtown School.

Some schools have approached police, requesting a reduction in the number of buses requisitioned or the duration of deployment.

“They have asked for three buses from April 20, but we have written to the police saying that if buses are taken away that early, running the school will be difficult. We are trying to merge routes so at least the senior section is not impacted,” said Anjana Saha, principal of Mahadevi Birla World Academy.

At South Point, eight buses are expected to be requisitioned from April 25 to May 1. “We are seeking some concession,” said principal Jaidev Ghosh.

Some schools may have to shut days before the elections, as their premises will be used as polling stations.

“Our campus will be taken over for polling from 1pm on April 28, so classes will run only till 12.30pm that day,” said Gargi Banerjee, principal of Sri Sri Academy.

IEM Public School in Salt Lake has rescheduled internal tests from May 4 to May 5 after receiving requests from parents travelling to vote on April 23, said director John Bagul.