

Doctors demand changes in rules for rural service

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: The next time you visit a hospital and see a doctor sporting a black band or t-shirt, don't be surprised. They are part of a nationwide 'Save the doctor' campaign launched by the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Association of Healthcare Providers India (AHPDI).

It aims to address the shortage of specialist doctors and the controversy surrounding the mandatory rural service for MBBS students.

The shortage of specialists is being blamed on the skewed ratio of undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG) medical seats, due to

which the total duration of study for medicine has shot up owing to the wait to land a PG seat. The campaign seeks the integration of rural service with the internship.

Narendra Saini, secretary general, IMA, told presspersons here on Monday that the government should provide soft infrastructure and incentives for rural service. AHPDI treasurer Devi Shetty said rural service could be made part of the MBBS internship and the PG training programme. "This way, a whole year will not be wasted," he said.

"The present number of UG seats is 45,000, while the number of PG seats is only 12,000. Once medical students complete MBBS, they

are forced to wait for years attending coaching classes and mugging up multiple choice questions rather than finishing their specialisation and treating patients," Mr. Shetty said.

Three years ago, the Medical Council of India and the Health Ministry had given the nod for doubling of PG seats. "On the contrary, this year, the number of government PG seats has gone further down," he added.

Kavya. C, who has just completed her MBBS from a city college, concurred with the idea. "Though it is not compulsory for us, we would like to serve in rural areas when we are in our most effective period, which is after PG."