

Medicos rally against rural posting

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: "I passed MBBS six months ago. But don't call me a doctor, I have not treated a single patient in these months. I have spent the entire time solving multiple-choice questions so that I can crack the PG entrance test. I am just an Indian medical graduate."

This was Kalpajit Banik, a medical PG aspirant from Agartala, speaking for thousands like him dogged by two major problems—the skewed seat ratio between MBBS and PG courses and compulsory rural posting after MBBS. Student representatives from across the country landed in Bangalore on Monday to launch the 'Save the doctor' campaign, which aims at finding solutions to these issues. India has 45,600 UG seats in 362 medical colleges across the country. But

the number of PG seats is a mere 12,000. With a pass percentage of 80%-90%, nearly 40,000 doctors graduate every year and compete for the 12,000 seats. The shortage of seats has not only left aspirants in the lurch but also hit the healthcare system, medicos rued.

SAVE THE DOCTOR

"This situation is perpetuating only because citizens and doctors have never raised their voice," said Dr Devi Shetty, chairman of Narayana Hrudayalaya, adding, "There are 1,748 training posts for emergency medicine in the US. In India, it is 32. In haematology, the US has 523 seats as against 13 here." He recalled that three years ago, when he was the governing council member of Medical Council of India, a resolution was passed to double the number of PG

seats but was never implemented.

"In fact, the number has decreased by 1,000 compared to last year," Dr Shetty said.

Students feel the rural posting will only make things worse. "We are not against working in rural areas. But we feel the posting should be made mandatory during the internship period or post-graduation," said Navneet Motreja, another student.

They also argued that rural areas need specialists and not MBBS graduates. "The government should provide incentives so that students go to villages willingly," said Narendra Saini, secretary general, Indian Medical Association. As part of the campaign, backed by Indian Medical Association and Association of Healthcare Providers India, the students will wear Save the Doc t-shirts, spread awareness via social media and wear black badges.