

MBBS students protest rural posting, say shift it to PG course

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 8

MEDICAL students in the Capital gave their classes a miss on Thursday to turn up for a protest at Jantar Mantar against the compulsory rural posting of doctors that would add an extra year to the five-year MBBS curriculum and what they called "the huge disparity between undergraduate and postgraduate seats in medical education".

The doctors threatened to go on strike if their demand that rural health service be shifted to the PG curriculum was not met. Police used water cannons to break the protest.

The protest drew doctors from Maulana Azad Medical College, University College of Medical Sciences and Lady Hardinge Medical College and was backed by the Indian Medical Association and Delhi Medical Association.

"There are about 2,000 posts vacant in the primary



Doctors at the protest at Jantar Mantar on Thursday.

RAVI KANOJA

health centres, a gap which can be addressed easily by posting those who get selected in the 12,000 postgraduate seats. What is the need to use the 45,000-odd MBBS students for this? When will the undergraduate students prepare for the PG entrance tests?" a protester said.

Maintaining that they were not against serving in rural areas, students said the timing needed to be changed to ensure "our careers are not hampered".

"What is the point of sending doctors to set-ups where there is no electricity, water, laboratory or basic diag-

nostic facilities, and absolutely no paramedical staff support? If the government wants to improve healthcare in rural areas, then these issues must be addressed first," another student said.

Dr Narendra Saini, IMA secretary general, said, "Every PG student has to serve for six

months in rural areas as part of their course. This period can be extended. Similarly, every medical officer is eligible for 4-5 promotions. For every promotion, one rural posting can be made mandatory. But delaying the medical education of doctors which already takes 13-odd years is not justified."