

# Medical students protest

Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Police had to use water canons on Thursday to prevent hundreds of agitating medical students from marching to Nirman Bhawan, where the Union Health Ministry is located.

The medical students, who had the support of Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Delhi Medical Association, had gathered for a protest march at Jantar Mantar as part of their campaign 'Save the Doctor'.

The agitating doctors demanded that the Union Health Ministry equalise Under Graduation (UG) and Post Graduation (PG) medical seats and include rural posting as part of internship and postgraduate training. Over two to three lakh medical students are supporting this movement across the country.

A delegation of the agitating students was later allowed to meet the Health Ministry officials, who, sources said, have agreed to look into their demands.

In a directive to the Medical Council of India last year, the Union Health Ministry had asked for extending the three-month rural posting to one year and include it in the MBBS curriculum.



Medical students during a protest at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Thursday against the government's decision to make one year rural posting mandatory for doctors. - PHOTO: PTI

The agitating medical students, however, claim that rural posting "is unfair on them and is a waste in the absence of proper infrastructure at the primary health centres."

Save the Doctor campaign co-ordinator Dr. Navneet Motreja said: "India currently lacks specialist doctors due to less number of clinical PG seats in medical institutions. Though India has the largest number of medical institutions, the disparity in the number of seats allotted for PG and UG students along with the mandatory rural posting are affecting young doctors and they end up spending 13

years merely studying."

He added that there are 45,600 UG seats which are likely to reach 50,000 shortly due to the progressive steps taken by the MCI. Whereas, there are only 12,000 PG seats which most of the doctors prefer to choose.

"With a pass rate of 80-90 per cent nearly 40,000 doctors graduate every year and compete for 12,000 seats with their batch mates and over a lakh seniors. In the last PG entrance exam under NEET, over 110,000 doctors appeared for the test to claim one of the 12,000 seats. Adding to this, the one year compulsory ru-

ral posting has worsened the situation," said Dr. Motreja.

Extending his support to the medical graduates, IMA secretary general Dr. Narendra Saini, said: "We support rural posting but in the present situation making it compulsory is not feasible because there is no structured posting in rural areas. Every PG student must do six months of rural posting as part of their course/ internship."

He also added that every medical officer during their tenure is entitled for at least 4-5 promotions. For every promotion, one year rural posting can be made mandatory.