



Cabinet to consider bill to replace MCI with new panel

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New Delhi: The Union Cabinet is likely to consider on Wednesday the proposed legislation to set up National Medical Commission (NMC) as the apex medical education regulator, scrapping the Medical Council of India.

The government is keen to get the bill cleared in the ongoing monsoon session of Parliament. Once cleared, the draft NMC Bill, 2017 will replace the existing Indian Medical Council (IMC) Act, 1956 which governs medical education in the country.

However, the new bill, mooted by the health ministry, has diluted the provision to make way for elected members in the proposed Commission.

NMC BILL PROPOSES

- Introduction of part election process to pick members of NMC. Nine of the 29 members to be elected
- An appellate authority headed by a retired judge to hear appeals against NMC orders
- Exit exam for all MBBS graduates to get practising licence. Exam to also serve as NEET for candidates hoping to pursue for PG studies

The move is a departure from the key recommendation of the Niti Aayog committee, headed by Arvind Panagariya, which suggested for selection of members of the Commission. The ministerial panel, headed by finance minister

Arun Jaitley, has recommended increasing the number of members and introducing a part election process.

Another significant change in the new bill, cleared by the ministerial panel, is the provision to establish an appellate authority headed by a retired judge to hear appeals against NMC orders.

Earlier, the bill suggested that any person or body or an organisation, aggrieved by an order made of Commission may prefer an appeal to the central government.

The bill also proposes an exit exam which all MBBS graduates will have to clear to get practising licence. The exit exam may also serve as National Eligibility cum Entrance Test for aspiring candidates for post-graduate studies.

Ayurvedic doctors cannot work in casualty: KMC

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Bengaluru: Can ayurvedic doctors handle an emergency case in a multi-specialty hospital? No, if you go by a case order issued by the Karnataka Medical Council.

The KMC order in March 2017 reads that a patient, Rajanna M, 41, who died in a city hospital was not examined by a qualified doctor, but by an ayurvedic doctor.

Hit by a two-wheeler, Rajanna was taken to Koshy's Hospital in Ramamurthy

Nagar at 7.30pm on November 7, 2011. The patient was moved from the ICU to the general ward after a CT scan threw up no abnormality.

But the family said the man had suffered a head injury and was vomiting. The attendants were told it was nothing serious, the vomiting was due to gastritis and he would be dis-

charged the next day. But when the patient developed breathlessness, he was seen by an intensivist and shifted back to the ICU at 9.45pm. The family was informed about the patient's death at 11pm.

Rajanna's brother Devaraja M filed a medical negligence case against the hospital. The KMC order, a copy of

which is with TOI, noted in March 2017 that the patient was not examined by a qualified doctor but managed by an ayurvedic doctor. The KMC warned the hospital not to appoint an ayurvedic doctor in trauma care.

"Ayurveda cannot be integrated with allopathy in taking care of accident and trauma injuries. After this incident, the ayurvedic doctor left the hospital and his whereabouts are not known. During the golden hour, a qualified allopathic doctor/

intensivist can make a difference in identifying serious signs and symptoms," the KMC observed.

Rajanna, a father of two, was his family's only breadwinner and ran a salon. His family is fighting a case in consumer court. However, Dr Santhosh Koshy, head of Koshy's Hospital, said the ayurvedic doctor was functioning under the supervision of an intensivist. "Our best efforts were made to save the patient and it's not a case of medical negligence," said Dr Koshy.



Need not always complete full course of antibiotics: Doctors

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New Delhi: Is it important to complete a full course of an antibiotic? Yes, according to conventional wisdom, which says stopping a course mid-way could lead to drug resistance. But now several scientists have challenged this claim, saying there's no evidence to prove it.

In many situations, stopping the use of antibiotics sooner is a safe and effective way to reduce antibiotic overuse, a paper published in the British Medical Journal on Monday argued. "Patients are put at unnecessary risk from antibiotic resistance when treatment given is longer than necessary," said the authors from Brighton and Sussex Medical School in the UK.



DIFFERING OPINIONS

Agreeing that there was a need to critically look at prescription patterns, Dr Ran-deep Guleria, AIIMS director, however, warned patients against stopping antibiotics on their own. "It is a clinician's call," he said.

Dr Suranjit Chatterjee, senior consultant, internal medicine, Apollo Hospital, said an antibiotic course need not be treated as sacrosanct. "It can be de-escalated or stopped if the patient's

condition improves," he said, adding that antibiotics were prescribed to many patients on an empirical basis in case of high fever or diarrhoea. "If tests reveal that he/she does not have typhoid or other serious infections as suspected and this is reflected in the patient's clinical condition, the antibiotics' course can be altered," he said.

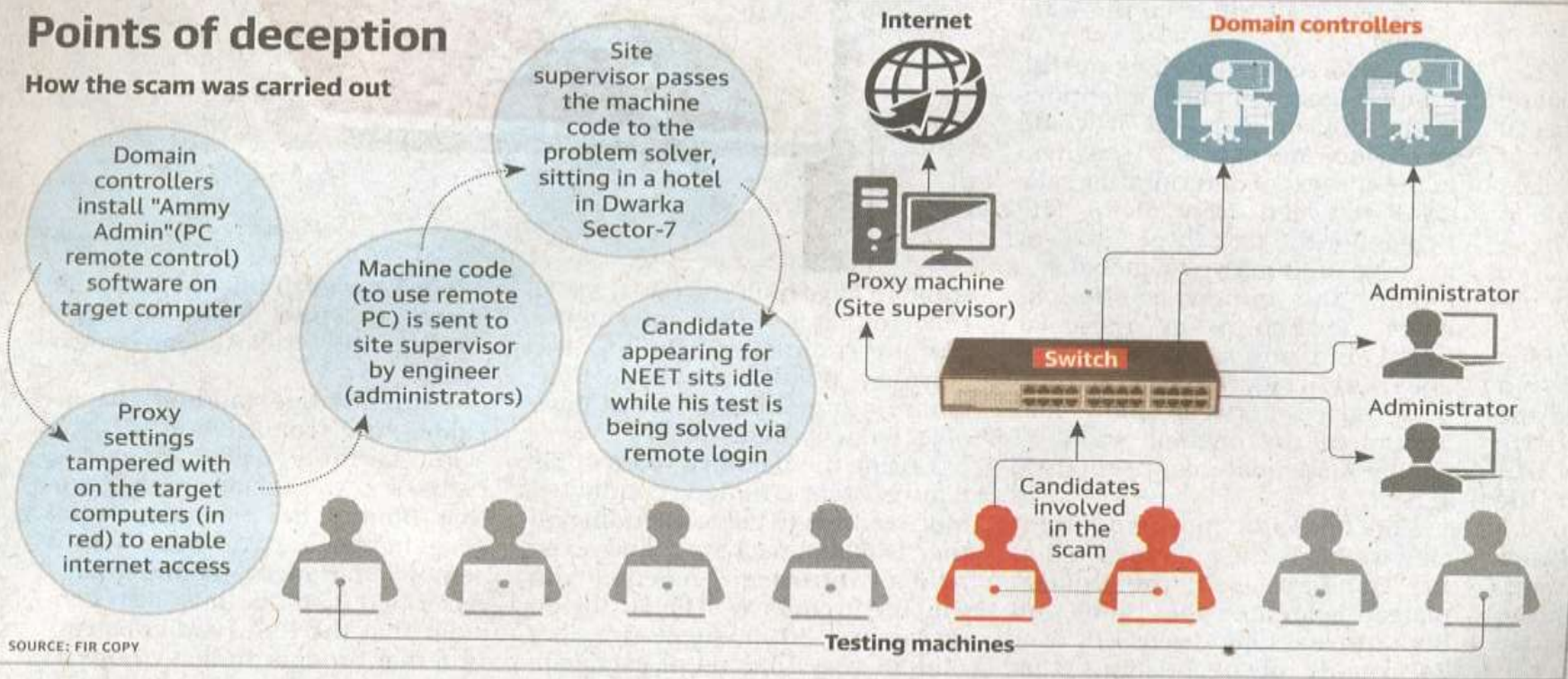
Guleria and Chatterjee said in diseases such as tuberculosis and typhoid, a patient may feel better after a few days but the antibiotic course still needs to be completed because not doing so increases the risk of a relapse and the emergence of resistant bacteria. Traditionally, antibiotics are prescribed for a recommended duration or courses, say for five to 10 days or more, depending on the condition.

Tampered computers gave NEET applicants a lifeline

Charge sheet against testing firm says candidates paid to get access to Internet, outside help

Points of deception

How the scam was carried out



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NEW DELHI

The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police has filed a charge sheet in the court of metropolitan magistrate Satish Kumar Arora here against officials of Prometric Testing Pvt Ltd, hired by the National Board of Examinations (NBE), to conduct the National Eligibility Cum Entrance Test (NEET) in November 2016 for admissions to post graduate medical courses.

Nearly one lakh students appeared for the PG entrance examination, competing for 35,117 post graduate seats across the country.

Remote access given

According to the charge sheet, accessed by *The Hindu*, computers at the examination centres managed by Prometric were compromised. In some cases, select computers were installed with a remote, screen sharing software, Ammy, allowing 'solvers' outside to select the

correct answers for the students.

In other instances, site supervisors, engineers and officials deployed by Prometric tampered with the security system and ensured that select candidates got access to the Internet by connecting



Selection of staff for the exam seems to be compromised and security and sincerity of the exam was breached.

remotely to another computer outside the examination hall, the police said.

The Crime Branch is investigating officials of Prometric and the National Board of Examinations (NBE). The charge sheet states that the involvement of "officials at the National Board of Examinations and Promterics" cannot be ruled out.

Sources in the Crime Branch said a list of 500 stu-

dents has been prepared in a supplementary charge sheet.

Investigations revealed that the NBE contracted Prometric, which then sub-contracted the conducting of the tests to yet another company, CMS IT Services Pvt. Ltd. for engineering and support staff. CMS IT Services further contracted out the hiring of local vendors for staff at various examination centres.

"In this way, the selection of suitable staff for the exam seems to be compromised and the security and sincerity of the exam was breached," the charge sheet says.

According to the charge sheet, the aspirants paid between ₹2.5 to 3 lakh to access the Internet during the exam. In one centre in Chandigarh, the site supervisor, one Ankur Mishra (named in the charge sheet) and hired by CMS IT Services, left slips with answers for select candidates.

The NBE is also under investigation for hiring Prom-

teric, an American company, without inviting tenders from other companies. The Crime Branch says Prometric's staff reformatted the computers and destroyed evidence after the exam.

Echoes of Vyapam

Dr. Anand Rai, whistle blower in the Madhya Pradesh medical entrance examination, better known as the Vyapam scam, and a complainant in the present case said, "The NBE handed over the contract to Promteric without inviting tenders. Promteric has admitted to formatting evidence on the computers [after the NEET], which should have been maintained for a minimum of five years. This is a gross violation of the Indian Evidence Act."

Soumitra Roy, Country Manager, Prometric India said the company was "not aware of any such development" adding, "We proactively continue to support the authorities in their investigation."