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SRI DEVARAJ URS MEDICAL COLLEGE
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Tense moments for state's med students

Reshma Ravishanker

BENGALURU, DHNS: Thousands of medical seat aspirants in Karnataka at a risk of losing lakhs of rupees as the fee would be forfeited.

Students who are aspiring for a seat in the all-India institutes and deemed universities across the country from Karnataka are in a fix now. These students, who have availed a seat in the counselling process conducted by the Karnataka Examinations Authority, must report to colleges latest by Friday failing which they will lose seats. The last date for payment of fee is Thursday.

These medical aspirants have also paid Rs 2,05,000 as security deposit to participate in the counselling process conducted by the Medical Coun-

selling Committee for deemed and all-India institutes.

Karnataka's students now have only two options before them. Either forgo the choice of 1 seat if it is allotted in the first round and await the results of deemed universities or take up the seats allotted by the KEA.

In the procedure lie a few hassles, explain parents. "If we choose to risk and wait for deemed counselling results, we will still have to pay the fee here for medical colleges. This is non-refundable. We will lose a year's fee," said Dr Chandrashekar, a parent of one of the students from Mysuru.

If one chooses a seat allotted by MCC, the Rs 2,05,000 registration fee will be adjusted with the tuition fee. "Should we reject it, money will be forfeited," said Tara, a parent.

Notice on MCC site

All the participating candidates/institutes/colleges/universities of Online Undergraduate (MBBS and BDS) Courses Counselling 2018 are hereby informed that in compliance with directions of the Hon'ble High Court of Madras, Madurai Bench ... Online undergraduate counselling for the session 2018 including the declaration of 2nd round result will be kept in abeyance till further orders.

Cutting it fine

- Amount paid at security deposit with the MCC: Rs 2.05 lakh
- Last date for payment of fee for first round counselling: July 19
- Last date for these students to report to college: July 20

Why the delay

July 10: All students who took NEET exam in Tamil will get extra 196 marks on 720, ruled Madras High Court on July 10. By this time, the first round of counselling was completed for all-India quota seats.

July 16: CBSE moved SC against the Madras High Court decision. Counselling had to be kept in abeyance after this.

All-India quota confusions: med seat allottees in catch-22 situation

Last date for fees today; students risk losing money or seat in premier college

Reshma Ravishanker

BENGALURU: The state's medical aspirants are left in the lurch as they are unsure on whether they ought to select a seat under the Karnataka quota seats even as the counselling process for seats in the country's premier colleges hangs in balance.

The first round counselling

for Karnataka quota seats under the National Eligibility and Entrance Exams (NEET) conducted by the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) has been completed and July 19 is the last date for students to pay the fees in colleges where they have been allotted seats. Students who have availed of seats under this round of counselling ought to report to these colleges by July 20.

Even as the process has gone a step ahead in Karnataka, students who aspire for the all-India quota seats, the counselling for which is conducted by the Medical Counselling Committee (MCC) under the Directorate of Health and Family Welfare, is on hold over an impending case before the apex court. This implies that students are still unsure if they will avail seats in the premier medical institutes or deemed

universities. Parents too are anxious as they are unsure whether the fee for seats allotted to them in the first round of counselling of Karnataka quota ought to be paid as there is uncertainty over the counselling for all-India seats.

Tara, the parent of one of the students who has been allotted a seat in the first round of counselling of KEA, said, "My son has a seat in Rajarajeshwari Medical College. This was his

choice 1 in KEA. There is still no word on the all-India quota seats. We do not know whether to let go of this seat as giving it up can be risky given the uncertain prospects of getting a seat in a deemed university."

Several parents like Tara are only hopeful that the KEA extends the period for fee payment for the first round of counselling till MCC announces its first-round results.

DH News Service

How did students with zero or negative marks in physics, chemistry qualify in NEET? It's not the fault of NEET

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The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) has brought in much needed

transparency in medical college admissions. This has exposed how students with abysmal scores in the entrance examination have got admission for MBBS, mostly in private colleges. This situation has been created by the health ministry and the Medical Council of India (MCI) keeping the qualifying cutoff very low so that private colleges can fill their seats despite their exorbitant fees.

With the Supreme Court ruling that all colleges will have to go by NEET ranking for admissions in 2017, one would have imagined that merit-based admissions were finally in place. However, even students with ranks below 6 lakh got admission though there were only about 60,000 MBBS seats in 2017. How did that happen? The exorbitant fees charged by most private colleges forced lakhs of relatively meritorious students to forego seats allotted to them in these colleges, allowing poor performers with more money to

get admission.

Many high scoring students cannot afford the exorbitant fees, but the health ministry and MCI, by keeping the cutoff at 50th and 40th percentile for general and reserved categories respectively, have ensured that the private colleges can go further and further down the merit list till they find students rich enough to fill their seats at the price demanded by them. Low

The high fees are the root cause of the dilution of merit. The higher the average fees in a college, the lower the average NEET score of those gaining admission to it

cutoffs ensured that over six lakh students qualified for just 60,000 seats.

An analysis of NEET scores indicates that, other than ST, for all other categories even an 88th percentile cutoff would have been enough to comfortably fill the seats available. For the ST category, this would be true at about the 75th percentile.



Several students with zero or negative marks in the physics and chemistry papers of NEET qualified for admission as the MCI has not fixed any minimum cutoff in individual subjects.

If zero or negative marks do not make a candidate ineligible for admission, why bother to test in the subject at all? Equally, how can a candidate scoring 15 out of 360, or 4%, in the NEET biology paper be eligible for MBBS? Several such students not only qualified, but also got admission in private colleges, paying average annual tuition fees of Rs 17 lakh. Thus the merit-based admission that NEET promised has been subverted by keeping the qualifying criteria fixed at ridiculously low levels despite

the NEET results of 2013, 2016 and 2017 exposing the flaws in them.

If the cutoff was raised and minimum marks for individual subjects made mandatory, there would be fewer students qualifying and the private colleges demanding sky-high fees will not be able to fill their seats. They would be forced to charge more reasonable sums. TOI had analysed the annual tuition fees charged in 216 private colleges to show how 25 colleges averaged Rs 5 lakh or less and about half averaged under Rs 8 lakh. Why does the government allow some to charge up to Rs 25 lakh when they teach the same MCI-stipulated curriculum?

The high fees are the root cause of the dilution of merit. As TOI's analysis of NEET

scores and college fees has shown, the higher the average fees in a college, the lower the average NEET score of those gaining admission to it. Seats remain vacant not because there aren't enough meritorious students but because many high scoring students can't afford the fees. Otherwise, why would private colleges not be able to fill their seats despite over 2 lakh students being within the 80th percentile?

The government argues that letting MBBS seats go vacant would be a colossal waste in a country facing a huge shortage of doctors. That's a red herring. Clearly, the shortage of doctors is most acute in rural India. No one, not even the health ministry, can pretend that doctors from these private colleges, where students pay lakhs of rupees as fees every year, will help overcome the rural shortage.

Can we allow such colleges to function in the name of doctor shortage when they not only do not help address the shortage but also actively sabotage and corrupt the medical education system? NEET can only stop the rot if it is not subverted by the Centre fixing low qualifying cutoffs and states refusing to regulate fees.