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Expanding health infra
Paying attention to the shortage of doctors in the country, the government has increased the number of seats in medical colleges over the past few years

37 Medical colleges started in 2019-20	529 Total number of medical colleges in India (266 govt, 263 private)	STATES THAT GOT HIGHEST NO OF MEDICAL COLLEGES IN THE LATEST DRIVE Kerala: 8 UP and Karnataka: 7 each WB & Tamil Nadu: 6 each
59 New medical colleges opened in last 3 years (33 private, 22 govt & 4 PPP)	79,000 Total no. of MBBS seats across medical colleges	11,57,771 No. of allopathic doctors registered in India

India got new 59 medical colleges in last three years

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

THE Centre has approved 59 new medical colleges in the country in the last three years, 33 of which are in the private sector while 22 colleges are directly under the government. Interestingly, four new medical colleges — in Gujarat and Assam — have also been started under the public-private-partnership mode.

The highest number of new medical colleges — eight — have been approved in Kerala, while Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh have got seven new colleges each. In all, the country now has 529 medical colleges, 266 of which are government-run. The data came out in the response filed by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to a question by MP

Dhiraj Prasad Sahu in the Rajya Sabha. The numbers are yet another example of the government's bid to address the shortage of doctors in the country, particularly rural areas, said health ministry officials.

At present, India has a total of 11,57,771 allopathic doctors registered with the state medical councils and Medical Council of India.

"Assuming 80% availability, it is estimated that around 9.26 lakh doctors may be actually available for active service. It gives a doctor-population ratio of 1:1457 as per current population estimate of 1.35 billion, which is lower than the World Health Organization norm of 1:1000," the government reply in Parliament said.

This year, the government has already approved nearly 9,000 more MBBS seats through general permission for hike in seats and for implementation of the Economically Weaker Section quota. This has taken the total number of MBBS seats to about 79,000.

Public health experts cautioned that while the government was doing good by paying attention to the shortage of doctors in the country, it should also develop mechanisms centrally to track and evaluate the competency of students passing out, mainly in private colleges.

"Also, to address the issue of faculty shortage in colleges specialist doctors working in private sector should be incentivised to teach on part-time basis," said Oommen John of the George Institute for Global Health, New Delhi.

MEDICAL COUNCIL BILL PASSED AMID DEMANDS FOR REFORMS

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EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

IT was doctors' day out in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday with members hailing from the medical fraternity cutting across party lines arguing for structural reforms in medical education in the country during the discussion on the National Medical Council Bill. The House later passed the Bill which proposes constituting a 12-member Governing Body in place of the Medical Council of India (MCI).

BJP MP Dr Subhash Bhamre, an oncologist by profession, sought the government's intervention in reforming medical education, while alleging that corruption in MCI has made allocation of seats biased in favour of privately-run institutions. "I represent Dhule Parliamentary constituency. The private medical college there has been allocated 150 (MBBS) seats despite lacking in patients. In contrast, the government medical college was allocated just 50 seats despite being full of patients. In medical education, experience counts but corruption in MCI is perpetuating a situation where private institutions, without being able to give exposure to students, are sanctioned more seats," said Bhamre.

Earlier, Union Minister for Health and Family welfare Dr Hash Vardhan, while introducing the Bill, said it was the need of the hour since the MCI's functioning had led to perception that it was full of corruption. He said the Bill would ensure transparency and accountability in medical education.

Shiv Sena MP Dr Shrikant Eknath Shinde made an emotional pitch against rising incidents of violence against doctors and expressed fear that the bridge course proposed under the Bill for traditional health practitioners would further lead to such incidents. He said foreign educated doctors should be entrusted with rural postings.

BJD's Anubhav Mohanty asked why the government wanted bureaucrats in the governing body while YSR Congress MP Dr Sanjeev Kumar Singari said the MCI was an elected body but the proposed body would be nominated by the government. SP's Azam Khan, who is the patron of a hospital in Rampur, suggested that the norms on faculty be relaxed while giving recognition to a medical college.