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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Indian medical education system

- The crisis in Ukraine and the resulting evacuation of medical students, delays in post-graduate counselling due to reservation-related litigation and the state of Tamil Nadu enacting a law to exclude NEET exams in India. The education system has attracted a lot of adverse attention.
- There is a need to look into what is lacking in the system and what adequate measures need to be taken to deal with the situation.

Problems of Medical Education in India

- **Demand-supply imbalance:** A serious problem with respect to population parameters is the demand-supply imbalance. The cost of these seats in private colleges ranges between Rs 15-30 lakh per year (not including hostel expenses and study material).
- This amount is more than what most Indians can afford. It is difficult to comment on quality as there is no fixed criterion. However it is highly variable and unfavourable in most medical colleges despite the private-public divide.
- **Issue of Skilled Faculty/Faculty:** Government's initiative to open new medical colleges is seriously affected by the shortage of faculty/faculty. Except at the lowest level, where new entrants come, the teachers of the existing medical college are recruited by the new colleges at all other levels. Academic quality remains a serious concern.
- The Medical Council of India (MCI) tried to plug the many loopholes of the former faculty and corruption in the past. This has introduced the necessary 'publications' for promotion to improve the academic rigor of the faculty but has resulted in a glut of journals of dubious quality.
- **Low doctor-patient ratio:** India has one government doctor per 11,528 people and one nurse per 483 people, far below the 1:1000 recommended by the World Health Organisation.

- **Old Curriculum and Teaching Style:** New dimensions are being established in the medical field, but the medical studies curriculum in India is not updated accordingly.
- **Lack of social accountability:** Indian medical students do not receive training that provides them with social accountability as health practitioners.
- **Problems with private medical colleges:** Law changes in the 1990s made it easier to open private schools, and many medical institutions emerged in the country, financed by businessmen and politicians who had no experience running medical schools. This commercialized medical education to a great extent.
- **Corruption in Medical Education:** Fraudulent practices and rampant corruption like fake-degrees, bribes and donations, proxy faculty etc. is a big problem in the medical education system.

Improvement:

- There is a dire need to revisit the existing guidelines for setting up medical schools and allowing for the correct number of seats.
- Giving teaching privileges to practicing practitioners and allowing e-learning tools will bridge the gap of quality teachers across the system. Also, these reforms can double the existing medical seats without compromising on the quality of teaching.
- Periodic recertification based on continuing learning systems may be necessary to keep up with the rapid pace of change.
- Students need to improve their basic management, communication and leadership skills.
- They need to be trained keeping in view their social relevance as doctors.
- There is a need for integration of subjects in the classroom, use of new teaching methods and more prevalent technology.
- There is a need to work on medical research and clinical skills in colleges.

Steps to be taken

- **Increase in seats:** Several institutions have proposed to increase seats by converting district hospitals into medical colleges using the private-public partnership model. NITI Aayog is moving in this direction.
- However, the government needs to strengthen a functional regulatory framework and a proper public-private model that meets the needs of the private sector as well as the country before implementing these ideas.
- We have failed miserably mainly because of the politico-private sector nexus.
- **Controlling College Fees:** Recent efforts by the National Medical Council (NMC) to regulate college fees are being opposed by medical colleges. The government should also seriously consider subsidizing medical education in the private sector or alternative ways of funding medical education for underprivileged students.
- **Regular quality assessment:** The quality assessment of medical colleges should be done regularly, with reports made available in the public domain. NMC is

conducting a common examination for all medical graduates as a quality control measure.

- **Changes in Occupational Health Education:** Today's medical education should be able to produce professionals who are in line with the medical system of the 21st century.
- **The Lancet report 'Health Professionals for a New Century:** Transforming Health Education to Stronger Health Systems in an Interdependent World' (2010) outlines key recommendations for changes in health professional or vocational education that need to be addressed.
- There is a need to change the system to meet the growing shortage of health professionals to serve the aging population with lifestyle and life-long diseases, apart from raising the standards of medical professionals.

Eligibility for 'National Political Party'

- Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has emerged as the only major winner other than BJP in the recently held elections. As per the trends, the party is set to form the government in Punjab with a lead of 91 seats, and open its account with two seats in Goa, including a vote share of 6%.

Can 'Aam Aadmi Party' claim to be a national party?

- Not now.
- A party needs to meet one of three set criteria in order to be recognized as a 'national party' – and at present the AAP does not meet any of them.

Registration of Political Parties:

- Registration of Political Parties is done under the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.
- A political party has to submit an application to the Election Commission of India under the relevant section within 30 days to register its establishment, as per the prescribed guidelines. For this, in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the Election Commission of India issues guidelines.

Eligibility for 'National Political Party' of India:

- The political party has won 2 percent of the total Lok Sabha seats (11 out of 543 members) in the Lok Sabha elections and these members have been elected from at least three different states.
- It is mandatory to secure at least six percent of the valid votes polled in the general elections or assembly elections held in four or more states.
- Must be recognized as a 'State Party' in four or more states. Apart from this, for this, a minimum of four seats in the Lok Sabha should be won from any state or states.

Eligibility for 'State Level Political Party':

- For a political party to be recognized as a 'State level political party', it is necessary to secure a minimum of six percent of the total valid votes polled in the elections to the Lok Sabha or the Legislative Assembly held in the state.
- In addition, for this, at least two seats should be won in the Legislative Assembly of the respective state.
- For a political party, it should have secured 3 percent of the total seats or 3 seats, whichever is higher, in the elections to the State Legislative Assembly.
- One MP from each of the 25 Lok Sabha seats or eight per cent of the total votes polled in the state by a political party during a state assembly election or a Lok Sabha election.

The profit:

- A registered party recognized as a 'State Level Political Party', has the privilege of allotting a reserved election symbol for the party to its candidates in the State concerned.
- A registered party recognized as a 'National Political Party' has the privilege of allotting secure election symbols for the party to its candidates throughout India.
- Candidates from recognized national or state level political parties need only one proposer at the time of filing their nomination papers. In addition, they also have the right to get two sets of electoral rolls free of cost at the time of revision of electoral rolls and one set of electoral rolls is provided free of cost to their candidates during the general election.
- For these, during the general elections, they are provided telecast facility on All India Radio and Doordarshan.
- Travel expenses of star campaigners during general elections for recognized political parties are not added to the expenditure of that candidate or party.

Hague Convention 1954: Blue Shield

- Recently the 'United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization' (UNESCO) has emphasized on protective measures to preserve the endangered cultural heritage of Ukraine in the light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- To avoid accidental damage, the agency is marking cultural assets such as cultural sites and monuments in Ukraine with the distinctive 'Blue Shield' emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention for Protection in the event of armed conflict.

Hague Convention of 1954

- **Background:** In the context of history, armed conflicts have always wreaked havoc on the lives of the people. In addition to human casualties, armed conflicts have led to large-scale destruction of cultural heritage, undermining the foundations of communities, and the prospect of lasting peace and reconciliation.
- **Origin:** Considering that the protection of cultural heritage is of great importance to all peoples of the world, it has stressed the need for universal protection, the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was adopted under the auspices of UNESCO in 1954.
- This convention is known as the Hague Convention of 1954.
- It is the first and most comprehensive multilateral treaty specifically dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage in times of peace as well as during armed conflict.
- **Objectives:** The purpose of the convention is to protect cultural property, including architecture, art or historical monuments, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest, as well as scientific collections of any kind regardless of their origin or ownership.
- India is a party to the Hague Convention, 1954.

Blue Shield Emblem:



- **Requirement:** In accordance with Article 6 of the Hague Convention, 1954, cultural property may have a distinctive symbol in order to facilitate its recognition.
- **Origin:** Blue Shield formerly established by the International Committee of Blue Shield in 1996.
- **About Blue Shield:** It is a non-governmental, non-profit, international organization committed to the protection of heritages around the world.
- The Blue Shield Network is often referred to as the cultural equivalent of the Red Cross.
- **Tasks:** Blue Shield is a worldwide network of dedicated individuals committed to protecting the world's cultural heritage from threats such as armed conflict and natural disasters.
- This includes museums, monuments, archaeological sites, archives, libraries, audio-visual materials and important natural areas as well as intangible heritage.
- **Related issue:** Some states have refused to mark their cultural assets, arguing that if that property is marked as a symbol of national identity it will be more vulnerable to enemy attacks.
- Unfortunately this has been proven during the war in the former Yugoslavia where cultural assets marked Blue Shield were deliberately targeted.

UNESCO:



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations that seeks to establish peace through international cooperation in the fields of education, science and culture.
- It was established in the year 1945 and is headquartered in Paris, France.
- It has 193 member countries and 11 associate members. India joined UNESCO in the year 1946.
- In the year 2019, the United States and Israel formally left UNESCO.

Swadeep Kumar