

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

**Dr. Harsh Vardhan hails the NMC Act 2019 as historic, path-breaking and a
game-changer**

**“It is a milestone in the medical education sector; a huge and
transformational reform by the NDA Govt”**

New Delhi, 8th August, 2019

“The National Medical Commission Act 2019 passed by both Houses of Parliament is historic and path-breaking. It is a huge and visionary reform in the medical education sector by the NDA Government under the leadership of our visionary Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji, and will prove to be a milestone in the years to come”. This was stated here today by Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare while addressing media persons on the NMC Act 2019. The Union Health Minister further said that “I am extremely grateful to the Hon’ble Prime Minister under whose strong leadership the National Medical Commission Act has finally seen the light of the day”.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated that the NMC Act is a progressive legislation which will reduce the burden on students, ensure probity in medical education, bring down costs of medical education, simplify procedures, help to enhance the number of medical seats in India, ensure quality education, and provide wider access to people to quality healthcare. “It is a game changing reform of transformational nature. I am sure that under the NMC, medical education in the country will attain its zenith in the years to come”.

Elaborating further, Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that “Work on this Bill had commenced almost five years ago when an expert group headed by Professor Ranjit Roy Choudhury was set up to study the problems being faced in the medical education sector. This expert group found that the Medical Council of India (MCI) had failed in almost all spheres and had become a highly corrupt and ineffective body. It recommended that independent regulators selected through a transparent process should replace the elected regulators. The National Medical Commission (NMC) seeks

to achieve this, by having eminent medical personalities who will be appointed for only one term of four years. They will not be eligible for any further extension. To ensure probity and integrity of the highest order, they will have to declare their assets at the time of being appointed and again while demitting office”.

Overarching body

NMC will be an overarching body, which will frame policies and co-ordinate the activities of four Autonomous Boards. These Boards will look after the work of UG and PG education, Assessment and Rating; and Ethics and Medical Registration. “The purpose of having these four independent Boards is to ensure separation of functions between them”, the Union Health Minister explained.

Student friendly

The National Medical Commission Act is a student friendly initiative, the Health Minister stated. He added that one of the mandates of NMC is to look at the cost of medical education. It also provides for a common entrance examination for MBBS along with common counseling for all medical institutions in the country. This provision will prevent seat blocking in parallel counseling processes and will eliminate the need for students to approach multiple colleges and take part in multiple counseling processes for admission. This will save students and their families from unnecessary physical and financial trauma.

NEXT

Elaborating on its salient features, Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that “Even in the current system, every student has to appear for a final year examination. Under the NMC Act, this final year examination has been converted into a nationwide exit test called NEXT. This single examination will grant i) a license to practice medicine, ii) an MBBS degree, and iii) entrance to postgraduate courses. Students will be able to concentrate on internship instead of spending all their time preparing for NEET PG and thus the burden on students will be greatly reduced. The same examination will also serve as licentiate exam for foreign graduates”.

There is a provision for common counseling for entrance to PG courses also. Students will be able to get admission to seats in all medical colleges and to Institutes of National Importance like AIIMS, PGI Chandigarh and JIPMER through a single counseling process. The Act does not impose any restriction on the number of attempts at NEXT examination.

Fees Regulation

“A singularly outstanding feature of the NMC Act is that it provides for regulation of fees *and all other charges* in 50% seats in private colleges as well as Deemed to be Universities. This is a welcome step in the direction of regulation of the cost of medical education”, stated Dr Harsh Vardhan. He added that there was no provision to regulate fees in the Indian Medical Council Act 1956. As a result, States had to resort to signing of MOUs with medical colleges at the time of granting Essentiality Certificate and thereby gain a handle to regulate fees of state quota seats. In view of the lack of a regulatory mechanism, the Hon’ble Supreme Court had to pass orders for setting up of fees committees in each state to be chaired by retired High Court judges. This committee decided only the fees and not the other charges levied by private colleges. Deemed to be Universities refused to submit before this committee and remained virtually unregulated, the Health Minister noted.

Dr Harsh Vardhan said that “The need to regulate fees varies from state to state depending on the number of private colleges already available. In the spirit of a vibrant and healthy federal polity, instead of the Centre abrogating the power to regulate fees for 100% of the seats available in the private sector, under this progressive Act, States have the power to take a view regarding the extent to which fee regulation needs to take place. They would now have the freedom to sign MOUs with medical colleges on the basis of mutual understanding as before. In addition, since the NMC Act has a provision for fees regulation, they will have the authority to come up with state amendments regarding regulation of fees for the remaining 50% seats”.

Community Health Providers

Elaborating on the provisions on Community Health Providers and debunking apprehensions being raised by critics of the NMC Act, Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that: “We are looking at universal health coverage and more importantly, universal screening of our population for non-communicable diseases in the years to come. This requires a large number of health professionals. Doctors are a scarce resource in our country and need to be optimally utilized. They are indispensable for secondary and tertiary care; the only area where other health professionals can supplement them is preventive and primary healthcare”.

The Union Health Minister explained that as part of a pragmatic and forward looking measure in the NMC Act, in remote areas where doctors are not available, there will now be a health professional who can counsel the population, provide early warnings, treat elementary ailments, and provide early referral to a higher facility. The utility of such mid-level health providers has been confirmed by the WHO after studying their impact on healthcare in developed and developing countries. Even developed countries like USA, Canada and UK have mid-level providers like nurse practitioners, he added.

“Our rural population deserves the best healthcare facilities. We have a system of community health centres and primary health centres in rural areas based on population norms. This system is continuing and efforts are being made to fill up vacancies at such centres. Flexibility has been provided under NHM to pay higher salaries to doctors and some states are even following a policy of “you quote, we pay” to attract doctors. Facilities at rural health centres are being improved continuously under NHM”.

Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that “In the above background, a provision has been made in the NMC Act to register some Community Health Providers (CHPs) who shall be modern medicine professionals; they shall not be dealing with any alternative system of medicine. Also, they will have limited powers for providing primary and preventive healthcare at the mid-level”. He further stated that the eminent doctors in NMC shall decide their qualifications through regulations which shall be finalized after extensive public consultation and debate.

Dispelling rumors, fears and apprehensions about this provision giving a fillip to quackery in the country, he stated that: “A false impression is being created that the provision for CHPs has been made to legalize quacks. Nothing can be farther from the truth. On the contrary, the punishment for quackery has been enhanced to up to one year imprisonment and up to Rs 5 lakhs fine. Most of the so-called quacks in the country do not possess any qualifications and would not be able to meet the conditions that will be set by NMC for becoming a CHP”, Dr Harsh Vardhan explained.

NMC members

Elaborating further on some of the concerns voiced regarding the NMC Act, Dr Harsh Vardhan stated that “There are some apprehensions about NMC being dominated by central government nominees. This is not true. There will be 10 Vice Chancellors of State Health

Universities and 9 elected members of State Medical Councils in the NMC. Thus 19 out of 33 members, which is more than half of the total strength, would be from the States and only a minority of members will be appointed by the central government thereby ensuring that the NMC is representative, inclusive and respecting the federal structure of Indian polity”.

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