Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill

Why in news?

Medical professionals and parents of medical aspirants in the state have raised concerns over the Indian Medical Council (Amendment) Bill, introduced by the Union health ministry earlier this week.

Why concerns arise?

- The draft makes provision for an exit test (National Exit Test or NEXT) for MBBS graduates to qualify for medical practice.
- The draft states that NEXT will replace the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for post-graduation courses.
- This provision, while aimed at providing a level-playing field to both government and private college students, has been opposed by doctors and parents alike.
- In their feedback, the parents have contested the validity of the NEXT and the 50 per cent reservation in post-graduation seats for candidates in government services.
- In India we already have a continuous evaluation process for medical students all through the five and a half years of their MBBS programme. Taking a NEXT exam at the end makes the university exams and assessments redundant.
- Further people allege that such a tedious process will discourage meritorious students to take up medical courses.
- While many parents and doctors agreed that NEXT would help maintain uniform standards in medical education, the 50 per cent reservation clause has not been well-accepted.
- Some parents said that the reservation went against the current merit-based system of admission.
- Some doctors have also suggested that the Bill should allow students to take NEXT multiple times as it was a qualifier for admission to post-graduate courses.

Will this draft discourage the students?

- With the current 50 per cent constitutional reservations at the undergraduate and post-graduate entry level, an additional 50 per cent

reservation for government medical officers will leave less than 25 per cent chance for open category students. This restriction will compel MBBS graduates to look for post-graduation courses abroad.

- With a five and a half year course for MBBS, a compulsory government service of at least a year and an ME programme, it will take a doctor at least 13 years to complete their education. This will discourage students from taking up medical education.
- The parents and doctors have asked the ministry to reconsider these clauses before passing the Act.

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