Restrictions on New Medical Colleges

Why in news?

Recently National Medical Commission (NMC) unveiled new guidelines that cap the number of MBBS seats in existing government and private medical colleges.

What does the recent NMC notification say?

- **Annual intake**- From this academic year (2023-24), new medical colleges will only receive permission for annual intakes of 50, 100 or 150 students.
- **Ratio**- These colleges must adhere to the ratio of *100 MBBS seats for every 10 lakh population* in the respective State or Union Territory.
- **Centre's approval-** The guidelines restrict the States as no medical or dental college can be established or their capacity increased without prior approval of the Centre.

Southern states has already exceeded the limit set by the NMC. Tamil Nadu has 11,600 seats for a projected population of 7.64 crore as of 2021, which is 4,000 more than the 7,600 seats the State should have according to the new NMC guidelines.

What are the issues with the new notification?

- **Shortage of doctors**- The NMC move increases complexities in the country that faces a paucity of doctors.
  - World Health Organization recommends a doctor-patient ratio of *1:1000*
  - **India-** There is 1 government doctor for every 10,189 people.
- **Vague-** If the reason for guideline is concern over quality of education due to mushrooming of colleges, the right course would be to inspect these colleges more frequently and disqualify those that are lacking in standards.
- **Federal tension**- It curbs the rights of States to provide healthcare and education and creates tension between the more developed southern States against the Northern States.

Public health is a State Subject under 7th Schedule.

- **Penalising South**- The Southern States feel that they are being penalised for offering better education and health facilities.
- **Interstate movement**- Restricting the number of medical graduates makes little sense when inter-State movement of medical professionals is common.
- **Violates fundamental right-** Recently the Supreme Court held that the executive

instructions could not impose reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to establish educational institutions under *Article 19(1)(g)* of the Constitution.

- **Regional disparity-** There is adequate availability of doctors at the state level in Tamilnadu, but there are districts where their availability continues to be a persistent issue.
- This can be effectively addressed only by starting new medical colleges in backward areas and any restriction based on state level criteria will deprive these deserving districts of much needed tertiary institutions.

What lies ahead?

- If the reason for guideline is concern over quality of education due to mushrooming of colleges, the right course would be to inspect these colleges more frequently and disqualify those that are lacking in standards.
- The NMC as a regulator of medical institutions must focus on its mandate of checking malpractices in the funding and running of medical colleges and hospitals.

National Medical Commission (NMC)
• It has been constituted by an act of Parliament known as *National Medical Commission Act, 2019* • **Aim**- To improve access to quality and affordable medical education. • **Functions** • To ensure availability of adequate and high quality medical professionals in all parts of the country. • To promote equitable and universal healthcare services • To encourage medical professionals to adopt latest medical research in their work and to contribute to research • To objectively assess medical institutions periodically in a transparent manner • To maintain a medical register for India • To enforce high ethical standards in all aspects of medical services • To have an effective grievance redressal mechanism • **Autonomous Boards**- • UG Medical Education Board • PG Medical Education Board • Medical Assessment and Rating Board • Ethics and Medical Registration Board

References

1. Business Line- Baseless curbs on Southern states
2. Deccan Herald | Southern states can’t open new medical colleges

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