Should NEET be banned?

Description

Theme:

- The plight of Indian students in Ukraine amid the Russia-Ukraine war highlighted the issue of the NEET exam again. Several people are demanding a ban on the NEET-UG exam.
- Since the NEET exam was made compulsory in 2017, Tamil Nadu is opposing it and the TN assembly passed the "NEET exemption bill". On 15th March 2022, Tamil Nadu governor R N Ravi said that he will send the bill for presidential assent. If the bill gets presidential assent, the majority of undergraduate medical seats in Tamil Nadu colleges will be exempted from NEET and the admissions will take place based on class 12 marks instead.

What is the NEET exam:

- 'National Eligibility cum Entrance Test' (NEET) is being conducted across India since 2013 for students seeking admission for both undergraduate (NEET-UG) and postgraduate medical education (NEET-PG).
- The NEET exam was made mandatory in 2017.
- In February 2018, it was made compulsory to pass NEET to get an eligibility certificate to study MBBS in a foreign country.

Yes – NEET should be banned:

- A high score in the NEET exam is required to get admission to government medical colleges in India. It costs approximately Rs.1.25 crores to study in private medical colleges in India. So, many students are forced to go to other countries such as China, Ukraine, Russia, the Philippines etc. to pursue medical education. In those countries, medical education costs around Rs.35 lakhs. Moreover, they allow students with low NEET scores, but above cut-off marks.
- Students work hard to score well in class 12 exams, but all that hard work is not recognised. And only the NEET score is considered for entry into medical college, which is

very unfair. Moreover, the NEET exam is mainly based on the CBSE curriculum. So, state board students have to study additional things to get a good score in the exam.

- As the exam requires additional study, coaching centres are taking advantage of the situation and are charging lakhs of rupees for the coaching for the NEET exam. So, due to this, students who cannot afford the coaching are at a disadvantage.

No – NEET should not be banned:

- NEET exam standardizes the entrance criterion for medical education across the country.
- As a high score is required to get into government medical colleges, the exam ensures meritocracy.

Steps that were taken by the Indian government:

- In March 2022, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has decided that the fees of 50 per cent seats in the private medical colleges and deemed universities should be equal to the fee of government medical colleges. So, this means approximately 65,000 seats are affordable.

What more need to be done:

- The root cause of the issue is a very low number of medical seats in India, despite having high demand. As of December 2021, there are 88120 MBBS seats (government + private) – 27498 Bachelors of dental surgery seats in India. In 2021, the number of applicants for the exam are around 15 to 16 lakhs. So, many students are forced to go to other countries to pursue medical education. Moreover, World Health Organization recommends having 1 doctor for a population of 1000 individuals. To achieve that also, India needs to increase the number of medical seats.
- When NEET was imposed, 90% of private colleges increased fees by at least 400% within a day. And hence, 80% of Indians cannot afford MBBS seats in private colleges. Even though half of the seats in private colleges will be charged at par with government colleges now, the fees of the remaining seats too should be regulated by the government to make medical education affordable.
- As per Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, students who studied MBBS in a foreign country should pass Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE) in order to register and practise in India. But every year, less than 20% of the students are passing the exam. By this, it is evident that the quality of medical education in other countries where Indian students are studying is not at par with the medical education in India. So, it is very important to take steps to provide affordable and high-quality medical education in India.

Conclusion:

The requirement of a high score in the NEET exam and the high cost of medical education in private colleges are forcing many students to pursue medical education in foreign countries. So, the government should take steps to provide affordable medical education in India.

Your Turn…

Do you think NEET should be banned? Express your point of view through the comment section below. And subscribe to our blog to read answers to the trending GD topics.

References:

- Why do Indians go abroad for medical studies?
- Bitter pill (cover story) in the Hindu newspaper dated 13th March 2022
- mbbs: 80% of Indians can't afford MBBS seat in private colleges

Photo by Andy Barbour from Pexels