

## **543 seats under Directorate of Medical Education lying vacant in state of Kerala**

KOTTAYAM: It doesn't seem to matter to the state health department that the Medical Council of India (MCI) has de-recognised 53 PG medical courses in medical colleges in Kerala impacting the future of over 600 students. Nor does it seem to have caused any discomfiture that questions are being raised about the inadequate care and treatment that patients can expect these days. Because, one-fourth of the total sanctioned posts under Directorate of Medical Education (DME) in the state are lying vacant. As per the data received through the Right to Information (RTI), 543 out of 2,210 sanctioned posts under DME have not been filled. This is the reality a month after Pinarayi Vijayan-led government's maiden Cabinet meeting, held on May 25, directed all the departments to report vacancies within 10 days. The Kerala Medical Postgraduates Association (KMPGA) has urged the government to rectify the issues related with the recruitment of teachers.

"The government should take urgent steps to report the vacancies to PSC," said Dr Antony Stanley, KMPGA secretary. Joint DME, K Sreekumari told Express that the Health and Family Welfare Department has already reported the vacancies to the government and vacancies would be filled soon. "It is learnt that the Health Secretary has spoken to the Health minister and met PSC chairman as part of expediting the process," she said. But according to Dr C P Vijayan, president of the Kerala Government Medical College Teachers' Association (KGMCTA), the situation is highly alarming.

"Apart from the workload of existing doctors, the lack of adequate teachers would gravely affect the quality of medical education. It will eventually affect the training and, hence, the competency of medical students when teaching is compromised. When patient care became satisfactory after the implementation of residency system, government turned a blind eye towards the teaching sector," Vijayan said.

The DME's reply included the vacancies in nine government medical colleges (GMCs), except GMC, Ernakulam.

Interestingly, this is while nearly 53 PG medical education departments in GMCs in the state lost recognition from MCI, owing to lack of adequate faculty members, including professors, associate professors and assistant professors. As per the RTI data, a major chunk of the vacancies belongs to entry cadre. Of the 543 vacancies, 470 vacancies are of assistant professors and lecturers. Besides, posts of 42 professors (out of 271 sanctioned), 31 associate professors (out of 341) and seven

principal posts (out of nine) are lying vacant. As per an RTI data in 2012, (both RTI replies are in possession of Express) the vacancies under DME had been 322 of which seven were professors and other vacant posts are - associate professor (56) and assistant professors/senior lecturers (259). Express had reported in April, 2014 and May, 2016 that faculty crunch was a main reason for losing MCI recognition for various PG courses in GMCs. However, the increase in vacancies has shown that the government had taken little effort to address the issue.

“The culpable negligence of the authorities concerned has put patient care and recognition of medical courses in GMCs in a fix. A reason behind the spurt in the vacancy of professors is that the Departmental Promotion Committee did not conduct timely promotions,” said Dr P S Jinesh, a medical activist.