

MBBS in PHILIPPINES

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- **Indian Embassy in Philippines issues advisory to students**
- **Agents not paying fees to varsities**

Hyderabad: Planning to enrol in MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery) in Philippines? Then you have to probably rethink.

Philippines: New destination

Philippines seems to be the new Russia and China for medical education these days. There was a time when hordes of Indians used to flock Russia and China to study medicine, however, in recent years, due to the backlash from the medical fraternity in India on the quality of education provided in these countries, there is a steep decline now.

Modus Operandi

Of late, several agents in the city are luring students, aspiring to become doctors, to pursue Bachelor of Science (BS) and Doctor of Medicine (MD) in Philippines, as securing a medical seat in Philippines is easier than in India. The agents promise them affordable and quality education there. However, the agents mint money as they keep the aspirants in the dark about BS, MD, National Medical Admission Test (NMAT), curriculum, duration and the examination system followed in Philippines.

To secure an MD seat in Filipino varsities, it is mandatory for an aspirant to complete his/her bachelor degree and clear NMAT which is conducted by the Commission of Higher Education (CHED), Philippines.

“Just as we have EAMCET here; in Philippines NMAT is compulsory to get admitted to the MD course after completing bachelors. However, some universities to increase the flow of Indian students have put in place a special provision to decrease the qualifying marks to 40 per cent in the test. The exam should be cleared in three attempts. If we are not able to clear the test during the course, our sir (agent) told us that he would talk to university officials and see that NMAT is cleared,” said a student who is studying in a deemed university in Philippines.

We however, learn that to enter a good university students have to score an NMAT score between 80 to 90 per cent.

An agent from the city who runs a consultancy, says, "NMAT can be easily managed by the Indian agents present there, if students fail to pass the test, the agents 'help' them clear the exam."

But students have to put their best efforts to clear the test; otherwise they will perish due to misguidance of agents.

Easy on pocket

As studying medicine in India is pretty expensive, students are shifting base to foreign countries for cheap and quality education. However, many end up acquiring a degree which is not valid in India, thanks to the smooth-talking agents. They again have to appear for the Medical Council of India (MCI) screening test and several students fail in this test.

According to sources, last year some agents sent about 2,000 Telugu students to Philippines and they charged Rs 30 lakh as fees for medical education.

Advisory

With increasing malpractices by the agents in India, a few universities like Davao and University of Perpetual are under the scanner of the Commission of Higher Education Department (CHED), Philippines. The Indian Embassy in Philippines also issued an advisory to the students who are seeking admissions in the country.

The advisory states that the students should take admission only in a medical college that is approved by the CHED.

The advisory strongly recommends students not to take admission in any institution which is not in the list given by the embassy. It also advises students to remit their admission and tuition fee, hostel and boarding dues directly to the bank account of the university and not to the agents.

Several agents take money and promise them that they will deposit the cash in the varsity's account but many agents fail to do so. And, students face the heat in their colleges. Then it is a tedious task for parents who are forced to run around the agents till their money is deposited in the account.

A parent who pleaded anonymity said that he was not aware of the foul play by the agents. "We live in Nizamabad district, as we are not familiar with the process of depositing money, we approach agents to deposit the amount into the university's account," he lamented.

Sources reveal that a consultancy in Somajiguda, Hyderabad that is exclusively working on facilitating admissions to MBBS courses in Philippines with two different names in Philippines and Hyderabad, and a Bengaluru-based education consultancy which is working for Central America, Philippines, China, etc., are sending 1000s of students every year and they are under the scanner for their dubious acts.

The embassy also advised students to check the curriculum and standards of the education institution whether it meets the requirements of Medical Council of India (MCI) before taking admission in Philippines, so that students secure registration after completion of their studies.

Sources said that when students tried to check with the universities as per Indian Embassy advisory, some universities did not give proper response about the requirements of MCI. Lack of clarity here is a major issue.

Some students said that they were not aware of the fact that they would be issued a tourist visa instead of a student visa. "When a student goes, he/she should be given student visa, but the irony is that we were given tourist visas which were again converted into student visas by taking huge amounts of money," said a student on the condition of anonymity.

No cap on admissions

According to sources, there is no cap on the admissions for a few universities. "While in a deemed university, there are some 300 seats for MD course, for bachelors course, one university is appointing nearly 10 agents by offering them a 30 per cent commission. So agents are sending more than the prescribed number of students and the university officials make the students ineligible for the course by failing them in a subject during the bachelor's programme," said an agent.

Encore

Earlier, the same kind of controversy and confusion happened in Chinese Medical Education, but the Chinese Education Ministry with the interference of MCI made interim provisions and gave clarity in duration, limitation of seats and curriculum. This academic year, China allotted only 3,580 seats for foreigners. It is doubtful as to when the Philippines Education Ministry will give the same clarity as most of the colleges in Philippines are private and are manipulated by agents. We can hope that MCI will interfere soon in this regard in the larger public interest and the case is same with Central America.

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