

DOCS' ALLIANCE ALLEGES MASSIVE GRAFT IN MCI

REMOVAL OF ENTIRE LEADERSHIP SOUGHT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, 4 May

In an unprecedented move, a group of doctors today launched a national coalition to press for removal of the entire leadership of the Medical Council of India, alleging massive corruption and even demanded scrapping of the Indian Medical Council Act.

The move comes close on the heels of a Parliamentary panel report calling for re-vamping the MCI and the Supreme Court appointing a three-member Oversight Committee headed by ex-CJI R M Lodha to oversee functioning of the body, which regulates medical practice in the country, with regard to an entrance test.

The launch of the coalition preceded release of a book, 'Dissenting Diagnosis', which contains first person accounts of doctors about how patients are exploited in hospitals and laboratories in India authored by Dr Arun Gadre and Dr Abhay Shukla. The book was also launched on the occasion.

The alliance was announced by Dr Abhay Shukla of Jan Swasthya Abhiyan (People's Health Movement) at a press conference here which was also attended by representatives of a number of doctors' bodies including Indian Doctors for Ethical Practice (IDEP) and SATHI. They alleged "massive corruption" in MCI.

The doctors termed as "worrying" the "silence" of the Health Ministry on the findings of the House panel. The coalition may draft a model Act if the government does not take any step in this regard, Shukla said.

Adopting a resolution demanding scrapping of the Indian Medical Council Act, the doctors said its provisions were leni-

ent and that it should be replaced with a new law to check corruption in medical education and promote ethics in the medical profession.

Commenting on the collusion between MCI and private medical colleges, Dr GS Grewal of Punjab Medical Council alleged it was common knowledge that some of the MCI members prefer "gold instead of cash" and overlook the concept of "ghost faculty".

"The formation of the alliance is unprecedented. We have reached a stage where corruption in MCI and the medical world at large is bound to lead towards some major upheaval. The current MCI leadership looks like the proverbial three monkeys. It should immediately resign on moral grounds," Shukla said.

He said they had approached Health Minister JP Nadda to be a part of the National Consultation on Reform and Restructure of MCI. "We will again approach him and also the Prime Minister with these demands."

Dr Jasodhara Dasgupta of Medico Friend Circle, another partner of the alliance, said the time was ripe for the government to take strong action against MCI which she said has failed to equip doctors to handle even primary health care issues.

Dr Samiran Nundy, a senior surgeon, suggested that Britain's General Medical Council could be a good model to follow in restructuring MCI and that the body should have nominated members from the civil society.

"Right now the regulatory system is being hijacked. They have absolutely no regard for medical ethics. That is why the reform should involve multiple stakeholders as any such initiative requires wider civil society participation," Shukla said.