India approves new dental schools

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HONGKONG/LEIPZIG, Germany/ NEW DELHI, India: The Minister of Health and Family Welfare in India, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, has approved 150 educational institutions, including a significant number of medical and dental colleges. He also directed the Ministry’s and Dental Councils to take up pending recommendations of colleges as soon as possible so that semesters could begin by 1 August, the newspaper Times of India reports.

In India, each institute offering medical or dental education needs annual clearance from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare based on recommendations by the two councils.

Officials have justified the large number of approvals by the many applications that had been pending approval for several years and numerous public complaints of undue delay in the processing of cases. However, the approvals came at a time when there is growing concern for the future employment of dental graduates. According to a Times of India report, many dental graduates in India are forced to quit dentistry and work in other, more lucrative jobs.

Education regulators have also been said to turn a blind eye to quality in their haste to recognize private professional institutions. Azad made clear that no intermediaries would be tolerated in his ministry for clearing any medical institute application. He asked for complaint boxes to be placed at his office and residents to receive complaints against any person seeking illegal endorsement, either in medical councils or in the Ministry.

“What is needed in India is a national workforce strategy that is carefully devised and implemented,” Prof. Raman Bedi, former Chief Dental Officer in the UK and founder of the new Indian dental community Dentalgar, told Dental Tribune Asia Pacific. “With higher demands for quality dentistry by local people, dental tourism, postgraduate training opportunities etc., many dentists will stay in India instead of going abroad.”

Dental education in India has grown in recent years and India now ranks first in the world in having the highest number of dental schools. The country has 290 dental institutions, which produce between 15,000 and 20,000 Bachelor of Dental Surgery graduates every year.

Fair commits cooperation in education

Malaysia’s Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Datuk S.K. Devamany has addressed the need for further cooperation in the field of higher education between his country and the Republic of India. Speaking at this year’s India Education Fair in Kuala Lumpur in June, he invited Indian colleges from different fields, including dentistry, to establish branch campuses in Malaysia. He also encouraged students from India to consider the educational opportunities that his country has to offer instead of travelling to Europe or the US.

The 2009 India Education Fair held in conjunction with the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers showcased 25 colleges and schools from India. The Fair aims for better cooperation between educational institutions in both countries.

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Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad (third from left) during the celebration of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June in New Delhi. (DTE Photo: Vinay Bhatkan)

Oral health of Aussie kids declines

The latest report on children in Australia, released by the country’s Institute of Health and Welfare, indicates a slight increase in tooth decay. The Institute said that the increase is related to dietary patterns and recent changes in school dental programmes.

Mobile health care for Taiwan

More people in Taiwan will soon be able to receive government health care, following the Department of Health’s acquisition of 11 additional dental chairs and 6 vehicles equipped with medical equipment such as X-ray units to serve remote areas.