Indian Medical Association organises a Nationwide Satyagraha against the proposed NMC Bill across 500 cities

Other demands include exemption of doctors from the Consumer Protection Act, reformation of the PCPNDT Act, enactment of a Central Act to protect doctors from the increasing incidences of violence and capping medical negligence compensation

New Delhi, November 16, 2016: The Indian Medical Association, the only representative, national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine organised a pan India protest today to voice and demand prompt action on key issues impacting the medical community at large. The “IMA Stop NMC Satyagraha” was held in over 500 cities simultaneously between 11:00 am - 1:00 pm on the occasion of International Tolerance Day. Over 2000 IMA leaders participated in the Satyagraha organised at Jantar Mantar in the capital city and 1-lakh doctors in the various protests nationwide.

IMA has been demanding key reforms towards the betterment of the medical profession since over a year. The Satyagraha that was originally supposed to be held in November 2015 was postponed on the assurance of Hon’ble Health Minister of India, Shri J P Nadda that IMA’s demands will be addressed within 6 weeks by an Inter-Ministerial Committee consisting of Joint Secretaries from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ministry of Law & Justice, Ministry of Consumer Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs. While the government accepted some demands initially, key issues remain unresolved. The Inter-Ministerial Committee is also only recommendatory in nature making them incapable of any action.

IMA asks for the government to consider the demands that it has put forward on behalf of 2.7 lakh doctors and action them within a six weeks period.

Speaking at the dharna Padma Shri Awardee Dr KK Aggarwal – National President Elect Indian Medical Association said, "IMA has been demanding swift action against serious issues affecting the transparent and efficient functioning of the medical profession since the past one year, yet key issues remain unsolved. The proposed NMC bill is undemocratic and must be done away with. The medical profession is open to amendments in the existing MCI Act to make it more robust and
effective. The PCPNDT Act is unjust and the inclusion of doctors under the purview of the Consumer Protection Act unfair. The medical profession is a noble one and protecting doctors from the increasing incidence of violence is the responsibility of all including the government who must enact stricter provisions towards this. Together we stand unified as a medical profession and hope that our demands are heard”.

“The medical profession fails to understand why the government cannot implement genuine demands of the medical profession promptly”, said Dr SS Agarwal, National President IMA. Dr A. Marthanda Pillai, Past President IMA said, “IMA is committed to helping the Government in achieving sustainable developmental goals and has contributed successfully to most programmes and schemes. It is now time to consider our demands in the interest of the medical profession.”

Post the protest, key IMA leaders including Dr SS Agarwal, Dr KK Aggarwal & Dr A Marthanda Pillai handed over a memorandum addressed to the Indian Prime Minister to the Minister for Health and Family Welfare.

Dr. Vinay Aggarwal - Past National President IMA, Dr R N Tandon - Honorary Secretary General (Elect) IMA, Dr. D R Rai - Past Honorary Secretary General IMA, Dr R V Asokan - Chairman, Hospital Board of India, Dr. Rakesh Gupta - President, DMA & Dr. Ashwini Goyal – Honorary Secretary DMA were some leaders who addressed the Satyagraha in Delhi.

Given below are the demands put forward by IMA:

- IMA is against the recently proposed National Medical Commission Bill that demands the dissolution of the Medical Council of India, a move that is undemocratic in nature. It will cripple the functioning of the medical profession by making it completely answerable to the bureaucracy and non-medical administrators. IMA believes that instead, the government must consider introducing amendments to the existing MCI Act to make it transparent, accountable, robust and self-sufficient.
- Incidences of violence against doctors and medical establishments are on the rise. 18 States in the country already have enacted acts & ordinances protecting doctors and their establishments against violence. IMA fails to understand why the Central Government cannot bring a Central Act regarding the same. We have so far been only assured that they will write to the other state Governments also to enact similar laws!
- IMA members provide professional consultation for a nominal fee. General practitioners still provide consultation for less than Rs.200/- Rs.300/-. IMA demands that individual doctor clinics be taken out of the purview of the Clinical Establishment Act. While the Government has accepted most of the points suggested by IMA concerning the Clinical Establishment Act, IMA urges them to consider this as well.
- IMA is against the enforcement of any penal action on doctors for clerical mistakes, a primary example being that of the PCPNDT Act. IMA instead wants graded action against the erring Doctors/establishments.
• IMA wants the medical profession to be taken out of the purview of the Consumer Protection Act and till that happens, the compensation should not be decided on the income of the patient but the total fee charged. Awarding compensation that runs in crores is unacceptable and instils unnecessary fear in the minds of doctors. The method of compensation followed at present is unjust and differentiates between the poor and the rich. For the same amount of consultation charged, a poor man gets less whereas the rich get more! IMA is not against the compensation method used in clinical trials by the Government.

• IMA agrees with the views of the Central Government that Non-MBBS & Non-BDS doctors cannot prescribe Scheduled H, H1 & X-Drugs but the same also needs to be enacted and followed by the State Governments through appropriate amendments. The NMC Act if introduced will nullify this clause as it has a provision allowing the registration of non-MBBS doctors to the medical profession.

• IMA demands that the Inter-Ministerial Committee appointed to look into IMA’s demands should not be recommendatory in nature and should be given powers to implement their suggestions. Or else their suggestions should be resolved the Government of India within a period of six weeks from the date of submission.

• IMA fails to understand why it takes years to pass amendments given that the Government has powers to bring Ordinances or Special Acts. IMA wants IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS and the time bound implementation of their demands.

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About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 29 States and Union Territories. It has over 2, 53,000 doctors as its members through more than 1650 active local branches spread across the country.

For further information please contact:
Rakhi S M - 9871109555
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
hsgima@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell