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Deccan Herald

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# Govt approves 75 new medical colleges

NEW DELHI, DHNS

With India having a serious shortfall of doctors, the Union Cabinet Wednesday approved the setting up of 75 new government medical colleges, which will create an additional 10,000 MBBS seats.

The new colleges would be attached to 200-300 bedded hospitals. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs sanctioned Rs 24,375 crore up to 2021-22 to set up the colleges.

The establishment of new medical colleges, attached to existing district or referral hospitals, would lead to an increase in the availability of health professionals, improve tertiary care in government sector, utilize existing infrastructure of districts hospitals and promote affordable medical education in the country, the government said in a press note.

However, both the government press note and Union Minister Prakash Javadekar, who briefed the media after the cabinet meeting, are silent on the issue of faculty shortage, which the government plans to address such challenges.

The shortage of the teaching faculty in medical colleges is a big problem in medical education in India. It's a problem even for the batch of six new AIIMS colleges, which are still not fully functional after nearly two decades.

The government, however, sanctioned several more colleges that are under various stages of approval and con-



Union Minister Prakash Javadekar (Right) along with Railways Minister Piyush Goyal addresses a press conference in New Delhi, on Wednesday. PTI

struction. The government had earlier approved to establish 58 new medical colleges attached with existing district or referral hospitals. Of this, 39 medical colleges, have already started functioning, while the remaining 19 would be made functional by 2020-21. Under Phase-II, 24 new medical colleges have been approved.

In a recent study on human resources in healthcare in India, researchers from Public Health Foundation of India showed that India has 4.5 allopathic doctors for every 10,000 people while the World Health Organisation's recommendation is to have a 10:10,000 ratio.

Interestingly, the same study published in the journal BMJ Open also showed that more than 50% of all doctors in India were produced by government medical colleges, and more than 80% of them are employed in private institutions or work as private practitioners.

## 26% FDI in digital media

The government on Wednesday approved a proposal to allow 26% foreign direct investment (FDI) in digital media platforms.

The Union Cabinet at its meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the proposal. "We will allow 26% FDI with government approval in digital media which delivers news and current affairs," Union Minister Piyush Goyal told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Untill so far, the government policy on FDI had remained silent on the fast-growing digital media.

The existing policy provided for allowing 26% FDI in print media through government approval route and 49% FDI in electronic media.