

ALL INDIA PEOPLE'S SCIENCE NETWORK (AIPSN)

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AIPSN Central Secretariat,
E – 8/46, Akashganga colony
Arera Colony, Bhopal - 462039
Madhya Pradesh

E-mail: gsaipsn@gmail.com
Ph: 9425302012
Twitter: @gsaipsn
website: https://aipsn.net

President: Dr. Satyajit Rath General Secretary: Asha Mishra Treasurer: S. R. Azad

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AIPSN Statement on NEET

NEET-2024 (National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-2024) has been under severe attack from all quarters, from public, educational to political. This year it was greatly exposed by its rigging, leaking and corruption and the future of 24 lakh students who appeared for NEET is at stake. Over the years since its inception, it was opposed by Tamil Nadu Government as it was against the state's autonomy, social justice, educational quality and healthcare system.

NEET was introduced in 2010 by the then Medical Council of India (MCI). NEET replaced AIPMT (All India Pre Medical Test) and other state-level examinations. NEET was initially proposed to take place from 2012 onwards. Following the announcement from the Medical Council of India that it would introduce the NEET-UG exam in 2012, several states including Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, strongly opposed the change, stating that there was a huge variation in the syllabus proposed by the MCI and their state syllabi. The CBSE and MCI deferred NEET by a year.

The test was announced by the Government of India and was held for the first time on 5 May 2013 across India for students seeking admission for both undergraduate and postgraduate medicine. On 18 July 2013, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of 115 petitions and cancelled the NEET exam as illegal and unconstitutional and announced that the MCI could not interfere with the admission process done by colleges.

However, it was restored on 11 April 2016, on the basis of argument by Sankalp Educational trust that students had been writing more than 90 exams for different medical colleges spending lakhs of rupees for entrance test alone and hence need a common entrance exam. The five-judge Constitution bench recalled the earlier verdict and allowed the Central

Government and the Medical Council of India (MCI) to implement the common entrance test until the court decides afresh on its validity.

The reasons for conducting the NEET placed before all: 1) Admissions should be transparent; 2) Admissions should be based on merit; 3) There should be no mandatory donations; 4) Students should not have to take multiple entrance exams for the same course.

But what actually happened over the years was this:

1. Lakhs and lakhs of rupees have been spent by the aspirants to get coaching to appear before NEET. This is not possible for the poor and underprivileged who got admission earlier by their school marks. Nearly 20 students committed suicide in Tamil Nadu alone, though they got good marks at school level but not good percentile for admission through NEET.
2. Though admission was said to be merit based, students with a '0' percentile were allowed get admission to private medical colleges to fill vacant seats. This was because the economically weaker students who got eligible percentile marks for private colleges could not get admission because of high fees, though there were said to be no capitation fees.
3. It is pity that many students end up writing the NEET exam many times.
4. From the beginning, it was alleged that the NEET exam had no transparency and there were malpractices. The 2024-NEET showed that there was a question paper leak (supposed to be benefited by 40000 students), rigging and corruption to the tune of 30-40 lakhs per student who attempted malpractices.

AIPSN views the following as our concerns:

1. Since the NEET is the tool and gate way for entering medical education, students start preparing from 6th std onwards, omitting the regular school subjects and are not worried about +2 marks. It is found that even failed students in +2 get more NEET marks due to several year coaching for NEET which is not at all worthy for pursuing medical examination. It is pity since the Dr.Radhakrishnan committee recommends 12 years of study as a must for any higher education. This is now taken as "take it for granted".
2. NEET exams are conducted on a different syllabus, which indirectly compels students to go to coaching, where they have to pay a hefty sum which is many, many times higher than the application fee for so-called independent entrance examinations as fees.

Students who do not undergo coaching for NEET will suffer in exams. Thus, there is no level playing field in centralized exams like NEET.

3. NEET was earlier conducted by CBSE and now it is conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA) as per National Education Policy-2020. NTA is not an academic or professional body to conduct entrance exams for Higher education. NTA behaves like an employment recruitment agency.
4. Because of the nature of NTA, many foretold that it would lead to a scam and it happened in 2024 on a bigger scale and the Supreme Court has taken cognizance of it.
5. The Union Government of India and the Supreme Court stated that NEET was brought for transparent merit-based admissions and without mandatory donations to Private Medical Colleges and Universities. But both seem like mirages now.
6. Private Medical Institutions have raised their fees and other amenity fees which are not affordable to the poor and even to the middle class who are therefore not joining. This has resulted in '0' percentile admission and the very fact of merit-based admission is being defeated.
7. Conducting centralized entrance exams is impractical in a multicultural society, imposing uniform rules in the conduction of exams (removal of ornaments including mangal sutra, hizab, safety pins used for safety dressing etc.). This is a terrifying act psychologically upsetting the students
8. AIPSN objects to intervening and preventing state autonomy in admission to higher education.
9. AIPSN requests the Supreme Court to study carefully all the reasons justifying NEET and as to how these reasons have been defeated over the years.
10. The verdict in the Modern Dental College case favors federalism and opposes the *suo moto* implementation of NEET in all states. It was delivered by five member bench of the Supreme Court. But, Justice Anil Dave with only a three-member bench delivered a judgment against the five members' judgment. This action by the Supreme Court judges needs to be revisited.

11. The 92nd report of the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare for Parliamentary Affairs suggested a commendable recommendation. However, this was ignored by the Parliament and the Modi government. The recommendation stated: "NEET is essential. It should be implemented. If there is any difficulty in implementation, the states which are not interested may be exempted. Later, if some states become interested, they may join. States that have joined and later decide not to continue may withdraw from NEET." At the very least, this recommendation should have been considered.
12. In a democratic - federal system, such a centralised examination system managed by a non-academic agency can hardly function efficiently.
13. NEET is a complete failure. NEET is building a coaching industry. NEET discriminates against good students interested in medicine who want to serve the people of their states. NEET is devaluing school boards. NEET does not promote quality in education, either school education or medical education.

AIPSN rejects all kinds of centralized entrance examinations for any kind of state higher education admissions including NEET, CUET, etc. Centralized examinations can be held for central educational institutions. It is noted that:

- NEET is against federalism.
- NEET is against social justice.
- NEET contradicts the fundamental requirements of our constitution.

In order to fulfill the needs of the medical aspirants, the demands of society and to give more opportunities for admission to rural students, the Union Government must enable public medical colleges and medical college hospitals for every district of each State.

Contact:
AIPSN General Secretary Ms. Asha Mishra
9425302012 gsaipns@gmail.com

Prof. P. Rajamanickam, AIPSN Higher Education Desk Convnenor
968025569