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## Compulsory Rural Service for Doctors

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The **Supreme Court** has suggested the Union Government and the **Medical Council of India** to have a uniform policy regarding the compulsory service to be rendered by the doctors who are trained in government institutions.

- The **Association of Medical Super Speciality Aspirants and Residents and others** had challenged the state government's regulations that imposed a condition of **compulsory service** for a minimum fixed period with the state.
  - Doctors complained that such a condition violated the **right of an individual to** carry on his profession, amounted to '**forced labour**' in violation of their constitutional right and would impede the progress of their careers.
- **However, the Supreme Court ruled** that doctors across the country are bound by the **compulsory bonds** executed by them at the time of their admission in post-graduate and super-speciality medical courses.
  - The SC noted that the huge infrastructure has to be developed and maintained for running medical colleges with post-graduate and super-speciality courses, the amount of fees charged from students is meagre in comparison to private medical colleges.
  - Moreover, reasonable stipend is also paid to these doctors.
  - It affirmed policies of states of Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal.

- **Compulsory Bonds:** It binds doctors with conditions to serve in their respective states for a certain fixed period, in rural areas. The doctors' original mark-sheets, certificates and other documents are also usually retained by the state authorities after the completion of speciality courses.
  - **Compulsory service** is in the **larger public interest** and beneficial for **deprived sections of society**, the top court ruled in favour of the policy of various state governments to have compulsory bonds to be executed by the doctors before their admissions to PG and super speciality courses.
  - In the urban areas, there are 176 doctors for every 100,000 people. In the rural area, the figure is an abysmal less than eight doctors for every 100,000 people scattered over large areas. And every year around 31,000 doctors graduate from 269 private and government medical colleges in India.

## Need of Compulsory Bonds

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- There is a need to provide healthcare to people and due to the scarcity of super specialists in their states, it is not arbitrary to utilise the services of doctors who were beneficiaries of government assistance.
- The state governments have introduced compulsory service bonds to **protect the fundamental right of the deprived sections** of society guaranteed to them under **Article 21 of the Constitution of India**.

## Violation of Fundamental Right

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The appellants contended that their rights guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India have been violated.

The SC rejected this argument on the grounds that, while balancing communitarian dignity vis-à-vis the dignity of private individuals, the scales must tilt in favour of communitarian dignity.

**Source: Tol**