

agrees to meet medicos

Arjun Singh says he cannot discuss the reservations until after the elections



Students shout slogans on the second day of their protests in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Hours after students of four medical colleges went on an indefinite strike to protest an increase in reservations in higher education institutions, Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Arjun Singh agreed to meet them.

Singh said in a statement, "I was pained by the news that a number of students of the medical colleges wanted to meet me and were not allowed to; and that some of them received injuries in the process. My house is open to anybody who desires to come and meet me."

Over 400 medical students clashed with the police on Wednesday after they were denied a meeting with Singh at his Akbar Road residence.

He added, "Unfortunately, because of the directions of the Election Commission I am not in a position to interact with them and I have to maintain silence till the elections are over."

On April 5, Singh declared that the government planned to reserve 27 per cent of seats in 20 central universities, the Indian Institutes of Management, the Indian Institutes of Technology and other central government funded institutions for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Reacting to this, medical students went on an indefinite strike, and resident doctors followed suit with a token protest.

Said Shweta Sardana of Lady Harding Medical College, "We are aware that the HRD minister has agreed to meet us and 10 students will go to meet him." The medical students and resident doctors intend to collect at the India Gate and discuss the issues they want to raise before the minister.

Though the strike was only limited to the Out Patients Department (OPD), medical services were partially affected. "All other services are functioning normally and the aim is not to disrupt medical services for patients but to fight for our rights," said Anirudh Lochan of UCMS.

"The doctors at MAMC are on token strike for a day against the policy," said Manish Verma, principal of MADC. "The hospitals have made arrangements to meet the shortfall of doctors at the OPD, and we don't expect any problems for the patients," said Verma.

Meanwhile, city police deployed personnel in huge numbers outside Singh's residence and at the India Gate where the medical students were carrying on their protest.