

Federation of Faculty of Medicine Teachers' Associations of Sri Lanka

30.04.2024

President-FMTA
Faculty of Medicine
University of Colombo

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Faculty of Medical Sciences
University of Sri
Jaywardenepura

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University of Kelaniya

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University of Wayamba

President-FMTA
Faculty of Medicine
University of Moratuwa

Hon. (Dr.) Susil Premajayantha
Minister of Education
Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Dear Sir,

Serious Threat to Free Education and Medical Education in Sri Lanka due to Arbitrary and Ill-advised Recruitment of Civilian Sri Lankan Students to the Kotelawala Defense University (KDU) MBBS Program.

We, the Federation of Faculty of Medicine Teachers Associations (FFMTA) wish to express our concerns in the strongest terms regarding the Serious Threat to Free Education and Medical Education in Sri Lanka due to arbitrary and ill-advised recruitment of civilian Sri Lankan students to the MBBS degree program at the KDU, on a fee levying basis and disregarding the merit order of the GCE Advanced Levels, which is the National entry examination.

Our concerns are as follows:

1. Violation of the legal framework and the Last Will of Sir John Kothalawela: The General Sir John Kotelawala Defense Academy was established in 1981 in keeping with the wishes of the late Sir John Kotelawala, to establish a higher education academy for Cadet Officers in line with the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, UK and the National Defense College - New Delhi, India. Paragraph four of the Sir John Kotelawala Defense Academy Act, No. 68 of 1981 states:

“AND WHEREAS it was the wish and desire of the said late General Sir John Lionel Kotelawala CH, KBE, LLD that the said land and premises and movable properties shall be used for the purpose of establishing a National Defense University to impart higher education and training at university level to persons who intend to serve the nation and in the Armed Forces of Sri Lanka.”

Admission of fee levying civilian students is a clear violation of this last will. Further, according to the KDU act, there is no legal provision to recruit fee levying civil students to the Faculty of Medicine.

2. Violation of Minimum Standards of Medical Education: As per the document titled 'Standards for Accrediting a Medical School' published by the Accreditation Unit of the SLMC, section A: General Information, sub-section A,1 clearly states the following, “Entry criteria for medical students are transparent and match the minimum standards defined by the SLMC

in all instances. The minimum entry criteria to a medical school should be one of the following.

- a. Sri Lankan GCE Advance Level (AL): Subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics - 2C's and 1S pass
- b. London AL (i.e., Cambridge, Pearson Edexcel AL): Subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics - 2B's and 1C pass."

However, the advertisement for recruitment published by KDU in April 2024 which describes the "Entry qualifications – Day Scholar Local" the minimum entry criteria of those who follow the Cambridge/Edexcel Bio-science stream have been altered to "two C passes and one D pass". The application process also states that "The Board of Management of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University reserves the exclusive right to select the candidates" indicating an arbitrary pathway for a privileged few.

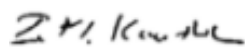
This is a grave violation of the accreditation standards clearly set forth by the SLMC and an affront to the quality provision of medical education in the country.

Further, according to Minimum Standards of Medical Education in Sri Lanka, "Every university whose medical degree has been recognized by the Medical Council shall inform the Medical Council of any substantial change in its approved medical educational programme, student intake numbers or resources, for review by the Medical Council and determination as to whether the university and/or its medical degree remains in compliance with the prescribed standards."

3. Establishment of a system parallel to the current higher education process governed by the Universities Act of 1978 and militarization of the medical education process: This parallel system will lead to serious injustice to students coming through the free education system of the country.
4. Manipulation and misuse of higher education opportunities leading to widening inequities: Even with the present intake numbers, KDU training facilities are unable to meet the training needs of the MBBS Programme. The clinical training of KDU undergraduates has been impinging on the facilities available to students recruited to other universities under the Ministry of Education (MOE) and continues without any benefit to the centres or the trainers available to medical students. This indicates that the facilities for undergraduate teaching at KDU are inadequate, which is a serious issue since the MBBS degree awarded by Sri Lankan state universities is recognized by the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME).
5. Unjust and unethical allocation of public resources, endangering the state medical education system: According to the Universities Act, the allocation of resources to State Universities is through the University Grants Commission. As noted by the National Audit Office, the KDU hospital was built utilizing a multi-billion-rupee loan from a State Bank (with the interest paid by the Treasury), during a period when Faculties of Medicine in State Universities under the MOE are facing severe challenges due to lack of resources.

Therefore, we request you to take all the measures to prevent this ill-advised move to recruit fee levying students for the MBBS programme at KDU, exceeding its mandate and endangering free education and medical education system of the country.

Signed;



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Dr. Ashwini de Abrew, Secretary, FMTA,
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Dr. Shashanka Rajapakse, Secretary, FMTA,
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Sri Lanka



Prof. K. T. Sundaresan, Secretary, FUTA,
Faculty of Health Care Sciences, Eastern
University of Sri Lanka

CC.

1. Hon. Dr. Ramesh Pathirana, Minister of Health, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
2. Ms. Thilaka Jayasundara, Secretary, Ministry of Education
3. Dr. Palitha Maheepala, Secretary, Ministry of Health
4. Sr. Prof. Sampath Amaratunge, Chairman, University Grants Commission
5. Prof. Vajira H. W. Dissanayake, President, Sri Lanka Medical Council

6. Dr. H. D. B. Herath, Registrar, Sri Lanka Medical Council
7. Dr. Ananda Wijewickrama, President, Sri Lanka Medical Association
8. Dr. Saman Yasawardena, President, Association of Medical Specialists
9. Dr. Darshana Sirisena, President, Government Medical Officers Association
10. Prof. Barana Jayawardana, President, Federation of University Teachers Associations
11. Prof. Ricardo León-Bórquez, President, World Federation of Medical Education
12. Prof. Eric Holmboe, CEO, Education Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, USA
13. Dr. William Pinsky, President, Education Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, USA
14. Dr. Otmar Kloiber, Secretary General, World Medical Association
15. Rear Admiral H. G. U. Dammika Kumara, Vice Chancellor, Kothalawela Defence University
16. Prof. Aindralal Balasuriya, Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Kothalawela Defence University
17. Mr. Rashmika Chamod, Convenor, Medical Students Action Committee
18. Mr. Madushan Chandrajith, Convenor, Inter University Student Federation
19. All media