

# NO SC, ST, OBC QUOTA FOR NRIS APPEARING FOR NEET

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When he applied again this year, he was about to choose “NRI” before being told that this would not allow him to opt for the OBC quota. “NRI should not be an option under the nationality category at all. Non-Resident Indians still hold Indian citizenship and nationality and are only counted as NRIs for tax purposes,” said his father.

When Rohit took his case to the Kerala High Court earlier this month, he won an interim order on August 13 that directed the Health Ministry and the National Testing Agency (NTA) which conducts the NEET to change his application “in such a fashion that he is able to claim admission to MBBS course against the quota marked for OBC-NCL [non-creamy layer] in the event of selection”.

However, NTA has so far failed to make the needed changes, said Mr. Karthikeyan, noting that the exam would be held on September 12.

## NTA affidavit

In its affidavit to the court, the NTA held that including OBC category for NRI candidates was “not sustainable”. “NRI is already a separate reserved category for the MBBS course. The petitioner cannot be given the benefit of sub-reservation,” it stated.

Mr. Karthikeyan noted that constitutionally, vertical reservation was allowed only for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs and the Economically Weaker Sections, while horizontal reservation was allowed for Persons with Disability in all categories, including general merit. NRI seats were only a provision made for students with NRI sponsors, and was not to be considered as a reservation, he said.

A senior official from the National Medical Commission agreed that the application portal could be changed to allow NRI students to opt for community-based reservation, but insisted they could not then be eligible for NRI quota seats as well.

“We have operated on the principle that one candidate cannot apply for multiple quotas. Otherwise, tomorrow we should not see SC students also applying under EWS,” said another senior Health Ministry official.

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