

News in Brief

Back from Britain

After losing a 7 month old legal challenge against the British Government, thousands of Indian doctors in Britain may be forced to leave the country. The reason is a new immigration rule which will come into force from July this year. According to this rule, all non-European doctors and dentists will need a special work permit even while training in UK's National Health Services Hospitals. The employer will have to prove that no suitable European candidate was available before giving such a work permit to a non-European. The trigger for this change is said to be the British Medical Association's claim that 30% of British medical graduates are unemployed as well as the availability of many doctors from various European Union countries now becoming eligible to work in the UK. Up to now doctors from India, since they were qualified professionals were allowed to come on a permit free training visas. The new rule was challenged by the British Association of Physicians of India Origin (BAPIO). But while Judge Burton of the London High Court said there should have been a race impact assessment before the new rule, the new rule stands for now. (The Times of India, 17 February 2007)

The child and the cell phone

About 70% of Europeans aged 12-13 own a mobile phone and for 8-9 year olds the level is 23%, according to European Union data from 2005. In Germany the number is much higher at 92% for 12-19 year olds. The numbers are staggering. Adults and pediatricians need to wake up and predict long term consequences and pre-empt possible harm before it is too late. In Brussels, in early February, leading European mobile operators pledged to draw up a voluntary code over the next year aimed at protecting children from adult material and illegal content. The Disney phone launched last year in the US, with Mickey mouse and Tigger branding gives parents broad powers to specify when calls can be made, which sites can be accessed and how high the bills can go. US based technology group Genmobi have developed customized programs called Buzz Kidz and Buzz Teenz which allows only access to authorized sites and chat services. It also has a built in bad language detector which informs parents when expletives are used. So, while technology exists to be able to govern, censure and guide, the challenges that our children will face seem to be multiplying with the speed of the internet. (The Economic Times, 15 February 2007)

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