

A new government-sponsored scheme aims to certify yoga teachers across the world

Sandhya Soman,TNN | Jun 23, 2015, 04:42 AM IST

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MUMBAI: After successfully appealing for an International Day for Yoga from the United Nations, the government has launched a voluntary certification scheme for yoga teachers to keep an eye on the booming business of wellness. Launched a day after the eye-ball grabbing yoga day celebrations, the 'Scheme for Voluntary Certification of Yoga Professionals' is "mentored" by the ministry of Ayush and owned by Quality Council of India (QCI), an autonomous body that provides accreditation standards for various sectors.

The aim is to discourage fly-by-night operators who set up schools to cash in on the popularity of yoga, which has been on an upswing recently. As reported by TOI earlier, the government roped in the National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), a part of QCI, to come up with a framework that will verify credentials of yoga teachers using international best practices. "There are three levels --

teacher, master and guru. Currently only level 1 teacher certification is being launched. Others will follow," said Anil Jauhri, CEO, NABCB.

Initially, QCI will certify individual teachers as there are no certification bodies in India now. They can log on to yogacertification.qci.org.in to download application forms. Officials hope that soon there will be interest in the process, which is based on ISO:17024 international standards, so that personal certification bodies from across the world would seek to be accredited by NABC. They will in turn certify individual teachers adhering to the same competence standards. "The important thing is that people around the world are practicing yoga and if you do it in a different way, it can harm you as well. Here, experts are getting together and saying what is the right way of doing yoga," said R P Singh, secretary general, QCI.

Singh said there are different protocols to certify each level. "The certification is not based on any one curriculum. Nor does it insist that only those who have 200 or 600 hours of training will be certified," said Jauhri. Instead, examiners will test applicants on their knowledge of Patanjali's yoga sutras, Bhagavad Gita and Hatha yoga theory. They will also be expected to know how yoga affects anatomy, physiology, psychology and diet. Apart from classroom abilities, applicants will also have to demonstrate their knowledge and skill in performing yogic sukshma vyayama and shat kriya, suryanamaskar and yogasana, and pranayama and meditation.

The Ayush ministry has long considered coming up with a certification process for professionals in India and abroad. "In order to take leadership in yoga, which is an Indian product, they approached us to devise a system that will be accepted across the world," said Singh. As QCI is member of international accreditation forums, whatever schemes it launches are accepted in countries that follow same protocols, he said. QCI team worked with a steering committee headed by Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and later, with another committee headed by HR Nagendra, vice-Chancellor of Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana and prime minister Narendra Modi's yoga teacher.