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GoM Reviews Amendments to the JJ Act, 2015

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Why in News

Recently, a **Group of Ministers (GoM)** chaired by the Home Minister met to discuss **proposed amendments** to the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act, 2015**.

The GoM meeting was convened **to create greater synergy** between ministries on the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- **Improvement Over the Act of 2000:**

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 **replaced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000** to comprehensively address children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.

- **Change in Nomenclature:**

- The Act changes the nomenclature from **'juvenile'** to **'child'** or **'child in conflict with law'**. Also, it **removes the negative connotation** associated with the word "juvenile".
- It also includes several **new and clear definitions** such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children

- **Special Provisions for Age 16-18 years:**

Included special provisions to tackle child offenders committing heinous offences in the **age group of 16-18 years**.

- **Mandatory Constitution of the JJ Board:**

It **mandates** setting up **Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees** in **every district**. Both **must have at least one woman** member each.

- **Adoption Related Clauses:**
 - A separate new chapter on Adoption to streamline adoption procedures for an orphan, abandoned and surrendered children,
 - Also, the **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** was granted the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
 - The Act states that the adoption of a child is final on the issuance of an adoption order **by the court**. Currently, there are **629 adoption cases pending** in various courts.
- **Inclusion of New Offences:**

The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are **not adequately covered under any other law**.
- **Child Care Institutions (CCI):**

All Child Care Institutions, whether run by State Government or by voluntary or non-governmental organisations are to be **mandatorily registered** under the Act **within 6 months** from the date of commencement of the Act.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018

- The Bill provides that instead of the court, **the district magistrate will issue adoption orders** to address the high pendency of adoption cases.
- The Bill also seeks **to transfer all pending matters related to adoption before any court to the district magistrate having jurisdiction over the area**.
- The proposed amendments intend to **expedite proceedings**.

Group of Ministers

- Groups of Ministers (GoMs) have been constituted from time to time to look into different issues/subjects.
- These are **ad hoc bodies** formed to **give recommendations** to the cabinet on certain emergent issues and critical problem areas.
- Ministers heading the concerned ministries are inducted into the relevant GoMs and when the advice is crystallised they are disbanded.
- Some of these GoMs have been also **empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Cabinet** known as **Empowered Groups of Ministers (EGoMs)**.
- But with time the constitution of a large number of GoMs has resulted in many GoMs not being able to meet regularly to complete their work thus leading to significant delays on many major issues. Thus, all the Groups of Ministers (GoMs) and Empowered Groups of Ministers (EGoMs) were **abolished in 2014**.
- Further in **2015, 16 informal** Groups of Ministers (GoMs) were formed to discuss key issues of the country.

Source: TH