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Revoke Order Weakening PCPNDT Act: AIDWA

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Why in News

The **All India Democratic Women's Association** (AIDWA) has asked the government to withdraw an order that could weaken the implementation of the law banning pre-natal sex determination.

Key Points

- AIDWA referred to the **gazette notification** issued by the Health Ministry on 4th April 2020, which **suspended Rule 8, Rule 9(8) and Rule 18A(6)** of the **Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994**.
- The **suspended clauses deal with:**
 - Process for renewal of registration of genetic and ultrasound clinics.
 - Responsibilities of labs and clinics in maintaining and preserving records of all tests, techniques and procedures and sending a report to the concerned appropriate authority.
 - Duties of district authorities in sharing a quarterly progress report.
- After seeing the resistance, the Health Ministry **clarified** that the move **only allowed an extension of the deadline for submitting the progress reports** until 30th June 2020.
- The AIDWA has **rejected** the government's explanation and has asked the government to **revoke the notification**.
 - It has highlighted that the **suspension** of these rules throughout the country would **mean that clinics and genetic labs can carry on functioning without any scrutiny**.
 - This is the **only scrutiny that these labs are subjected to**, to assess their adherence to the basic rules and **to ensure that sex selection is not being carried** out by them.

- It has suggested that the government can issue an administrative order to delay the submission of the reports under Rule 9(8) and 18A(6) till 30th June while **making it clear that the relevant records must be maintained as mandated** by the PCPNDT Act.

However, the application for re-registration should not be allowed to be postponed since this can be done online.

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act

- It was **enacted in 1994** and **amended in 2003**.
- It is an **important tool for addressing sex selective eliminations**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To ban the use of sex selection techniques before or after conception.
 - To prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnostic technique (PDNT) for sex selective abortion.
- **Offences under the act include:**
 - Conducting or helping in the conduct of prenatal diagnostic technique in the unregistered units.
 - Sex selection on a man or woman.
 - Conducting PNDT for any purpose other than the one mentioned in the act.
 - Sale, distribution, supply, renting etc. of any ultrasound machine or any other equipment capable of detecting sex of the foetus.

All India Democratic Women's Association

- It is an **independent left oriented women's organisation** committed to achieving **democracy, equality and women's emancipation**.
- It was **founded in 1981** as a national level mass organisation of women.
- Its **members are from all strata in society**, regardless of class, caste and community. About **two-thirds of the organization's strength** is derived from **poor rural and urban women**.
- It **upholds secular values and challenges and resists cultural practices demeaning to women** and believes that the emancipation of women in India requires fundamental systemic change.

Source: TH