

Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

June 22, 2020

Recently the Union Cabinet approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020. The Bill **seeks to amend the Medical Terminal of Pregnancy Act, 1971** which provides for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners

Key features of the bill

- **Increase in the number of weeks for termination of pregnancy:** Under the Act of 1971, a pregnancy may be terminated within 20 weeks if: (i) the continuation of the pregnancy may risk the life of the mother, or cause grave injury to her health, or (ii) there is a substantial risk that the child if born, would be seriously handicapped due to physical or mental abnormalities. **The amendments propose to enhance the upper limit from 20 weeks to 24 weeks for special categories of women.** These would include
 1. survivors of rape
 2. Victims of incest, and other vulnerable women (such as differently-abled women and minors).
- **Constitution of a Medical Board:** The bill states that every state government is required to constitute a Medical Board. These Medical Boards will consist of the following members:
 1. A gynaecologist
 2. A paediatrician
 3. A radiologist or sonologist, and
 4. Any other number of members, as may be notified by

the state government.

- But the **central government will notify the powers and functions of these Medical Boards.**
- **Application:** However, this limit of 24 weeks for termination of pregnancy will not apply in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities diagnosed by the Medical Board.
- According to the Act, a pregnancy can be terminated within 12 weeks, with a recommendation from a registered medical practitioner. For terminating a pregnancy between 12 to 20 weeks, two medical practitioners are required to give their opinion.
- **The proposed amendments recommend the requirement of the opinion of:**
 1. One registered medical practitioner for termination of pregnancy up to 20 weeks, and
 2. Two registered medical practitioners for termination of pregnancy between 20 to 24 weeks.
- The amendments also propose that the name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated will not be revealed, except to a person authorized by the law.