

Cabinet approves The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

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The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. The Bill will be introduced in the ensuing session of the Parliament.

Salient features of proposed amendments:

- Proposing requirement for opinion of one provider for termination of pregnancy, up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion of two providers for termination of pregnancy of 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- Enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women which will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules and would include 'vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc.
- Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by Medical Board. The composition, functions and other details of Medical Board to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act.
- Name and other particulars of a woman whose pregnancy has been terminated shall not be revealed except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 is for expanding access of women to safe and legal abortion services on therapeutic, eugenic, humanitarian or social grounds. The proposed amendments include substitution of certain sub-sections, insertion of certain new clauses under some sections in the existing Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, with a view to increase upper gestation limit for termination of pregnancy under certain conditions and to strengthen access to comprehensive abortion care, under strict conditions, without compromising service and quality of safe abortion.

It is a step towards safety and well-being of the women and many women will be benefitted by this. Recently several petitions were received by the Courts seeking permission for aborting pregnancies at a gestational age beyond the present permissible limit on grounds of foetal abnormalities or pregnancies due to sexual violence faced by women. The proposed increase in

gestational age will ensure dignity, autonomy, confidentiality and justice for women who need to terminate pregnancy.

In order to increase access of women to safe abortion services and taking into account the advances in medical technology, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare proposed amendments after extensive consultation with various stake holders and several ministries.