

Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020

Why in News?

The Cabinet cleared the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Regulation Bill, 2020 that aims to regulate assisted reproductive technology services.

Why such a Bill is needed?

- India is among countries that have seen highest growth in the number of ART centres and ART cycles performed every year.
- Among Asian countries, India's ART market is pegged at third position.
- ART, including In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF), has given hope to persons suffering from infertility to achieve pregnancy, leading to safe delivery.
- But it has also brought in a plethora of legal, ethical and social issues.
- However, there is no standardisation of protocols yet in the country and reporting is still very inadequate.
- The need to regulate ART services is mainly to protect the affected women and children from exploitation.

What are the provisions of the Bill?

- **National Board** - This will be constituted to lay down a code of conduct to be observed by persons working at clinics.
- It will set minimum standards of physical infrastructure, laboratory and diagnostic equipment and expert manpower to be employed by clinics and banks.
- States and Union Territories shall constitute State Boards and State Authorities after the notification of the Central government.
- **National Registry and Registration Authority** will be formed to maintain a central database through which details of all clinics and banks will be obtained on a regular basis
- It will also assist the National Board in its functioning.
- **Punishment** - The Bill proposes stringent punishment for sex selection, sale of human gametes, and agencies behind such unlawful practices.
- In the first instance, the person will be fined Rs 10 lakh and in second instance, the person shall be imprisoned for up to 12 years.
- **Confidentiality** - The Bill will also ensure confidentiality of intending couples and protect the rights of the child.

What are the concerns?

- The ART Bill came after the Surrogacy Bill that it should have preceded.
- A market projection said the size of the ART market is expected to reach \$45 billion by 2026.
- A lack of regulation and the consequent laxity in operations was the concern which drove a lot of traffic from other nations to India.
- This, in turn, along with the relatively low costs, led to the mushrooming of unethical ART clinics across the country.

What is next?

- The ART Bill 2020 does impinge on surrogacy too.
- So, the government must work on ensuring synchrony in both the ART Bill and the Surrogacy Bill.
- Having come this far to ensure the reproductive rights of women, the state now has the thriving ART industry on a leash.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

