

Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Bill

Why in news?

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The private health sector in Karnataka is protesting against the state government proposed KPME (Amendment) Bill 2017.

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What is the bill about?

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- The Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act was passed in 2007.

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- The legislation aimed at being a legal control over private medical establishments (PMEs) in the state.

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- The Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2017 intends to bring the PMEs under the purview of the government.

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- The proposed amendments are based on the recommendations of former Supreme Court judge Vikramajit Sen.

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- Passing the bill would facilitate the rolling out of the State government's Universal Health Coverage (UHC) scheme called 'Arogya Bhagya'.

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What are the proposed amendments?

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- Primarily, the Bill makes the registration of PMEs mandatory and lays down guidelines to ensure their quality.

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- The main amendments include increasing the fine for running a non-

registered private medical establishment.

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- Similarly, the fine and term of imprisonment for non-adherence to the rules regarding maintenance of clinical records and payments has been increased.
- The amendments make it mandatory to provide life saving emergency measures without insisting on advance payment as in the current practice.
- And in the event of death, the body of the deceased should be released immediately without insisting on payment of dues.
- Every PME should display prominently the Patient's Charter and Private Medical Establishment's Charter.
- The amendments will pave the way for the government to fix the rates for each class of treatment, and also provide grievance redressal systems.

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What are the concerns?

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- The amendments have been met with fierce criticism from the private doctors' associations.
- The private health sector finds contentious the provisions like price capping of various procedures, imprisonment of doctors and setting up of a grievance redressal cell.
- There are demands for making the provisions applicable to the government hospitals as well.
- The protests call for enhancing the standards of health care at government hospitals before regulating private medical establishments.

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What is the way forward?

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- The amendment law for governing private medical establishments is a logical step to provide universal health coverage in the State.

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- However, there is a need to ensure parity in services offered by government and private institutions and end the neglect of public facilities especially in rural areas.

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- Beyond regulation of prices for some drugs, streamlining the processes for centralised procurement and free distribution of essential medicines to all is essential.

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- All health institutions participating in a universal access programme should be governed by common regulations and regulators to eliminate fragmentation of functions.

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- The country as a whole should try bringing in such measures to make a transition to universal health access in line with the Sustainable Development Goal.

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Source: The Hindu

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