

# Centre's guidelines to curb unnecessary hysterectomies

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**Context-** Recently a letter from the Health ministry was issued after the Supreme court's judgment that flagged the violation of women's right to health on petitions on conduct of unnecessary hysterectomies.

## **Key highlights:**

- The issue was raised after a PIL(public interest litigation) found that unnecessary hysterectomies were carried among poor,less- educated women in the rural areas.
- The procedure was high in states of Bihar, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana as well as other government schemes related to health care.

## **The issue**

- The petition highlighted that private hospitals were involved in performing such hysterectomies to claim fees via insurance.
- The PIL highlighted that women weren't told about alternatives and were told to undergo the procedure endangering their health.
- It was observed that most of the women who were subject to hysterectomies belonged to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes or Other Backward communities.

## **The new guidelines**

- As per the new guideline by the supreme court all states are requested to share the hysterectomy status and data before and after implementation of the new guidelines.
- The states are advised to undertake compulsory audits for all hysterectomies like for maternal mortality in all healthcare institutions both public and private.
- The recent judgment noted that while in developed countries hysterectomies are typically conducted among the premenopausal (transition phase before menopause,i.e the end of menstrual cycle) women above 45 years of age. In India, community based studies have found rising cases of hysterectomies rates among young women ranging from 28 to 36 years of age.
- The recent judgment said that the right to health is an intrinsic element of the right to life under Article 21 of the constitution. Life ,to be enjoyed in all its diverse elements,must be based on robust conditions of health. There has been a serious violation of fundamental rights of women who have undergone hysterectomies for unnecessary reasons.

### **About Hysterectomy**

- Hysterectomy is a surgical procedure wherein the uterus in some cases the cervix and surrounding organs and tissues such as the fallopian tube and ovaries is removed after which the woman can't get pregnant or menstruate.
- There are several reasons for conducting hysterectomy like uterine prolapse, fibroids, uterine cancer, abnormal bleeding etc.
- Complications may arise post surgery like severe infection, urinary tract infection, bowel blockage, blood clots and others.