The All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA) has asked the government to withdraw an order that could weaken the implementation of the law banning pre-natal sex determination.

Important Points

- AIDWA referred to the gazette notification issued by the Health Ministry on 4th April 2020, which suspended Rule 8, Rule 9(8) and Rule 18A(6) of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994.
- The suspended clauses deal with:
  - Process for renewal of registration of genetic and ultrasound clinics.
  - Responsibilities of labs and clinics in maintaining and preserving records of all tests, techniques and procedures and sending a report to the concerned appropriate authority.
  - Duties of district authorities in sharing a quarterly progress report.
- After seeing the resistance, the Health Ministry clarified that the move only allowed an extension of the deadline for submitting the progress reports until 30th June 2020.
- The AIDWA has rejected the government’s explanation and has asked the government to revoke the notification.
  - It has highlighted that the suspension of these rules throughout the country would mean that clinics and genetic labs can carry on functioning without any scrutiny.
  - This is the only scrutiny that these labs are subjected to, to assess their adherence to the basic rules and to ensure that sex selection is not being carried out by them.
- It has suggested that the government can issue an administrative order to delay the submission of the reports under Rule 9(8) and 18A(6) till 30th June while making it clear that the relevant records must be maintained as mandated by the PCPNDT Act.
  - However, the application for re-registration should not be allowed to be postponed since this can be done online.

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act

- It was enacted in 1994 and amended in 2003.
- It is an important tool for addressing sex selective eliminations.
- Objectives:
  - To ban the use of sex selection techniques before or after conception.
  - To prevent the misuse of prenatal diagnostic technique (PDNT) for sex selective abortion.
- Offences under the act include:
  - Conducting or helping in the conduct of prenatal diagnostic technique in the unregistered units.
  - Sex selection on a man or woman.
  - Conducting PNDT for any purpose other than the one mentioned in the act.
  - Sale, distribution, supply, renting etc. of any ultrasound machine or any other equipment capable of detecting sex of the foetus.
All India Democratic Women’s Association

- It is an independent left oriented women's organisation committed to achieving democracy, equality and women's emancipation.
- It was founded in 1981 as a national level mass organisation of women.
- Its members are from all strata in society, regardless of class, caste and community. About two-thirds of the organization’s strength is derived from poor rural and urban women.

It upholds secular values and challenges and resists cultural practices demeaning to women and believes that the emancipation of women in India requires fundamental systemic change.