Polity & Governance · GS - II

Examine the legal framework governing medical termination of pregnancy in India. How can reproductive autonomy be balanced with medical safeguards and statutory restrictions?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 04/11/2026	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act; reproductive autonomy; bodily integrity; maternal health; gestational limits; medical opinion; fetal abnormalities; judicial interpretation; access to healthcare.

Model Answer

Introduction

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 1971, amended in 2021, regulates abortion in India. It seeks to facilitate access to safe abortion services while establishing medical and legal safeguards.

Legal Framework

Under the Act, termination up to 20 weeks is permitted subject to statutory conditions and the opinion of a registered medical practitioner. Between 20 and 24 weeks, specified categories of women may access termination under prescribed conditions. Beyond 24 weeks, termination is generally permitted in cases of substantial fetal abnormalities through a Medical Board or under statutory exceptions, including circumstances involving risk to the pregnant woman's life.

Balancing Rights and Safeguards

Reproductive Autonomy: Decisions concerning pregnancy affect bodily integrity, dignity, privacy and personal liberty.

Medical Safeguards: Gestational limits, professional assessment and specialised evaluation in certain cases help ensure appropriate medical care.

Judicial Role: Courts interpret statutory provisions while considering individual circumstances, medical evidence and constitutional rights.

Way Forward

India should strengthen accessible abortion services, improve awareness of legal entitlements, ensure timely Medical Board decisions and protect confidentiality. Medical decisions must remain evidence-based, non-discriminatory and consistent with the law.

Conclusion

A rights-based approach requires balancing reproductive autonomy with legitimate medical safeguards. Clear procedures and timely healthcare access are essential to protect women's dignity, health and legal rights.

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