Open camps for Sterilisation

Why in news?

- Over 27 months after 13 women died and 65 took ill at a State-run mass sterilisation camp in Chhattisgarh.
- Following this, the State government has now discontinued all sterilisation services.

What was the recent move?

- Open camps were discontinued.
- The doctor who performed the surgeries has been terminated and representatives of the pharmaceutical company which supplied the medicines are in jail.
- These moves are taken as per the recommendations of a judicial commission headed by retired district judge Anita Jha

What is the effect of it?

- Health facilities, including district hospitals have also stopped sterilisations.
- Instead of providing quality sterilisation services in the aftermath of so many deaths, the government has responded by discontinuing the services.
- As a result of discontinuing them, women have turned to private clinics for family planning.
- It costs around Rs. 8,000- 10,000.
- Those who couldn’t afford are required to go to neighbouring Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh.
- Tribal areas have suffered the most.
- Since the discontinuation of open camps, sterilisation rates in Chhattisgarh for both men and women have dropped drastically.

What should be done?

- It has been a long-standing demand of the health movement in India that open camps be discontinued.
- However, they have to be replaced by adequate facilities at CHCs and district hospitals.
- It needs to be accompanied by awareness on male contraceptive methods such as condom use and vasectomy.
Family planning is equally a men’s issue.
But currently there is no stress or campaign on male contraception.
The government does not persuade men into sterilisation the way it does for women.
The tragedy in Chhattisgarh was a wakeup call.
It showed that there is high demand, especially among women, despite bad quality services.
Therefore government should respond by providing quality services to men and women, rather than withdrawing the existing services.

Source: The Hindu