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.