Government Ban on Oxytocin

Why in news?

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Government has recently decided to restrict the production and sale of oxytocin.

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What is Oxytocin?

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- Oxytocin is a crucial hormone used on pregnant women.
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- It is used for the induction of labour and stop postpartum bleeding.
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- It causes uterine contractions during labour, and also helps new mothers lactate.
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- It has largely been in use during delivery to reduce maternal mortality.
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- Government has banned its production other than by the public sector Karnataka Antibiotics and Pharmaceuticals Ltd (KAPL).
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- KAPL alone can supply oxytocin to registered public and private sector hospitals.
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Why is the ban?

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- **Misuse** - Besides the genuine uses, Oxytocin is largely misused.
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- It is used in injecting milch animals, such as cows, to increase milk production.
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- Vegetables and fruit, too, are injected with Oxytocin, to increase their sizes.

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- Worryingly, it is also used in illegal and unsafe abortions to induce labour.
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- Besides, social workers allege that it was injected to force premature puberty in trafficked young girls.
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- **Sale** - Illegal import of the drug from China is another concern.
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- It is subsequently sold in India in “crude plastic bottles” by unlicensed companies.
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- Even on the organised front, only one company imports the raw material.
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- This is then made into a finished drug and sold by licensed and unlicensed players.
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What are the concerns with the ban?

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- Doctors have cautioned of supply shortages of the drug due to the restriction.
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- The KAPL exemption has paved the way for a PSU monopoly, by a company that has never made this drug in the past.
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- KAPL claims to have the capacity to supply the country’s requirement.
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- But there is little transparency over the drug’s pricing in comparison to that of private producers.
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What could be done?

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- Competition is a leveller and so the government should reconsider the ban on private production.
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- Its abuse needs to be curbed, possibly by restricting its human and veterinary sale.

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- Multiple layers of documentation as with narcotic and psychotropic drugs or antibiotics could be adopted.
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- Massive surveillance and raids on illegal importers and unlicensed producers could be implemented.
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Source: The Hindu, BusinessLine

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