National Registry of Voluntary Organ Donors

Why in News?

The Punjab and Haryana High Court directed the Centre and the two respective states, and the Union Territory of Chandigarh, to implement 'The Transplant of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994' in letter and spirit.

What did the court say?

- The High Court also asked them to consider the recommendations of the Expert Committee set up to give suggestions for effective implementation of the law.
- The Committee of nine doctors from PGIMER, Chandigarh has pushed for a National Registry of Donors.
- They also recommended a biometrics-based authentication of donors and recipients.

What is the 1994 Act and how was the Expert Committee formed?

- The Act governs the transplantation of human organs and tissues in India, including the donation of organs after death.
- **2016** - Two public interest petitions were filed in the High Court, seeking effective implementation of the law.
- **May 2019** - The PGIMER was asked to constitute a committee of doctors for deliberations over the subject, and to submit a report containing measures to promote cadaver donations.
- The Committee submitted two reports to the court in May and October, 2019.

What did the Committee say about a digital database and biometric verification?

- The panel recommended the creation of a 'National Registry of Voluntary Organ Donors'.
- The panel also said that the registry may be based on a unique national ID number given by the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO).
- It said that a database of all surgeons and medical experts sanctioned for the transplantation should also be maintained.

- It recommended that the identity of the donor and the recipient be verified through a biometric system of authentication to prevent fabrication of identity or other fraud in the process.
- All hospitals engaged in transplantation procedures must invest in a biometric system linked to the national database of Aadhaar and PAN numbers, it suggested.

What are the Committee's recommendations regarding the consent process?

- The Committee has said that a donor card should be treated as a Living Directive for cadaver donations.
- It has also said that mandatory informed consent should be taken in case of live donors after explaining to them the risks involved in donation surgery.
- It has suggested that a right be given to the donor to withdraw consent any time before the surgery.
- It has suggested a wait or cooling period to allow rethinking on the part of the live donor, and has also sought a procedure for mandatory confidential psychological analysis of the donor in private before presenting them to the authorization committee.

Did the Committee recommend any reimbursement for the donor?

- The Committee has recommended that a lump sum monetary reimbursement be given to the donor towards expenses related to the transplantation.
- It suggested a payment of at least Rs 50,000 at the time of discharge.
- It has also called for a system to provide for medical insurance of the donor, and also for their post surgical needs.

What has the Committee said about government institutions and awareness process?

- The process of organ donation and consent involves religious beliefs, social taboos and certain apprehensions by the relatives.
- So, the Committee has said there needs to be the involvement of certified NGOs and religious bodies to create positive awareness.
- It has said that government hospitals and transplant centres should be given priority attention to improve the deceased organ donation.
- It also said that these measures should be taken to prevent the trend of employing visiting surgeons at private centres in violation of practice registration norms.

Source: The Indian Express

