U.S. Supreme Court's Ruling on Abortion

Why in news?

The US Supreme Court has eliminated the nationwide right to abortion that it had recognized in its landmark Roe v. Wade decision.

What is the Supreme Court ruling about?

- **Roe v. Wade (1973)-** The court struck down laws that made abortion illegal, and ruled that abortion would be allowed up to the point of foetal viability (the time after which a foetus can survive outside the womb).
- However, the court has upheld a Republican-backed Mississippi law that bans abortion after 15 weeks.
- **Mississippi ban**- In 2018, the state of Mississippi banned most abortions after 15 weeks much before foetal viability directly challenging the 1973 judgment.
- Later it was struck down on the grounds that it unequivocally violates the constitutional rights of women.

To know more about the abortion laws in the U.S., click here

What is the need for limiting the abortion?

- The U.S. abortion rate peaked in 1980, seven years after the Roe ruling, at 29.3 abortions per 1,000 women of child-bearing age.
- The number of U.S. abortions increased by 8% during the three years ending in 2020, reversing a 30-year trend of declining numbers.
- In 2020, there were 930,160 U.S. abortions, with 20.6% of pregnancies ending in abortion in 2020.
- Mississippi experienced a 40% increase in abortions performed from 2017 to 2020.
- With the US Supreme Court overturning Roe v Wade, the demand for abortion pills will likely rise.

What is medical abortion?

- In a medication abortion, a patient takes drugs to end a pregnancy rather than having a surgical procedure.
- The first drug is mifepristone, also known as RU-486, followed by a second drug called misoprostol.
- The drugs are approved for use through the 10th week of pregnancy.
- Over half of abortions in the United States are medication abortions.
- The US Food and Drug Administration allowed patients to consult with healthcare providers via telemedicine appointments and receive the pills by mail.
- That increased access to abortion for patients living in remote areas without providers nearby and women unable to take time off from work or not able to get to clinics for other reasons.

What is the impact of the Supreme Court's ruling on telemedicine abortion?

- Before the Supreme Court's ruling, 13 states had so-called "trigger laws" written to impose new abortion bans.
- It was predicted that at least 26 states, including those with trigger laws, will pass new abortion laws.
- Such state laws have so far not distinguished between surgical and medication abortion, so they are expected to ban medication abortion entirely.
- Some will ban abortions almost completely, while others outlaw abortion at six weeks or 15 weeks.
- **Ordering from other states**- The laws around telemedicine generally say that the location of the patient controls.
- Doctors who prescribed abortion pills to a patient in a state where they are illegal could lose their licenses in that state, or even face criminal charges.
- A woman who lives in a state where abortion is illegal could travel to a state where it is legal, have a telemedicine visit, and have the medication mailed to an address there.
- **Ordering from overseas**- Women in states cracking down on telemedicine abortion have increasingly turned to ordering pills online from overseas.
- While the practice is not legal, state authorities have said they have no effective way of policing orders from foreign doctors and pharmacies.

References

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