

Business Standard

SC raps states for outsourcing sterilisation camps to NGOs

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The Supreme Court today took strong exception to the outsourcing of sterilisation camps by state governments to NGOs, as questions were raised over the family planning targets set by the Centre which have to be fulfilled by the states. The matter being heard by the apex court related to such a camp in Bihar's Araria district where 53 women were operated within about two hours in January 2012.

A bench headed by Justice M B Lokur also asked Chhattisgarh government to file an affidavit specifying details as to how much compensation was paid to the victims of such a camp held in November 2014 in Bilaspur district in which over dozen women had lost their lives. "It is a question of human life. We can't live with problems throughout our lives. It needs to be cured, solutions need to be found. This compensation thing is bringing all the problems. For this compensation, there is race against time and a number of operations are being conducted," it said.

The bench, also comprising Justice U U Lalit, asked Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand to specify the Centre's stand on discontinuing granting of compensation to the patients and sought suggestions from it to check outsourcing of such camps and imposition of guidelines. Senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the petitioner, said the target for sterilisation set by the Centre was the "trigger point" and states have to fulfil them.

States in order to meet these targets outsource the camps to NGOs, he said, adding that ASHA workers who are given targets bring women to such camps. To this, the court said "sometimes the women are not even aware what they are subjected to. They (NGOs) are not doing any philanthropic work."

"All possible loopholes need to be plugged. You can't flock people like herds (to these camps). Compensation needs to be dissuaded," the bench observed. When counsel for Chhattisgarh government said action has been taken against the doctors who had conducted the operations, the bench retorted: "Forget about the prosecution and say what are the steps taken to prevent such incidents". It sought details of the steps taken by the state.

The bench also threatened to impose Rs five lakh as compensation per victim on an NGO, Jai Ambe Welfare Society which had organised the camp in Bihar in which 53 women were operated in around two hours in January 2012. "How are these NGOs selected for conducting such camps? Is there any background check? Who are the doctors who conduct such camps? Who gives permission for holding camps," the bench asked ASG.

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