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### **1. SC allows abortion of 30-week foetus: What is the law on abortions, and what does the court consider?**

#### **Why in News?**

The Supreme Court has allowed a 14-year-old victim of sexual assault to terminate her almost 30-week pregnancy. A Bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud on Monday (April 22) said it was a “very very exceptional case where we have to protect her (the girl)”.



### **SC Allows Minor Rape Survivor To Abort 30-Week Pregnancy**

A Bench noted that a report submitted by the dean of a municipal hospital in Mumbai on the case had “clearly opined that the continuation of the pregnancy against the will of the minor may impact negatively on the physical and mental well-being of a minor who is barely 14 years old”.

Is it unusual for courts to allow an abortion this late into a pregnancy? Under what circumstances is termination allowed?

#### **What is India’s law on abortion?**

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 (MTP Act) allows the termination of pregnancy under the following circumstances.

Upto 20 weeks, termination is allowed on the advice of one doctor. In case of a pregnancy of 20-24 weeks, abortion is allowed as an exception, but only under certain categories, after two registered medical practitioners have evaluated the right to seek termination.

Section 3B of the Rules under the MTP Act lists seven categories of forced pregnancies, including rape in case of minors or sexual assault; women with disabilities; or when there is a change in marital status of women during pregnancy.

After 24 weeks of pregnancy, the law requires that a medical board be set up in "approved facilities", which may "allow or deny termination of pregnancy" only if there is substantial foetal abnormality.

### **Has the court allowed termination beyond this period?**

Yes, it has, in certain cases. On February 1 this year, the Supreme Court refused to allow a 26-year-old woman to terminate her 32-week pregnancy after the Delhi High Court first allowed the abortion and then recalled its order following a plea by the Centre to consider protecting the right to life of the unborn baby.

On October 16, 2023, a three-judge Bench led by the CJI had rejected a married woman's plea to abort her third pregnancy who had pleaded that it was unplanned, and that she did not have the resources or the mental frame to support the child.

Earlier, on August 21, 2023, a Bench headed by Justice Nagarathna had held a special sitting on a Saturday (when the court is shut) to allow termination of pregnancy of a rape survivor whose pregnancy was at 27 weeks and three days.

There are also instances in which a court has overruled the decision of the medical board to allow termination. In 'Bhatou Boro v. State of Assam' (2017), Gauhati High Court overruled the medical board's refusal to give an opinion for termination of pregnancy of over 26 weeks of a minor rape survivor.

### **Is there a question of 'foetal viability' in abortion in India, and do the rights of an unborn child matter in the same way as in many jurisdictions abroad?**

Last year, the CJI-led Bench made observations saying both that the rights of a woman "must trump" when it comes to abortion, and that there was a need to "balance out the rights of the unborn child".

While courts have read the MTP Act liberally, the test of "foetal viability" as a benchmark to allow abortion is new in India. The landmark 1973 US Supreme Court verdict in 'Roe v Wade' that made abortion a constitutional right allowed abortion up to the point of foetal viability, that is, the time after which a foetus can survive outside the womb.

Foetal viability in 1973 was pegged at 28 weeks (7 months), which is now with scientific advancement lower at 23-24 weeks (6 months). It has been argued, therefore, that foetal viability is an arbitrary standard.

### **Criticism of Indian law**

The criticism of India's law is that the decision to terminate after 20 weeks is shifted to doctors and not the woman. While this aspect is not challenged in court, frequent cases of women approaching the court at the eleventh hour point to a legislative gap.

The Indian legal framework on reproductive rights tilts to the side of the woman's autonomy to decide and choose more than towards the rights of the unborn child.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian express

## 2. New shoe sizing system proposed for Indians: What is 'Bha' and the need for it?

### Why in News?

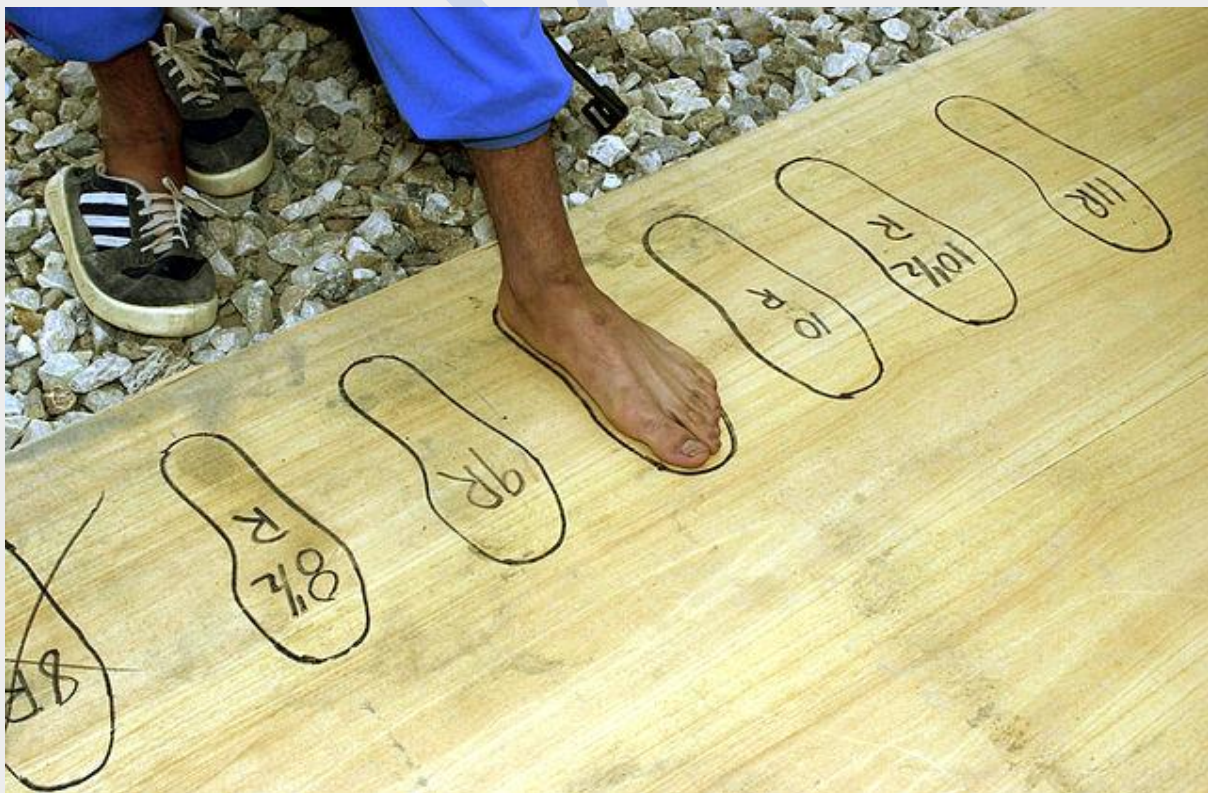
A pan-India survey on the feet sizes of Indians was recently carried out as part of a larger project for developing an Indian sizing system for footwear. Proposed to be named 'Bha' (भ) to represent Bharat, it could form the basis for manufacturing footwear in India. Upon its implementation, Bha will replace the existing UK/European and the US sizing systems.

### What did the survey find?

Initially, the hypothesis was that at least five footwear sizing systems would be required for Indians to be inclusive of various ethnicities. Prior to the survey, it was thought that people from northeast India, on average, had smaller feet sizes compared to the rest of India.

A survey was conducted between December 2021 and March 2022, covering 1,01,880 people across 79 locations in five geographical zones. 3D foot scanning machines were deployed for understanding the size, dimensions and structure of an average Indian foot.

A statistical analysis of the massive data obtained from the survey concluded that a single shoe sizing system could be applied for Indians.



### **Problems with UK/European/US sizing systems**

Overall, Indians' feet were found to be wider than that of Europeans or Americans. Due to the narrow footwear available under the UK/European/US sizing systems, Indians have been wearing footwear which are a size bigger than required.

Many Indians were found to be wearing extra-long, ill-fitted and tight footwear. In the case of high-heeled women's footwear, wearing a bigger size was both inconvenient and a cause for potential injuries.

For men, shoelaces were tightened much more than ideal to ensure the shoes were not loose fitting. This affected the normal flow of blood for the wearer.

By wearing footwear not designed according to their feet's specifications, Indians have been vulnerable to injuries, shoe bites and compromised foot health – especially among elderly women and diabetics.

### **Why was the need for an Indian shoe sizing system felt?**

The British introduced UK sizes in India before Indian independence. According to it, an average Indian woman wears footwear sizes between 4 and 6, and the average man between 5 and 11.

Since there existed no data on the feet structure, size, dimensions of Indians, developing an Indian system had been difficult and was never undertaken.

With an Indian user now owning an average of 1.5 footwears each and India being the world's most populated country, it is one of the world's biggest markets and manufacturers of shoes. Industry stakeholders also said that an estimated 50 per cent of the footwear ordered online were rejected by customers. With Bha, both the users and the footwear manufacturers could benefit.

### **What are the survey's recommendations?**

Bha proposes eight footwear sizes: I – infants (0 to 1 year), II – babies (1 to 3 years), III – small children (4 to 6 years), IV – children (7 to 11 years), V – girls (12 to 13 years), VI – boys (12 to 14 years), VII – Women (14 years and above) and VIII – Men (15 years and above).

For commercial purposes, initially manufacturing of footwears ranging in sizes III – VIII would be sufficient. Footwear manufactured as per Bha could give nearly 85 per cent of the country's population the right fitting and better comfort.

The biggest advantage of adopting Bha would be that footwear manufacturers would need to develop only eight sizes as against the present 10 sizes (English system) and seven sizes (European system). In addition, half-sizes would not be needed.

The shoe last size will have an additional 5mm foot length. The Bha system will also be wider at its girth than the footwear currently available commercially.

### **What is the current status of Bha?**

The Chennai-based Council of Scientific and Industrial Research–Central Leather Research Institute (CSIR–CLRI) conducted the survey. It submitted its recommendations to the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), which comes under the Union Ministry of Commerce. The DPIIT has forwarded them to the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which is the Indian authority to implement this sizing system, for approval.

Since Bha will completely overhaul the existing sizing systems, the departments have suggested that footwear manufactured as per Bha size standards should be given to users for trial, testing and feedback. Bha is expected to be implemented sometime in 2025.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Indian Society

Source: Indian Express

### 3. Net direct tax collections in 2023-24

#### Why in News?

India's net direct tax collections grew 17.7% in 2023-24 to hit ₹19.58 lakh crore, thanks to a surge in personal income tax whose share of the tax kitty rose to 53.3% from 50.06% in the previous year while corporate taxes' contribution dipped to 46.5% from 49.6%.

| BOOST TO ECONOMY |            |            |          |
|------------------|------------|------------|----------|
| Collection       | 2022-23    | 2021-22    | Increase |
| Direct tax       | ₹16.61L cr | ₹14.12L cr | 17.63%   |
| Gross revenue    | ₹19.68L cr | ₹16.36L cr | 20.33%   |
| Corporate tax    | ₹10L cr    | ₹8.59L cr  | 16.91%   |
| Personal IT      | ₹9.6L cr   | ₹7.73L cr  | 24.23%   |

Personal income tax (PIT) and Securities transaction tax (STT) receipts also grew at almost double the pace of corporate taxes last year.

#### Securities Transaction Tax

Securities Transaction Tax is a tax payable in India on the value of securities transacted through a recognized stock exchange. As of 2016, it is 0.1% for delivery based equity trading.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu