

Indian IVF doctors slam move to ban commercial surrogacy

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Leading Indian fertility doctors and surrogate mothers Thursday criticised a move to ban commercial surrogacy, saying it will severely limit options for childless couples and women who carry others' babies as a way out of poverty.

India's cabinet on Wednesday cleared a [bill](#) to restrict surrogacy services to Indian married couples, following concerns over the "rent-a-womb" industry exploiting impoverished young [women](#).

The bill seeks to bar foreign, single and homosexual would-be parents from surrogacy services in India and states that only women who are close relatives of a beneficiary can act as surrogates.

Gita Makwana, 33, who became a [surrogate mother](#) in 2010 after having one child of her own, said the bill would remove avenues for women like her to escape poverty.

"When I became a surrogate I got three lakh rupees (\$4,475) as compensation," Makwana from Anand in Gujarat state, a centre for India's surrogacy sector, told AFP.

"I used it to repair my house and educate my child. But with the new rules coming in, women who want to become surrogates to support their families, will not be able to do so," she said.

Dr Himanshu Bavishi, President of Indian Society for Third Party

Assisted Reproduction in Ahmedabad, said the decision was "regressive, unfortunate and careless".

"What the government has done is gone for cheap popularity, saying that it's a move to protect poor, exploited women," he told AFP.

"This (surrogacy) in fact gives millions of poor women across India a chance to make a reasonably good amount of money at any one point of time without doing anything rash."

India, with cheap technology, skilled doctors and a steady supply of local surrogates, is one of relatively few countries where women can be paid to carry another's child.

Some 2,000 infertile couples enlist the help of Indian women to carry their embryos through to birth every year, according to the government.

Dr Nayna Patel, the medical director of Akanksha Hospital and Research Institute in Anand, said that while more regulation in the field was welcome, under the bill "virtually no woman" would be able to become a surrogate.

"For an infertile couple, surrogacy is a life-changing opportunity. But the bill will snatch away these opportunities from them," said Patel, whose clinic has handled over 1,120 [surrogacy](#) cases over the past decade.

She added that a group of IVF experts and gynaecologists were studying the bill and plan to make a representation to the government before it is introduced in parliament.

However, a few experts welcomed the bill Thursday, saying that it would bring more transparency to a largely unregulated industry.

"This will put an end to unethical practices and [commercial surrogacy](#). There is nothing wrong in it," said Dr Manish Banker, an IVF specialist in Ahmedabad.

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