Communal Clouds in Kerala

Why in news?

The police took a person into custody after a purported video in which a boy could be heard raising provocative slogans during a march in Alappuzha.

What is the issue?

- The video shows a minor, sitting on the shoulder of a man and chanting hate and incendiary slogans apparently against other religions.
- The police registered a case against those who brought the child to the rally and its organisers under IPC
    - **Section 153A**- Promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc
    - **Section 295A**- Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings of any class by insulting its religion or religious beliefs
    - **Section 506**- Punishment for criminal intimidation
    - **Section 120 (o) of the Kerala Police Act**- Causing a nuisance of himself to any person by undesirable or anonymous call, letter, writing, message, e-mail or through messenger
- The rally was conducted in the Alappuzha beach as part of 'Save the Republic' campaign.
- The provocative sloganeering has drawn widespread condemnation.
- Despite this, there were numerous killings that added an unmistakable communal hue to violence in Kerala.

What does this imply?

- The Constitution respects free speech and guarantees the citizens' right to organise, but constitutional politics allows little space for spreading hate.
- A toxic cloud of communalism is enveloping the State as Hindu, Christian, Islamic groups and dishonest politicians are trying to profit from disharmony.
- The Kerala government must make it clear that any call or mobilisation for violence is unacceptable in the State.
- Along with strong administrative measures, Kerala must shore up all its inherent strengths through popular mobilisation against communalism of all hues.

What does this incident call for?

- Hate speech has to be countered with political and jurisprudential means and there is a need for political and pedagogical solution to the menace.
- The Constitution's ideas of equality, liberty and fraternity must be educated among the masses.
- Whenever hate speech thrives, the state should invoke the existing law judiciously in appropriate cases and must take a secular stand based on the rule of law.
- The Law Commission in its **267th report** on hate speech has proposed **Section 153C** which

penalises incitement to hatred with two years' imprisonment or Rs. 5,000 in fine or both.
- It has also proposed **Section 505A** to punish speech or writing that causes fear or alarm among a group, or provokes violence on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth or disability.

References

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/communal-clouds-in-kerala-the-hindu-editorial-on-hate-slogans-in-sdpi-rally/article65460774.ece
2. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/one-held-over-provocative-sloganeering-in-pfi-rally-in-allapuzha/article65456085.ece

