Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025

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Why in News?

The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill, 2025, set to be introduced in the upcoming legislative session.

> *Karnataka is the 1st state in India to introduce a Bill for targeting hate speech.*

- **Aim -** To introduce a specific legal framework to curb the spread of hatred and disharmony.
- **Hate speech definition -** The Bill defines hate speech as expressions intended to cause harm or animosity based on categories such as *religion, race, caste, sex, gender, sexual orientation, place of birth, residence, language, disability, or tribe.*
- **Hate crimes -** These are defined as acts of making, publishing, circulating or promoting such hate speech or inciting, abetting, or attempting such speech.
- **Imprisonment and Penalty -**
  - **For first-time offenders** - The Bill proposes imprisonment from 1 to 7 years and a Rs.50,000 fine and
  - **For repeat offenders** - 2 to 10 years and a Rs.1,00,000 fine.
- Offenses are ***cognizable and non-bailable*** and they will be tried by a Judicial Magistrate First Class.
- **Collective liability for organizations -** Organizations can be held liable, with responsible individuals accountable unless they demonstrate lack of knowledge or due diligence.
- **Regulation of Online Hate Content -** A designated officer can direct the blocking or removal of online content promoting hate crimes.

- Executive Magistrates and senior police officers have preventive powers if a hate crime is deemed imminent.
- **Exemptions -** Exemptions exist for genuine works in science, literature, art, heritage, or bona fide religious practices.
- The state government views the Bill as necessary to strengthen social harmony and address a gap in national laws regarding the definition of hate speech.

Reference

The Indian Express | Karnataka’s new Hate Speech Bill

