Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2025

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Polity & Governance*

Why in news?

The Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill was unanimously passed with support from lawmakers across parties.

- **Aim –** To punish caste & community-based social exclusion & discrimination carried out by informal bodies like caste or community panchayats.
- **Objective –** To uphold equality and protect backward and marginalised groups from further exclusion caused by unconstitutional practices.
- **2nd State –** With this law, ***Karnataka has become the second state,*** after Maharashtra, to enact a law criminalising social boycotts.

Key Provisions

- **Definition –** It defines a ***social boycott*** as any act or gesture, oral or written, that results in social discrimination among members of a community.
- **List of forms of exclusion –** It lists ***20 forms of exclusion***, including
  - Denial of the right to work, hire services, conduct business, or participate in social and religious life on equal terms.
  - Also, interference in marriages or funeral rites, blocking access to essential services, and acts of social ostracism on any grounds, etc.
- **Scope of Criminal Liability –** It extends criminal liability beyond those who directly impose a boycott to include individuals who encourage, enforce, or use their influence to sustain it.
- Members of any-body who votes in favour of a social boycott will also be deemed to have committed the offence.
- **Prohibition on assembling –** Assemblies convened to deliberate or plan the imposition of a boycott are declared unlawful.
- **Victim to be heard –** If the accused is found guilty, the Court must first hear the victim on the sentence before deciding it.
- **Offences to be cognizable & bailable –** Offences under this Act are cognizable & bailable, and will be tried by a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class.
- **Compounding of Offence –** An offence under this Act may be settled if the victim consents and the court grants permission.
- **Receiving Complaints –** The ***victim or a family member*** can file a complaint with the police or directly before a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class.

- **Police Powers –** The police are empowered to file complaints on their own initiative (***suo motu***).
- **Social Boycott Prohibition Officer –** The State Government may appoint, through an official notification, a Group 'A' officer as the Social Boycott Prohibition Officer.
- **Punishment –** It prescribes imprisonment of ***up to 3 years***, a fine that ***may extend to Rs 1 lakh, or both***, for any person who imposes, causes, or practises a social boycott.

Reference

The News Minute | Karnataka's Social Boycott Bill

