

"You have the ability to choose your reactions." Steve Maraboli

NATIONAL

CABINET CLEARS BILL TO RESTORE THE PROVISIONS OF SC/ST ACT

The cabinet has given its nod to introduce a Bill to restore the original provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, which the Supreme Court had struck down in a March ruling.

The Amendment Bill seeks to insert three new clauses after Section 18 of the original Act:

The first stipulates that for the purposes of the Act, "preliminary enquiry shall not be required for registration of a First Information Report against any person."

The second stipulates that the arrest of a person accused of having committed an offence under the Act would not require any approval.

The third says that the provisions of Section 438 of the Code of Criminal Procedure — which deals with anticipatory bail — shall not apply to a case under this Act, "notwithstanding any judgment or order of any Court."

On March 20, the Supreme Court issued a slew of guidelines to protect people against arbitrary arrests under the Act, directing that public servants could be arrested only with the written permission of their appointing authority, while in the case of private employees, the Senior Superintendent of Police concerned should allow it. A preliminary inquiry should be conducted before the FIR was registered to check if the case fell within the ambit of the Act, and whether it was frivolous or motivated, the court ruled.

The ruling was greeted by a storm of protest from Dalit groups, which said the order diluted the law. However, the court refused to stay its ruling, leading to the demand from Dalit groups that the government introduce an ordinance or an Amendment Bill to restore the provisions.

The Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is popularly known as POA, the SC/ST Act, the Prevention of Atrocities Act, or simply the Atrocities Act. The SC/ST Act was enacted on September 9, 1989. The rules for the Act were notified on March 31, 1995.

The SC/ST Act lists 22 offences relating to various patterns or behaviours inflicting criminal offences and breaking the self-respect and esteem of the scheduled castes and tribes community. This includes denial of economic, democratic and social rights, discrimination, exploitation and abuse of the legal process.

According to the SC/ST Act, the protection is provided from social disabilities such as denial of access to certain places and to use customary passage, personal atrocities like forceful drinking or eating of inedible food sexual exploitation, injury etc, atrocities affecting properties, malicious prosecution, political disabilities and economic exploitation.

For speedy trial, Section 14 of the SC/ST Act provides for a Court of Session to be a Special Court to try offences under this Act in each district.

The prime objective of the SC/ST Act is to deliver justice to marginalised through proactive efforts, giving them a life of dignity, self-esteem and a life without fear, violence or suppression from the dominant castes.

'STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY PREPAREDNESS INDEX'

'State Energy Efficiency Preparedness Index' has been released by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).

The nationwide Index is a joint effort of the NITI Aayog and BEE. The index assesses state policies and programmes.

The Index will help in implementing national energy efficiency initiatives in states and meet both State as well as national goals on energy security, energy access and climate change.

It has 63 indicators across Building, Industry, Municipality, Transport, Agriculture and DISCOM with 4 cross-cutting indicators.

The Index examines states' policies and regulations, financing mechanisms, institutional capacity, adoption of energy efficiency measures and energy savings achieved.

The 'Front Runner' states in the inaugural edition of the Index are: Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Rajasthan based on available data.

Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Haryana have been categorised in the second best category of 'achiever' states.

Significance of the Index:

Such an index assumes significance in a country that is now the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases after the US and China, and which is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. India plans to reduce its carbon footprint by 33-35% from its 2005 levels by 2030, as part of its commitments to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted by 195 countries in Paris in 2015.

INDIA UNVEILS GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION LOGO, TAGLINE

India has unveiled a tagline and a tricolour logo for geographical indication (GI) certified products. From now on, the GI-registered goods will sport the logo and the tagline to make them more attractive.

Tagline: **"Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India"**.

A total of 320 products have been conferred the GI status in India so far.

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.

GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.

COMMON SERVICE CENTRES TO IMPLEMENT AYUSHMAN BHARAT

Common Service Center (CSC) and National Health Accounts (NHA) signed a MoU to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme through three-lakh CSCs across the country.

Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will cover over 10 crore poor vulnerable families (around 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage of up to RS. 5lakh (per family per year) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation.

According to the MoU, a beneficiary can now visit the nearby CSC to get the benefit of this scheme and CSC will help the beneficiary to identify his name in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare database and his entitlement for the scheme.

The CSCs will help the beneficiary to scan/upload his KYC documents for verification of his/her identity and claim his/her entitlement.

The beneficiary will also have facility to print his/her Ayushman Scheme card through the centre which will be his/her base source claim. CSCs will also provide requisite information about the scheme and promote the same.

CSC 2.0

Under the Digital India programme, at least one CSC (preferably more than one) is envisaged in 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats for delivery of various electronic services to citizens across rural India.

CSC 2.0 is a service delivery oriented entrepreneurship model with a large bouquet of services made available for the citizens through optimum utilization of infrastructure already created in the form of SWAN, SSDG, e-District, SDC, and NOFN/BharatNet.
