



**KARNATAKA INSTITUTE FOR LAW
AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORM
BENGALURU**

105

DRAFT MODEL BILLS

Volume-II

COMPILED BY : PROF. C. S. PATIL

From Director's Desk

A meeting of experts was held under the Chairmanship of Sri.H.K.Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs and Legislation and Tourism, who is also Vice President of KILPAR to decide upon the activities which the institute has to take up on priority. Undertaking research in to the problems of the society where there are no laws or laws are not satisfactory and suggest new legislation and law reforms to be adopted was one of the activities which was recommended to be taken up immediately. The Director was tasked with the responsibility of contacting the legal experts, both professionals and academicians and call a meeting. The meeting was held on 21-2-2025. It was presided over by Sri.H.K.Patil, Hon'ble Law Minister. He emphasised that KILPAR through research teams constituted for the purpose should undertake review of laws made by the government, make suggestions of new laws to be enacted and take guidance from judgements. The Minister observed that Model Bills Banks should be created, draft Bills should be posted on the website, it should come to the public domain so that there can be public debate on them. A target of preparing 100 draft Bills was set. Ten research teams with principal investigators were constituted to undertake the exercise. The modalities to be followed by the teams were also circulated.

Accordingly the Karnataka Institute for Law and Parliamentary Reform embarked upon the project of drafting Model Bills in socially relevant areas and keep them ready for adoption whenever necessary. The objective was to address problems afflicting the contemporary society and provide remedy. Subsequently two meetings of the research teams were conducted on 27th and 28th February 2025 to narrow down upon the areas where new legislations and law reform are necessary. The research teams conducted research in their chosen areas and submitted their research reports along with draft Bills to KILPAR. These drafts were considered by a Committee consisting of Sri.G.Sridhar, Secretary to the Government, Department of Parliamentary Affairs and Legislation, GOK, Sri.K.L.Ashok, Additional Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Human Rights, GOK and Prof.C.S.Patil, Director KILPAR in four meetings and approved with suggestions to make minor changes. A total of 104 Draft Bills are compiled team-wise and submitted herewith.

Bengaluru
24-10-2025

(C.S.Patil)
Director

Acknowledgements

The patronage of Sri. Siddaramaiah, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka, and the President, KILPAR enables us in the institution to undertake path breaking research activities. The leadership provided Sri.H.K.Patil, Hon'ble Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs and Tourism, who is also Vice President of KILPAR and his invaluable directions, suggestions and contributions through valuable discourses in the meetings has gone a long way in successfully completing the drafting of 105 Bills of social relevance, by ten Research Teams in a time bound manner. But for their support, undertaking a research activity and drafting of Bills of this scale would have been impossible. We place on record our gratitude to both of them.

Sri.G.Sridhar, Secretary to Government, Department of Parliamentary Affairs and Legislation, Government of Karnataka, Sri.K.L.Ashok, Additional Secretary, Department of Law, Justice and Human Rights, Government of Karnataka have stood with KILPAR through out till the completion of the task. The institute is beholden to them for the cooperation and guidance. We are grateful to Dr. Shivputra Baburao, KSAS, P.S. to the Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights and Parliamentary Affairs and Legislation for the encouragement extended.

The research teams consisted of Ms. Maitreyi Krishnan., Advocate, All India Lawyers Association for Justice (AILAJ), Sri. L. Muralidhar Peshwa., Advocate, All India Lawyers Union, Sri. B M Sunil Kumar., Advocate, Dr. Sapna, Dean, Christ University School of Law, Bengaluru, Ms. Sawmya Suresh, Christ University School of Law, Bengaluru, Dr. Davis Panadan, Principal, Christ Academy School Of Law, Bengaluru, Dr. K.B. Kempe Gowda, Principal, Vivekananda Law College, Bengaluru, Dr. Sanjeeve Gowda G.S., Assistant Professor, V.V.Pura Law College, Bengaluru, Dr. Sandeep Desai, Dean, Amity Law School, Bengaluru, Sri. Vasanth Aditya J., Kreetam Law Associates, Bengaluru, Smt. Renuka, Kreetam Law Associates, Bengaluru, Sri. Shashikanth Karoshi, Advocate, Belagavi, Dr. Jagadish S. Halashetti, Advocate, Bengaluru, Dr. S.V. Jogarao, Advocate, Legalexcel Attorneys, Bengaluru, Dr. Shyam Kishore, Dean, Alliance University, Bengaluru and Sri. Y.G. Muralidharan, Chairman, CREAT, Bengaluru who shouldered the responsibility of conducting research and drafting the Bills. While these experts played the lead role, they were assisted by Ms. Anjana Rajsri, Ms. Pratyusha M.S., Dr.Gopi Ranganath, Dr. Chaitra V., Dr. Nandu Sam Jose, Dr. Nirun R.N., Mr. Priyank Jagawanshi, Dr Anjana Prasad S., Dr. Asha

P. Soman, Ms. Divya Sethia, Ms. Sinsa Elizabeth Sunny, Mr. Adrien.S, Dr. Chindhu Joseph, Christ Academy Institute Of Law, Bengaluru, Dr. Sini John, Dr. Irfan Rasool Najar, Ms.Shantala Matti, Mr.Sachin S. Patil, Mr. Ravindra A. Gunjale, Mr.Kaushik S. Karegoudar, Mr.Abhishek B. G., Mr. Bharath Y. J. and Mr.Vishal B. Banne in their respective reams. The KILPAR acknowledges their contribution with gratitude.

The efforts of Dr. Revaiah Odeyar, Research Head (Parliamentary Affairs), KILPAR and Mr.Sreedhara K.S., Research Head (Law) shouldered the responsibility of getting the draft Bills arranged and bound in the form of volumes are appreciated. The assistance of all the staff members of KILPAR throughout this project is well appreciated.

Bengaluru

Date: 24-10-2025

C. S. Patil

The Karnataka Institute for Law and Parliamentary Reform (KILPAR), Bengaluru

105 Draft Model Bills

Sl.no	Bills Name	Page
Volume-1		
Team-1 Ms. Maitreyi Krishnan., BSL., LL.B, Advocate, All India Lawyers Association for Justice (AILAJ) Shri. L. Muralidhar Peshwa., B.Sc., LL.M., PGDHRM, AILU		
1.	The Karnataka Workplace Equality and Dignity (Prohibition Of Caste Discrimination) Bill, 2025	1-9
2.	The Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Association and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in The Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2025	10-23
3.	The Karnataka Conferment of Permanent Status to Workmen Bill, 2025	24-29
4.	The Karnataka Right to Adequate and Dignified Housing Bill, 2025	30-39
5.	The Karnataka Sanitation and Housekeeping Workers (Rights, Dignity and Social Security) Bill, 2025	40-44
6.	The Karnataka Domestic Workers Protection Bill, 2025	45-62
7.	The Karnataka it/ites Employees' Conditions of Service Bill, 2025	64-77
8.	The Karnataka Regulation of Disciplinary Proceedings in Workplaces Bill 2025	78-90
9.	The Karnataka Recognition of Trade Unions and Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Bill, 2025	91-111
10.	Karnataka Advocates' Protection from Violence and Social Welfare (Amendment) Bill, 2025	112-120
Team-2 Dr. Sapna, Dean, Christ University School of Law, Bengaluru		
1.	The Karnataka Protection of Child Influencers Bill, 2025	121-128

2.	The Paying Guest Accommodation Regulation (Standards, Compliance and Maintenance) Bill, 2025	129-139
3.	The Karnataka Parental leave (equality and support) Bill, 2025	140-148
4.	The Coaching Institutes and Tuition classes regulation Bill, 2025	149-167
5.	The Karnataka Green Education Bill, 2025	168-175
6.	The Karnataka Public Facilities for Disabled Bill, 2025	176-185
7.	The Ambulance Siren Regulation and Monitoring Bill, 2025	186-191
8.	The Karnataka Victim Justice Bill, 2025	192-216
9.	The Plea Bargaining (reform) Amendment Bill, 2025	217-222
10.	The Karnataka Administrative Dispute Resolution and Efficiency Bill, 2025	223-231
Team-3		
Dr. Davis Panadan, Principal, Christ Academy School of Law, Bengaluru		
1.	The Karnataka Stray Animal (Management and Welfare) Bill, 2025	232-240
2.	The Karnataka Child Online Safety, Awareness and Protection Bill, 2025	241-246
3.	The Karnataka Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Facilitation Bill, 2025	247-251
4.	The Karnataka Protection of Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill, 2025	251-257
5.	The Karnataka Public Information for Governance and Citizen Awareness Bill, 2025	259-263
6.	The Karnataka Work from Home Bill, 2025	264-267
7.	The Karnataka Women Traffic Police Welfare Bill, 2025	268-272
8.	The Karnataka Digital Detox and Work-Life Balance Bill, 2025	273-277
9.	The Karnataka Speed Breaker Regulation and Designed Bill, 2025	278-281
10.	The Karnataka Equitable Pricing and market transparency Bill, 2025	282-286

Team-4 Dr. K.B. Kempe Gowda, Principal, Vivekananda Law College, Bengaluru Dr. Sanjeeve Gowda G.S., Assistant Professor, V.V.Pura Law College, Bengaluru		
1.	The Karnataka Breast Feeding and Lactating Mothers (Welfare and Protection) Bill, 2025	287-302
2.	The Karnataka Dangerous Stunt Riding (Prohibition and Penalties) Bill, 2025	303-307
3.	The Karnataka Food Wastage (Prevention and Management) Bill, 2025	308-312
4.	The Karnataka Forensic Science and Criminal Investigation Bill, 2025	313-320
5.	The Karnataka Mercy Petition (Procedure and Guidelines) Bill, 2025	321-333
6.	The Karnataka Regulation of Extravagant Marriages Bill, 2025	334-342
7.	The Karnataka Regulation of Plastic Usage and Reuse of Cooking Oil in The Food Sector Bill, 2025	343-350
8.	The Karnataka Regulation of School Fees Bill, 2025	351-357
9.	The Karnataka State Trauma Care and Rehabilitation Bill, 2025	358-365
10.	The Karnataka Farmers' Right to Assured Remunerative Price for Agricultural Produce Bill, 2025	366-378
Volume-2		
Team-5 Dr. Sandeep Desai, Dean, Amity Law School, Bengaluru		
1.	The Karnataka Affordable Housing, Urban Development and Slum Rehabilitation Bill, 2025	1-25
2.	The Karnataka Protection of Senior Citizens From Abuse and Neglect Bill, 2025	26-57
3.	The Karnataka Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Bill, 2025	58-98
4.	The Karnataka Substance Abuse Prevention and Awareness for Educational Institutions Bill, 2025	99-137

5.	The Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education Bill, 2025	138-159
6.	The Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Bill, 2025	160-185
7.	The Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention and Public Safety Bill, 2025	186-225
8.	The Karnataka Affordable Healthcare and Patient Rights Bill, 2025	226-255
9.	The Karnataka Digital Land Records Bill, 2025	256-292
10.	The Karnataka Educational Institutions Fee Regulation and Transparency Bill, 2025	293-323
11.	The Karnataka Farmers' Crop Insurance and Disaster Compensation Bill, 2025	234-358
12.	The Karnataka Regulation of Gambling, Betting and Lotteries Bill, 2025	359-393
13.	The Karnataka Digital Estate, Inheritance and Succession Bill, 2025	394-418
Team-6		
Mr. Vasanth Aditya J., Kreetam Law Associates, Bengaluru		
1.	The Karnataka State Public Passengers and Transport Rights Bill, 2025	419-422
2.	The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Bill, 2025	423-425
3.	The Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Bill, 2025.	426-428
4.	The Karnataka Prevention of Custodial Torture Bill, 2025	429-432
5.	The Karnataka Transplantation of Human Organ and Tissue Bill, 2025	433-442
6.	The Karnataka Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2025.	443-446
7.	The Karnataka Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Amendment) Bill, 2025	447-450

8.	The Karnataka Milk Procurement (Protection of Farmers) and Enforcement of Safety of Milk Standards Bill 2025.	451-464
9.	The Karnataka State Abolishment of Illegal Rehabilitation, De-addition and Detention Centers Bill	465-468
10.	The Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Bill, 2025	469-488
11.	The Karnataka Road Safety (Prohibition of Hazardous Stunts and Wheeling) Bill, 2025	489-491
Volume-3		
Team-7 Sri. Shashikanth Karoshi, Advocate, Belagavi Dr. Jagadish Halashetti, Advocate, Bengaluru		
1.	The Prohibition of Unauthorised Practice of Law (fake Advocates) Bill, 2025	1-7
2.	The Karnataka Gated Communities (Recognition, Regulation & Public Integration) Bill, 2025	8-21
3.	The Karnataka Rooftop Solar Incentive Bill, 2025	22-33
4.	The Karnataka Protection of Men from Domestic Violence Bill, 2025	34-37
5.	The Regulation of Bike Taxis in Karnataka Bill, 2025	38-43
6.	The Regulation of Fair Pricing of Digital Services Bill, 2025	44-48
7.	The Karnataka Living Will (Advance Directive Will) Bill, 2025	49-55
8.	The Transportation Fare Regulation Bill, 2025	56-59
9.	The Karnataka Online Safety and Digital Harmony Bill, 2025	60-66
10.	The Karnataka Paying Guest Accommodation (Regulation and Safety) Bill, 2025	67-79
11.	The Karnataka Court Fees and Suit Valuation Amendment Bill, 2025	80-83

Team-8 Dr. S.V. Jogarao, Advocate, Bengaluru.		
1.	The Karnataka Brought Dead Patients (Registration and Certification) Bill, 2025	89-92
2.	The Karnataka Milk Quality Regulation Bill, 2025	93-95
3.	The Karnataka Regulation of Wheeling and Dangerous Stunts on Roads Bill, 2025	96-99
4.	The Karnataka Under trial Free Legal Services and Rights Bill, 2025	100-103
5.	The Karnataka Consumer Protection –Mediation for Medical Negligence Cases (Amendment) Bill, 2025	104-106
6.	The Karnataka Early Childhood Care, Education and Development Bill, 2025	107-112
7.	The Karnataka Terminally Ill Patients (Withdrawal of Life Support) Bill, 2025	113-116
8.	The Karnataka Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (Altruistic Donations) Amendment Bill, 2025	117-123
9.	The Karnataka Consumer Protection (Adjudication Procedure in State and District Commissions) Amendment Bill, 2025	124-128
10.	The Karnataka Prisons and Correctional Services Bill, 2025	129-152
Team-9 Dr. Shyam Kishore, Dean, Alliance University, Bengaluru		
1.	Karnataka Child Mental Health and Well-being Bill, 2025	153-163
2.	Karnataka Digital Infrastructure and Data Governance Bill , 2025	164-172
3.	Karnataka Ecological Restoration and Rewilding Bill, 2025	173-179
4.	The Karnataka Meta verse Regulation Bill, 2025	180-188

5.	The Karnataka Safe and Inclusive Public Spaces for Women Bill, 2025	189-214
6.	The Karnataka State Recognition & Inclusion of Intergenerational Climate Justice Bill, 2025	215-223
7.	The Karnataka Online Gaming Regulation Bill, 2025	224-238
8.	The Live-in Relationship Bill, 2025	239-248
9.	The Karnataka Menstrual Health and Environment Integration Bill, 2025	249-270
10.	The Karnataka Sustainable Building Materials Bill, 2025	271-294
	Team-10 Mr. Y.G. Muralidharan, Chairman, Creat, Bengaluru	
1.	The Karnataka Adventure Sports (Regulation and Safety) Bill, 2025	295-315
2.	The Karnataka Citizen's Right to Hearing Bill, 2025	316-320
3.	The Karnataka Coaching Centers (Control & Regulation) Bill, 2025	321-333
4.	The Karnataka Digital Literacy Promotion Bill, 2025	334-339
5.	The Karnataka Domestic Workers (Protection and Welfare) Bill, 2025	340-353
6.	The Karnataka Financial Products and Services Consumer Protection Bill, 2025	354-363
7.	The Karnataka Gymnasium and Fitness Centers (Regulation & Licensing) Bill, 2025	364-370
8.	The Karnataka Paying Guest (Regulation) Bill, 2025	371-374
9.	The Karnataka Pre- Legislative Consultation Bill, 2025	375-381
10.	The Karnataka Private School Fees (Regulation) Bill, 2025	382-387

THE KARNATAKA AFFORDABLE HOUSING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND SLUM REHABILITATION BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for the realization of the right to affordable and adequate housing; to ensure protection against forced evictions; to promote sustainable urban development and rehabilitation of slum dwellers; to facilitate public-private participation in housing and infrastructure; and to provide for institutional mechanisms and regulatory frameworks for planning, development, and governance of housing for economically weaker sections and vulnerable groups in the State of Karnataka and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Whereas Article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees the right to life which includes the right to shelter and adequate living conditions as recognised by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India;

And whereas Article 38, Article 39, Article 46, and Article 243W of the Constitution mandate the State to secure social justice, reduce inequalities, and promote economic welfare by ensuring adequate means of livelihood, safeguarding vulnerable sections of society, and empowering urban local bodies for planning and implementation of development schemes;

And whereas it is expedient to establish a statutory framework to protect housing rights, prevent homelessness, regulate urban expansion, rehabilitate slum settlements, and strengthen the legal and institutional infrastructure for inclusive and participatory housing development in the State of Karnataka;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

PART I CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent, and commencement.— (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Affordable Housing, Urban Development, and Slum Rehabilitation Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different provisions.

2. Definitions.—In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—(a) "affordable housing" means housing units with a sale price or rental value determined by the State Government for economically weaker sections (EWS), low-income groups (LIG), and other categories notified from time to time, making them financially accessible to such groups;

(b) "beneficiary" means a person or household who meets the eligibility criteria, including income level, residency, and vulnerability, as notified by the State

Government for the purpose of receiving housing or rehabilitation benefits under this Bill;

(c) "District Urban Housing Committee" means the district-level body constituted under this Act to coordinate the preparation and implementation of housing, rehabilitation, and urban development plans;

(d) "habitable living standards" means the minimum conditions of housing quality as notified by the State Government, including access to potable water, electricity, sanitation, structural safety, and ventilation;

(e) "in-situ rehabilitation" means the upgradation or redevelopment of existing settlements, including slums, at or near their current location, to provide improved and permanent housing with access to basic services;

(f) "peri-urban areas" means areas adjoining existing urban local bodies, identified and notified by the State Government for inclusion within the urban development framework;

(g) "public-private partnership" (PPP) means any collaborative arrangement between a government agency and a private sector entity for financing, development, construction, or management of housing or infrastructure projects under this Act;

(h) "rehabilitation" means the process of providing resettlement and support to persons or communities displaced due to urban development or slum clearance, including provision of housing, essential services, and livelihood support;

(i) "Slum Rehabilitation Authority" means the statutory body constituted under this Act to oversee, coordinate, and implement slum redevelopment and rehabilitation projects across the State;

(j) "slum" means any compact settlement, whether notified or non-notified, where the dwellings, due to poor design, lack of ventilation, inadequate sanitation, overcrowding, or other factors, are unfit for human habitation and are so declared by a competent authority;

(k) "State Government" means the Government of Karnataka;

(l) "tenure security" means protection against arbitrary eviction or displacement, granted through legal recognition of occupancy or residence under this Act or any housing scheme notified under it;

(m) "urban local body" means a municipal corporation, municipality, or town panchayat constituted under the applicable laws governing urban governance in Karnataka;

(n) "Zonal Rehabilitation Officer" means the officer designated under this Act to supervise and monitor the implementation of rehabilitation and resettlement plans in specific zones;

(o) words and expressions used but not defined in this Act shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them in the relevant central or state legislation, as applicable.

3. Statement of State Policy on Affordable Housing and Slum Rehabilitation.—The State of Karnataka affirms that housing is a human right and an essential component

of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The State shall endeavour to:

- (a) ensure the progressive realisation of universal access to adequate housing;
- (b) prevent the growth of slums by providing affordable options in urban planning;
- (c) adopt inclusive, participatory, and environment-friendly models for urban renewal and slum rehabilitation; and
- (d) protect the rights of vulnerable populations including women, children, persons with disabilities, and SC/ST communities in all housing schemes and urban development policies.

4. Objectives and scope of the Act.- This bill aims to,—

- (a) provide statutory backing to the right to affordable and adequate housing for all;
- (b) establish mechanisms for slum rehabilitation, in-situ development, and urban renewal;
- (c) mandate the inclusion of affordable housing quotas in new real estate developments;
- (d) facilitate private sector participation through regulated and accountable PPPs; and
- (e) ensure long-term sustainability through environmentally conscious and socially inclusive planning.

5. Applicability to urban and peri-urban areas.- The provisions of this Act shall apply to all urban local bodies including municipal corporations, municipalities, town panchayats, and to peri-urban areas designated as urban development zones by notification of the State Government.

6. Overriding effect and relationship with existing laws.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other Karnataka State law in force.

(2) This Act shall be read in harmony with central legislation including the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016, the Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1956, and the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 to the extent not inconsistent.

PART II

RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

CHAPTER II

HOUSING AS A LEGAL RIGHT

7. Right to affordable and adequate housing.- Every eligible beneficiary shall have the legally enforceable right to access adequate, safe, secure, and affordable housing within the State. Such housing shall meet prescribed standards for space, structure, sanitation, and habitability, and shall not be more than a reasonable distance from basic services and livelihood opportunities.

8. Right to protection from forced eviction.- (1) No person, household, or community shall be evicted or removed from their dwelling or informal settlement unless the eviction is carried out in accordance with due process of law.

(2) The following conditions shall be mandatorily fulfilled prior to any eviction:

- (a) Prior written notice of not less than sixty (60) days shall be served individually to all affected persons, clearly stating the reasons, date, and time of eviction;
 - (b) Social Impact Assessment (SIA) shall be conducted by an independent authority to evaluate the consequences of the eviction, particularly on vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes;
 - (c) Consultation and Participation: All affected persons shall be provided an opportunity to be heard through public consultations or grievance forums prior to the eviction. Consent of the majority shall be recorded where feasible;
 - (d) Suitable Alternative Accommodation shall be offered in advance to all eligible persons, preferably in the same ward or vicinity, ensuring continuity of livelihood, education, and social networks;
 - (e) Temporary Shelter and Emergency Aid: In cases where immediate eviction is unavoidable due to health, safety, or environmental emergencies, temporary housing, food, water, and medical aid shall be arranged until permanent rehabilitation is completed;
 - (f) Eviction Timing and Conditions: Evictions shall not be carried out during monsoon months, school examinations, or late evenings, and shall be conducted in a humane, peaceful, and orderly manner under supervision of designated officials;
 - (g) Presence of Independent Observers: Representatives of the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority or notified NGOs shall be invited to monitor the eviction to ensure compliance with legal and human rights standards;
 - (h) Right to Appeal and Legal Aid: All affected persons shall have the right to appeal the eviction before a designated appellate authority, and shall be entitled to free legal aid for such proceedings.
- (3) No eviction shall be carried out solely on the basis of non-possession of formal title or ownership, if the occupant is eligible under rehabilitation or housing schemes notified under this Bill.
- (4) Any eviction carried out in violation of this section shall be deemed unlawful and the affected persons shall be entitled to immediate restoration, compensation, and punitive remedies as prescribed.

9. Right to tenure security and habitable living standards.- (1) Informal settlers shall be accorded security of tenure based on occupancy and continuous residence, irrespective of formal title.

(2) The State shall ensure minimum standards of habitability including potable water, electricity, sanitation, waste disposal, and street lighting in all declared residential and rehabilitation zones.

10. Special protections for women-headed households, SC/STs, persons with disabilities.- (1) All housing schemes under this bill shall provide for priority reservation and access to women-headed households, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and persons with disabilities.

(2) The State Government shall prescribe specific percentages of housing units earmarked for such categories, ensure gender-sensitive and barrier-free infrastructure, and include representation in housing committees.

11. Obligations of the State to provide basic urban services.- (1) The State shall ensure equitable access to essential urban services in all notified housing and slum areas.

(2) These services shall include, but not be limited to, piped drinking water, sewerage and sanitation, storm water drainage, solid waste management, all-weather roads, electricity connections, and digital infrastructure.

(3) The State Government shall coordinate with relevant departments and local bodies to guarantee time-bound delivery of such services.

CHAPTER III TENANT AND OCCUPIER PROTECTIONS

12. Registration and identification of eligible beneficiaries.- (1) A comprehensive database of eligible beneficiaries shall be maintained by the State Urban Housing Registry.

(2) Each beneficiary shall be assigned a unique registration number and identification credentials linked to Aadhaar, ration card, or other notified documents.

(3) The data shall be updated annually and made publicly accessible in accordance with applicable data protection laws.

13. Legal recognition of informal settlements and occupancy rights.- (1) The State Government shall conduct a survey and mapping of all informal settlements within its jurisdiction.

(2) Occupancy rights shall be granted to long-term residents based on length of stay, community consensus, and land availability, subject to environmental and public safety considerations.

(3) Such rights shall be recorded in official land records and may be used as eligibility for future upgradation schemes.

14. Restrictions on arbitrary demolition and displacement.- (1) No structure shall be demolished without serving prior notice of at least sixty days.

(2) Any proposed clearance shall be preceded by a detailed Social Impact Assessment (SIA), and results shall be made available to the affected persons.

(3) Adequate time and opportunity shall be provided to contest or appeal any proposed Bill under due legal procedures.

15. Resettlement and rehabilitation procedures.- (1) Displaced households shall be resettled within the same ward or nearby location to maintain social networks and livelihood continuity.

(2) Each resettled family shall receive a dwelling unit of minimum prescribed area, with individual water and electricity connections, and access to public transport, health, and education facilities.

(3) The State shall establish grievance redressal mechanisms and post-resettlement monitoring units for a minimum period of two years.

16. Guidelines for rental housing and occupancy in notified zones.- (1) The State Government shall notify rental housing guidelines for the regulation of tenancies in affordable housing areas.

(2) These guidelines may prescribe:

(a) maximum permissible rents,

- (b) registration of tenancies and model agreements,
 - (c) incentives for landlords providing rental units to EWS/LIG tenants,
 - (d) dispute resolution mechanisms.
- (3) Occupants in notified zones shall not be evicted except in accordance with tenancy laws and contractual terms duly registered with the designated authority.

PART III

INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER IV

STATE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES

17. Constitution of Karnataka Affordable Housing and Urban Development Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a body to be known as the Karnataka Affordable Housing and Urban Development Authority (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”) to exercise powers conferred on, and perform functions assigned to it under this Act .

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall have the power to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue or be sued.

(3) The headquarters of the Authority shall be at Bengaluru, with such regional offices as the State Government may notify.

18. Composition, powers, and functions of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members:

- (a) Chairperson – the Minister in charge of Urban Development, ex officio;
- (b) Vice-Chairperson – to be nominated by the State Government from among senior bureaucrats of the rank of Additional Chief Secretary or above;
- (c) Secretary – the Principal Secretary, Housing Department, ex officio;
- (d) Five experts in the field of urban planning, housing finance, architecture, environmental science, and public health, nominated by the State Government;
- (e) Two representatives of civil society organisations working in housing or slum development;
- (f) One representative each from the Real Estate Regulatory Authority and the State Pollution Control Board;
- (g) Member-Secretary – to be appointed by the State Government.

(2) The functions of the Authority shall include—

- (a) formulation of policies and schemes for affordable housing and urban renewal;
- (b) coordination with relevant departments for land allocation, infrastructure provision, and finance;
- (c) approval of master plans and district housing Billions plans;
- (d) regulation and promotion of public-private partnerships;
- (e) oversight of implementation of this bill and issuance of directions to implementing bodies.

19. Terms and conditions of service of members.- (1) The nominated members of the Authority shall hold office for a term of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment.

(2) They shall be entitled to such honorarium, allowances, and other conditions of service as may be prescribed.

(3) Any member may resign by writing to the State Government, and may be removed by the Government on grounds of proven misconduct, incapacity, or conflict of interest after due inquiry.

20. Establishment of District Urban Housing Committees.- (1) The State Government shall constitute a District Urban Housing Committee (DUHC) in every district, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, to facilitate district-level implementation of this Act.

(2) Each DUHC shall include:

- (a) Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat,
- (b) Commissioner(s) of urban local bodies within the district,
- (c) District Town Planning Officer,
- (d) Representatives from line departments such as PWD, Education, Health, and Social Welfare,
- (e) Two civil society representatives and one expert in housing or urban development nominated by the District Collector.

(3) The DUHC shall prepare and update District Housing Billions Plans, coordinate with local bodies, monitor project progress, and report to the State Authority.

21. Coordination with Urban Local Bodies and Metropolitan Planning Committees.- (1) The Authority shall coordinate with Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) to integrate affordable housing objectives into broader city development plans.

(2) ULBs shall be responsible for providing infrastructure linkages to housing projects, facilitating land availability, and maintaining public services in housing areas.

(3) The Authority shall consult MPCs during formulation of metropolitan-level housing strategies and ensure alignment with regional planning.

22. Constitution of Expert Technical and Social Impact Panels.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute the following advisory panels to support implementation:

- (a) Technical Appraisal Panel (TAP) – to evaluate the structural, environmental, and design aspects of housing projects;
- (b) Social Impact Panel (SIP) – to assess rehabilitation plans, participatory approaches, and social integration.

(2) Each panel shall include not less than five and not more than ten members with relevant domain expertise and shall submit reports and recommendations to the Authority.

CHAPTER V

SLUM REHABILITATION AUTHORITY

23. Establishment of Karnataka Slum Rehabilitation Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish the Karnataka Slum Rehabilitation Authority (hereinafter referred to as “KSRA”) as a statutory body to oversee and implement slum redevelopment and rehabilitation initiatives under this Act.

(2) The KSRA shall be headed by a Chairperson, not below the rank of Additional Chief Secretary to Government, and shall include members representing housing, urban development, finance, health, and public works departments, and two civil society representatives.

24. Powers and responsibilities of the Authority.- (1) The KSRA shall,—

- (a) identify and declare slum areas under Section 25;
- (b) design and implement slum redevelopment and in-situ rehabilitation projects;
- (c) coordinate with ULBs and DUHCs for service delivery in slum areas;
- (d) approve project-specific implementation plans;
- (e) engage community-based organisations for mobilisation and feedback;
- (f) monitor project execution and submit periodic reports to the State Government.

25. Demarcation and declaration of slum areas.- (1) The KSRA shall conduct comprehensive surveys using GIS mapping and satellite imagery to identify slum clusters and assess habitability levels.

(2) Based on the survey, it may declare any area as a slum by public notification, after inviting objections from affected persons within thirty days.

(3) A declared slum area shall be eligible for prioritised development, rehabilitation, and upgradation schemes under this Act.

26. Appointment of Zonal Rehabilitation Officers.- (1) The State Government shall appoint Zonal Rehabilitation Officers (ZROs) for designated zones to implement and monitor rehabilitation activities under the direction of the KSRA.

(2) ZROs shall coordinate with local officials, maintain beneficiary databases, ensure compliance with timelines, and serve as the nodal grievance redressal officer for the zone.

27. Community participation and consultation in slum redevelopment plans.-(1) The KSRA shall ensure the participation of affected communities through regular consultations, public hearings, and representation in project committees.

(2) Project designs shall reflect community needs including livelihood access, social infrastructure, safety concerns, and gender-inclusive amenities.

(3) Affected households shall be given at least one opportunity to participate in the selection of resettlement sites and housing layouts.

PART IV
HOUSING PROJECTS AND PLANNING MECHANISMS
CHAPTER VI
AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PLANS

28. State Affordable Housing Master Plan.- (1) The Authority shall prepare a State Affordable Housing Master Plan every five years, outlining the goals, strategies, financing models, implementation timelines, and monitoring frameworks.

(2) The Plan shall be prepared in consultation with ULBs, DUHCs, MPCs, and civil society and shall be notified in the Official Gazette.

(3) The Plan shall prioritise housing for vulnerable populations, promote equitable distribution, and align with climate and environmental sustainability goals.

29. District-level Housing Billion Plans.- (1) Every DUHC shall prepare an Annual Housing Billion Plan based on ground-level data and aligned with the State Master Plan.

(2) The Billion Plan shall identify priority projects, implementation agencies, timelines, budgets, and expected outcomes, and be submitted to the Authority for approval.

(3) Performance against these plans shall be monitored quarterly.

30. Site selection, land identification, and zoning norms.- (1) Site selection for housing projects shall be based on availability of land, proximity to employment centres, transport access, environmental sustainability, and social integration.

(2) The State Government shall issue guidelines for land pooling, land readjustment, and reservation of public land for affordable housing.

(3) Zoning regulations shall be modified, where necessary, to permit higher Floor Area Ratio (FAR), mixed land use, and compact vertical housing developments for EWS/LIG households.

31. Integrated planning with public transport and green spaces.- (1) All housing projects shall integrate with existing or proposed public transport systems including metro, bus rapid transit, and feeder networks.

(2) Provision shall be made for adequate public spaces, parks, playgrounds, and green buffers in all layouts.

(3) The Authority shall coordinate with urban transport and environment departments to ensure integrated spatial planning.

32. Affordable Housing Reservation in Development Projects (Inclusionary Zoning).- (1) Every private residential or mixed-use development project exceeding a built-up area of 5,000 square metres shall reserve at least 15% of the total housing units or built-up area for affordable housing.

(2) The reserved units shall be constructed within the project site, unless exempted for off-site development by the Authority under exceptional circumstances.

(3) Developers shall be eligible for incentives including FAR relaxation, tax benefits, and expedited approvals in return for compliance. (4) Non-compliance shall attract penalties including monetary fines, cancellation of project approval, or disqualification from future projects.

CHAPTER VII

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND APPROVALS

33: Single-Window Clearance for Affordable Housing Projects.- (1) The State Government shall establish a “Single-Window Clearance Authority for Affordable Housing” to streamline and fast-track approvals related to land use conversion, building and layout plan sanction, environmental clearance, fire safety, water and electricity connections, and occupancy certificates.

(2) The Authority shall operate through a centralized digital platform with time-bound service delivery, integrated with relevant departments and local bodies.

(3) All applications submitted shall receive an acknowledgment number, and the status of each application shall be available online for real-time tracking by the applicant.

(4) The Authority shall ensure clearance within a maximum of 45 days, failing which the application shall be deemed approved unless objected to with valid reasons.

(5) Mandatory consultation with Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), the Town and Country Planning Department, and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board shall be completed within stipulated timelines.

34: Technical, Environmental, and Social Feasibility Studies.- (1) Every project under this bill shall undergo:

(a) A Technical Feasibility Study covering soil strength, seismic safety, drainage conditions, and structural resilience;

(b) An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for projects above the threshold specified under the EIA Notification, 2006 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;

(c) A Social Impact Assessment (SIA) where the project involves land acquisition or displacement, in accordance with the Land Acquisition Rehabilitation and resettlement Act, 2013.

(2) All such studies shall be conducted by empanelled independent agencies and published on the public domain for community review and transparency.

(3) Recommendations of the studies shall be binding on project design and implementation, and their non-compliance shall attract regulatory penalties.

35: Reservation of Land and Building Quotas in Urban Layouts.- (1) All new urban development plans, layouts, and township projects—whether by public or private developers—shall reserve a minimum of 20% of the total buildable area or land area for affordable housing units.

(2) Such reservation shall be clearly demarcated in the approved layout plans and shall not be subject to future conversion or commercialisation.

(3) Allotment of such reserved units shall be strictly in accordance with eligibility norms and allotment procedures under this Act, and subject to audit.

36: Guidelines for Low-Income Housing Design and Amenities.- (1) The State Government shall frame and notify Model Design Standards for housing for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low-Income Groups (LIG), and slum dwellers.

- (2) These guidelines shall include:
 - (a) Minimum unit size (not less than 25 sq.m. carpet area);
 - (b) Proper ventilation and natural lighting;
 - (c) Rainwater harvesting and solar energy use;
 - (d) Design for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) and elderly residents;
 - (e) Fire safety norms and earthquake resistance.
 - (3) Compliance with these guidelines shall be certified by registered architects and engineers and verified at completion stage by the Urban Local Body.
- 37: Role of Cooperative Housing Societies and Self-Help Groups (SHGs).-(1)** The State shall Billively promote community-led housing models by extending technical, legal, and financial assistance to registered cooperative housing societies and SHGs.
- (2) These entities may be empowered to:
 - (a) Develop or co-develop housing projects on allotted land;
 - (b) Undertake post-occupancy management, maintenance, and revenue collection;
 - (c) Partner with urban local bodies in slum upgrading initiatives.
 - (3) The State shall provide preferential access to land, subsidies, capacity-building workshops, and institutional credit to such entities.

PART V

SLUM REDEVELOPMENT AND REHABILITATION

CHAPTER VIII

IN-SITU REDEVELOPMENT AND RELOCATION

- 38: In-Situ Rehabilitation as First Priority.-** (1) In-situ rehabilitation shall be adopted as the default and preferred approach in all notified slums to preserve existing livelihood networks and reduce displacement.
- (2) In-situ redevelopment shall involve upgradation of physical infrastructure and construction of multi-storied housing wherever necessary.
 - (3) Only when site constraints or environmental hazards render in-situ redevelopment unfeasible shall alternative relocation be considered under Section 40.
- 39: Eligibility Criteria and Beneficiary Selection.-** (1) The cut-off date for eligibility shall be January 1st, 2020, subject to future notification by the State Government.
- (2) Beneficiaries must fulfil criteria of residence, income limit (as notified for EWS/LIG), and not owning a pucca house elsewhere in India.
 - (3) The Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) shall conduct a household-level survey with Aadhaar-based biometric identification.
 - (4) Draft beneficiary lists shall be published for community verification and finalized only after a grievance disposal window of 30 days.
- 40: Relocation Only as a Last Resort with Consent.-** (1) Relocation shall be permissible only when:
- (a) The site is located on hazardous land (e.g., floodplains, railway safety zones);
 - (b) The land is reserved for critical public use and no in-situ alternative exists.
- (2) At least two-thirds of the affected households must consent to relocation through a documented and video-recorded community consultation.

(3) Relocation sites shall be within 3–5 km radius, and must ensure access to schools, health centres, markets, and public transport.

41: Temporary Shelter During Redevelopment.- (1) Temporary shelters must be provided to all displaced residents during the period of construction, not exceeding 18 months.

(2) Such shelters shall include basic sanitation, water, electricity, and kitchen spaces, and shall be located to minimise disruption to children's education and employment.

(3) The cost of temporary accommodation shall be borne by the project proponent or implementing agency.

42: Guidelines for Reconstruction under PPP, Cluster-Based or Cross-Subsidy Models.- (1) Slum redevelopment may be executed using:

- (a) Public-Private Partnership (PPP) arrangements with land as equity;
- (b) Cluster-based pooling of contiguous slums for infrastructure efficiency;
- (c) Cross-subsidy models with Floor Space Index (FSI) incentives.

(2) In all such projects:

- (a) A minimum of 60% of FSI shall be reserved for free housing to slum residents;
- (b) Agreements shall be executed between developers and the Authority specifying timelines, quality standards, and penalties for delay;
- (c) State and community representatives shall be part of project monitoring committees.

CHAPTER IX

POST-REHABILITATION SUPPORT

43: Title Deeds or Occupancy Certificates to Beneficiaries.- (1) Upon completion, each beneficiary shall be issued either a freehold title deed or an occupancy certificate valid for 99 years, as notified.

(2) Preference shall be given to issuing titles in the name of the woman head of household.

(3) Such documents shall serve as valid proof of address and ownership for purposes of banking, ration, school admission, and public service access.

44: Integration with Water, Sanitation, Electricity, and Waste Management.-

(1) Every rehabilitated housing site shall be provided with:

- (a) 24/7 piped water supply;
- (b) Toilets and sewer connections;
- (c) Street lighting and electricity meters;
- (d) Solid waste collection and segregation points.

(2) These services shall be operational before physical allotment and occupancy.

45: Community Infrastructure — Schools, PHCs, and Skill Centres.- (1) Layouts for rehabilitation sites shall include space for:

- (a) Government primary schools;
- (b) Primary Health Centres (PHCs);
- (c) Anganwadis;
- (d) Skill training centres under NSDC or PMKVY schemes.

(2) The convergence of schemes such as Samagra Shiksha and Ayushman Bharat shall be ensured at the planning stage.

46: Social Audits and Community Monitoring.- (1) Independent social audits shall be conducted by civil society groups notified by the State.

(2) Each rehabilitation colony shall have a Resident Monitoring Committee comprising elected beneficiaries and women representatives.

(3) Findings of social audits shall be tabled before the District Urban Housing Committee and uploaded online.

47: Grievance Redressal Mechanisms in Rehabilitation Colonies.- (1) Each colony shall have a Local Grievance Redressal Officer (LGRO) to receive complaints related to construction quality, service delivery, and allotment issues.

(2) A time-bound mechanism (within 30 days) shall be adopted for resolution.

(3) Unresolved grievances shall be escalated to the District Urban Housing Committee or State Housing Ombudsman under Chapter XVII.

PART VI
FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE AND INCENTIVES
CHAPTER X
FUNDING AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURES

48. Establishment of Karnataka Affordable Housing Fund.- (1) The State Government shall constitute a dedicated fund to be called the Karnataka Affordable Housing Fund (hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”) for the purpose of financing, supporting, and promoting housing projects for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), Low Income Groups (LIG), and other vulnerable sections.

(2) The Fund shall be maintained in the Public Account of the State and administered by a High-Powered Committee notified by the Government.

(3) The Fund shall consist of—

- (a) budgetary grants and loans from the State Government;
- (b) contributions or grants from the Central Government under housing schemes;
- (c) loans, grants, or donations from bilateral and multilateral institutions;
- (d) amounts collected through fees, levies, fines, or penalties under this Act; and
- (e) any other source as may be notified by the Government.

(4) The Fund shall be utilised for,—

- (a) financing capital and infrastructure components of housing projects;
- (b) providing viability gap funding, subsidies, or incentives; and
- (c) undertaking capacity building, technology upgrades, and research.

(5) An annual report on the use of the Fund shall be tabled before the State Legislature.

49. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and viability gap funding.- (1) The State Government may promote housing through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) by entering into concession agreements, development rights agreements, or joint ventures with private entities, not-for-profit organisations, or housing cooperatives.

(2) The Government may extend Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to eligible PPP projects for EWS/LIG housing as per norms notified under this Act.

(3) Every PPP project shall include a minimum earmarking of dwelling units for EWS and LIG categories, with tenure and specifications as notified.

(4) Selection of private partners shall be through a transparent and competitive bidding process, and shall comply with provisions of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act, 1999.

(5) The agreement shall clearly specify the scope of services, performance benchmarks, timelines, pricing, dispute resolution mechanism, and exit clauses.

50. Cross-subsidy frameworks and density bonus models.- (1) The State Government may permit cross-subsidy in redevelopment and housing projects wherein higher-income group units may be allowed for sale at market prices, provided that a stipulated percentage of units is reserved for EWS/LIG categories.

(2) To incentivise private participation, the Government may offer additional Floor Space Index (FSI)/Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or Transferable Development Rights (TDR) to developers constructing EWS/LIG housing as per policy.

(3) The quantum of such incentives and the eligibility criteria shall be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

(4) The use of cross-subsidy or density bonus models shall be subject to compliance with environmental norms and urban planning regulations.

51. Budgetary allocations, CSR participation, and bond issuance.- (1) The State Government shall make annual budgetary allocations under the housing sector demand head for implementation of this Act.

(2) Housing projects under this Act may be declared as eligible Billivities under Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 for purposes of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

(3) The State Urban Development Finance Corporation may issue municipal bonds, social impact bonds, or other debt instruments for financing large-scale affordable housing projects.

(4) The proceeds from such instruments shall be ring-fenced for designated housing and slum redevelopment purposes.

52. Exemption from development charges and property tax rebates.-

(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, housing units constructed for EWS/LIG under this bill shall be exempted from—

(a) payment of building license fees, scrutiny charges, and external development charges; and

(b) property tax for a period of five years from the date of issuance of occupancy certificate.

(2) The State Government may, by notification, extend such exemption to developers or housing societies undertaking in-situ rehabilitation of slum dwellers.

(3) The Urban Local Bodies shall be reimbursed by the State Government for such waived charges through a dedicated compensation fund.

CHAPTER XI

SUBSIDIES, LOANS AND CREDIT-LINKED INCENTIVES

53. Capital subsidies for EWS/LIG housing.- (1) The State Government may provide upfront capital subsidy for each dwelling unit sanctioned for beneficiaries in the EWS and LIG categories.

(2) The amount and eligibility criteria for subsidy shall be notified from time to time and linked to income slabs, housing size, and cost ceilings.

(3) Such subsidy shall be credited directly to the beneficiary account or adjusted against the cost of the unit by the implementing agency.

(4) No beneficiary shall be eligible for such subsidy more than once.

54. Interest subvention schemes and CLSS-type benefits.- (1) The State Government may formulate interest subvention schemes under which eligible beneficiaries shall receive interest subsidy on home loans up to a specified amount and tenure.

(2) Such schemes may be implemented in coordination with lending institutions under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) or any similar scheme by Central Govt.

(3) The guidelines shall specify the rate of interest subvention, maximum loan amount, eligible income groups, and procedural mechanism for disbursement.

55. Credit guarantees and housing microfinance institutions.- (1) The State Government may establish or support a Credit Guarantee Fund for affordable housing to cover partial default risk for loans extended to EWS/LIG beneficiaries.

(2) The fund may be managed by a designated financial institution or trust and shall operate in accordance with regulations framed by the Reserve Bank of India or the National Housing Bank.

(3) Housing Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) and Self-Help Group Federations may be recognised and supported for extending small ticket housing loans for repair, construction, or incremental housing.

(4) Such institutions shall be regulated and empanelled subject to due diligence and compliance.

56. Priority sector lending for housing projects.- (1) All banks and financial institutions operating in the State shall earmark a portion of their Priority Sector Lending (PSL) portfolio for funding affordable housing projects and beneficiary loans.

(2) The Government may notify guidelines in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India regarding target allocation, interest rates, and eligible beneficiaries.

(3) The performance of banks under this head shall be monitored by the State Level Bankers' Committee (SLBC).

57. State insurance for housing against disasters and eviction risks.- (1) The State Government may institute a Housing Security Insurance Scheme to protect beneficiaries from financial loss due to natural disasters, fire, structural failure, or unlawful eviction.

(2) The insurance shall cover both life and property components where applicable and may be provided free or at subsidised premium for EWS/LIG households.

- (3) The scheme shall be implemented in partnership with public sector insurance companies or through a dedicated State Housing Insurance Corporation.
- (4) Claims under this scheme shall be settled within forty-five days of submission, subject to verification.

PART VII
LEGAL SAFEGUARDS, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
CHAPTER XII
LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND PROTECTIONS

58. Protection from unlawful eviction and harassment.- (1) No person residing in any notified slum, declared slum area, informal settlement or housing unit constructed or allotted under any Government scheme shall be evicted therefrom except in accordance with law and due procedure as prescribed under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971 or any other applicable law for the time being in force.

(2) Prior to effecting any eviction, the competent authority shall,—

(a) issue a written notice of not less than thirty days indicating the grounds for eviction;

(b) provide the occupant an opportunity of being heard in person or through a representative; and

(c) ensure that suitable alternative accommodation is provided in accordance with the provisions of this Bill.

(3) Any Act of intimidation, coercion, or harassment of the occupants by any person, including any government servant, developer, or agent, with intent to forcibly vacate the premises shall be punishable under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

(4) The State Government shall establish a dedicated Helpline and Monitoring Cell within the Department of Urban Development for receiving and redressing complaints relating to unlawful eviction or harassment.

59. Compensation for delay or disruption in redevelopment.- (1) Where the completion of any redevelopment, rehabilitation or housing project undertaken under this bill is delayed beyond the period specified in the development agreement or sanctioned plan, the eligible beneficiary shall be entitled to receive compensation in the form of monthly rent equivalent to the prevailing market rent of a similar premises in the locality or such minimum amount as may be prescribed by the State Government.

(2) In the event of displacement without provision of immediate alternate accommodation, the competent authority shall, at the cost of the project proponent, provide either—

(a) temporary housing in transit accommodation; or

(b) monetary compensation as per the norms laid down in the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

(3) The cost of compensation or transit housing under sub-sections (1) and (2) shall be borne by the developer or contractor and failure to comply shall render such party liable to penalty, blacklisting, and revocation of development rights.

60. Penal consequences for abandonment of project or fraudulent Act.- (1) Where any developer, promoter, or contractor fails to complete the construction and handover of a rehabilitation or housing project without lawful justification, such bill shall be deemed to be a breach of trust and shall be punishable under Sections 406 and 420 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

(2) The Regulatory Authority shall be competent to,—

- (a) impose monetary penalty not exceeding ten per cent of the total project cost;
- (b) revoke the building or development permission; and
- (c) initiate recovery proceedings, including attachment of assets, in accordance with law.

(3) Any fraudulent bill such as misrepresentation of facts, manipulation of beneficiary lists, diversion of government subsidy, or false documentation shall attract cancellation of registration, debarment from future projects, and criminal proceedings.

(4) The State Government shall establish a Whistleblower Protection mechanism to encourage reporting of such violations without fear of retaliation.

61. Legal aid to persons facing eviction.- (1) The Karnataka State Legal Services Authority shall set up Legal Aid Clinics in all notified rehabilitation colonies and slum redevelopment clusters.

(2) Such Clinics shall provide free legal representation, assistance in complaint filing, and support during eviction hearings and other legal proceedings.

(3) The State Government may empanel legal aid institutions, law colleges, and civil society organisations to conduct awareness and counselling programmes.

(4) Priority in legal aid shall be accorded to women-headed households, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

62. Summary disposal of disputes relating to rehabilitation.- (1) The State Government may, by notification, designate one or more Judicial Magistrates of the First Class as Special Urban Housing Magistrates for adjudicating disputes arising out of,—

- (a) eviction,
- (b) denial of rehabilitation benefits,
- (c) disputes over occupancy rights, or
- (d) irregularities in allocation of housing units.

(2) All proceedings under this section shall be tried in a summary manner as provided under Chapter XXI of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

(3) Any person aggrieved by the decision of the Special Magistrate may file an appeal before the District and Sessions Court within ninety days from the date of such decision.

(4) No civil court shall have jurisdiction in respect of any matter for which a Special Magistrate is empowered to adjudicate under this Act, except as provided under sub-section (3).

CHAPTER XIII

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

63. Mapping and inventory using GIS technology.-

(1) The State Government shall cause to be conducted Geographic Information System (GIS) based mapping of all notified and un-notified slums, informal settlements, and low-income housing areas within the State.

(2) Such mapping shall include demographic data, infrastructure availability, spatial boundaries, and environmental vulnerabilities, and shall be updated every two years.

(3) The database so created shall be integrated with the Urban Housing Management Information System (UHMIS) and made accessible to all planning and executing agencies.

64. Satellite-based project monitoring.- (1) All projects of in-situ redevelopment and affordable housing involving more than one hundred beneficiaries shall be monitored using satellite imagery and remote sensing technology.

(2) The Karnataka Remote Sensing Centre shall be the nodal agency for providing technical support, in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) or any such recognised agency.

(3) Any deviation from approved project design or illegal construction shall be reported for immediate inspection and corrective Billion.

65. Beneficiary monitoring through mobile applications.- (1) The Department of Urban Development shall develop and maintain a mobile-based application enabling beneficiaries to,—

- (a) view project status,
- (b) track their application,
- (c) lodge grievances, and
- (d) download documents.

(2) All beneficiaries shall be issued individual login credentials linked to their Aadhaar numbers and phone numbers.

(3) The data generated through the application shall be used to improve service delivery and ensure accountability.

66. Use of blockchain for property record management.- (1) The State Government shall, in a phased manner, implement blockchain technology to record land titles, occupancy rights, allotment certificates, and transfer deeds in a secure, tamper-proof and transparent manner.

(2) The blockchain registry shall be accessible to Urban Local Bodies, Sub-Registrar Offices, and planning authorities.

(3) All entries in the blockchain system shall be considered valid for the purpose of proof of ownership or possession in any proceeding under this Act.

67. Promotion of sustainable and smart construction.- (1) All new constructions under affordable housing or rehabilitation schemes shall mandatorily incorporate energy-efficient designs, including but not limited to,—

- (a) use of solar energy,
- (b) rainwater harvesting systems,
- (c) green building materials, and
- (d) sustainable waste disposal mechanisms.

(2) The State Government shall promote the use of prefabricated structures, modular units, and smart technologies for timely and cost-efficient delivery of projects.

(3) At least one model "smart housing cluster" shall be developed in every district, with IoT-enabled infrastructure, digital service platforms, and environmental sustainability features.

PART VIII
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSIVITY
CHAPTER XIV
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS

68. Participatory housing design and planning.- (1) The State Government shall ensure that all affordable housing and slum redevelopment projects under this Act are planned and designed with Billive participation of the intended beneficiaries.

(2) Every implementing authority shall, prior to finalisation of layout plans and design specifications, organise consultations with local residents, registered residents' associations, and community-based organisations.

(3) The procedure for participatory planning shall include—

- (a) publication of draft layout and building plans in the local language;
- (b) convening of a ward-level consultation meeting, giving at least fifteen days' public notice;
- (c) recording and incorporation of feasible suggestions and objections from residents; and
- (d) publication of a final consultation report on the notice board and website of the implementing authority.

69. Public hearings and community feedback forums.- (1) The Competent Authority shall conduct periodic public hearings during all key phases of housing project implementation, including beneficiary identification, relocation, construction progress, and allotment.

(2) Such hearings shall be conducted in a manner that ensures inclusivity and shall be widely publicised through public notices, local media, and digital platforms.

(3) Every implementing authority shall maintain a register of complaints, feedback, and Billion taken during these forums, which shall be open for inspection by any resident.

70. Rights awareness campaigns and legal literacy.- (1) The State Government shall conduct regular awareness campaigns for educating urban poor communities about their housing rights, entitlements, and the grievance redressal mechanism under this Act.

(2) The campaigns shall be conducted in collaboration with legal services authorities, civil society organisations, and educational institutions.

(3) Special modules on tenancy rights, women's property rights, and rights under slum redevelopment shall be developed and disseminated.

71. Urban Poor Housing Helpline and online complaint portal.- (1) The State Government shall establish a toll-free Urban Poor Housing Helpline, which shall operate in regional languages and provide information, counselling, and support to citizens regarding housing schemes, allotments, and complaints.

(2) An online portal shall be launched and maintained for submission, tracking, and redressal of complaints related to housing projects, evictions, and service delivery.

(3) Every complaint shall be assigned a unique registration number and shall be resolved within thirty days from the date of receipt, subject to extension by reasons recorded in writing.

72. Community leadership and representation in planning bodies.- (1) The State Government shall ensure representation of residents' welfare associations, women's collectives, slum dwellers' federations, and recognised community-based organisations in all statutory and advisory bodies related to housing planning and monitoring.

(2) At least one-third of such representatives shall be women, and due representation shall be given to members belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities.

(3) The nomination and tenure of such representatives shall be as may be prescribed.

CHAPTER XV

INCLUSIVE AND GENDER-EQUITABLE HOUSING

73. Reservation for women, transgender persons, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and persons with disabilities.- (1) Not less than thirty-three per cent of all dwelling units constructed under this Act shall be reserved for women beneficiaries, either individually or jointly with their spouses.

(2) A minimum of five per cent of the total dwelling units shall be reserved for transgender persons and persons with disabilities, respectively, subject to verification of identity and eligibility.

(3) Reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes shall be as per norms of the State Government and shall be adhered to in all housing projects implemented under this Act.

74. Priority for female-headed households and survivors of domestic violence.-

(1) The State Government shall accord first preference in allotment of dwelling units to households headed by women and to survivors of domestic violence who have no adequate shelter.

(2) Verification of eligibility for such categories shall be carried out through a summary inquiry and report from the local Protection Officer or Women and Child Development Department.

75. Guidelines for accessible and barrier-free housing.- (1) All housing projects under this Act shall conform to the standards of universal accessibility and barrier-

free design as specified in the Harmonised Guidelines and Standards for Universal Accessibility issued by the Government of India.

(2) The layout and design of dwelling units, common areas, and infrastructure shall incorporate ramps, tactile paving, handrails, accessible toilets, and designated parking for differently abled persons.

(3) Periodic audits shall be conducted by a certified accessibility auditor empanelled with the State Government.

76. Women-led cooperative housing societies.- (1) The State Government may, by notification, encourage and support the formation of women-led cooperative housing societies for in-situ development or construction of housing units.

(2) Such societies shall be eligible for additional incentives including land allotment on concessional rates, priority in sanctioning loans, and technical support from government agencies.

77. Gender-responsive planning in slum redevelopment.- (1) Every slum redevelopment plan shall incorporate gender-responsive components, including safety features such as adequate street lighting, community toilets for women, crèche facilities, and community halls.

(2) Women shall be mandatorily consulted during preparation of rehabilitation plans, layout designs, and social impact assessments.

(3) An annual Gender Impact Report shall be prepared by the Competent Authority and placed before the State Housing Board.

PART IX

MONITORING, REVIEW, AND REPORTING

CHAPTER XVI

PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

78. Annual Housing Access and Homelessness Report.- (1) The State Government shall prepare and publish, before the 31st day of March every year, an Annual Housing Access and Homelessness Report detailing,—

- (a) the total number of housing units constructed and allotted;
- (b) the number of beneficiaries in different income and social categories;
- (c) the progress made in rehabilitation of homeless and slum-dwelling families; and
- (d) such other parameters as may be prescribed.

(2) The report shall be laid before the State Legislature and made available to the public through digital platforms.

79. Performance audit of housing schemes.- (1) Every major housing scheme implemented under this Act shall undergo a performance audit once in two years by an independent agency empanelled by the Comptroller and Auditor General or any authority designated by the State Government.

(2) The audit shall evaluate the scheme's efficiency, transparency, financial compliance, and beneficiary satisfaction.

(3) The audit report shall be placed in the public domain within ninety days of its receipt.

80. Third-party social audits and impact assessments.- (1) The State Government shall ensure third-party social audits and impact assessments for all projects exceeding a value of ten crore rupees or displacing more than fifty families.

(2) Such audits shall be conducted by civil society organisations, academic institutions, or audit firms registered for this purpose.

(3) The findings of social audits shall be presented in a public forum and published on the official website of the Housing Department.

81. District Housing Scorecards and State-Level Dashboards.- (1) Every District Collector shall publish a District Housing Scorecard on a quarterly basis, indicating key indicators including sanction, completion, occupancy, grievance redressal, and inclusion metrics.

(2) The State Government shall maintain a real-time Housing Dashboard integrating data from all districts, accessible to the public.

82. Transparency in beneficiary lists and housing allotments.- (1) The list of eligible beneficiaries, provisional and final allotments, and waiting lists for housing projects shall be published on the notice boards of local authorities and on the official website of the implementing agency.

(2) Allotment proceedings shall be video-recorded and uploaded for public viewing.

(3) Any person aggrieved by exclusion or erroneous allotment may prefer a written appeal within thirty days to the Appellate Committee constituted under this Act, whose decision shall be final and binding.

CHAPTER XVII

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AND OMBUDSMAN

83. State Housing Ombudsman and District Forums.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish a State Housing Ombudsman to inquire into complaints and grievances arising out of the implementation of this Act.

(2) The Ombudsman shall be a person who is or has been a District Judge or has held a post equivalent to Secretary to the State Government, and shall be appointed for a term of three years, extendable by another term of two years.

(3) The Ombudsman shall have jurisdiction to,—

(a) hear grievances pertaining to beneficiary identification, allotment, relocation, construction quality, and service delivery;

(b) direct the Competent Authority or any other implementing agency to take such action as may be necessary for redressal; and

(c) recommend disciplinary or penal action against erring officials or agencies.

(4) District-level Housing Grievance Forums shall be constituted by the State Government in every district for initial grievance redressal under the supervision of the District Collector.

(5) The procedure, powers, and functions of the Ombudsman and District Forums shall be such as may be prescribed.

84. Time-bound redressal mechanisms.- (1) Every grievance submitted under this Act shall be acknowledged within three working days and shall be resolved within thirty days from the date of its receipt.

(2) In case of grievances involving eviction, displacement, or denial of shelter, such grievances shall be disposed of within fifteen days.

(3) The Competent Authority shall record reasons in writing for delay, if any, in disposal of grievance beyond the prescribed period.

(4) A monthly status report of grievances received, pending, and resolved shall be published on the official website of the implementing agency.

85. Online RTI-compatible tracking of grievances.- (1) The State Government shall maintain a centralised digital platform for lodging, tracking, and resolution of grievances under this Act.

(2) The portal shall be compatible with the Right to Information Act, 2005, and shall enable—

(a) submission of complaints with supporting documents;

(b) status tracking of each grievance with unique registration number;

(c) access to Billion taken reports and redressal timelines; and

(d) feedback and rating mechanism for complainants.

(3) All data related to grievances shall be maintained in such form and for such period as may be prescribed.

86. Appeals and review boards.- (1) Any person aggrieved by an order or non-action of the District Forum or the Competent Authority may prefer an appeal to the State Housing Ombudsman within thirty days of such order or inaction.

(2) The Ombudsman may, after giving an opportunity of being heard to the parties concerned, pass such order as deemed appropriate, including interim relief or directions.

(3) The State Government may constitute a Review Board comprising retired High Court judges, technical experts, and representatives of civil society to review systemic grievances and policy implementation lapses annually.

(4) The decision of the Ombudsman or Review Board, as applicable, shall be binding on all implementing authorities.

87. Protection of whistle-blowers and grievance petitioners.- (1) No person who has filed a grievance or complaint under this Act shall be victimised, threatened, or penalised for such Act.

(2) The State Government shall notify protective measures for whistle-blowers, including—

(a) confidentiality of identity;

(b) relocation assistance in case of credible threat; and

(c) initiation of disciplinary or criminal Billion against any person found guilty of harassment or intimidation.

(3) Any such incident of victimisation shall be reported to the State Housing Ombudsman for immediate intervention.

CHAPTER XVIII

PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

88. Penalties for violation of housing rights.- (1) Any public servant or authority who wilfully denies or obstructs access to housing benefits under this Act shall be liable to disciplinary proceedings and a penalty which may extend to twenty-five thousand rupees.

(2) In cases involving negligence causing homelessness or denial of due entitlements, the concerned official shall be liable for compensation as may be determined by the Ombudsman.

89. Penalties for unauthorized evictions and demolitions.- (1) No eviction or demolition shall be carried out in violation of the procedures laid down under this Act or any guidelines issued by the State Government.

(2) Any person or authority causing such illegal eviction shall be punishable with—

- (a) imprisonment which may extend to six months, or
- (b) fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, or both.

(3) The affected persons shall be entitled to immediate rehabilitation and interim compensation as prescribed.

90. Offences by developers and contractors.- (1) If any developer, builder, or contractor,—

- (a) fails to deliver housing units within the stipulated period without lawful justification;
- (b) uses substandard materials or violates approved plans; or
- (c) commits fraud in beneficiary selection or land allotment;

he shall be liable to a penalty not less than fifty thousand rupees and which may extend to five lakh rupees, and debarment from future projects.

(2) Repeat violations shall attract criminal prosecution under applicable laws.

91. Enforcement of rehabilitation orders.- (1) Any order for rehabilitation, relocation, or re-housing passed by the Competent Authority, Ombudsman, or Court shall be binding and enforceable as a decree of a civil court.

(2) Non-compliance with such order shall be deemed an offence and attract penal consequences under Section 88 or 89, as applicable.

92. Monitoring and prosecution by designated authorities.- (1) The State Government shall designate nodal officers at the State and District levels to monitor compliance with this Act and initiate prosecution for violations.

(2) Such officers shall have the power to—

- (a) inspect project sites and records;
- (b) summon officials or contractors; and
- (c) file complaints before appropriate forums.

CHAPTER XIX

POWER TO MAKE RULES AND REGULATIONS

93. Power to make rules and issue guidelines.- (1) The State Government may, by notification, make rules to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing powers, such rules may provide for,—

- (a) the constitution and procedure of grievance forums and ombudsman;
- (b) forms and formats for beneficiary registration, allotment, and appeals;
- (c) timelines and documentation for project implementation; and
- (d) any other matter necessary for effective implementation.

94. Delegation of powers and issuance of model policies.- (1) The State Government may, by order, delegate any of its powers under this Act to the Competent Authority or other officer subject to such conditions as may be specified.

(2) The State Government may issue model policy frameworks and operational guidelines to ensure uniformity and coordination across districts.

95. Power to amend schedules and forms.- The State Government may, by notification, add to, amend, or vary any of the Schedules or forms appended to this Act.

96. Notification of implementing agencies and authorities.- The State Government may, by notification, designate such departments, public agencies, corporations, or municipal bodies as implementing agencies for different provisions of this Act.

97. Jurisdictional bar on civil courts.- (1) No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceeding in respect of any matter which the Ombudsman, Competent Authority, or any other authority under this Act is empowered to determine.

(2) Nothing in this section shall bar the jurisdiction of the High Court under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution of India.

CHAPTER XX

REPEALS, SAVINGS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

98. Repeal of inconsistent provisions in earlier laws.- (1) On and from the commencement of this Act, the provisions of any State law, rule, or notification inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall stand repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) Such repeal shall not affect the previous operation of any scheme, order, or Billions taken under the repealed laws.

99. Continuance of existing rights, schemes, and settlements.- (1) All ongoing housing schemes, land titles, beneficiary lists, and rehabilitation settlements validly issued under any law for the time being in force shall be deemed to have been made under this Act.

(2) Any right, entitlement, or benefit accrued under the repealed enactments shall not be affected merely by reason of repeal and shall continue to be enforceable unless contrary to this Act.

THE KARNATAKA PROTECTION OF SENIOR CITIZENS FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide a comprehensive and enforceable legal framework for the protection of senior citizens in the State of Karnataka from abuse, neglect, abandonment, and financial exploitation;

And whereas it is the constitutional duty of the State under Articles 41 and 46 of the Constitution of India to secure the right to public assistance, dignity, and social welfare for the elderly, particularly those in need of care, protection, and support;

And whereas the growing vulnerabilities of the ageing population demand proactive legal measures to ensure their safety, inclusion, health, shelter, and access to justice;

And whereas it is essential to recognize the rights of senior citizens to live in security and dignity, to promote intergenerational solidarity, and to institutionalize safeguards against mental, physical, emotional, and economic abuse;

And whereas it is necessary to establish grievance redressal mechanisms, support services, monitoring authorities, and welfare schemes to enable an integrated approach for protecting the rights and well-being of senior citizens in both familial and institutional settings;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PART I PRELIMINARY

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent and commencement. (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Protection of Senior Citizens from Abuse and Neglect Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) "abuse" means any physical, emotional, sexual, verbal, or economic harm or ill-treatment inflicted upon a senior citizen, including through neglect or abandonment;

(b) "appropriate authority" means the authority appointed by the State Government under section 12 of this Act;

(c) "caregiver" includes any person responsible for the care of a senior citizen, whether related by blood, marriage, legal obligation, or hired under any arrangement;

(d) "District Welfare Officer" means the officer appointed by the State Government under this Act to implement the provisions thereof at the district level;

(e) "financial exploitation" means the unauthorized or improper use of a senior citizen's funds, property, assets, or financial instruments;

- (f) "institution" means any residential, medical, or caregiving establishment providing services to senior citizens, whether run by the Government, private entities, or voluntary organisations;
- (g) "legal aid" includes free legal services as defined under section 2(c) of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (Act No. 39 of 1987);
- (h) "maintenance" means the provision of food, clothing, residence, medical attendance and treatment;
- (i) "neglect" means the failure of any person having care or custody of a senior citizen to provide such person the basic necessities of life;
- (j) "notification" means a notification published in the Official Gazette;
- (k) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (l) "property" includes movable and immovable property and includes rights, interests, titles and claims upon such property;
- (m) "senior citizen" means any person who is a citizen of India and has attained the age of sixty years or more and resides in the State of Karnataka;
- (n) "State Government" means the Government of Karnataka;
- (o) "welfare measures" includes schemes, programmes, or services provided by the Government or authorized institutions for the benefit of senior citizens.

3. Declaration of State Policy for Protection of Senior Citizens.- (1) The State Government declares that the protection, dignity, and holistic well-being of senior citizens shall be a matter of public interest and State responsibility under Article 41 and Article 46 of the Constitution of India.

(2) The State shall strive to create a supportive environment for senior citizens to lead independent, dignified, and secure lives, free from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

(3) The State shall ensure that senior citizens have equitable access to justice, healthcare, social security, and other welfare mechanisms.

4. Objectives and scope of the Act.-The objectives of this Act shall be,—

- (a) to establish a statutory framework for the prevention of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of senior citizens;
- (b) to affirm and protect the fundamental rights of senior citizens to live with dignity, safety, and security;
- (c) to mandate institutional, familial, and community-based responsibilities for the care and protection of senior citizens;
- (d) to provide for the creation of grievance redressal mechanisms, legal aid, and emergency support services for senior citizens;
- (e) to ensure access to health care, financial security, and property rights of senior citizens;
- (f) to promote active ageing through social participation and community engagement; and
- (g) to supplement and strengthen the provisions of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007 (Central Act 56 of 2007), insofar as applicable to the State of Karnataka.

PART II
RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS OF SENIOR CITIZENS

CHAPTER II
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF SENIOR CITIZENS

5. Right to Live with Dignity and Safety.-(1) Every senior citizen shall have the right to live with dignity, equality, and personal liberty, and to be free from discrimination, harassment, or marginalization on any ground, including but not limited to age, gender, physical or mental health status, financial condition, or social dependency.

(2) The State Government shall take all necessary administrative, legislative, and policy measures to ensure safe, secure, and humane living conditions for senior citizens in all settings, including.

- (a) Private residences;
- (b) Public and private elder care institutions;
- (c) Public places and transport facilities; and
- (d) Government shelters and assisted living facilities.

(3) All public and private service providers dealing with senior citizens shall ensure that their services, interactions, and conduct uphold the inherent dignity and autonomy of such persons, and avoid any act that is demeaning, coercive, or disrespectful.

(4) The right to dignity shall include, but not be limited to, respect for privacy, personal space, freedom of choice, and informed consent in all aspects of care, treatment, and decision-making.

6. Right to Protection from Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation.-(1) Every senior citizen shall have the right to be protected from any form of physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, or psychological abuse, as well as from acts of neglect, abandonment, or exploitation, whether committed by family members, relatives, caregivers, institutions, or third parties.

(2) The State Government shall establish and operationalize, in every district, a 24x7 toll-free Senior Citizens' Helpline with linkage to an Emergency Response and Rescue Unit for immediate assistance in cases of abuse, violence, or neglect.

(3) Upon receipt of a complaint or credible information relating to abuse or neglect, the District Welfare Officer or other designated authority shall.

- (a) Initiate a prompt, impartial, and confidential inquiry;
- (b) Coordinate with the police and medical authorities where necessary; and
- (c) Ensure the safety and well-being of the affected senior citizen, including temporary shelter, medical care, and counseling, as required.

(4) The provisions of this section shall operate in addition to and not in derogation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

7. Right to Access Essential Services.- (1) Every senior citizen shall have the right to access essential public and private services on an equitable, priority, and non-discriminatory basis, including.

- (a) Primary and specialized healthcare;
 - (b) Safe and affordable housing or assisted living facilities;
 - (c) Public transportation and mobility assistance;
 - (d) Nutrition, sanitation, and social security schemes;
 - (e) Legal services and documentation support.
- (2) All government-run hospitals, primary health centres, and urban health missions shall.
- (a) Maintain exclusive counters and express queues for senior citizens;
 - (b) Reserve a minimum percentage of beds for elderly patients;
 - (c) Ensure domiciliary medical services for bed-ridden or home-bound elderly.
- (3) No senior citizen shall be denied any essential service on the ground of financial incapacity, lack of immediate family, or absence of identification documents, subject to verification by authorized officials.

8. Right to Legal Aid and Grievance Redressal.- (1) Every senior citizen shall be entitled to receive free legal aid and representation, in accordance with the provisions of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, for the enforcement of rights guaranteed under this Act or any other applicable law.

- (2) The State Government shall establish a District Grievance Redressal Authority in every district, comprising.
- (a) A retired judicial officer not below the rank of District Judge — Chairperson;
 - (b) The District Welfare Officer — Member;
 - (c) A representative from an accredited civil society organization working with elderly persons — Member.
- (3) The Grievance Redressal Authority shall have powers akin to a Civil Court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for the purpose of summoning witnesses, receiving evidence, and issuing directions to concerned departments.
- (4) The Authority shall maintain a digital case management system and resolve complaints preferably within ninety days of receipt, and shall submit quarterly reports to the State Monitoring Authority established under this Act.

9. Right to Social Inclusion and Participation.- (1) Every senior citizen shall have the right to participate fully and actively in cultural, educational, recreational, and developmental activities within the community and society at large.

- (2) The State Government and local bodies shall.
- (a) Promote intergenerational programs in schools and colleges;
 - (b) Encourage voluntary engagement of senior citizens in community mentoring, teaching, and local governance;
 - (c) Ensure accessibility in public spaces and digital platforms.
- (3) No senior citizen shall be forcibly isolated, confined, or institutionalized without lawful justification, and any act of social exclusion or forced seclusion shall be deemed a violation of this Act.

10. Protection of Property Rights and Financial Security.- (1) The movable and immovable property of senior citizens, whether self-acquired or ancestral, shall be protected

from illegal dispossession, fraudulent transfer, coercive alienation, or misuse by any person, including family members or legal heirs.

(2) Any transfer of property, title, asset, or money made by a senior citizen under fraud, coercion, undue influence, or without informed consent, shall be presumed voidable and may be annulled by the competent authority, including the Maintenance Tribunal under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007.

(3) The State Government shall coordinate with public and private financial institutions, including banks and insurance companies, to.

(a) Issue operational protocols for safeguarding the financial interests of senior citizens;

(b) Prevent fraudulent withdrawals or unauthorized changes in nominations;

(c) Designate senior citizen grievance officers in each branch.

(4) The State Government shall notify rules for the financial guardianship or fiduciary representation of incapacitated senior citizens, in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, where applicable.

CHAPTER III

ENTITLEMENTS AND WELFARE MEASURES

11. Entitlement to healthcare, medical support, and insurance.- (1) Every senior citizen shall be entitled to accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare services in public and private institutions in accordance with rules made under this Act.

(2) Government hospitals and primary health centres shall designate exclusive outpatient counters and priority queues for senior citizens.

(3) The State Government shall notify a scheme for free or subsidised annual health check-ups, emergency care, and mobile health services for senior citizens, especially in rural and tribal areas.

(4) Every senior citizen shall be entitled to enrolment in a government-backed health insurance scheme, with premium subsidies based on means-tested criteria.

(5) The Department of Health and Family Welfare shall develop geriatric wards in district hospitals and establish specialist training programs for geriatric care.

12. Provision of old-age homes and day-care centres.- (1) The State Government shall establish at least one government-managed old-age home in every district, with appropriate staffing, safety standards, and periodic inspections.

(2) The State Government may license, support, or partner with voluntary and private organisations to operate additional old-age homes, subject to prescribed guidelines.

(3) Every old-age home shall maintain registers of admissions, provide dignified living conditions, ensure non-discrimination, and allow visitation rights.

(4) The State Government shall establish day-care centres and community interaction spaces in urban and rural areas to promote engagement, recreation, and mental stimulation among senior citizens.

(5) Minimum standards, staffing norms, and complaint redressal systems for such facilities shall be notified by rules made under this Act.

13. Reservation in public transport, utilities, and civic amenities.- (1) Every senior citizen shall be entitled to priority access and reserved seating in public transport including buses, trains, and urban transit systems.

(2) State transport undertakings shall ensure issuance of concessional travel passes or digital smartcards for eligible senior citizens.

(3) Public utility service providers, including electricity, water, and gas departments, shall establish senior citizen counters and provide home-visit options for bill payments and grievance resolution.

(4) Local authorities shall ensure the installation of ramps, railings, rest zones, and signage in public places, hospitals, banks, and parks, in accordance with universal accessibility norms.

14. Concessions in taxation, tariffs, and public services.- (1) Senior citizens shall be eligible for property tax rebates, utility bill concessions, and exemptions or reductions in fees for public services, as may be prescribed.

(2) The State Government shall coordinate with municipal bodies and public agencies to implement such concessions through digital and offline mechanisms.

(3) The Finance Department shall publish annual notifications detailing the categories and thresholds of concessions applicable under this section.

(4) No senior citizen shall be denied service on the ground of availing such concessions.

15. Support for geriatric counselling and mental health services.- (1) The State Government shall establish counselling centres and deploy trained psychologists or counsellors in every district to provide geriatric counselling and therapy services.

(2) Such services shall include support for depression, isolation, dementia, substance dependence, elder grief, and family conflict.

(3) A 24-hour confidential counselling helpline shall be maintained for senior citizens, and widely publicised through government communication channels.

(4) All institutions serving senior citizens, including old-age homes and hospitals, shall be mandated to integrate basic mental health services and referral systems.

(5) The State Government shall collaborate with academic and mental health institutions to train human resources in geriatric psychology and therapy.

16. Welfare schemes for economically weaker and destitute senior citizens.- (1) The State Government shall maintain a Senior Citizens Welfare Register at the district level, identifying all economically weaker, destitute, abandoned, or homeless senior citizens.

(2) Persons registered under sub-section (1) shall be eligible for special monthly maintenance grants, subsidised ration, clothing, and emergency shelter services.

(3) The Department of Social Welfare shall frame targeted schemes for financial inclusion, skill-based livelihoods, and social pensions for vulnerable elderly populations.

(4) A dedicated welfare fund for senior citizens shall be created by the State Government for the implementation of welfare schemes, sourced from budgetary allocations, CSR funds, and voluntary contributions.

(5) No eligible senior citizen shall be denied any welfare benefit solely due to lack of identification documents; alternative verification procedures shall be notified by rules.

PART III
INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER IV

KARNATAKA SENIOR CITIZENS WELFARE AUTHORITY

17. Establishment of Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a statutory authority to be known as the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”) for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue or be sued.

(3) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located at Bengaluru, and it may establish regional offices at such other places as the State Government may deem necessary.

18. Composition and Constitution of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely.

- (a) A retired officer of the Indian Administrative Service not below the rank of Principal Secretary, nominated by the State Government — Chairperson;
- (b) Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development — Member;
- (c) Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare — Member;
- (d) Director General of Police or his nominee not below the rank of Inspector General — Member;
- (e) Three eminent persons from the fields of gerontology, law, and social work — Members;
- (f) A legal expert not below the rank of Additional Advocate General — Member;
- (g) Member Secretary — to be appointed by the State Government from among senior officers of the rank of Joint Secretary or above.

(2) The Authority shall be constituted within a period of six months from the commencement of this Act.

(3) No person shall be eligible to be appointed as a Member of the Authority if they have been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude or declared insolvent.

19. Powers and Functions of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall perform the following functions, namely.

- (a) Recommend and oversee the implementation of welfare policies for senior citizens;
- (b) Advise the State Government on legislative and administrative measures for the protection of senior citizens;
- (c) Monitor and evaluate the performance of welfare institutions and homes;
- (d) Frame regulations and standards for care institutions and senior welfare schemes;
- (e) Coordinate with civil society organisations, NGOs, and local self-governments;
- (f) Conduct awareness campaigns and promote research on issues related to senior citizens;
- (g) Maintain a centralised database of registered care institutions and vulnerable seniors.

(2) The Authority shall have the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for the purposes of summoning, production of records, and inspection of facilities.

20. Term of Office, Conditions of Service, and Removal of Members.- (1) The non-ex officio Members of the Authority shall hold office for a term of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term only.

(2) A Member may resign from his office by writing under his hand addressed to the State Government and such resignation shall take effect upon acceptance.

(3) The State Government may remove any Member before the expiry of their term if they—
(a) have been adjudged insolvent;
(b) have been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude;
(c) are physically or mentally incapacitated;
(d) have abused their position so as to render their continuation detrimental to public interest.

Provided that no removal shall be made unless the Member has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

21. Appointment of Chief Executive Officer and Staff .- (1) The State Government shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Authority, who shall be of the rank of Special Secretary or equivalent.

(2) The CEO shall be responsible for day-to-day administration, implementation of decisions of the Authority, and supervision of its staff.

(3) The Authority may, with the approval of the State Government, appoint such officers and staff as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions.

22. Regional and District Senior Citizens Welfare Committees.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute Regional and District Senior Citizens Welfare Committees in each division and district, respectively, to aid and assist the Authority.

(2) The Committees shall function under the supervision of the Authority and perform such functions as may be delegated to them, including inspection, grievance handling, and community outreach.

23. Delegation of Powers and Constitution of Advisory Panels.- (1) The Authority may, by order, delegate such of its powers and functions as it may deem necessary to any Member, officer, or Committee constituted under this Act.

(2) The Authority may constitute Advisory Panels comprising experts, retired public servants, and senior citizen representatives to provide inputs on policy, legal aid, mental health, and care systems.

CHAPTER V

SENIOR CITIZENS PROTECTION OFFICERS

24. Appointment of Protection Officers at State, District, and Taluk Levels.- (1) The State Government shall appoint or designate a Senior Citizens Protection Officer (hereinafter referred to as “Protection Officer”) at the State, District, and Taluk levels.

(2) The Protection Officers shall be public servants and may be drawn from existing cadres in the Departments of Social Welfare, Police, or Revenue.

(3) The State Government shall ensure adequate gender representation and training among such appointed officers.

25. Powers and Functions of Protection Officers.- (1) The Protection Officer shall,—

- (a) Monitor and report instances of abuse or neglect;
- (b) Conduct home visits, interviews, and preliminary assessments;
- (c) File complaints before the Grievance Redressal Authorities or appropriate courts;
- (d) Coordinate with law enforcement, medical officers, and social welfare agencies;
- (e) Maintain a confidential database of high-risk or vulnerable senior citizens.

(2) The Protection Officer shall have the authority to enter and inspect any place of residence or institution upon receipt of credible information of abuse or neglect, subject to guidelines issued by the Authority.

26. Duties Regarding Prevention of Abuse and Neglect.- (1) It shall be the duty of every Protection Officer to take proactive measures to prevent the abuse, neglect, or abandonment of senior citizens, including.

- (a) Conducting awareness drives in local communities;
- (b) Identifying at-risk households and senior citizens;
- (c) Referring cases to appropriate legal or social forums.

(2) The Protection Officer shall submit a monthly report of preventive actions taken to the District Committee and the Authority.

27. Reporting Mechanisms and Inspection Powers.- (1) The Protection Officer shall establish and maintain robust and accessible channels for the lodging of complaints, including mobile helplines, physical complaint centres, and digital portals.

(2) Upon receipt of a complaint, the Protection Officer shall register the matter and conduct a preliminary inquiry within fifteen days.

(3) The Protection Officer shall have inspection powers with or without prior notice in cases of emergency or suspected abuse.

Provided that the inspection must be carried out with due regard to the privacy and dignity of the senior citizen concerned.

28. Training and Capacity Building of Protection Officers.- (1) The State Government shall ensure periodic training and orientation of Protection Officers in the following areas—

- (a) Legal rights of senior citizens;
- (b) Psycho-social care and counselling techniques;
- (c) Crisis response and trauma-informed care;
- (d) Ethics and sensitivity in dealing with elderly persons.

(2) The training shall be conducted through recognized institutions and may involve partnerships with NGOs, police academies, and medical colleges.

PART IV

PREVENTION OF ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND EXPLOITATION

CHAPTER VI

PROTECTION MECHANISMS AGAINST ABUSE

29. Definition and categorization of abuse and neglect.- (1) For the purposes of this Act, "abuse" of a senior citizen shall include, but not be limited to, any act or omission that causes

physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, or institutional harm, harassment, or deprivation of rights.

(2) "Neglect" shall include the failure to provide adequate food, shelter, medical care, hygiene, or protection, by a person or institution responsible for the care of a senior citizen.

(3) The categories of abuse shall include—

- (a) physical abuse, including assault, over-medication, and restraint;
- (b) emotional and psychological abuse, including verbal threats, humiliation, and isolation;
- (c) sexual abuse, including molestation or non-consensual acts;
- (d) financial abuse, including fraud, coercion, or wrongful appropriation of assets;
- (e) institutional abuse, including neglect or mistreatment in care facilities;
- (f) abandonment or desertion.

(4) The State Government may, by notification, include further categories of abuse as may be warranted in public interest.

30. Mandatory reporting of abuse by individuals and institutions.- (1) Any person, including but not limited to family members, neighbours, caregivers, health professionals, legal practitioners, and institutional staff, who has knowledge or reasonable suspicion of the abuse or neglect of a senior citizen, shall mandatorily report such incident to the designated Protection Officer or the local police station.

(2) Every institution, including hospitals, old-age homes, and care centres, shall establish internal reporting procedures and designate nodal officers for the reporting of abuse cases.

(3) Failure to report, without reasonable cause, shall attract penal consequences under this Act.

Provided that no legal or disciplinary action shall lie against a person making a report in good faith.

31. Protection of whistle-blowers and complainants.- (1) No person who makes a complaint or report under section 24 shall be subjected to victimization, threats, harassment, or retaliatory action by any person, authority, or institution.

(2) The State Government shall prescribe procedures for the anonymous filing of complaints and secure channels of communication.

(3) Any person who intimidates, coerces, or retaliates against a whistle-blower or complainant shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees, or with both.

32. Emergency protection orders and interim relief.- (1) Upon receipt of a complaint indicating imminent threat or harm to a senior citizen, the Protection Officer may apply to the Magistrate having jurisdiction for an emergency protection order.

(2) The Magistrate may, after prima facie satisfaction, pass such orders as may be necessary for the immediate protection, medical treatment, temporary shelter, or separation of the senior citizen from the alleged perpetrator.

Provided that such order shall be passed within seventy-two hours of receipt of the application.

(3) The Magistrate may also order interim maintenance, where warranted

33. Prohibition of abandonment of senior citizens.-(1) No person having care or custody of a senior citizen shall abandon or cause to be abandoned such person in any public place, hospital, or other location with intent to sever responsibility or familial ties.

(2) Abandonment of a senior citizen shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, or with both.

Provided that voluntary institutionalization of a senior citizen with their consent shall not amount to abandonment.

34. Safeguards against financial fraud, coercion, and exploitation.- (1) No person shall obtain any transfer of property, money, or rights from a senior citizen by way of coercion, deception, fraud, misrepresentation, undue influence, or mental pressure.

(2) Any such transfer shall be deemed voidable under applicable laws and may be declared null and void upon petition to the appropriate civil court.

(3) Financial institutions shall adopt safeguards, including alert systems and reporting mechanisms, to detect and prevent suspicious transactions or exploitative practices involving senior citizens.

(4) The State Government may prescribe guidelines for banks, insurance companies, and digital platforms in this regard.

35. Special provisions for vulnerable senior citizens.- (1) The State Government shall formulate specific policies and schemes for the protection of vulnerable categories of senior citizens including.

(a) widows or widowers without family support,

(b) physically or mentally disabled senior citizens,

(c) destitute or homeless elders,

(d) senior citizens belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, or minority communities,

(e) those residing in conflict-affected or remote areas.

(2) The Protection Officers shall maintain a special registry of such vulnerable individuals for the purpose of monitoring, outreach, and intervention.

(3) Appropriate shelters, legal assistance, and special relief measures shall be provided on priority basis.

CHAPTER VII

INSTITUTIONAL AND CAREGIVER ACCOUNTABILITY

36. Licensing and regulation of private old-age homes.- (1) No private old-age home or elder care facility shall operate without a valid license issued by the competent authority as prescribed.

(2) The licensing authority shall ensure compliance with prescribed standards of hygiene, safety, staffing, nutrition, healthcare, and grievance redressal.

(3) The license shall be renewable every three years, subject to audit and inspection.

37. Code of conduct for caregiving institutions.-

(1) Every caregiving institution shall adopt a Code of Conduct, detailing—

(a) professional ethics and respect for dignity of senior citizens,

(b) procedures for handling abuse or emergency situations,

(c) minimum standards for care, nutrition, hygiene, and recreation.

(2) Any deviation from such code shall invite disciplinary and penal consequences, including suspension of license.

38. Registration and monitoring of professional caregivers.- (1) All professional caregivers working in institutional or private settings shall be registered with the District Welfare Officer and possess minimum training and character verification as prescribed.

(2) The Authority shall maintain a central digital registry of certified caregivers, accessible to the public.

(3) Periodic monitoring, evaluation, and sensitization programs shall be conducted for all registered caregivers.

39. Grievance redressal mechanisms in caregiving institutions.- (1) Every caregiving institution shall establish an internal Grievance Redressal Committee to handle complaints made by or on behalf of senior citizens.

(2) All grievances shall be recorded, addressed within fifteen days, and reported quarterly to the District Senior Citizens Welfare Committee.

(3) Failure to address grievances adequately may result in fines, suspension of registration, or closure of the institution.

40. Penalties for abuse and neglect in institutional settings.- (1) Any institutional authority or employee found guilty of abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a senior citizen shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years or with fine up to two lakh rupees, or both.

(2) Repeated offences shall lead to permanent disqualification from caregiving services and blacklisting of the institution.

41. Framework for caregiver support, counselling, and training.- (1) The State Government shall develop and implement modules for capacity building, stress management, and psychological support for caregivers.

(2) Periodic certification and refresher courses shall be made mandatory for continued service.

(3) Counselling services shall be made available to caregivers facing mental or emotional strain.

Provided that no caregiver shall be forced to work beyond reasonable hours or conditions detrimental to their well-being.

PART V

TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED SAFETY AND SUPPORT

CHAPTER VIII

TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS FOR SENIOR CITIZEN SAFETY

42. State Senior Citizen Helpline and Online Portal.- (1) The State Government shall establish and maintain a dedicated 24x7 Senior Citizen Helpline in every district to address complaints, provide emergency assistance, counselling, and support services.

(2) An integrated Online Portal shall be developed to facilitate registration of complaints, tracking of welfare schemes, access to legal aid, medical information, and status of grievances filed.

(3) The helpline and portal shall be available in Kannada and other regional languages as prescribed.

Provided that the portal shall be made accessible for persons with disabilities in accordance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

43. Mobile-based applications for emergency assistance.-(1) The State Government shall launch a mobile application specifically designed for senior citizens, enabling features such as panic button, emergency contacts, location sharing, voice commands, and access to nearby help centres.

(2) The mobile application shall be integrated with the State Emergency Response System and Police Control Room.

(3) It shall be ensured that the application operates on basic smartphones and low-bandwidth networks to ensure accessibility in rural areas.

44. Use of AI and digital surveillance for elder safety.- (1) The State Government may, in consultation with the appropriate authority, develop Artificial Intelligence-based surveillance systems in public spaces, old-age homes, and assisted living facilities to detect instances of distress, neglect, or abuse.

(2) Any such technology shall ensure minimal intrusion and shall adhere to privacy norms prescribed under law.

(3) Surveillance data shall be stored securely and accessed only for purposes of investigation or response to emergencies by authorised personnel.

45. Establishment of digital health records for senior citizens.- (1) The State Government shall facilitate the creation and maintenance of individualised digital health records for all registered senior citizens in the State.

(2) These records shall be accessible to authorised healthcare providers and emergency responders, subject to the consent of the senior citizen concerned.

Provided that in cases of medical emergency, implied consent may be presumed solely for treatment purposes.

46. Integration with police emergency response systems.- (1) The State Government shall ensure full integration of senior citizen support systems with the existing police emergency and response infrastructure, including dial 112 and cybercrime cells.

(2) Training and capacity building of police personnel shall be undertaken to sensitise them to senior citizen-specific needs and protocols.

47. Promotion of assistive technologies and smart devices.- (1) The State shall promote the development and subsidised distribution of assistive technologies including medical alert systems, wearable devices, fall detectors, and smart home solutions tailored to the elderly.

(2) Special grants or incentives may be provided to innovators and startups developing such devices for elder welfare.

Provided that priority shall be given to indigenous products and technologies developed in Karnataka.

48. Cyber safety awareness and digital literacy for senior citizens.- (1) The State Government shall implement regular awareness programs to educate senior citizens on cyber safety, fraud detection, and responsible digital usage.

(2) Workshops and helpline guidance shall be provided on common threats such as phishing, identity theft, financial fraud, and misinformation.

(3) Local libraries, community centres, and educational institutions shall collaborate to provide digital literacy training tailored to senior citizens.

CHAPTER IX

DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY

49. Protection of personal and medical data of senior citizens.- (1) No personal, biometric, financial, or medical data of senior citizens shall be collected, stored, processed, or disseminated without lawful authority and informed consent.

(2) Such data shall be maintained in secure and encrypted systems with strict access protocols.

(3) Data minimisation principles shall be adhered to, and data shall be retained only for as long as necessary for the purpose for which it was collected.

50. Obligations on service providers regarding data confidentiality.- (1) All public and private service providers handling senior citizens' data, including healthcare institutions, old-age homes, digital platforms, and financial institutions, shall implement data protection measures in accordance with rules made under this Act.

(2) They shall be liable for any breach, leakage, or unauthorised use of data.

(3) They shall also provide senior citizens with clear and accessible privacy policies and options to withdraw consent.

51. Consent mechanisms for digital services.- (1) Consent for the collection and processing of data shall be,-

- (a) free, informed, specific, and unambiguous;
- (b) documented in writing or electronic form; and
- (c) revocable at any time by the senior citizen.

(2) In case of guardianship or cognitive impairment, consent may be provided by a duly authorized legal guardian, subject to safeguards.

Provided that no consent shall be deemed valid if obtained under coercion, misrepresentation, or influence.

52. Compliance with Information Technology Act, 2000 and allied laws.- All digital platforms, institutions, and authorities governed under this Act shall ensure full compliance with the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and such other data protection laws and judicial pronouncements as may be applicable from time to time.

53. Penal provisions for breach of data privacy.- (1) Any person or institution that,—

- (a) unlawfully collects or processes the personal data of senior citizens;
- (b) discloses or shares such data without consent; or
- (c) negligently causes breach or leakage of such data,

shall be liable for penalty as may be prescribed, which may include fine, suspension of licence, or prosecution under applicable laws.

Provided that in cases of repeated or wilful breach, such person or institution shall also be liable for compensation to the affected senior citizen, as determined by the adjudicating authority.

PART VI
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITIES
CHAPTER X

FAMILY OBLIGATIONS AND INTER-GENERATIONAL SUPPORT

54. Legal obligation of children and heirs to maintain senior citizens.- (1) It shall be the statutory duty of all children, whether biological, adoptive, or stepchildren, and all legal heirs of a senior citizen to maintain such senior citizen and provide for their basic physical, emotional, and financial needs.

(2) Maintenance shall include provision for food, clothing, shelter, medical attendance, and reasonable recreation.

(3) Where the senior citizen is unable to maintain himself or herself from own earnings or property, the children or heirs shall be liable to maintain him or her in a manner befitting the status and lifestyle previously enjoyed.

Provided that such obligation shall continue irrespective of whether the senior citizen has transferred any movable or immovable property to such children or heirs.

(4) Any agreement or condition that attempts to waive or dilute the obligation of maintenance under this Act shall be void to that extent.

55. Provisions for monthly maintenance and medical expenses.- (1) The children or heirs of a senior citizen shall be obligated to provide a monthly allowance for maintenance, as may be required to meet the basic needs of the senior citizen, and to cover medical expenses to ensure continuity of treatment.

(2) The prescribed authority shall have the power to determine the appropriate monthly allowance based on the financial capacity of the person liable and the requirements of the senior citizen.

(3) The maintenance amount may be revised periodically based on inflation, change in economic status, or increase in healthcare costs.

Provided that in no case shall the maintenance amount fall below the minimum threshold as may be notified by the State Government.

56. Simplified procedures for claiming maintenance.- (1) Any senior citizen may file an application for maintenance before the Maintenance Tribunal constituted under this Act, either personally or through a representative.

(2) The Tribunal shall adopt a summary procedure, and every application shall be disposed of within a period not exceeding ninety days from the date of filing.

Provided that in exceptional cases involving health emergencies or homelessness, interim maintenance shall be granted within thirty days.

(3) The burden of proof shall lie on the person against whom maintenance is claimed to show why such maintenance is not due.

57. Mediation and family counselling services.- (1) The State Government shall establish family counselling centres and mediation units at the Taluk and District levels to facilitate amicable resolution of maintenance disputes and encourage family reintegration.

(2) Counselling shall be undertaken by professionally trained counsellors with expertise in elder care, family dynamics, and dispute resolution.

(3) Participation in mediation or counselling shall not be a bar to the senior citizen's right to approach the Maintenance Tribunal.

Provided that no senior citizen shall be compelled to undergo mediation if such process causes further distress or risk to well-being.

58. Penalties for wilful neglect and non-maintenance.- (1) Any person who, having the means to do so, wilfully neglects or refuses to maintain a senior citizen shall be punishable with,—

- (a) a fine which may extend to twenty-five thousand rupees; or
- (b) imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months; or
- (c) both.

(2) In addition to penal action, the Maintenance Tribunal may direct restitution of costs incurred by the State for providing institutional care or medical treatment to such senior citizen.

Provided that the Tribunal shall take into account any extenuating circumstances or bona fide inability to pay.

CHAPTER XI

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

59. Role of Resident Welfare Associations and NGOs.- (1) Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), cooperative housing societies, and local community groups shall play a proactive role in the welfare and safety of senior citizens residing within their jurisdiction.

(2) RWAs shall maintain a register of senior citizens, conduct periodic health camps, coordinate emergency responses, and facilitate access to government welfare schemes.

(3) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the field of elder care shall be recognised as key partners and may be empanelled by the State Government to implement programs under this Act.

Provided that such organisations must comply with standards of transparency, ethics, and accountability as prescribed.

60. Promotion of inter-generational bonding programs.- (1) The State Government shall implement schemes and programs in schools, colleges, and community centres to promote inter-generational understanding, respect, and emotional bonding between youth and senior citizens.

(2) Such programs may include shared learning initiatives, storytelling sessions, life skill mentorship, and collaborative volunteering projects.

(3) The Department of Education and the Department of Social Welfare shall jointly issue guidelines for incorporating inter-generational engagement into the school curriculum and community development plans.

61. Community-based safety networks for elder care.- (1) The District Administration shall promote the establishment of Community Elder Safety Networks comprising trained volunteers, local police, healthcare professionals, and welfare officers.

(2) These networks shall operate as a decentralized system for monitoring, reporting, and responding to cases of elder abuse, neglect, or distress within the locality.

(3) The networks shall work in close coordination with Protection Officers and local authorities under this Act.

Provided that participation in such networks shall be on a voluntary basis and shall not interfere with formal investigation procedures.

62. Volunteer schemes for elder companionship.- (1) The State Government shall develop and support structured volunteer programs whereby individuals, students, or retired professionals may register to offer companionship, support, or guidance to isolated or homebound senior citizens.

(2) Volunteers shall be trained and vetted, and appropriate safety and ethical guidelines shall be issued for their engagement.

(3) Incentives including certificates, awards, and recognition may be provided to encourage consistent and quality participation.

63. Recognition and awards for community elder care initiatives.- (1) The State Government shall institute annual awards to recognise outstanding contributions by individuals, RWAs, NGOs, institutions, and local bodies in promoting elder welfare, safety, and dignity.

(2) Awards may be conferred at the Taluk, District, and State levels based on criteria such as innovation, sustainability, community engagement, and impact.

(3) A dedicated committee shall be constituted by the Department of Social Welfare to identify, evaluate, and recommend recipients of such awards.

Provided that preference shall be given to initiatives benefiting economically weaker or marginalised senior citizens.

PART VII

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS

CHAPTER XII

SENIOR CITIZENS DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

64. Establishment of Senior Citizens Conciliation Centres.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish Senior Citizens Conciliation Centres in every district and at such other levels as may be prescribed, for the purpose of amicable resolution of disputes involving senior citizens, especially those pertaining to maintenance, property disputes, and abuse or neglect.

(2) The Conciliation Centres shall function under the administrative supervision of the District Legal Services Authority and in coordination with the District Senior Citizens Welfare Committee.

(3) The State Government shall frame rules regarding infrastructure, staffing, and functioning of the Conciliation Centres, including appointment of trained conciliators with specialization in geriatric care and elder law.

(4) The services of the Conciliation Centres shall be provided free of cost to senior citizens.

Provided that no dispute pending before a court shall be entertained by the Conciliation Centre unless referred by the court or with the consent of the parties.

65. Procedures for Mediation and Conciliation of Elder Abuse Cases.- (1) Every Conciliation Centre shall follow a non-adversarial, confidential, and senior citizen-sensitive process of mediation and conciliation, aimed at preserving dignity and familial harmony.

(2) The conciliators shall ensure that the consent of senior citizens is obtained freely and without coercion, and they shall be permitted to be accompanied by a support person or legal aid counsel, if required.

(3) Proceedings before the Conciliation Centre shall be concluded within a period of sixty days from the date of receipt of complaint, extendable by another thirty days for reasons to be recorded in writing.

(4) The conciliators shall submit a report of settlement or failure to conciliate to the District Senior Citizens Welfare Authority and, where appropriate, to the competent court.

66. Fast-track Adjudication of Senior Citizen Protection Cases.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the High Court, notify one or more designated courts in each district as Senior Citizen Protection Courts for the purpose of speedy trial of offences and disputes under this Act.

(2) The Protection Courts shall have the powers of a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class or a Civil Judge (Senior Division), as may be applicable.

(3) All matters filed before such courts shall be disposed of within a period of ninety days from the date of filing, and adjournments shall not be granted except for reasons recorded in writing.

(4) The courts shall provide special facilities for senior citizens, including priority listing, home-based deposition in cases of physical infirmity, and assistance for hearing or visually impaired persons.

67. Recognition and Enforcement of Conciliation Outcomes.- (1) Any settlement arrived at before a Conciliation Centre shall be reduced to writing and signed by the parties and the conciliators.

(2) Such settlement shall have the same status and enforceability as an arbitral award under Section 74 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 and shall be binding upon the parties.

(3) In the event of breach of the settlement, the aggrieved senior citizen may approach the Senior Citizen Protection Court for enforcement of the agreement.

68. Appeal Provisions Against Decisions of Conciliation Centres.- (1) Any party aggrieved by the outcome of conciliation proceedings may, within thirty days of the date of signing of the conciliation settlement or report of failure, appeal to the District Senior Citizens Welfare Authority for a review.

(2) The Authority shall hear such appeals in a summary manner and may confirm, modify, or set aside the conciliation outcome, or refer the matter to the appropriate court.

(3) The decision of the Authority under this section shall be final and binding unless challenged before a competent court.

69. Integration with Lok Adalats and Legal Services Authorities.- (1) The State Government shall ensure coordination between the Conciliation Centres and the Lok Adalats established under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, to facilitate out-of-court settlements of disputes involving senior citizens.

(2) Senior Citizens Conciliation Centres may, with the consent of parties, refer any unresolved matter to a Lok Adalat for final settlement.

(3) Legal Services Authorities shall prioritize cases involving senior citizens for free legal aid, counseling, and alternate dispute resolution.

CHAPTER XIII

LEGAL SAFEGUARDS AND JUDICIAL PROTECTION

70. Special Provisions for Protection of Property Rights.- (1) Any transfer of property, movable or immovable, by a senior citizen, made after the commencement of this Act, by way of gift, settlement, or otherwise, with the condition of maintenance, shall be deemed void if the transferee fails to provide the agreed maintenance.

(2) The senior citizen shall have the right to approach the Senior Citizen Protection Court for restoration of such property, and the court may pass appropriate orders including injunctions, eviction of unauthorized occupants, or restoration of possession.

Provided that such claim shall be made within five years of the date of transfer.

71. Legal Aid and Support for Vulnerable Senior Citizens.- (1) Every senior citizen shall be entitled to free legal aid under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

(2) The State Government shall appoint panel advocates specialized in elder law in each district to represent senior citizens before courts and authorities under this Act.

(3) Legal aid clinics shall be set up at old-age homes, geriatric clinics, and panchayat-level legal service centers for accessible legal consultations.

72. Expedited Court Procedures for Senior Citizen Cases.- (1) All courts and tribunals in the State of Karnataka shall give priority to cases involving senior citizens, particularly in matters related to property, maintenance, abuse, and neglect.

(2) Senior citizens shall have the right to request early hearing by filing an affidavit of age and urgency, which shall be recorded and disposed of within fifteen days.

(3) The Registrar General of the High Court shall issue periodic circulars ensuring time-bound listing and hearing of cases filed by or against senior citizens.

73. Protection Orders and Restraining Orders.- (1) Upon receipt of a complaint of abuse, neglect, harassment, or undue interference, the Protection Court may issue immediate protection orders, including.

- (a) Restraining the alleged abuser from approaching the senior citizen;
- (b) Eviction of the abuser from the shared household;
- (c) Prohibition of communication or financial access without consent.

(2) Protection orders shall be valid for such period as the Court deems fit and may be modified or revoked upon application by either party.

74. Provisions for Restitution of Property and Assets.- (1) Any property or asset, movable or immovable, obtained by coercion, fraud, misrepresentation, or abuse of dominance from a senior citizen shall be liable to restitution under orders of the Protection Court.

(2) The Court may direct restoration of property or its value, payment of damages, or freezing of bank accounts and assets of the wrongdoer.

(3) The Court shall also have powers to direct local authorities or police to assist in execution of such orders.

75. Criminal Penalties for Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation.- (1) Any person found guilty of intentionally abusing, neglecting, harassing, intimidating, or exploiting a senior citizen shall be punishable with.

- (a) Imprisonment of not less than six months, which may extend to three years; and
- (b) Fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees.

(2) Where the offender is a legal heir or family member, the court may additionally order disqualification from inheritance or succession.

(3) The offences under this section shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

Provided that the Court may, in appropriate cases involving first-time offenders or familial disputes, direct community service, counseling, or restorative justice mechanisms.

PART VIII
MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY
CHAPTER XIV
MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE MECHANISMS

76. Annual performance reviews of welfare schemes.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall conduct an annual performance review of all welfare schemes implemented under this Act, including healthcare, housing, nutrition, financial assistance, and counselling initiatives.

(2) The review shall be based on measurable indicators of effectiveness, accessibility, coverage, and impact on the target population of senior citizens.

(3) Each Department or agency implementing such schemes shall submit annual action-taken reports and data to the Authority within the prescribed time.

Provided that any scheme found to be ineffective or underperforming shall be subject to revision or withdrawal in consultation with the concerned Department.

77. Compliance audits of institutions and service providers.- (1) The State Government shall notify a framework for periodic compliance audits of all institutions, service providers, and caregiving facilities receiving government assistance or licensed under this Act.

(2) Such audits shall be conducted by an independent panel appointed by the Authority and shall cover safety standards, service quality, financial integrity, and compliance with senior citizen rights.

(3) Institutions found non-compliant shall be liable to corrective directives, penalties, or cancellation of licence, as deemed fit by the Authority.

Provided that institutions shall be given reasonable opportunity to be heard before any punitive action is initiated.

78. Independent evaluation of senior citizen welfare programs.- (1) The Authority shall commission third-party evaluations at least once every three years, through reputed academic institutions, civil society organizations, or professional evaluators, to assess the socio-economic and psychological impact of programs implemented under this Act.

(2) The evaluation shall include consultations with beneficiaries, stakeholders, and implementers, and shall inform evidence-based improvements in policy design and delivery.

79. Transparency and public disclosure requirements.- (1) All reports of performance reviews, audits, and evaluations shall be made available in the public domain, except where disclosure may violate personal privacy or endanger safety.

(2) The Authority shall maintain an updated website for public access to welfare scheme data, institutional compliance status, helpline performance, and redressal statistics.

Provided that all disclosures shall adhere to data protection standards as laid down in this Act and the Information Technology Act, 2000.

80. Social impact assessment and public feedback.- (1) The Authority shall carry out biennial Social Impact Assessments (SIA) to evaluate the long-term societal implications of senior citizen protection policies, particularly with respect to gender, caste, disability, and rural-urban disparities.

(2) Public hearings and stakeholder feedback mechanisms shall be organized prior to major revisions in policy or institutional framework.

(3) The findings of such assessments shall be submitted to the State Legislature and made available for public review.

CHAPTER XV

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AND CITIZEN CHARTER

81. Grievance redressal system under the Authority.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall establish and operationalize a comprehensive, accessible, and multi-tiered grievance redressal system for senior citizens and their representatives, which shall include:

(a) a toll-free, round-the-clock telephone helpline at the State and district levels;

(b) an online grievance portal integrated with the State e-Governance platform;

(c) in-person grievance reception counters at the offices of the Protection Officers and District Senior Citizens Welfare Committees; and

(d) a mobile application for real-time grievance registration and status tracking.

(2) The grievance redressal system shall provide for the registration, categorization, prioritization, assignment, and resolution of complaints within specified timeframes, and shall be user-friendly, multilingual, and accessible to persons with disabilities.

(3) Upon receipt of a complaint, a unique complaint reference number shall be generated and communicated to the complainant through electronic and telephonic means, and the complaint shall be entered into a centralized grievance tracking system.

(4) The system shall ensure transparency and accountability by providing the complainant with access to the real-time status of their complaint and by maintaining a digital record of all actions taken.

Provided that no complaint shall be rejected or closed without providing written reasons to the complainant and affording them an opportunity to be heard.

(5) The Authority shall conduct periodic audits of the grievance redressal system, including third-party assessments, to ensure efficiency, fairness, and satisfaction of complainants.

82. Time-bound resolution of complaints.- (1) All complaints received under Section 75 shall be resolved within a maximum period of thirty days from the date of receipt, unless an extension is warranted in exceptional cases, with reasons to be recorded in writing by the designated officer.

(2) Complaints involving allegations of abuse, neglect, harassment, physical or mental harm, safety concerns, or other urgent matters shall be categorized as high-priority and addressed within seventy-two hours of receipt.

(3) The designated Protection Officer or such other officer as authorized by the Authority shall be empowered to issue immediate directions, conduct home visits or inspections, and recommend or provide interim relief, including shelter, medical assistance, or legal protection.

Provided that interim protection, restraining orders, or temporary relocation of the affected senior citizen may be authorized by the Protection Officer pending final resolution of the complaint, in coordination with law enforcement or judicial authorities where necessary.

(4) All complaints shall be resolved in a manner that upholds the dignity, privacy, and autonomy of the senior citizen, and no coercive settlement shall be imposed.

83. Senior Citizen Ombudsman at State and District levels.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, appoint a Senior Citizen Ombudsman for the State and each District to oversee, supervise, and ensure the fair and effective functioning of the grievance redressal mechanisms under this Act.

(2) The Senior Citizen Ombudsman shall,-

(a) receive and inquire into appeals or complaints against delays, inaction, bias, or misconduct in

(a) grievance redressal;

(b) recommend remedial or disciplinary actions against erring officials or institutions;

(c) issue advisory guidelines to improve grievance handling and service delivery; and

(d) submit quarterly reports to the Authority on systemic issues and compliance trends.

(3) The Ombudsman shall have the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 for the purposes of summoning witnesses, requisitioning documents, conducting inspections, and enforcing attendance.

(4) The decisions of the Ombudsman shall be recommendatory in nature, but binding unless recorded otherwise by the Authority with reasons.

Provided that no appeal or inquiry shall be entertained by the Ombudsman unless the complainant has first availed the grievance redressal system under Section 75.

84. Publication of Citizen Charter for elder services.- (1) Every public and private institution, including hospitals, caregiving centres, old-age homes, service delivery agencies, and welfare departments, engaged in delivering elder care or welfare services, shall formulate, adopt, and display a comprehensive Citizen Charter.

(2) The Citizen Charter shall include,-

(a) a list of services offered;

(b) service standards and delivery timelines;

(c) fees or charges, if any, applicable to services;

(d) names and contact details of responsible officers; and

(e) grievance redressal mechanisms and escalation procedures.

(3) The Citizen Charter shall be prominently displayed in Kannada and English at all physical locations of the institution, including reception areas, notice boards, and waiting rooms, and shall also be published on their websites and affiliated digital platforms.

(4) The Charter shall be reviewed and updated annually, and failure to publish or adhere to the Charter shall be considered a contravention of this Act and may attract penalties.

85. Stakeholder consultative forums.-(1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall constitute State and District-level Stakeholder Consultative Forums to provide a platform for dialogue, policy input, and monitoring of service delivery concerning senior citizens.

(2) The Forum shall comprise,-

(a) representatives of senior citizens' associations;

- (b) family caregivers and volunteer groups;
 - (c) civil society organizations and NGOs working in elder care;
 - (d) representatives from relevant Departments including Health, Social Welfare, Housing, and Transport;
 - (e) professionals and experts in geriatrics, mental health, and public administration.
- (3) The Forums shall meet at least twice a year and may make recommendations on policy reforms, scheme improvements, capacity-building, awareness campaigns, and regulatory changes.
- (4) The Authority shall consider the recommendations of the Forums during annual planning and shall provide feedback to the Forums on action taken.
- Provided that a summary of the proceedings of each Forum shall be published on the official website of the Authority within thirty days of the meeting.

PART IX FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER XVI

FINANCE, ACCOUNTS, AND AUDIT

86. Grants and funds allocated by the State Government.- (1) The State Government shall, from time to time and at least once every financial year, allocate adequate budgetary grants to the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(2) Such grants shall be earmarked for, but not limited to, the following purposes:

- (a) implementation of welfare schemes and programmes for senior citizens;
- (b) administrative expenses, including salaries, operational costs, infrastructure, and logistics;
- (c) training and capacity-building of Protection Officers, Ombudsmen, caregivers, and related personnel;
- (d) maintenance and upgradation of the grievance redressal system, digital platforms, and helplines; and
- (e) any other activity deemed necessary by the Authority in pursuance of its objectives under this Act.

(3) The grant provided under this section shall be non-lapsable, and any unutilised amount at the end of a financial year shall automatically be carried forward to the subsequent year and retained in the accounts of the Authority.

(4) The quantum and utilization of the grants shall be subject to an annual review by the Department of Finance and the Public Accounts Committee of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly to ensure fiscal prudence and transparency.

Provided that the Authority shall submit an annual fund utilization certificate in the prescribed format, duly audited, to the Finance Department within three months from the close of each financial year.

87. Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Fund.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a dedicated fund to be known as the Karnataka

Senior Citizens Welfare Fund, to be maintained and operated by the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority.

(2) The Fund shall consist of,-

- (a) grants, loans, or financial assistance received from the Central or State Government;
- (b) voluntary contributions, donations, or bequests from individuals, trusts, foundations, institutions, and corporate entities, including those made under corporate social responsibility obligations;
- (c) fines, penalties, or monetary recoveries imposed and collected under the provisions of this Act;
- (d) interest or income derived from investments made from the Fund; and
- (e) any other source as may be specified by the State Government by notification from time to time.

(3) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Fund shall be a non-lapsable and revolving fund, and shall be applied for the following purposes,-

- (a) providing emergency financial support, including for medical, shelter, or legal aid, to destitute and vulnerable senior citizens;
- (b) funding welfare schemes, innovation pilots, community-based initiatives, and inter-generational programmes;
- (c) supporting infrastructure development for old-age homes, day-care centres, helplines, and mobile outreach units;
- (d) capacity building, training programmes, and awareness campaigns under the Act; and
- (e) any other activity consistent with the purposes of this Act as approved by the Authority.

Provided that the Fund shall not be diverted for any purpose unrelated to the welfare and protection of senior citizens.

(4) The operation and utilization of the Fund shall be subject to such financial rules and norms as may be prescribed by the State Government.

88. Levy of fees and charges for services.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, notify the levy of reasonable fees or user charges for the provision of certain specialized services or facilities rendered under this Act.

(2) Such fees or charges may be applicable for, but not limited to:

- (a) legal representation and legal aid services;
- (b) temporary shelter and assisted living facilities;
- (c) counselling, psychotherapy, and rehabilitation sessions;
- (d) caregiver registration, training, and certification programmes; and
- (e) any other specialized service delivered by the Authority or its authorized partners.

(3) The fees levied shall be affordable, progressive, and subject to regular review to ensure equity and access.

Provided that no fee or charge shall be levied on senior citizens who are:

- (a) classified as below the poverty line by the competent authority;
- (b) certified as destitute or abandoned; or
- (c) recipients of financial assistance under any government-run welfare scheme for the elderly.

(4) All revenues generated from such fees shall be deposited into the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Fund and utilized solely for the objectives of this Act.

89. Accounts, audit, and annual reports.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall maintain proper books of accounts and other relevant financial records in such form and manner as may be prescribed by the State Government in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

(2) The Authority shall prepare an annual statement of accounts for each financial year, including an income and expenditure statement, balance sheet, and fund utilization summary.

(3) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited annually by the Accountant General of Karnataka, or such other authority as may be notified by the State Government, and the audit shall include both compliance and performance auditing of financial and physical deliverables.

(4) A copy of the audited accounts and the audit report shall be submitted to the State Government within six months of the close of the financial year.

Provided that any adverse comments or material observations made in the audit report shall be rectified or acted upon within ninety days from the date of receipt of the report.

90. Presentation of reports to State Legislature.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall prepare and submit to the State Government an Annual Report detailing:

- (a) the major activities undertaken during the year;
- (b) performance outcomes of schemes and services;
- (c) audited financial statements and expenditure reports;
- (d) findings from monitoring, evaluation, and social audits;
- (e) challenges encountered and future plans.

(2) The State Government shall, as soon as may be after the receipt of the Annual Report, lay the same before both Houses of the Karnataka State Legislature along with a memorandum of action taken thereon, within six months of the close of the financial year.

(3) The Annual Report shall also be made available to the public through the Authority's website and at its offices in both Kannada and English.

PART X

OFFENCES, PENALTIES, AND ENFORCEMENT

CHAPTER XVII

OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

91. Penalty for abandonment of senior citizens.- (1) Any person who, having a legal, moral, or familial responsibility to provide care, support, or maintenance to a senior citizen, wilfully deserts, discards, or abandons such senior citizen in a public place, private dwelling, hospital, or institutional facility, without making prior adequate arrangements for the senior citizen's sustenance, safety, or medical needs, shall be deemed to have committed an offence under this Act.

(2) The offence under sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees, or with both.

(3) The court may, in addition to the punishment under sub-section (2), direct the accused to pay monetary compensation, which shall be just and reasonable having regard to the circumstances of the abandonment and the distress caused to the senior citizen.

Explanation:For the purpose of this section, “abandonment” shall include any act of leaving a senior citizen without informed consent, adequate financial means, shelter, or access to essential care.

92. Penalty for abuse and neglect by family members.- (1) Any person who is a relative, guardian, or family member of a senior citizen and who, by act or omission, subjects such senior citizen to physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional trauma, economic exploitation, or wilful neglect of care, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine not exceeding one lakh rupees, or with both.

(2) Where the abuse or neglect is found to be repeated, prolonged, or aggravated, or results in serious harm or injury, the punishment shall be imprisonment up to three years and a fine which may extend to two lakh rupees.

(3) Proceedings under this section may be initiated,-

- (a) upon a complaint made by the aggrieved senior citizen;
- (b) by any person or organisation acting bona fide on behalf of the senior citizen;
- (c) suo motu by the Protection Officer or the Authority, on credible information.

Explanation:

“Neglect” shall include failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, companionship, or any form of support necessary to maintain the dignity and wellbeing of a senior citizen.

Provided that no complaint under this section shall be dismissed solely on the ground of the complainant’s familial relationship with the accused.

93. Penalty for exploitation by institutions and caregivers.- (1) Where any person, agency, caregiving institution, or service provider entrusted with the care, custody, or responsibility of senior citizens, engages in or permits financial exploitation, physical or emotional abuse, coercion, or denial of adequate care, such person or institution shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, and with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees.

(2) Upon conviction under sub-section (1), the competent authority shall:

- (a) initiate proceedings for cancellation of licence, registration, or recognition of such institution;
- (b) disqualify the person or institution from providing elder care services for a period of not less than five years.

Provided that the Authority may, pending the conclusion of the trial, suspend the operational license of the institution as an interim measure if there is a prima facie threat to the life, safety, or dignity of the residents.

94. Offences by companies and organizations.- (1) Where an offence under this Act is committed by a company, society, trust, or any registered body of persons, every person who at the time of the commission of the offence was in charge of, and responsible to the organisation for the conduct of its business, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to punishment accordingly.

(2) No such person shall be liable under this section if they prove that the offence was committed without their knowledge or despite having exercised due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where an offence is committed by a company or organisation and it is proved that the offence was committed with the consent, connivance, or neglect of any director, manager, secretary, or other officer, such person shall also be deemed to be guilty and liable for punishment.

Explanation:

For the purposes of this section,-

- (i) “Company” means any body corporate, including a firm, society, trust, or association of persons, and
- (ii) “Director” in relation to a firm, means a partner in the firm.

95. Compounding of offences.- (1) Any offence punishable under this Act, not being an offence punishable with imprisonment for a term exceeding two years, may, before or after the institution of prosecution, be compounded by such officer or authority and in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) Compounding under sub-section (1) shall be permissible only with the free, informed, and voluntary consent of the senior citizen concerned, or in the event the senior citizen is incapacitated, by a guardian or representative duly authorised by the court.

(3) No offence under this Act shall be compounded where—

- (a) it involves serious bodily harm or grievous injury;
- (b) the accused has previously been convicted of a similar offence under this Act.

Provided that the Authority may, upon recommendation of the Ombudsman, permit compounding in exceptional humanitarian circumstances with court approval.

96. Power to prosecute and impose fines.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority, Protection Officers, or any officer specially authorised by the State Government shall have the authority to:

- (a) lodge complaints before a Magistrate of competent jurisdiction;
- (b) initiate prosecution for offences punishable under this Act;
- (c) impose and recover administrative fines where permitted.

(2) In cases where the offence is of a continuing nature, a further fine not exceeding five thousand rupees for each day during which the offence continues after conviction, may be imposed by the Magistrate.

(3) The Authority may maintain a separate account for fines and penalties recovered, which shall be deposited in the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Fund and utilised exclusively for the benefit of affected senior citizens.

CHAPTER XVIII

ENFORCEMENT POWERS AND INVESTIGATIONS

97. Powers to inspect, investigate, and seize records.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority, or any officer duly authorised by it in writing, shall have the power, at any reasonable time, to enter and inspect any premises, including but not limited to elder care homes, medical facilities, day-care centres, nursing institutions, private dwellings where

senior citizens are housed or cared for, or any place where violations of this Act are suspected to have occurred.

(2) Such entry and inspection may be undertaken with prior notice of not less than twenty-four hours to the person in charge of the premises:

Provided that in cases where there is an imminent risk to the life, dignity, health, or safety of a senior citizen, such inspection may be undertaken without prior notice, and with immediate effect.

(3) During the course of inspection or investigation under this section, the authorised officer may,—

- (a) require the production of any registers, documents, records, or reports maintained by the institution or caregiver;
- (b) seize or take custody of any records, electronic files, articles, or objects which may be relevant for the purposes of inquiry, prosecution, or prevention of abuse under this Act;
- (c) interview senior citizens, staff, or witnesses present at the premises, with due regard to privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent.

(4) A detailed report of every such inspection or seizure shall be prepared and submitted to the Authority within seventy-two hours of the completion of such inspection.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "inspection" shall include physical verification, compliance checks, stakeholder interviews, and environmental assessment of facilities.

98. Powers to summon and examine witnesses.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority, the State or District Ombudsman, or any officer specifically empowered by the State Government under this Act, shall have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908), while trying a suit, in respect of the following matters, namely—

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining them on oath;
- (b) compelling the production of documents, electronic records, or other material objects;
- (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;
- (d) issuing commissions for examination of witnesses or documents;
- (e) requisitioning public records or copies thereof from any court or office.

(2) Every person so summoned under this section shall be legally bound to appear and provide true and complete information, failing which such person shall be liable to proceedings under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 or any other applicable penal provision. Provided that senior citizens summoned as witnesses shall be entitled to receive travel support, caregiver assistance, or other facilitative support as may be prescribed by rules.

99. Enforcement of protection orders.- (1) Every protection order, restraining order, maintenance order, or any other directive issued under the provisions of this Act by the Authority, the Protection Officer, or any designated judicial or quasi-judicial body shall have the force of a decree of a civil court and shall be enforceable accordingly.

(2) Any person, institution, or authority who fails to comply with such order shall be deemed to have committed an offence under this Act and shall be liable to,—

- (a) a fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees; and
- (b) imprisonment for a term which may extend to three months in case of wilful default or non-compliance.

(3) The Authority or the aggrieved senior citizen or their representative may initiate contempt proceedings before a court of competent jurisdiction in cases of deliberate disobedience of protection orders.

Provided that interim enforcement measures may be taken by the Authority or Protection Officer in emergent cases to prevent recurrence of harm or breach of the order.

100. Recovery of maintenance and dues.- (1) Any sum payable to a senior citizen under a maintenance order, interim relief direction, or as compensation awarded under this Act, shall be recoverable as arrears of land revenue under the provisions of the Karnataka Revenue Recovery Act, 1966 (Karnataka Act 12 of 1966).

(2) The District Collector, upon receipt of a recovery certificate issued by the Authority or Protection Officer, shall initiate proceedings for recovery, which may include,—

- (a) attachment and sale of movable or immovable property of the defaulter;
- (b) deduction of dues from salaries, pensions, or bank accounts of the defaulter;
- (c) garnishee orders upon third parties holding assets or income of the defaulter.

(3) The District Collector may impose additional administrative costs or recovery fees not exceeding five per cent of the amount recoverable to defray the cost of enforcement proceedings.

Provided that no recovery proceedings shall be initiated against the sole residential dwelling of the defaulter if such dwelling is established to be the only shelter of dependents below the poverty line.

101. Powers to issue directions and advisory notices.- (1) The State Government or the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority shall have the power to issue, from time to time, such binding directions, compliance notices, or advisory circulars as may be necessary for the effective implementation of this Act to,—

- (a) institutions registered under this Act;
- (b) healthcare providers, caregiving professionals, and service agencies;
- (c) employers, landlords, or any person responsible for the welfare of senior citizens;
- (d) any public authority, department, or officer entrusted with functions under this Act.

(2) The directions issued under sub-section (1) may relate to—

- (a) specific measures for improving the safety, dignity, accessibility, and welfare of senior citizens;
- (b) reforms in operational protocols, staffing standards, and grievance redress mechanisms of eldercare institutions;
- (c) preventive guidelines applicable during public emergencies, disasters, or epidemics;
- (d) mandatory compliance with standards of care, certification requirements, and reporting obligations.

(3) Any failure to comply with such directions or advisory notices, unless justified in writing and accepted by the Authority, shall attract,—

- (a) administrative penalties not exceeding fifty thousand rupees for each instance of non-compliance;
- (b) disqualification from receiving public grants, subsidies, tenders, or contracts;
- (c) suspension or revocation of licence, registration, or accreditation, in cases of continued or deliberate non-compliance.

Provided that the institution or person aggrieved by the imposition of penalty or action under this section may file an appeal before the State Appellate Tribunal within a period of thirty days from the date of such imposition or action.

PART XI
MISCELLANEOUS
CHAPTER XIX
MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

102. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority, the Ombudsman, the Protection Officer, or any officer or person acting under the provisions of this Act or under the rules, regulations, or orders made thereunder, for any act which is done in good faith or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of the objectives of this Act.

(2) For the purpose of this section, “good faith” shall include any action taken with due diligence, proper care, and without malice or dishonest intention, even if such action results in unintended harm or procedural error.

Explanation: The burden of proving malafide intent in any proceeding shall lie on the complainant or person alleging abuse of power under this section.

103. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes and provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely,—

- (a) the manner of registration of institutions providing elder care;
- (b) qualifications, duties, and code of conduct for Protection Officers;
- (c) procedures for grievance redressal, appeal, and compounding of offences;
- (d) forms of application, notice, records, registers, and reports to be maintained under this Act;
- (e) manner of appointment, terms of service, and powers of the Ombudsman;
- (f) procedures for allocation and disbursement of grants from the Welfare Fund;
- (g) guidelines for caregiver training, elder abuse prevention, and community awareness;
- (h) any other matter which is required to be, or may be, prescribed under this Act.

(3) Every rule made under this section shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before both Houses of the State Legislature while it is in session, for a total period of thirty days, which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions, and if before the expiry of the session in which it is so laid or the successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be.

104. Power to issue regulations, notifications, and guidelines.- (1) The Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government and by notification published in the Official Gazette, issue regulations, operational guidelines,

protocols, and circulars not inconsistent with this Act or the rules made thereunder, for the proper implementation of its provisions.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), such regulations may provide for—

- (a) registration, inspection, and regulation of eldercare institutions;
- (b) grievance redress mechanisms and citizen charter requirements;
- (c) minimum standards for elder housing, health services, mobility, and safety;
- (d) procedures for assessment, categorisation, and special protection of vulnerable senior citizens;
- (e) formats for inter-departmental coordination and reporting;
- (f) eligibility criteria and disbursement mechanisms for welfare schemes.

(3) All such regulations and guidelines shall be placed in the public domain and made accessible in print, audio, and digital formats in Kannada and other relevant local languages.

105. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) Every such order shall be laid, as soon as may be, before both Houses of the State Legislature.

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

Explanation: “Difficulty” shall not include mere administrative inconvenience, but shall relate to implementation barriers, unforeseen legal ambiguities, or statutory gaps.

106. Repeal and savings.- (1) On and from the date of commencement of this Act, any law, rule, regulation, or order in force in the State of Karnataka that is inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act shall stand repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done, any action taken, any rights, obligations or liabilities acquired or incurred, any penalties imposed, or any investigation or proceeding initiated under the repealed provisions shall, in so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

Provided that all authorities and institutions constituted under any repealed enactment shall continue to function under this Act until reconstituted or superseded under the provisions herein.

107. Power to amend Schedules and annexures.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, amend, add to, or omit any Schedule or Annexure appended to this Act for the purpose of updating standards, definitions, eligibility conditions, priority areas, or operational requirements, as may be necessary from time to time.

(2) Every such amendment shall be laid before the State Legislature at the earliest opportunity and shall be subject to such modification as the Legislature may direct.

108. Jurisdiction of civil courts barred.- (1) No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit, proceeding, or application in respect of any matter which the Karnataka Senior Citizens Welfare Authority, the Protection Officer, the Ombudsman, or any other authority empowered under this Act is authorised to determine or take cognizance of.

Provided that nothing in this section shall be construed to bar the jurisdiction of the High Court under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution of India in exercise of its writ or supervisory jurisdiction.

Explanation: This section shall not affect the rights of parties to seek remedies through alternative dispute resolution mechanisms or statutory appellate forums constituted under this Act.

THE KARNATAKA PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework for preparedness, early detection, response, and recovery during public health emergencies, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Whereas Article 47 of the Constitution of India imposes a duty upon the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health;

Ana Whereas the State of Karnataka is committed to strengthening its ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks and public health emergencies in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner;

Ana whereas it is expedient to provide for institutional mechanisms, infrastructure, rights, duties, and coordinated strategies in the event of pandemics, epidemics, and other public health threats;

BE it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. **Short title, extent and commencement.**— (1).This Act may be called the Karnataka Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Act, 2025.

(2).It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3).It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. **Definitions.**— In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) "Act" means the Karnataka Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Act, 2025;

(b) "designated health emergency" means a situation declared under Section 5 involving an outbreak or risk of outbreak of a disease requiring coordinated State response;

(c) "emergency medical care" means immediate, life-saving healthcare and treatment to persons affected or at risk during a public health emergency;

(d) "first responders" include healthcare workers, paramedics, police, fire services, and civil defence personnel involved in immediate response;

(e) "notification" means a notification published in the Official Gazette;

(f) "outbreak" means the occurrence of more cases of a disease than normally expected in a specific area or among a specific group of people;

(g) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(h) "public health emergency" means the occurrence or imminent threat of a serious health risk caused by epidemic or pandemic infectious disease, biological agent, or toxin, necessitating coordinated governmental intervention;

(i) "State Government" means the Government of Karnataka.

(j) "State" means state of Karnataka.

3. **Declaration of State Policy on Public Health Emergencies.**— (1) The State Government hereby declares that the protection and promotion of public health, preparedness for health emergencies, and ensuring equitable access to healthcare services

during such emergencies shall be a matter of vital public interest and a core function of the State.

(2) In the discharge of functions under this Act, and in the event of a notified public health emergency, all Departments, Local Bodies, Public Institutions, and Health Agencies shall be guided by the following principles,-

(a) Equity and Inclusion – All public health measures shall prioritise vulnerable, marginalised, and high-risk populations including, but not limited to, women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and economically weaker sections;

(b) Scientific Evidence and Best Practices – Policies, protocols, and interventions shall be based on the latest epidemiological data, public health research, and globally recognised best practices;

(c) Human Rights and Civil Liberties – No emergency response shall violate the constitutional rights of individuals except in accordance with the procedure established by law and only to the extent necessary and proportionate to the situation;

(d) Transparency and Accountability – The State shall ensure transparent communication, public disclosure of health data, timely dissemination of advisories, and mechanisms for public participation and feedback;

(e) Community Engagement and Local Resilience – Strengthening community-based responses, empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies, and mobilising civil society shall be integral to preparedness and response planning.

(3) The State Government shall ensure that adequate resources, infrastructure, personnel, and digital systems are developed and maintained on an ongoing basis to prevent, detect, and respond to any actual or potential public health threat.

(4) The State Government may issue from time to time such rules, advisories, circulars, and operational guidelines as may be necessary to implement this policy effectively.

4. Objectives and scope of the Act.- (1).The objectives of this Act are to,—

(a) institutionalise a coordinated mechanism for detection, response, and recovery from public health emergencies;

(b) ensure early warning systems, infrastructure readiness, and inter-agency coordination;

(c) protect the rights of individuals while enabling lawful and effective interventions;

(d) establish obligations of all stakeholders including citizens, hospitals, and authorities during peacetime and emergencies;

(e) provide for disaster preparedness training, medical stockpiling, and rapid response units.

5. Application during health crises, disasters, and peacetime preparedness,- (1) The provisions of this Act shall apply and have effect in the following circumstances:

(a) During a Declared Public Health Emergency – Upon the issuance of a notification by the State Government under the provisions of this Act declaring a public health emergency arising from communicable diseases, environmental hazards, pandemics, or other threats to health and safety;

(b) During Disasters with Public Health Implications – In the course of any natural or human-made disaster wherein the health, hygiene, or medical needs of the population are threatened or disrupted;

(c) In Periods of Peacetime or Non-Emergency – For the purposes of institutional strengthening, capacity building, preparedness planning, risk assessment, surveillance system development, public education, and simulation drills, even in the absence of an active emergency.

(2) All authorities, institutions, officers, and agencies under the State Government shall, during both emergency and peacetime periods, take such steps as may be necessary to give full effect to the objects and purposes of this Act.

(3) The application of this Act and the exercise of powers conferred hereunder shall be without prejudice to the concurrent operation of other relevant central or state laws, provided that,-

(a) in the event of any conflict or inconsistency between the provisions of this Act and any other law for the time being in force in the State, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency;

(b) the operation of this Act shall not be hindered or obstructed on account of procedural or jurisdictional overlaps with other enactments.

(4) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to limit the powers of the State Government or any authority acting under any other law to take additional measures for the protection of public health, provided such measures are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

PART II

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER II

PUBLIC HEALTH RIGHTS AND DUTIES

6. Right to timely emergency medical care.- (1) Every person even resident or non-resident of the state present within the territorial jurisdiction of the State shall have the right to receive prompt and appropriate emergency medical treatment, without discrimination, during a period of declared public health emergency under this Act.

(2).No hospital or healthcare provider, whether public or private, shall deny or delay essential emergency medical care, including screening, stabilisation, and lifesaving interventions, to any individual during such period.

(3).The State Government shall take all necessary steps to operationalise this right, including provision of requisite financial allocations, human resources, medical supplies, and logistical infrastructure to public and private health establishments.

7. Right to information and transparency during health emergencies.- (1) Every resident or non- resident of the State shall have the right to timely, accurate, and accessible information concerning the nature, extent, and response measures of any declared public health emergency.

(2) The Department of Health shall ensure daily dissemination of official briefings, verified public health advisories, and measures to counter misinformation through print, electronic, and digital media in languages and formats accessible to all sections of the population.

8. Right to privacy, dignity, and non-discrimination in treatment.-(1) All individuals who are affected by, or at risk during, a declared public health emergency shall be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness by all authorities, institutions, and service providers.

(2) Confidentiality of personal health information, including medical records, diagnostic test results, and contact tracing data, shall be maintained in strict accordance with the applicable data protection laws and ethical guidelines.

(3) No person shall be denied medical care, subjected to quarantine, isolation, or any emergency health intervention in a manner that is discriminatory on the basis of gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other constitutionally prohibited ground.

9. Duties of citizens during public health crises.- It shall be the duty of every citizen within the State to act in the interest of public health and safety during a declared public health emergency. Without prejudice to any other law in force, every person shall:

(a) Abide by all lawful orders, notifications, and guidelines issued by the State Government or any authorised public health authority under the provisions of this Act;

(b) Provide accurate and complete information regarding symptoms, travel history, or possible exposure to communicable diseases, as and when required by competent authorities;

(c) Abstain from knowingly spreading rumours, misinformation, or false alarms, and from obstructing or interfering with the functioning of any public health officer or emergency responder;

(d) Act in good faith with prescribed public health measures, including but not limited to screening, testing, isolation, quarantine, contact tracing, and vaccination programs.

10. State's responsibility to provide equitable, accessible healthcare.- (1) The State Government shall be duty-bound to ensure the continuous and timely availability of essential medical supplies, including but not limited to life-saving drugs, vaccines, diagnostic kits, personal protective equipment (PPE), and emergency medical devices, during any period of declared public health emergency.

(2) The State shall adopt targeted measures to ensure that healthcare services and critical medical support reach vulnerable and marginalised groups, including senior citizens, persons with disabilities, persons in rural or remote areas, women, children, and economically weaker sections of society.

(3) For the effective discharge of this responsibility, the State Government shall establish and maintain strategically located, district-wise emergency medical stockpiles and storage facilities, with real-time inventory management systems and periodic audits to ensure readiness and sufficiency.

PART III

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER III

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES

11. Constitution of Karnataka State Public Health Emergency Authority.- The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a body to be called the Karnataka State Public Health Emergency Authority (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”).

The Authority shall consist of,—

(a) Chief Minister of Karnataka – Chairperson;

(b) Minister-in-Charge of Health and Family Welfare – Vice-Chairperson;

- (c) Chief Secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare – Member;
- (d) State Public Health Emergency Commissioner – Member Secretary;
- (e) Three technical experts in the fields of epidemiology, virology, and disaster management – Members;
- (f) Such other members as may be prescribed by the State Government.

(2).The Authority shall be a statutory body with perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property. The Members of the committee shall be Public Servants as per Section:28 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita,2023.

12. Powers and functions of the Karnataka State Public Health Emergency Committee.- The Committee shall,—

- (a) Developing and formulating comprehensive State-level policies and response plans for health emergencies;
- (b) Reviewing and approving the Karnataka Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan as outlined in Section 18;
- (c) Officially declaring a State-level public health emergency and leading the coordination of response efforts across all relevant government departments;
- (d) Managing and allocating funds dedicated to emergency preparedness and response activities;
- (e) Preparing and submitting detailed annual reports on the State’s health emergency preparedness status to the State Legislature.

13. Appointment of State Public Health Emergency Commissioner.- (1).The State Government shall appoint a senior officer of the rank not below Principal Secretary as the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner.

(2).The Commissioner shall act as the nodal officer for implementation of this Act and shall,—

- (a) coordinate with central and State agencies,
- (b) monitor field responses,
- (c) serve as Member-Secretary of the Authority, and
- (d) discharge such other functions as may be prescribed.

14. Establishment of District Public Health Emergency Committees.- (1) The District Collector shall constitute a District Public Health Emergency Committee in every district of the state.

(2) The Committee shall consist of representatives from health, police, education, transport, rural development, and municipal departments.

(3) The Committee shall,—

- (a) implement district preparedness plans,
- (b) coordinate with local bodies and public health units,
- (c) supervise field-level emergency response.

15. Coordination with Local Bodies and Urban Health Missions.- (1) Each Municipal Corporation and Gram Panchayat of the state shall designate a Health Emergency Liaison Officer to ensure effective communication and coordination.

(2) Local bodies shall align their public health plans with the district emergency preparedness plan and actively participate in public awareness, disease surveillance, and containment efforts.

(3) Urban Health Missions shall be integrated with District Committees to enable real-time data sharing and coordinated response actions.

16. Formation of Inter-Agency Emergency Coordination Task Force.- (1) The Authority shall establish an Inter-Agency Emergency Coordination Task Force to ensure effective preparedness, response, and recovery during public health emergencies. The Task Force shall be composed of:

(a) Senior-level representatives from key government departments and agencies, including but not limited to health, transport, revenue, police, information technology, civil aviation, and education. These officials shall be nominated by their respective departments and shall have decision-making authority to facilitate swift inter-departmental coordination.

(b) Designated representatives from the military and paramilitary forces, where deemed necessary, to support emergency operations, especially in situations requiring enhanced security, logistics support, or operational capacity.

(2). The primary functions of the Task Force shall include,-

(i) Facilitating inter-agency coordination for unified emergency response efforts;

(ii) Overseeing logistics management, including the mobilization and distribution of resources, equipment, and personnel;

(iii) Establishing communication protocols to ensure timely information sharing among agencies and with the public;

(iv) Monitoring the implementation of emergency plans and recommending course corrections as needed;

(v) Supporting local authorities in operational execution and ensuring alignment with national emergency response strategies.

(3). The Task Force shall meet regularly during emergencies and may convene in advance of anticipated public health threats. It shall operate under the overall supervision of the Authority and submit periodic reports on its activities and recommendations.

17. Technical Advisory Panel.- (1) The State Government shall establish a Technical Advisory Panel to provide expert guidance on scientific, legal, and technological aspects related to the prevention, management, and containment of public health emergencies.

(2) The Panel shall consist of a minimum of seven (7) members, to be appointed by the State Government, and shall include professionals with expertise in the following domains:

(a) Epidemiology – to provide insights into disease surveillance, transmission dynamics, and population health risks;

(b) Virology – to offer guidance on pathogen characteristics, mutation trends, and laboratory diagnostics;

(c) Public Health – to contribute strategies for community-based interventions, vaccination campaigns, and healthcare system preparedness;

(d) Legal Affairs – to ensure compliance with existing public health laws, emergency regulations, and human rights protections;

(e) Information Technology and Data Science – to advise on digital tools for tracking, data integration, privacy safeguards, and decision-support systems.

- (3) The State Government may include additional experts from relevant disciplines such as environmental health, mental health, or bioethics, depending on the nature of the public health threat.
- (4) The Panel shall function as an advisory body to the State Public Health Emergency Authority and shall undertake the following responsibilities:
 - (a) Analyze outbreak trends and advise on potential escalation or de-escalation of response measures based on scientific evidence;
 - (b) Recommend containment strategies, including quarantine protocols, travel advisories, testing policies, and healthcare resource allocation;
 - (c) Advise on legal and ethical frameworks to guide emergency powers, enforcement actions, and civil liberties safeguards;
 - (d) Review data governance protocols, including data collection, usage, storage, and sharing mechanisms, ensuring compliance with relevant privacy and cybersecurity standards;
 - (e) Support communication strategies to ensure the dissemination of accurate and evidence-based public health information.
- (5) The Panel shall meet at regular intervals or as directed by the Authority and may form sub-groups or working committees to address specific areas of concern.
- (6) The recommendations of the Technical Advisory Panel shall be documented and submitted to the Authority for consideration in policy formulation and operational planning during public health emergencies.

PART IV
STRATEGIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE
CHAPTER IV
EMERGENCY PLANNING AND SIMULATION

- 18. Statewide Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.-** (1) The State Public Health Emergency Authority shall formulate, adopt, and implement a comprehensive Karnataka Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (hereinafter referred to as "the Plan") to ensure a structured, coordinated, and timely response to any public health emergency within the State.
- (2) The Plan shall be developed in consultation with relevant government departments, district authorities, health institutions, and subject-matter experts. It shall be,-
 - (a) Reviewed and updated biennially to incorporate emerging scientific knowledge, technological advancements, lessons learned from past emergencies, and stakeholder feedback;
 - (b) Revised immediately in response to significant public health events or national/international guidance changes.
 - (3) The Plan shall comprehensively address the following components,-
 - (a) Early Detection and Surveillance,-
 - (i) Establishment of robust disease surveillance systems at state and district levels;
 - (ii) Integration of real-time data analytics and early warning mechanisms;
 - (iii) Protocols for risk assessment and classification of threats.

- (b) Resource Allocation and Surge Capacity Planning,-
 - (i) Inventory and mapping of critical resources including hospital beds, medical equipment, PPE, ambulances, and human resources;
 - (ii) Guidelines for equitable distribution and rapid mobilization of resources during emergencies;
 - (iii) Frameworks for public-private partnerships and emergency procurement.
- (c) Inter-Agency and Inter-Governmental Coordination,-
 - (i) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of departments including health, police, transport, education, local governance, and disaster management;
 - (ii) Mechanisms for coordination between state, district, and national agencies;
 - (iii) Activation protocols for emergency response task forces.
- (d) Risk Communication and Public Information Protocols,-
 - (i) Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for disseminating timely, transparent, and accurate public health information;
 - (ii) Use of multi-platform communication strategies to reach diverse populations;
 - (iii) Countermeasures against misinformation and panic.
- (e) Quarantine, Isolation, and Containment Measures,-
 - (i) Identification and maintenance of quarantine and isolation facilities;
 - (ii) Legal and procedural guidelines for containment zones and movement restrictions;
 - (iii) Protocols for contact tracing and community engagement.
- (f) Vaccination and Medical Countermeasure Logistics,-
 - (i) Cold chain management systems and distribution plans for vaccines and essential medicines;
 - (ii) Priority group identification and immunization scheduling;
 - (iii) Monitoring of vaccine coverage and adverse events.
- (g) Training, Simulation, and Capacity Building,-
 - (i) Regular training and mock drills for healthcare workers, emergency personnel, and administrative staff;
 - (ii) Development of manuals and resource materials for responders and institutions.
- (4) The Plan shall include a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework with defined indicators, reporting timelines, and accountability mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of preparedness and response actions.
- (5) The final version of the Plan and its periodic updates shall be made publicly accessible and communicated to all stakeholders, including district administrations, healthcare institutions, and civil society partners.
- 19. Risk profiling and vulnerability assessment at district level.-** (1) Each District Public Health Emergency Committee shall conduct regular risk profiling and vulnerability assessments to identify potential public health threats and assess readiness. This assessment shall be based on key indicators such as,-
 - (i) Disease prevalence and outbreak history;
 - (ii) Population density and demographics;
 - (iii) Availability and capacity of healthcare infrastructure;
 - (iv) Past experiences with natural disasters and other emergencies.

(2) The collected data and analysis shall be submitted to the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner and integrated into the State's Digital Health Preparedness Dashboard to support real-time monitoring, planning, and resource allocation.

20. Multi-sectoral convergence and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).- (1) The State Public Health Emergency Authority shall develop and issue model Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the management of major public health risks, including disease outbreaks, biothreats, and health-related natural disasters.

(2) All relevant government departments, agencies, and statutory bodies shall review and align their internal contingency protocols with the State SOPs within six (6) months of their issuance. This alignment shall ensure coordinated, timely, and unified action during emergencies.

(3) The Authority shall facilitate periodic orientation and joint planning sessions among departments to ensure inter-sectoral coordination and operational readiness.

21. Public-private partnership protocols for emergency preparedness.- (1) The State Government shall formulate comprehensive rules and protocols to engage with private sector entities—including hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, logistics providers, and diagnostic laboratories—to augment the State's public health emergency response capacity.

Such partnerships may include but are not limited to,-

(a) Shared utilization of hospital infrastructure, including ICU beds, isolation wards, and emergency services during surges;

(b) Joint procurement and warehousing of essential medical supplies, drugs, vaccines, and protective equipment to ensure availability and cost-efficiency;

(c) Coordinated logistics and distribution mechanisms for the timely delivery of vaccines, medicines, and critical supplies across districts and vulnerable areas.

(2).Partnership agreements shall be guided by pre-defined terms of collaboration, quality standards, accountability frameworks, and provisions for financial reimbursement or incentives, as deemed appropriate by the State Government.

22. Annual simulation exercises, scenario drills, and mock operations.- (1) The State Public Health Emergency Commissioner, in collaboration with District Committees and Urban/Rural Local Bodies, shall conduct annual simulation exercises, scenario-based drills, and mock operations to test emergency preparedness and response systems at all administrative levels.

(2) These exercises shall cover critical response functions such as emergency medical triage, quarantine enforcement, supply chain management, and public communication.

(3) Findings and outcomes from these activities shall be systematically documented and used to,-

(i) Update district and State-level emergency response plans;

(ii) Identify training needs and capacity gaps;

(iii)Revise SOPs and inter-agency coordination mechanisms for future emergencies.

CHAPTER V

RAPID RESPONSE AND FIELD TEAMS

23. Establishment of Karnataka Public Health Rapid Response Teams (PHRRT).- (1)

The State Government shall establish dedicated Public Health Rapid Response Teams (PHRRTs) at both the State and District levels to ensure immediate, organized, and effective responses to public health emergencies.

(2) Each PHRRT shall be multidisciplinary in composition and include,-

- (i) Trained epidemiologists for outbreak investigation and containment planning,
- (ii) Paramedics and frontline health workers for field deployment, triage, and emergency care,
- (iii) Logistics coordinators for on-ground resource management,
- (iv) Data scientists and analysts for real-time data monitoring, modeling, and predictive risk assessment

24. Deployment mechanisms, chain of command, and authority.- (1) All PHRRTs shall function under the strategic direction and operational supervision of the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner, in accordance with State and District Health Emergency Plans.

(2) Deployment of PHRRTs shall be guided by severity-level protocols and emergency alert classifications as notified by the State Public Health Emergency Authority.

(3) During deployment, PHRRTs shall be granted priority access to essential logistics, including:

- (i) Emergency transport vehicles and medical equipment,
- (ii) Trained support personnel, and
- (iii) Required communication and surveillance infrastructure, as specified in their deployment orders.

25. Equipping and training of PHRRTs with AI-backed tools.- (1) Each PHRRT shall be equipped with state-of-the-art field tools, including,-

- (i) Mobile diagnostic and laboratory units,
- (ii) Portable disease surveillance and response kits,
- (iii) AI-powered analytics platforms for real-time outbreak tracking, forecasting, and decision support.

(2) The State Government shall establish continuous training and capacity-building programs for PHRRT personnel in collaboration with academic institutions, public health research bodies, and technology partners. These programs shall include,-

- (i) Simulation-based exercises,
- (ii) Skill refreshers in emergency medical response, logistics, and data analysis,
- (iii) Training on the ethical and legal dimensions of emergency deployments.

26. Integration with Disaster Management and Civil Defence Units.- PHRRTs shall operate in close coordination with the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) and Civil Defence Units, functioning under pre-defined joint command structures during declared public health emergencies. Integration protocols shall include,-

- (i) Unified incident command systems,
- (ii) Resource sharing frameworks, and
- (iii) Joint response drills and rehearsals.

27. Emergency responder protection and insurance coverage.- (1) The State Government shall ensure that all personnel deployed as part of the public health emergency response, including PHRRT members, are provided with.-

- (a) Adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) based on risk classification;
- (b) Comprehensive health insurance coverage and accidental death and disability benefits;
- (c) Legal protection under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) for actions taken in good faith under the provisions of this Act.

(2) In addition, the State shall notify compensation schemes to provide financial support to emergency responders or their families in the event of injury or death incurred in the line of duty during a declared public health emergency.

PART V

HEALTH SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE AND READINESS

CHAPTER VI

INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

28. Designation of Emergency Health Facilities and Quarantine Zones.- (1) The State Government shall identify and officially notify selected public and private healthcare institutions as Emergency Health Facilities (EHFs) to be activated during declared public health emergencies, pandemics, or biological threats.

(2) The State Public Health Emergency Commissioner may, by order, requisition suitable buildings including stadia, hostels, educational institutions, community halls, and hotels to be temporarily converted into Quarantine Zones, Isolation Units, or Observation Centres, in accordance with the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023.

(3) The list of designated EHFs and quarantine-ready infrastructure shall be maintained in a central registry, updated annually, and shared with relevant district and municipal authorities. The registry shall include facility capacity, staffing readiness, and essential equipment availability.

29. Creation of surge hospitals and temporary treatment centres.- (1) In the event of a pandemic, mass casualty incident, or overwhelming healthcare demand, the State Public Health Emergency Authority may direct the establishment of Surge Hospitals or Temporary Treatment Centres (TTCs) to augment clinical capacity.

(2) These centres shall be,-

- (i) Rapidly deployable using prefabricated structures, converted existing facilities, or mobile medical units;
- (ii) Equipped with essential utilities such as oxygen supply, sanitation, and internet connectivity;
- (iii) Operated under the supervision of the District Health Officer (DHO) and integrated into the existing healthcare referral system.

(3) Standard operating protocols shall be issued for TTC operations, workforce deployment, infection control, and service demobilization post-emergency.

30. Guidelines for isolation, triage, and intensive care during pandemics.- (1) The State Government shall formulate and periodically update clinical and operational guidelines for pandemic response, including,-

(a) Patient isolation protocols based on level of infectivity, severity, and risk to public health;
(b) Triage systems to guide prioritization of patients during resource scarcity, including colour-coded triage categories and ethical frameworks;

(c) Management of Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and high-dependency units during surge periods, including critical care resource allocation.

(2) These guidelines shall be in conformity with technical advisories issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), World Health Organization (WHO), and other relevant expert bodies, and shall be disseminated to all public and private healthcare facilities across the State.

31. Emergency ambulance network and referral linkage systems.- (1) A dedicated Emergency Ambulance Network shall be established and maintained under the operational control of the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner. This fleet shall,-

(i) Be equipped with GPS-enabled tracking,

(ii) Include vehicles with negative pressure compartments and appropriate biosafety measures for infectious disease transport,

(iii) Be supported by a real-time dispatch system managed from a central control room.

(2) Each district shall establish a Referral Linkage Control Room to coordinate,-

(i) Real-time monitoring of bed availability across public and private hospitals,

(ii) Emergency patient transfers with medical escorts,

(iii) Communication with treating physicians and receiving facilities.

32. National and inter-state referral coordination.- (1) The State Public Health Emergency Authority shall liaise with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and health authorities in neighbouring States to facilitate:

(a) Inter-State transfer of patients during situations of overflow or when specialized care is unavailable locally;

(b) Harmonization of treatment protocols, ensuring clinical continuity for referred cases;

(c) Execution of mutual aid agreements (MOUs) for resource sharing, bed reservation, laboratory access, and emergency workforce mobilization.

(2) The State Government shall designate a Nodal Officer for Inter-State Referral Coordination, responsible for,-

(i) Streamlining cross-border transfers and patient documentation,

(ii) Coordinating with referral hospitals, ambulance services, and state counterparts,

(iii) Maintaining records of all inter-state health emergency movements.

CHAPTER VII

STOCKPILING AND SUPPLY CHAINS

33. Establishment of Emergency Medical Stockpiles (EMS).- (1) The State Government shall establish Emergency Medical Stockpiles (EMS) at zonal and district levels to ensure timely availability of critical medical supplies during public health emergencies, pandemics, and disaster situations.

(2) Each EMS shall contain a pre-identified set of essential items, including but not limited to,-

(i) Life-saving medications,

(ii) Vaccines and immunoglobulins,

- (iii) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE),
 - (iv) Ventilators and oxygen therapy devices,
 - (v) Diagnostic kits and lab consumables,
 - (vi) Disinfectants, emergency medical kits, and medical consumables.
- (3) The EMS shall be governed by a notified inventory schedule, categorizing items by criticality, shelf-life, and priority level. This inventory shall be reviewed and updated biannually by the Department of Health and Family Welfare in coordination with the State Public Health Emergency Authority.
- 34. Inventory management and distribution protocols.-** (1) The State Government shall develop an Integrated Stockpile Management System (ISMS)—a centralized digital platform enabling oversight, planning, and decision-making related to emergency stockpiles.
- (2) The ISMS shall include a real-time dashboard accessible to designated officials at the State, district, and taluka levels, containing,-
- (i) Inventory levels by item and location,
 - (ii) Stock inflow and dispatch history,
 - (iii) Expiry tracking and replenishment cycles,
 - (iv) Usage rates and anticipated shortages.
- (3) Each district warehouse shall be responsible for maintaining accurate and up-to-date digital records, with manual backups, and submitting monthly reports to the State Authority.
- (4) Emergency distribution protocols shall ensure equitable allocation based on outbreak severity, healthcare burden, and vulnerability profiles, with pre-authorized requisition formats and chain-of-custody procedures.
- 35. Real-time tracking of life-saving supplies.-** (1) To enhance traceability and reduce pilferage, the State shall implement Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and QR-code based barcoding systems for all critical health supplies managed under EMS and ISMS.
- (2) The tracking system shall enable,-
- (i) Live location monitoring from central stockpiles to point-of-care delivery,
 - (ii) Monitoring of cold chain compliance for temperature-sensitive items,
 - (iii) Automated alerts for nearing expiry dates or stockouts.
- (3) All tracking data shall be integrated into a public-facing transparency portal maintained by the State Public Health Emergency Authority, allowing citizens and stakeholders to monitor supply flows during emergencies.
- 36. Emergency procurement and waiver of standard procedures.-** (1) In the event of a notified public health emergency, the State Public Health Emergency Authority shall be empowered to invoke emergency procurement provisions to acquire essential medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and support services without delay.
- (2) For the duration of such an emergency, the provisions of the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act, 1999 may be temporarily relaxed, provided that:
- (a) Each procurement is supported by a written justification specifying the urgency, supplier selection criteria, and cost-effectiveness;
 - (b) A post-facto audit is conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) or the State Directorate of Audit and Accounts, and findings submitted to the Legislative Oversight Committee within 90 days of the conclusion of procurement.

(3) All emergency procurement actions shall be documented, and procurement data shall be published on the public procurement transparency portal within a reasonable timeframe.

37. Decentralized warehousing and last-mile logistics.- (1) To enhance distribution efficiency and resilience, the Authority shall establish a decentralized network of health warehouses at the taluka and block levels, equipped to store and dispatch essential health supplies to remote and high-risk areas.

(2) These decentralized units shall be integrated with the ISMS and shall follow uniform storage, rotation, and replenishment protocols to maintain shelf-life integrity and rapid deployment readiness.

(3) The State shall empanel pre-approved logistic service providers, including public, cooperative, and private entities, to manage last-mile delivery under Service Level Agreements (SLAs) that define timelines, security, and delivery verification requirements.

(4) Logistics partners shall be equipped with GPS-tracked vehicles and digital delivery tools to ensure real-time delivery confirmation and feedback capture.

PART VI

HEALTHCARE CAPACITY AND WORKFORCE

CHAPTER VIII

HUMAN RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

38. Emergency deployment of healthcare professionals.- (1) In the event of a declared public health emergency, the State Government may issue orders for the mandatory deployment of healthcare professionals from both public sector institutions and empanelled private healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centers.

(2) Such deployment shall include doctors, nurses, paramedics, laboratory personnel, and allied health professionals, and shall be carried out under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, and the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA), 1968, as applicable.

(3) Orders for deployment shall specify,-

- (i) Duration and scope of duty,
- (ii) Assigned roles and jurisdictions,
- (iii) Conditions of service, including pay continuity and legal indemnity.

(4) Institutions shall be mandated to release personnel as per notification, failing which penalties may apply under the applicable statutory provisions.

39. Temporary licensing and fast-track credentialing.- (1) During a declared public health emergency, the State Medical Council, Nursing Council, and Allied Health Boards shall establish expedited processes for temporary registration and credentialing of,-

- (a) Retired healthcare professionals, who were in good standing at the time of retirement;
- (b) Final-year students of medicine, nursing, and allied health sciences, with verified academic clearance and institutional recommendation;
- (c) Foreign-trained Indian nationals, holding valid qualifications recognized by the National Medical Commission (NMC) or other relevant regulatory bodies.

(2) Temporary registrations shall be valid for the duration of the emergency and may be extended for up to 90 days post-declaration, subject to review.

(3) Credentialing procedures shall include background verification, training certification, and role-specific induction.

(4) Such temporary license holders shall be entitled to legal protection and benefits available to regular health workers for the duration of service.

40. Training programs for health crisis management.- (1) The State Government, in collaboration with recognized public health institutions and professional bodies, shall implement mandatory training and capacity-building programs for all healthcare professionals and frontline responders.

(2) The training curriculum shall include.-

- (i) Infection prevention and control (IPC) protocols,
- (ii) Proper use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE),
- (iii) Triage and emergency care procedures,
- (iv) Psychological first aid and mental health support,
- (v) Risk communication, public messaging, and community engagement strategies.

(3) Trainings shall be delivered through online platforms, on-site simulations, and periodic refresher modules. Certificates of participation shall be recorded in the professional's service record or licensing profile.

41. Volunteer corps and community health force.- (1) The State Public Health Emergency Authority shall establish a State Emergency Health Volunteer Corps, comprising trained individuals from:

- (i) Accredited community-level health workers,
- (ii) NSS (National Service Scheme) and NCC (National Cadet Corps) units,
- (iii) Accredited youth volunteers and civil society organisations.

(2) The volunteer corps shall operate under a graded mobilization protocol based on the severity of the emergency and geographic need.

(3) All registered volunteers shall receive,-

- (i) Basic emergency health training,
- (ii) Protective equipment kits,
- (iii) Accident insurance coverage and identity cards issued by the Authority.

(4) Volunteers may be deployed for duties such as surveillance support, logistics assistance, public education, vaccination drives, and non-clinical relief services.

42. Health worker safety, mental health, and compensation.- (1) The State Government shall ensure comprehensive safety, welfare, and compensation mechanisms for all health workers and emergency responders deployed during a public health emergency. These shall include:

- (a) Hazard pay and hardship allowance, proportionate to risk level and deployment zone;
- (b) Access to mental health services, including counselling, psychological first aid, and peer-support systems;
- (c) Financial compensation, including ex-gratia payment or pension benefits in the event of disability or death occurring in the line of duty.

(2) All personnel shall also be eligible for group insurance coverage, the premiums of which shall be borne by the State during the emergency period.

(3) The State Government shall notify detailed rules and operational guidelines for this welfare scheme within 60 days of the commencement of this Act, ensuring clarity on eligibility, claims processing, and grievance redressal.

PART VII

TECHNOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS AND DIGITAL INNOVATION

CHAPTER IX

SURVEILLANCE AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

43. Development of Karnataka Health Surveillance and Early Warning System (KHSEWS).- (1) The State Government shall design, develop, and implement the Karnataka Health Surveillance and Early Warning System (KHSEWS)—a comprehensive, integrated, and interoperable digital health surveillance platform aimed at enhancing the State’s capacity for timely detection and response to public health threats.

(2) The KHSEWS shall include capabilities to,-

(a) Collect real-time syndromic surveillance data and laboratory-confirmed diagnostic information from all public, private, and empanelled healthcare facilities, including hospitals, clinics, diagnostic laboratories, and community health centers;

(b) Enable early detection and continuous monitoring of emerging infectious diseases, outbreaks, and other public health threats through automated data analytics;

(c) Support risk identification, forecasting, and situational awareness through advanced modelling techniques to inform decision-making and resource allocation.

(3) Oversight and operational management of KHSEWS shall be the responsibility of a designated Surveillance Director, appointed under the supervision of the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner, with clear roles and responsibilities defined for data governance, privacy, and security.

(4) The system shall be designed in compliance with international health regulations (IHR 2005) and aligned with best practices recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other global health surveillance frameworks.

44. Integration with National Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP).-

(1) KHSEWS shall be fully integrated and interoperable with the National Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP) operated by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, to enable seamless exchange of data at the State and national levels.

(2) All notifiable diseases, outbreaks, clusters, and unusual health events identified within Karnataka shall be reported to the IDSP platform within 24 hours of confirmation, adhering to the standardized formats and protocols prescribed by the National Surveillance Program.

(3) The integration shall ensure bidirectional data flow, enabling national-level alerts and guidelines to be contextualized and disseminated at the State and district levels.

45. Usage of AI and predictive analytics for real-time alert generation.- (1) KHSEWS shall incorporate advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning algorithms, and predictive analytics models to,-

(a) Identify and map emerging outbreak hotspots and high-risk zones by analyzing multi-source data streams;

(b) Model and simulate various outbreak spread scenarios, estimating future case loads, healthcare resource needs, and intervention impacts;

(c) Automatically generate real-time alerts and situational reports for the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner, District Surveillance Committees, healthcare facilities, and emergency response teams.

(2) The AI models and algorithms shall be subject to regular independent audits for accuracy, fairness, and bias mitigation, and designed to comply with established ethical AI standards, including data privacy, transparency, and accountability principles.

46. Public health dashboards, alert systems, and mobile notifications.-(1) The Authority shall maintain a Public Health Emergency Dashboard as a publicly accessible interface presenting,-

(a) Daily epidemiological data including case counts, recoveries, fatalities, and vaccination rates;

(b) Real-time status of healthcare resource utilization such as hospital bed occupancy, ventilator availability, and PPE stocks;

(c) Geographic and regional alerts indicating zones of concern or emerging threats.

(2) The system shall support multimodal communication channels including,-

(i) SMS alerts,

(ii) Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVRS),

(iii) Mobile app push notifications for citizens, healthcare workers, and field teams.

(3) All alerts and communications shall be issued in both Kannada and English languages, formatted for accessibility to persons with disabilities, including screen-reader compatibility and audio formats.

47. Monitoring zoonotic, environmental, and community-based indicators.-(1) The State shall establish an Interdepartmental Monitoring Cell comprising representatives from the Departments of Animal Husbandry, Forests, Environment, and Public Health to undertake joint surveillance and analysis of cross-sectoral health indicators.

(2) The Monitoring Cell shall collect, collate, and analyze data on,-

(a) Emergence and circulation of zoonotic pathogens in animal populations;

(b) Changes in vector populations such as mosquitoes and rodents, indicating vector-borne disease risks;

(c) Key environmental indicators including water quality, air pollution levels, and other parameters influencing public health;

(d) Periodic community health surveys capturing demographic, behavioral, and epidemiological trends.

(3) Findings and indicators from this Cell shall be integrated into KHSEWS to provide a comprehensive early warning perspective and reviewed quarterly to inform preventive action and policy decisions.

CHAPTER X

E-HEALTH AND DIGITAL RESPONSE ECOSYSTEM

48. State Digital Health Emergency Platform.-(1) The State Government shall establish and maintain a State Digital Health Emergency Platform (DHEP)—an integrated digital ecosystem designed to centralize critical data streams and enable coordinated management of health emergencies.

(2) The DHEP shall encompass and interlink the following functional modules,-

- (a) Hospital Bed Management System: Real-time tracking of bed availability across public and private hospitals, including isolation wards, ICU beds, and ventilator-equipped units;
- (b) Vaccine Logistics and Inventory Management: End-to-end monitoring of vaccine stocks, cold chain status, distribution routes, and administration data;
- (c) Quarantine Monitoring: Digitized records of quarantine orders, compliance status, and facility management;
- (d) Telemedicine Infrastructure: Secure platforms facilitating remote consultations, follow-ups, and specialist referrals;
- (e) Citizen Grievance Redressal: A dedicated portal and helpline to receive, track, and resolve public complaints related to emergency health services.

(3) The platform shall strictly adhere to the National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) Health Data Management Policy, ensuring robust data security, privacy protection, consent-driven data sharing, and compliance with the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) and other relevant legislations.

49. Unified Electronic Health Record (EHR) architecture.- (1) All healthcare providers within Karnataka—public, private, and empanelled—shall adopt and implement a Unified Electronic Health Record (EHR) format as prescribed under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) framework.

(2) Each citizen shall be issued a unique Health ID enabling seamless aggregation of health data, including diagnostics, treatments, immunizations, and emergency care records.

(3) All health transactions related to emergencies, including admissions, testing, and treatment interventions, shall be,-

- (i) Digitally recorded using standardized EHR templates;
- (ii) Encrypted end-to-end to ensure confidentiality and integrity;
- (iii) Accessible only to authorized personnel based on consent and role-based access controls.

(4) Protocols shall be established to facilitate interoperability with national and regional health information systems.

50. Mobile apps for patient tracking, alerts, and teleconsultation.- (1) The State Government shall develop, deploy, and maintain official mobile applications to enhance citizen engagement and remote health management during emergencies. These apps shall provide functionalities including,-

- (a) Patient Self-Reporting and Symptom Monitoring: Allowing individuals to report symptoms, health status updates, and receive personalized health advice;
- (b) Home Isolation Tracking: Real-time monitoring of quarantine compliance with geofencing and alert notifications to healthcare supervisors;
- (c) Direct Teleconsultation Access: Secure, user-friendly portals to connect patients directly with registered doctors for consultations and prescriptions.

(2) The mobile apps shall feature,-

- (i) Real-time language translation capabilities covering all major regional languages and English;
- (ii) Geotagging for accurate location-based services;

- (iii) Integration with State Call Centres and emergency response teams for rapid coordination.
- (3) Apps shall comply with accessibility standards to serve users with disabilities.
- 51. Geo-mapping and contact tracing systems.-** (1) The State Public Health Emergency Commissioner shall establish GIS-enabled dashboards and digital tools for,-
 - (a) Identification and visualization of epidemiological hotspots with layered data on case clusters and trends;
 - (b) Implementation of geo-fencing technologies to demarcate containment zones and monitor compliance;
 - (c) Mapping and monitoring of healthcare facility readiness, including bed capacity, staffing, and equipment availability.
- (2) Contact tracing operations shall employ anonymized, Bluetooth-based proximity tracking protocols, ensuring,-
 - (i) Protection of personal identity and health data;
 - (ii) Automatic deletion of collected data within 90 days after the declared emergency ends;
 - (iii) Compliance with privacy laws and ethical guidelines.
- (3) Regular audits shall be conducted to validate data accuracy and privacy safeguards.
- 52. Emergency call centres, tele-triage and chatbot support.-** (1) The State shall operate 24x7 multilingual Emergency Call Centres throughout the duration of a declared public health emergency. The call centres shall provide,-
 - (a) Risk triage and emergency medical advice, guiding callers on next steps and hospital referrals;
 - (b) Up-to-date information on resource availability such as hospital beds, ambulance services, and vaccination centres;
 - (c) Psychosocial counselling and legal advice for affected individuals and their families, with trained specialists on standby.
- (2) In addition, AI-driven chatbots shall be deployed across official State health websites and popular messaging platforms to,-
 - (i) Address routine and first-line public queries;
 - (ii) Provide symptom-checking tools;
 - (iii) Facilitate appointment scheduling and feedback collection.
- (3) Chatbots shall be continuously updated using machine learning techniques to improve accuracy and user experience.

PART VIII

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER XI

EMERGENCY DECLARATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS

- 53. Legal procedure for declaration of public health emergency.-** (1) The State Government may formally declare a Public Health Emergency under this Act upon receiving a written recommendation from the Authority and the State Public Health Emergency Commissioner after a thorough risk assessment.

(2) The declaration of emergency shall be promulgated by notification in the Official Gazette, clearly specifying,-

(a) The nature and type of the emergency, including the causative agent or condition (e.g., infectious disease outbreak, bioterrorism threat);

(b) The geographical extent of the affected areas, delineating districts, blocks, or zones impacted;

(c) The anticipated duration of the emergency declaration and the specific restrictions or measures to be implemented under this declaration;

(d) The identification of responsible authorities and designated officers empowered to enforce emergency provisions.

(3) The emergency declaration shall undergo mandatory periodic review every 30 days by the State Government, informed by updated epidemiological data and expert advice.

(4) The State Government shall revoke or modify the declaration promptly once the public health risk is deemed sufficiently controlled or mitigated, with the revocation published in the Official Gazette.

54. Power to restrict movement and public gatherings.- (1) Upon the declaration of a Public Health Emergency, the State Government or the designated District Magistrate shall have the authority to issue binding orders to,-

(a) Restrict, postpone, or prohibit all forms of public gatherings, assemblies, events, and processions, including religious, cultural, political, and social events;

(b) Impose curfews or regulate movement of individuals within specified areas or timeframes to reduce transmission risks;

(c) Limit the occupancy and operating capacity of public transportation systems, educational institutions, workplaces, and other public venues to ensure social distancing.

(2) Such orders shall,-

(i) Be formulated and enforced in strict conformity with Articles 19(2) to 19(6) of the Constitution of India, safeguarding fundamental rights while allowing reasonable restrictions for public health;

(ii) Be subject to judicial review to ensure legality, proportionality, and necessity;

(iii) Include provisions for adequate public communication and grievance redress mechanisms.

55. Regulation of interstate and intrastate transport.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to regulate and monitor the movement of persons and goods across district, zonal, and State borders to minimize disease transmission risks.

(2) The State Government may, as necessary,-

(a) Mandate valid health certificates, negative test results, or vaccination status for travellers crossing administrative boundaries;

(b) Implement mandatory sanitization protocols for public and private transport vehicles, including buses, trains, taxis, and aircraft;

(c) Suspend, curtail, or reschedule public and private transport services, including railways, buses, and flights, in coordination with national agencies.

(3) These regulatory actions shall be undertaken in close coordination with the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Civil Aviation, and other relevant central authorities to ensure harmonized enforcement and minimal disruption.

56. Imposition of containment zones and isolation mandates.- (1) The District Public Health Committee may declare Containment Zones within its jurisdiction based on epidemiological evidence, including,-

- (i) Case positivity rates;
- (ii) Transmission dynamics;
- (iii) Healthcare system capacity constraints.

(2) Within declared Containment Zones, the Committee shall be empowered to enforce measures such as,-

- (a) Comprehensive door-to-door health screening and surveillance by trained teams;
 - (b) Sealing of residential, commercial, or public buildings where transmission risk is identified;
 - (c) Mandatory institutional quarantine or isolation for suspected or confirmed cases, including provisions for safe transportation to quarantine facilities.
- (3) Non-compliance with containment and isolation orders shall attract penalties under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), as well as sanctions prescribed under this Act, including fines and possible prosecution.

57. Temporary regulation of commercial activities.- (1) The State Government shall have the authority to temporarily regulate, restrict, or suspend operations of commercial and public activities, including but not limited to,-

- (a) Markets, shopping malls, and retail establishments;
- (b) Factories, offices, and workplaces;
- (c) Religious institutions, entertainment venues, and recreational facilities.

(2) Any such regulatory orders must adhere to principles of,-

- (a) Time-bound duration, clearly specifying start and end dates;
- (b) Proportionality to the assessed public health risk, avoiding excessive disruption;
- (c) Periodic review and adjustment based on evolving epidemic data and stakeholder inputs;
- (d) Exemption of essential services, including healthcare, food supply chains, utilities, emergency services, and public transportation.

(3) Clear guidelines for enforcement and public communication shall accompany such measures, ensuring transparency and minimizing socio-economic impact.

CHAPTER XII

REGULATION OF ESSENTIAL MEDICAL SERVICES

58. Licensing, price control, and distribution of critical medicines.- (1) Licensing of suppliers,—

- (a) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the State Government may, during the period of a declared public health emergency, by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that the manufacture, import, storage, sale or distribution of such critical medicines, vaccines or therapeutic agents, as may be specified, shall be undertaken only by persons or entities holding a valid licence issued under the *Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940* (23 of 1940) and duly endorsed for emergency supply by the designated State Licensing Authority.

(b) The State Government may prescribe, by rules, an expedited procedure for the grant of temporary or provisional licences, subject to such verification, conditions, and compliance with prescribed safety standards as may be necessary in the public interest.

(2) Price control,—

(a) The State Government may, in consultation with the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) and having regard to the exigencies of the emergency, by notification in the Official Gazette, fix a maximum retail price or ceiling price for any such critical medicine, vaccine or therapeutic product.

(b) No person shall sell, or offer to sell, any such medicine, vaccine or product at a price exceeding the price so fixed.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this sub-section, the expression “price” shall include all charges, taxes, levies, margins or fees imposed at any stage of supply.

(3) Distribution and supply chain regulation,—

(a) The State Government may regulate the mode, manner and priority of distribution of critical medicines, vaccines or therapeutic agents, having due regard to,—

- (i) the severity of the public health emergency;
- (ii) the requirements of vulnerable populations; and
- (iii) geographical risk mapping and availability.

(b) It shall be lawful for the State Government to requisition, in such manner as may be prescribed, stocks from any manufacturer, wholesaler or retailer, on payment of fair compensation, determined in accordance with the rules.

(c) The State Government may, by order, mandate direct-to-hospital or direct-to-patient delivery systems so as to ensure uninterrupted and equitable access to such medicines or products.

(4) Penalty,—

Any person who contravenes the provisions of this section shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees, or with both; and such contravention shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

59. Regulation of private hospitals and laboratories during emergencies.— (1) Requisitioning of services: The State Government may, during a declared public health emergency, by order, direct any private hospital, nursing home, clinical establishment, or diagnostic laboratory to,—

- (a) earmark such proportion of beds, intensive care units, or isolation facilities for the treatment of patients affected by the notified disease as may be specified;
- (b) provide diagnostic, pathological, or imaging services at rates not exceeding those prescribed by the State Government;
- (c) report, in such form and at such intervals as may be prescribed, all cases of the notified disease to the designated health authority.

(2) Regulation of charges,—

(a) The State Government may, by notification, fix the maximum permissible charges for consultation, treatment, diagnostic tests, and hospitalisation during the period of the emergency.

(b) No hospital or laboratory shall refuse treatment or diagnostic testing to any person on the ground of inability to pay at the time of service, subject to such reimbursement mechanism as the State Government may prescribe.

(3) Priority treatment for essential personnel-Private hospitals and laboratories shall give priority in treatment and testing to healthcare workers, law enforcement personnel, emergency service providers, and other categories notified by the State Government.

(4) Penalty-Any contravention of the provisions of this section shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees, or with both, and such contravention shall also be a cognizable offence.

60. Emergency approval for vaccines and experimental therapies.- (1) Accelerated approval process,—

During a declared public health emergency, the State Government may, in coordination with the Central Government and the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), implement an expedited approval process for,—

(a) vaccines, drugs, or biologics under phase III trials with promising safety and efficacy data;

(b) experimental therapies authorised under the “compassionate use” or “emergency use authorisation” framework.

(2) Conditional us,—

Such approval shall be subject to,—

(a) informed consent of the patient or their legal guardian;

(b) mandatory adverse event reporting to the designated pharmacovigilance centre;

(c) post-marketing surveillance as may be prescribed.

(3) Local manufacture,—

The State Government may facilitate technology transfer, licensing, or local manufacturing of approved emergency products within the State, subject to compliance with national law.

61. Medical waste management and sanitation protocols.- (1) Mandatory compliance,-

All hospitals, laboratories, quarantine facilities, vaccination centres, and testing sites shall comply with biomedical waste management standards as notified under the Bio-Medical Waste Management Rules, 2016, and such additional protocols as the State Government may prescribe during a public health emergency.

(2) Emergency protocols,-

(a) Segregation, collection, transport, and disposal of infectious waste generated during the emergency shall be carried out under strict infection control procedures;

(b) The State Government may designate emergency waste treatment and disposal sites, with requisite environmental safeguards;

(c) Training shall be provided to all waste-handling personnel, and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) shall be made available.

(3) Penalty-Failure to comply with this section shall be punishable with imprisonment up to one year, or with fine up to two lakh rupees, or with both, and in the case of continuing contravention, with an additional fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees for every day during which the contravention continues.

62. Prohibition of hoarding, misinformation, and black-marketing.- (1) Hoarding and black-marketing,-

(a) No person shall hoard, withhold from sale, or engage in black-marketing of any essential medicine, vaccine, oxygen, PPE, or medical equipment during a declared public health emergency;

(b) Any such act shall be deemed an offence under this Act and also under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (10 of 1955).

(2) Misinformation,-

(a) No person shall knowingly make, publish, or circulate any false information, misleading medical claims, or rumours regarding the cause, spread, prevention, or treatment of the notified disease, where such information is likely to cause public panic, prejudice public order, or endanger public health.

(b) The offence shall be punishable as per Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Information Technology Act, 2000 shall apply in addition to the penalties under this Act.

(3) Penalty,-

(a) Any person contravening sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to seven years, and with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees;

(b) Any person contravening sub-section (2) shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees, or with both.

PART IX

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND EQUITY

CHAPTER XIII

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RISK COMMUNICATION

63. Role of Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions.- (1) For the purposes of ensuring community-based preparedness and response during a declared Public Health Emergency, it shall be the duty of every Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, Zilla Parishad, Municipal Council, and Municipal Corporation within the State to,—

(a) assist in the implementation of emergency health measures as directed by the State Public Health Emergency Authority;

(b) maintain an up-to-date register of vulnerable persons including the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, children, and persons with chronic illnesses;

(c) support local surveillance, early-warning, and contact tracing activities;

(d) coordinate with Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Anganwadi workers, and other frontline health workers for door-to-door dissemination of information and essential services;

(e) identify and allocate community spaces for temporary medical camps, isolation centres, and relief distribution; and

(f) submit weekly situation reports to the District Public Health Officer in such form as may be prescribed.

(2) The functions under sub-section (1) shall be exercised in addition to, and not in derogation of, the functions assigned under Articles 243G and 243W of the Constitution and the respective Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act, 1993 and Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “vulnerable persons” means persons identified by the State Government, from time to time, as being at higher risk of severe impact during a public health emergency.

64. Community Health Watch Committees.- (1) The State Government shall, within three months from the commencement of this Act, notify the constitution of Community Health Watch Committees (CHWCs) at the Gram Panchayat and Ward levels, to function as grassroots monitoring and advisory bodies during both preparedness and response phases.

(2) A CHWC shall consist of,—

- (a) the elected Gram Panchayat/Ward Member as Chairperson;
- (b) one ASHA worker;
- (c) one Anganwadi worker;
- (d) a representative from any registered local civil society organisation;
- (e) one schoolteacher or principal from a local educational institution;
- (f) two community representatives, with at least one woman; and
- (g) such other members as may be prescribed by rules.

(3) The functions of the CHWC shall include,—

- (a) monitoring local compliance with public health advisories;
- (b) identifying misinformation or harmful practices and reporting them to local authorities;
- (c) supporting equitable distribution of relief and medical aid; and
- (d) providing feedback to the District Public Health Emergency Coordination Centre.

(4) The CHWC shall meet at least once every fortnight during a declared public health emergency and maintain written records of its deliberations.

(5) The quorum for any meeting shall be not less than fifty per cent of the members.

65. Civil Society and Youth Mobilisation.- (1) The State Public Health Emergency Authority may, in coordination with the Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports, engage youth organisations, including National Service Scheme (NSS) units, National Cadet Corps (NCC) units, and registered voluntary organisations, for the purposes of,—

- (a) assisting in non-clinical relief activities, such as distribution of food, medicines, and protective gear;
- (b) public outreach for health education and behavioural change; and
- (c) support in community-level surveillance and logistics management under supervision of trained officials.

(2) All volunteers engaged under this section shall be,—

- (a) provided with basic safety training and protective equipment; and
- (b) insured against injury, illness, or death arising in the course of such service, in accordance with such scheme as may be notified by the State Government.

66. Public Education Campaigns and Behavioural Nudges.-(1) The State Government shall ensure continuous public education through multiple channels, including but not limited to radio, television, social media, print media, and public announcement systems, regarding,—

- (a) the nature, symptoms, and prevention of the disease or hazard in question;
- (b) the importance of hygiene, vaccination, and early reporting; and
- (c) permissible and prohibited activities during the emergency.

(2) Behavioural nudges such as visual cues, signage, reminder messages, and community competitions for safe practices shall be designed and implemented in culturally appropriate formats.

(3) All educational materials shall be made available in Kannada and such other regional languages as may be necessary to ensure accessibility.

(4) The content of such campaigns shall be vetted by the State Public Health Emergency Authority to ensure scientific accuracy and prevent panic.

67. Addressing Stigma, Rumours, and Discrimination.- (1) Any person, group, or entity shall not,—

(a) engage in acts of social ostracism, refusal of services, or eviction of individuals or families on account of suspected or confirmed disease status;

(b) spread or publish, knowingly or recklessly, any false information that may cause fear, prejudice, or hatred against any person or community; or

(c) discriminate in employment, healthcare, or relief distribution on grounds of disease, caste, religion, gender, or socio-economic status during a public health emergency.

(2) The State Government shall,—

(a) set up a 24×7 helpline for reporting stigma-related incidents;

(b) authorise local authorities to take preventive and remedial measures, including issuing public advisories; and

(c) facilitate counselling and community mediation for affected persons.

(3) Any person contravening the provisions of sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees, or with both.

For the purposes of this section, “false information” shall have the same meaning as assigned under section 54 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

CHAPTER XIV

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

68. Tailored strategies for children, elderly, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Department of Health and Family Welfare, the Department of Women and Child Development, and the Department of Social Welfare, prepare and implement Emergency Preparedness Plans specifically addressing the needs of,—

(a) children, including newborns and infants;

(b) elderly persons;

(c) persons with disabilities as defined under section 2(s) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016; and

(d) pregnant and lactating women.

(2) Such Plans shall, inter alia, include—

(a) uninterrupted access to essential medicines and medical devices;

(b) priority health check-ups and mobile medical units;

(c) safe transportation arrangements to health facilities;

(d) provision for home-based care where mobility is restricted; and

(e) allocation of dedicated hospital beds in public and private health facilities during a Public Health Emergency.

(3) The State Government may, by notification, prescribe minimum service delivery standards for each category specified in sub-section (1).

(4) In implementing the provisions of this section, no person shall be denied services on the grounds of caste, creed, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, economic status, or place of origin.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “Public Health Emergency” shall have the same meaning as assigned in section 2 of this Act.

69. Emergency shelters for homeless and migrant populations.- (1) During the continuance of a Public Health Emergency, the State Government shall ensure the establishment and operation of temporary emergency shelters with adequate,—

(a) living space ensuring minimum prescribed sanitation standards;

(b) clean drinking water and food;

(c) ventilation and temperature control suited to prevailing climatic conditions;

(d) gender-sensitive and disability-friendly facilities; and

(e) security arrangements, including separate provisions for vulnerable women and children.

(2) Local bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and Municipal Corporations shall be responsible for,—

(a) identifying and preparing suitable premises for conversion into emergency shelters;

(b) maintaining updated records of shelter occupants; and

(c) coordinating with the police, health workers, and civil defence for security and service delivery.

(3) The provisions of sub-section (1) shall apply without prejudice to the obligations of employers under the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979.

Provided that Nothing in this section shall prevent the State Government from requisitioning private or community spaces for the purpose of temporary shelters, subject to payment of compensation in accordance with section 102 of this Act.

70. Special nutrition and support for immunocompromised populations.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with medical experts, maintain a registry of persons identified as immunocompromised, including but not limited to,—

(a) persons undergoing chemotherapy or immunosuppressive therapy;

(b) persons with HIV/AIDS;

(c) organ transplant recipients; and

(d) persons with chronic or rare immune disorders.

(2) During a Public Health Emergency, the State Government shall ensure,—

(a) delivery of fortified and special dietary supplements;

(b) door-to-door delivery of prescribed medicines;

(c) provision of personal protective equipment free of cost; and

(d) telemedicine facilities to reduce the need for hospital visits.

(3) The Food and Civil Supplies Department shall issue priority ration cards for such persons to ensure uninterrupted nutritional support during the emergency period.

71. Mental health support during emergencies.- (1) The State Government shall, during a Public Health Emergency, provide accessible mental health and psychosocial support services to,—

- (a) patients and their families;
- (b) frontline healthcare and emergency service workers;
- (c) survivors of the emergency event; and
- (d) vulnerable populations identified under section 68.

(2) Such services shall include—

- (a) establishment of 24x7 toll-free helplines;
- (b) deployment of trained counsellors in hospitals, shelters, and community centres;
- (c) tele-counselling and mobile therapy units; and
- (d) public awareness campaigns to reduce stigma associated with mental illness.

(3) The provisions of this section shall be implemented in accordance with the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, and in consultation with the Karnataka State Mental Health Authority.

72. Social protection and relief coordination.- (1) The State Government shall ensure, during the continuance of a Public Health Emergency, the coordination of social protection measures, which shall include,—

- (a) direct cash transfers to affected households;
- (b) temporary suspension or deferment of utility bills, rent, or loan repayments for low-income families;
- (c) provision of subsidised transport for essential travel;
- (d) fast-tracking of insurance claim settlements under public health insurance schemes; and
- (e) legal aid for persons affected by denial of services or discrimination.

(2) The State Disaster Management Authority shall designate a Nodal Relief Coordination Officer for each district to,—

- (a) coordinate with civil society organisations, charitable trusts, and corporate social responsibility entities;
- (b) maintain a district-level relief database; and
- (c) ensure avoidance of duplication in aid distribution.

(3) Any wilful denial, obstruction, or diversion of relief materials meant for vulnerable populations during a Public Health Emergency shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

PART X

ACCOUNTABILITY, MONITORING, AND COMPLIANCE

CHAPTER XV

AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

73. Monitoring framework and periodic evaluation.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish a Public Health Emergency Monitoring Framework to oversee the implementation, compliance, and effectiveness of measures under this Act at the State, district, and local levels.

(2) The framework shall,—

- (a) prescribe standard monitoring protocols, including timelines, responsible authorities, and documentation requirements;

- (b) ensure that monitoring covers infrastructure readiness, personnel preparedness, emergency response speed, public communication efficiency, and community engagement;
- (c) provide for both routine evaluations and post-emergency reviews.
- (3) The Director of Public Health Emergency Preparedness shall ensure that,—
 - (a) quarterly monitoring reports are submitted to the State Public Health Emergency Council; and
 - (b) annual consolidated evaluations are laid before the State Legislature.
- (4) The State Government may, by rules, prescribe the methodology for such evaluation, including,—
 - (a) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
 - (b) third-party or independent expert assessments;
 - (c) community satisfaction surveys; and
 - (d) integration with early warning systems and real-time data platforms.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “monitoring” shall include both preventive readiness checks and retrospective analysis of emergency handling to ensure continuous improvement.

74. Health emergency audits and financial disclosures.- (1) The Comptroller and Auditor General of India, or any agency authorised by the State Government in consultation with the Accountant General, Karnataka, shall conduct special public health emergency audits on,—

- (a) expenditure incurred under this Act;
- (b) procurement and utilisation of medical equipment, supplies, and infrastructure;
- (c) distribution of relief materials and emergency stockpiles; and
- (d) compliance with prescribed procurement transparency norms.
- (2) All State Government departments, local authorities, health institutions, and private entities receiving funds or resources under this Act shall—
 - (a) maintain separate books of accounts for such funds;
 - (b) publish quarterly financial disclosures on the official State Public Health Emergency Portal; and
 - (c) furnish documents, vouchers, and procurement records to the audit authority when required.
- (3) Where an audit reveals financial irregularities, misappropriation, or diversion of funds, the State Government shall—
 - (a) initiate recovery proceedings;
 - (b) order departmental inquiries; and
 - (c) prosecute offences under applicable laws, including the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, where warranted.

75. Performance indicators for districts and health institutions.-(1) The State Government shall notify a Performance Evaluation Index (PEI) for measuring preparedness and response capacity of,—

- (a) districts;
- (b) municipal corporations, municipalities, and Panchayati Raj Institutions; and
- (c) public and private health institutions designated under this Act.
- (2) The PEI shall be based on,—
 - (a) response time to public health emergencies;

- (b) adequacy of stockpiled medicines and equipment;
- (c) effectiveness of communication with the public;
- (d) level of staff training and deployment readiness; and
- (e) compliance with standard operating procedures (SOPs).

(3) The State Government shall,—

- (a) publish annual district-wise and institution-wise rankings;
 - (b) recognise high-performing units through incentives; and
 - (c) impose remedial measures or administrative actions on persistently underperforming units.
- (4) The criteria, weights, and scoring methodology for the PEI shall be prescribed by rules, ensuring uniform application across the State.

76. Real-time data transparency and citizen dashboards.- (1) The State Government shall establish and maintain a Public Health Emergency Transparency Portal accessible to the public, which shall,—

- (a) display real-time information on the status of health emergencies, including case counts, containment zones, medical facility capacities, and supply stock levels;
- (b) provide emergency contact numbers, helplines, and verified advisories; and
- (c) publish status updates on government relief efforts and citizen services.

(2) The data published shall be,—

- (a) verified by the State Public Health Data Authority;
 - (b) updated at intervals prescribed by rules; and
 - (c) anonymised where necessary to protect individual privacy in compliance with Article 21 of the Constitution and applicable data protection laws.
- (3) Any false or misleading publication of emergency data by a public authority or health institution shall attract penalties under section [Penalties Clause of the Act].

77. Review by the State Legislature.- (1) The Minister in charge of Health and Family Welfare shall, within six months after the cessation of a declared public health emergency, lay before the Legislative Assembly a comprehensive report detailing,—

- (a) nature, scope, and duration of the emergency;
- (b) actions taken under this Act;
- (c) expenditure incurred and audited statements;
- (d) evaluation findings and identified gaps; and
- (e) recommendations for strengthening preparedness.

(2) The Legislative Assembly may,—

- (a) refer the report to the relevant Standing Committee for examination;
- (b) seek oral or written clarifications from the State Government; and
- (c) recommend legislative or administrative amendments to improve preparedness and accountability.

(3) The report shall also be published on the official State Public Health Emergency Portal for public access within fifteen days of being tabled in the Legislature.

CHAPTER XVI

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AND OMBUDSMAN

78. State Public Health Emergency Ombudsman.- (1) Establishment of Ombudsman

The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint a State Public Health Emergency Ombudsman (“the Ombudsman”) for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Qualifications;

No person shall be appointed as the Ombudsman unless he or she,—

- (a) has held the office of a Judge of a High Court, or has served for not less than twenty years in the field of public administration, law, or public health; and
- (b) possesses proven integrity, impartiality, and experience in handling matters of public grievance redressal.

(3) Tenure and Conditions of Service;

- (a) The Ombudsman shall hold office for a term of five years or until attaining the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier.
- (b) The terms and conditions of service, including salary and allowances, shall be prescribed and shall not be varied to his or her disadvantage after appointment.

(4) Powers and Functions;

The Ombudsman shall,—

- (a) receive, inquire into, and adjudicate complaints relating to maladministration, negligence, or rights violations during a public health emergency;
- (b) direct corrective measures to be taken by the concerned public authority;
- (c) submit annual and special reports to the State Legislature.

(5) Binding Nature of Orders;

Every direction issued by the Ombudsman under this section shall be binding on the concerned authority, unless stayed or set aside by the High Court in writ jurisdiction.

(6) Independence;

The Ombudsman shall act independently of the Executive Government and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other authority, except as provided under this Act.

79. District-level Citizen Grievance Forums.- (1) Establishment:

The State Government shall establish, in each district, a District Public Health Emergency Grievance Forum for the purpose of expeditious disposal of complaints from citizens during a public health emergency.

(2) Composition- The Forum shall consist of,—

- (a) the District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner — Chairperson;
- (b) the Chief Medical Officer — Member;
- (c) two non-official members representing civil society organisations or public health experts — nominated by the State Government.

(3) Jurisdiction- The Forum shall have jurisdiction to entertain complaints relating to,—

- (a) denial of healthcare services;
- (b) non-availability of essential medicines, equipment, or supplies;
- (c) improper quarantine or isolation measures;
- (d) any form of discrimination in health service delivery.

(4) Time-bound Disposal

Every complaint shall be disposed of within seven working days from the date of its receipt, except where an extension is justified in writing.

80. Online and Telephonic Complaint Tracking.- (1) Establishment of Complaint Tracking System

The State Government shall establish and maintain a centralised Online and Telephonic Complaint Tracking Portal accessible to all citizens during a public health emergency.

(2) Features;

The system shall,—

- (a) generate an acknowledgment number for every complaint;
- (b) allow real-time tracking of the status of the complaint;
- (c) ensure complaints are automatically routed to the relevant District Grievance Forum.

(3) Accessibility;

The portal and helpline shall be available in Kannada and English, and in such other languages as the State Government may notify.

(4) Data Protection;

The system shall ensure protection of personal data of complainants in accordance with applicable laws, including the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

81. Whistle-blower Protection during Health Crises.- (1) Protection of Persons Making Disclosures;

Any person, including a public servant, healthcare worker, or citizen, who makes a disclosure in good faith regarding corruption, mismanagement, or rights violations during a public health emergency shall be protected from any form of victimisation, retaliation, or disciplinary action.

(2) Non-disclosure of Identity;

The identity of the whistle-blower shall not be disclosed without his or her consent, except where disclosure is necessary for investigation or prosecution.

(3) Penalties for Retaliation;

Any person who subjects a whistle-blower to harassment, dismissal, demotion, or other retaliatory action shall be liable to imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

(4) Cognizance of Offences;

No court shall take cognizance of an offence under sub-section (3) except upon a complaint made by the Ombudsman or the District Grievance Forum.

82. Legal Aid and Support Mechanisms for Affected Citizens

(1) Provision of legal aid,—

- (a) The State Government shall ensure that free legal aid is made available to affected citizens during the period of a declared public health emergency.
- (b) Such legal aid shall be provided in accordance with the provisions of the *Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987* (39 of 1987), and the rules and regulations made thereunder.

(2) Special panels of lawyers,—

- (a) The Karnataka State Legal Services Authority shall constitute and maintain a panel of advocates for the purposes of this section.
- (b) The panel shall comprise advocates with demonstrable expertise in public health law, human rights, and disaster management.

(c) Such advocates shall be engaged to assist affected citizens in securing their rights and remedies under this Act or any other law for the time being in force.

(3) Awareness and outreach,—

(a) The State Government shall organise and conduct awareness programmes, in such manner as may be prescribed, to inform citizens of their rights under this Act.

(b) The programmes shall include dissemination of information regarding the procedure for obtaining legal aid and the availability of assistance through designated authorities.

(4) Coordination with non-governmental organisations,—

(a) For the purpose of providing holistic legal and social support to affected citizens, the State Government may enter into arrangements with non-governmental organisations, legal aid societies, or such other entities as may be approved.

(b) The terms and conditions of such arrangements shall be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

PART XI

PENALTIES, ENFORCEMENT, AND MISCELLANEOUS

CHAPTER XVII

PENALTIES AND OFFENCES

83. Penalty for non-compliance with emergency orders.- (1) Any person, body, or authority who,—

(a) wilfully disobeys or fails to comply with any lawful order, directive, or notification issued under this Act during the subsistence of a public health emergency declared under section [relevant section number]; or

(b) refuses to cooperate with public health authorities or obstructs implementation of emergency measures;

shall be liable to penalty and prosecution as provided in this section.

(2) Without prejudice to any higher penalty under any other law for the time being in force, such person shall be punishable with—

(a) imprisonment which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees, or with both, for the first offence; and

(b) imprisonment which may extend to two years, and fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, for every subsequent offence.

(3) Where the offence is a continuing one, a further fine which may extend to five thousand rupees for every day during which such contravention continues after conviction may be imposed.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “emergency orders” shall include all mandatory directions, quarantine measures, movement restrictions, or health protocols issued under this Act.

Exception: No penalty shall be imposed where the contravention is proved to be due to circumstances beyond the control of the accused and without any negligence or wilful default.

84. Penalty for spreading fake news or obstructing health workers.- (1) Whoever, during the continuance of a public health emergency, —

(a) knowingly makes, publishes, circulates, or disseminates, by any means whatsoever, any false statement, rumour, report, or representation which is likely to cause panic, alarm, unrest, or undermine public confidence in health measures prescribed under this Act; or

(b) digitally transmits, forwards, uploads, or shares such statement, rumour, report, or representation through any electronic medium, including but not limited to social media platforms, instant messaging services, or digital forums;

shall be guilty of an offence and shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to one lakh rupees, or with both.

(2) Whoever voluntarily obstructs, deters, intimidates, assaults, or causes physical, psychological, or reputational harm to any health worker, first responder, or authorised official, whether by words, gestures, or acts, while such person is lawfully discharging any duty, function, or responsibility under this Act, shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years, and with fine which may extend to two lakh rupees.

(3) Where the act of obstruction under sub-section (2) results in grievous injury, permanent disability, or serious disruption of essential health services, the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment which shall not be less than three years but may extend to five years, and with fine which shall not be less than two lakh rupees but may extend to five lakh rupees.

(4) For the purposes of this section, where a person is found to have created or shared digital content prima facie false in nature during a public health emergency, the burden shall lie on such person to prove that due diligence was exercised before its transmission.

(5) Offences under this section shall be cognizable and non-bailable, and shall be triable by a Magistrate of the First Class.

Explanation — For the purposes of this section—

(a) “health worker” includes any person engaged or authorised for healthcare, sanitation, testing, vaccination, public health communication, or relief work during a declared public health emergency;

(b) “false statement” shall mean any information which is proved to be knowingly untrue or misleading, and which a reasonable person would expect to cause public disorder or hinder health response efforts.

85. Criminal liability for hoarding, black-marketing, and medical fraud.- (1) Whoever, during the continuance of a declared public health emergency, hoards, withholds from sale, or refuses to supply any essential medical commodity notified under this Act or under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 (10 of 1955), with the intention of making excess profits, or sells such commodities at a price exceeding the maximum price fixed under law, shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than two lakh rupees.

(2) Whoever, during the continuance of a declared public health emergency, manufactures, sells, distributes, or otherwise deals in spurious, adulterated, or substandard medicines, vaccines, diagnostic kits, medical devices, or other notified health-related products, or fraudulently issues or causes to be issued false or fabricated medical certificates, diagnostic reports, or vaccination records, shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than five lakh rupees.

(3) Where a person is convicted of an offence under this section, the Court may, in addition to awarding any sentence, order the attachment or forfeiture of property, freezing of bank accounts, or seizure and confiscation of any stock of commodities or materials in respect of which the offence has been committed.

Explanation—For the purposes of this section, “essential medical commodity” shall include medicines, vaccines, oxygen, ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, hospital beds, diagnostic kits, or any other article or item as may be notified by the State Government from time to time in the Official Gazette.

86. Penalties on institutional negligence during health crises.— (1) Any hospital, diagnostic centre, clinical establishment, laboratory, pharmaceutical manufacturing unit, or any other healthcare institution, by whatever name called, which—

(a) fails to comply with the emergency preparedness and response requirements as prescribed under this Act or the rules made thereunder; or

(b) refuses, denies, or unreasonably withholds treatment, testing, admission, or medical assistance to any person in contravention of emergency orders or directions issued by the Government or the designated authority; or

(c) deliberately suppresses, conceals, falsifies, or withholds information relating to the occurrence, outbreak, spread, or suspected spread of a communicable disease or other health emergency, from the State Government, public health authority, or any officer duly empowered under this Act,

shall be liable to the imposition of a monetary penalty which shall not be less than five lakh rupees and which may extend to fifty lakh rupees, having due regard to the nature, gravity, and consequences of such contravention.

(2) Without prejudice to the penalty imposed under sub-section (1), the competent licensing or regulatory authority may, after giving the institution an opportunity of being heard, suspend, cancel, or revoke the licence, registration, or permit granted to such defaulting institution, either temporarily or permanently, in accordance with the provisions of this Act or any other law for the time being in force.

(3) Where any contravention under this section continues after the imposition of penalty, the institution shall be further liable to an additional fine of fifty thousand rupees for every day during which such contravention continues, until compliance is duly effected to the satisfaction of the competent authority.

Explanation—For the purposes of this section, “institutional negligence” shall mean and include any wilful act, omission, dereliction of duty, non-compliance, or failure to act on the part of a healthcare establishment which—

(a) endangers or has the potential to endanger the life, safety, or health of any person or community; or

(b) obstructs, impedes, or frustrates the effective implementation of emergency health response measures undertaken under this Act.

87. Offences by companies and health institutions.— (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company,—

(a) every person who, at the time the offence was committed, was in charge of, and responsible to, the company for the conduct of its business; and

(b) the company itself;

shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(2) No person referred to in sub-section (1) shall be liable to punishment if he proves that,—

(a) the offence was committed without his knowledge; or

(b) he exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(3) Liability of directors, managers, and officers — Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where an offence has been committed by a company and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent, connivance, or due to neglect of any director, manager, secretary, or other officer of the company, such person shall also be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be punished accordingly.

Explanation — For the purposes of this section,—

(a) “company” means any body corporate and includes a firm, society, trust, or other association of individuals; and

(b) “director”, in relation to a firm, means a partner in the firm.

CHAPTER XVIII

INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT

88. Emergency Inspection and Surveillance Officers.- (1) Appointment of Emergency Inspection and Surveillance Officers:

The State Government may, by notification published in the Official Gazette, appoint such number of officers, to be designated as *Emergency Inspection and Surveillance Officers* (hereinafter referred to as “EIS Officers”), as it may consider necessary for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act during a declared Public Health Emergency.

(2) Basis of Appointment:

The appointment of EIS Officers may be made,—

(a) on a permanent, temporary, or contractual basis, as the exigencies of public health may require;

(b) from among the officers serving in the Departments of Health and Family Welfare, Police, Food Safety and Standards, Urban Local Bodies, Disaster Management Authorities, and any other Department or agency as may be notified by the State Government;

(c) from such category of experts or specialists, including epidemiologists, microbiologists, public health engineers, and medical practitioners, as the State Government may deem expedient for surveillance, inspection, and emergency response.

(3) Powers and Functions of EIS Officers:

Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions, the EIS Officers shall, during the continuance of a declared Public Health Emergency, exercise the following powers and perform the following functions, namely:—

(a) to enter, inspect, and examine any premises, whether public or private, which is suspected or reported to be a site of infection, contamination, or a threat to public health;

(b) to inspect and oversee the functioning of any hospital, clinic, diagnostic centre, quarantine facility, laboratory, vaccination centre, storage facility for medicines, or such other institution as may have relevance to the control of the public health emergency;

- (c) to conduct epidemiological surveillance, including but not limited to the collection of samples, administration of health surveys, recording of medical or demographic data, contact tracing, and verification of compliance with protocols issued under this Act;
- (d) to issue, on the spot, compliance directions to owners, occupiers, managers, or persons in charge of premises or facilities, requiring them to undertake specific measures to prevent, control, or mitigate the spread of infection or contamination;
- (e) to coordinate with local police authorities for the enforcement of directions issued under this Act;
- (f) to prepare inspection reports and submit the same to the designated authority in the manner prescribed by rules framed under this Act.

(4) Identification and Accountability of EIS Officers:

(1) Every EIS Officer, while exercising or purporting to exercise powers under this section, shall carry and, upon demand, produce an official identity card or authorisation letter issued by the State Government or by an authority duly empowered in this behalf.

(2) Any EIS Officer who exceeds, abuses, or misuses the powers conferred under this Act shall be liable to departmental action, including disciplinary proceedings, suspension, removal, or such other penalty as may be imposed under the applicable service rules, in addition to any penalty prescribed under this Act.

(3) The State Government shall establish a grievance redressal mechanism for receiving and enquiring into complaints made against EIS Officers by members of the public, and appropriate action shall be taken within such time as may be prescribed.

(5) Protection of Action Taken in Good Faith:

No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against any EIS Officer or any person acting under his or her direction, for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or the rules or orders made thereunder.

(6) Delegation of Powers:

The State Government may, by notification, authorise a class or category of EIS Officers to exercise such powers and perform such functions as may be specified therein, subject to such restrictions and conditions as may be imposed in the interest of accountability and public safety.

89. Search, Seizure, and Quarantine Enforcement Powers.- (1) Where the State Government, the State Health Authority, or an Emergency Inspection and Surveillance Officer has reason to believe, based on credible information or personal knowledge, that,—

(a) any premises, building, conveyance, or place contains infected persons, contaminated goods, vectors, animals, or materials likely to spread infection; or

(b) there is wilful disobedience or violation of any order, direction, or notification issued under this Act during a public health emergency;

they may, after recording reasons in writing, by order in writing, authorise any officer not below the rank of a notified authority to enter, inspect, search, seize, or take possession of such premises, building, conveyance, goods, or materials, in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) All searches and seizures carried out under this section shall, as far as may be practicable, follow the procedure prescribed in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, unless expressly provided otherwise under this Act. Every authorised officer shall prepare a detailed inventory

of articles or property seized, and a written receipt thereof shall be handed over to the person from whose custody such property, goods, or samples are taken.

(3) Any goods, articles, or materials which are perishable in nature, or which upon examination by a competent authority are certified to pose an imminent threat to public health or safety, may be destroyed forthwith, subject to recording of reasons in writing and preparation of a destruction report countersigned by at least one independent witness, where practicable.

(4) Where any premises, building, conveyance, or area is found to be a site of infection, contamination, or suspected exposure, the State Government, the State Health Authority, or an authorised officer may direct that such premises, building, conveyance, or area be sealed, cordoned off, or placed under quarantine restrictions, and may regulate or prohibit ingress and egress thereto, for such duration as may be proportionate to the risk. Such quarantine restrictions may be reviewed and extended upon periodic assessment by the State Health Authority.

(5) The officer conducting a search or seizure shall, as far as practicable, be accompanied by a local police officer or such other officer as may be considered necessary for maintenance of public order and for securing compliance with lawful directions.

(6) No search of any residential premises shall be carried out between sunset and sunrise except with the prior written approval of a Magistrate of competent jurisdiction, unless the officer conducting the search is satisfied that any delay will defeat the purpose of such search, in which case reasons shall be recorded in writing and communicated forthwith to the nearest Magistrate.

(7) Where a female occupant of a premises is to be searched, such search shall be conducted only by a female officer with strict regard to decency, and in the presence of another adult female witness wherever possible.

(8) Any person aggrieved by a search, seizure, or quarantine order made under this section may, within seven days from the date of such order, prefer an appeal before such authority as may be notified by the State Government, and such authority shall dispose of the appeal within a period of fifteen days from the date of filing.

90. Power to Detain and Test Individuals Suspected of Infection.- (1) Where there is reasonable cause to believe that any person is infected or suspected of being infected with a notifiable disease, or has been in contact with an infected person or contaminated material, such person may be detained and subjected to medical examination and testing.

(2) Detention and testing shall be carried out only upon the written order of an EIS Officer or a Medical Officer authorised by the State Government, and the individual shall be informed of the reasons for detention and the nature of the tests to be conducted.

(3) All tests shall be performed by authorised laboratories in accordance with prescribed medical protocols.

(4) Every person detained under this section shall have the right to be treated with dignity and without discrimination, the right to communicate with a family member or legal counsel, and the right to receive a copy of the medical test results.

(5) Minors, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women shall be detained only in facilities appropriate to their needs and in the presence of a guardian or responsible adult, unless impossible due to urgent public health risk.

(6) No person shall be detained beyond the period necessary for testing and medical clearance, except under judicial authorisation.

91. Special Courts for Expedited Hearings.- (1) Establishment of Special Courts;

(a) The State Government, in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka, may designate one or more Courts of Judicial Magistrate of the First Class or Courts of Sessions as Special Courts for the purposes of this Act.

(b) Such Special Courts shall have jurisdiction to try offences under this Act and to dispose of matters expeditiously.

(2) Procedure;

(a) Special Courts shall follow the procedure prescribed under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, unless otherwise provided in this Act.

(b) The trial of any offence under this Act shall, as far as practicable, be concluded within six months from the date of filing of the charge sheet.

(3) Powers;

(a) To take cognizance of offences under this Act without the accused being committed to it for trial;

(b) To grant interim orders, injunctions, or reliefs necessary to contain the spread of infection;

(c) To hear appeals or revisions from orders of subordinate authorities under this Act, if so provided by notification.

(4) Appeals against the orders of the Special Court shall lie to the High Court of Karnataka, to be disposed of on a priority basis.

(5) Protection of Sensitive Information- Special Courts shall take measures to protect patient confidentiality, medical records, and any other sensitive data during proceedings.

CHAPTER XIX

RULEMAKING AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

92. Power to frame rules, notifications, and Standard Operating Procedures.- (1) The State Government may, by notification published in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes and provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:—

(a) the constitution, composition, powers, and functions of any authority, committee, or body constituted under this Act;

(b) the procedure for declaration, extension, review, or withdrawal of a public health emergency;

(c) the manner of procurement, storage, maintenance, and deployment of medical stockpiles, emergency equipment, and other critical supplies;

(d) the form, manner, and process of issuing emergency orders, advisories, and directions under this Act;

(e) the protocols and standards for quarantine, isolation, testing, treatment, and restriction on movement of persons or goods;

(f) the training, certification, capacity-building, and deployment of health personnel, volunteers, and first responders;

- (g) the establishment, operation, and coordination of early warning, surveillance, and disease-monitoring systems;
- (h) measures for occupational safety, insurance coverage, and protection of health workers, first responders, and volunteers;
- (i) the manner, scope, and safeguards relating to inspections, searches, seizures, requisition, and testing conducted under this Act;
- (j) procedures for grievance redressal, oversight, and accountability of authorities exercising powers under this Act; and
- (k) such other matters as are required to be, or may be, prescribed under this Act, or as may be necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

(3) The State Government may, from time to time, by notification in the Official Gazette, issue specific measures, restrictions, relaxations, or guidelines for the purposes of implementing this Act during the continuance of a declared public health emergency, and such notification shall have the force of law during the period it remains in operation.

(4) The State Government may frame and issue Standard Operating Procedures (hereinafter referred to as “SOPs”) consistent with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, for the operational guidance of field officers, health institutions, enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders.

(a) SOPs issued under this section shall be binding on all persons and authorities to whom they are addressed, during the continuance of a declared public health emergency.

(b) The State Government shall review and revise such SOPs periodically, having regard to scientific evidence, expert advice, and evolving circumstances of the public health emergency.

(5) Every rule and notification made under this section shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and the Karnataka Legislative Council, while they are in session, for a total period of not less than fourteen days, which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions; and if, before the expiry of the session immediately following the session or successive sessions aforesaid, both Houses agree in making any modification in such rule or notification, or both Houses agree that such rule or notification should not be made, the rule or notification shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or shall be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule or notification.

93. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) No such order shall be made under sub-section (1) after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(3) Every order made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and the Karnataka Legislative Council.

94. Power to amend Schedules and forms.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, add to, amend, vary, or omit any of the Schedules to this Act.

(2) The State Government may also, by notification in the Official Gazette, prescribe and revise forms to be used for the purposes of this Act.

(3) Every notification issued under this section shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and the Karnataka Legislative Council in the manner provided in section 92(4).

95. Continuation of proceedings during legislative changes.- Where any proceeding or action has been initiated under the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder, and before its completion this Act is amended, repealed, or substituted by any subsequent enactment,—

(a) such proceeding or action may be continued, completed, and enforced as if this Act had not been so amended, repealed, or substituted, unless otherwise expressly provided;

(b) all rights, liabilities, penalties, and obligations incurred before such amendment or repeal shall remain enforceable as if the amendment or repeal had not taken place.

The provisions of this section shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, the provisions of section 6 of the Karnataka General Clauses Act, 1899.

96. Repeal of inconsistent laws.- (1) On and from the commencement of this Act, the provisions of any law for the time being in force in the State of Karnataka, or any instrument having the force of law, in so far as they are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, shall cease to have effect to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) Saving- Nothing in sub-section (1) shall affect,—

(a) anything duly done or suffered under any law so repealed or modified;

(b) any right, privilege, obligation, or liability acquired, accrued, or incurred under any such law;

(c) any penalty, forfeiture, or punishment incurred in respect of any offence committed under such law; and

(d) any investigation, legal proceeding, or remedy in respect of any such right, privilege, obligation, liability, penalty, forfeiture, or punishment.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the expression “law” includes any Ordinance, order, bye-law, rule, regulation, notification, or scheme having

THE KARNATAKA SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND AWARENESS FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for a comprehensive legal framework to prevent and address the rising incidence of substance abuse among students and youth in educational institutions across the State of Karnataka;

And whereas the protection of physical and mental health of students, the creation of safe and drug-free learning environments, and the promotion of holistic development are essential components of the right to education and public health under Articles 21 and 47 of the Constitution of India;

And whereas there is a compelling need to institutionalize preventive education, early intervention, access to rehabilitation, and coordinated stakeholder response in order to counter the socio-psychological impact of substance abuse within schools, colleges, and universities;

And whereas it is necessary to empower educational institutions with statutory authority to adopt, implement, and enforce anti-drug policies in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, medical and mental health professionals, and social organizations;

And whereas the State considers it imperative to establish a Statewide monitoring, reporting, and enforcement mechanism to track emerging patterns of substance abuse and to take timely remedial and proactive measures;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PART I PRELIMINARY CHAPTER I GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Short Title, Extent, and Commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Substance Abuse Prevention and Awareness for Educational Institutions Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

- (a) “Adolescent” means a person who has completed the age of twelve years but has not completed the age of eighteen years, and includes a student enrolled in any educational institution falling within this age bracket;
- (b) “Awareness Programme” means any structured activity conducted by an educational institution, authority, or council under this Act to educate students, parents, and staff

about the dangers, legal implications, and prevention methods concerning substance abuse;

- (c) “Board” means the Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board constituted under section 14 of this Act;
- (d) “Child” means a person who has not completed the age of eighteen years, in accordance with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015;
- (e) “College Committee” means the committee established under this Act in each college or higher educational institution to implement preventive, surveillance, and rehabilitative measures regarding substance abuse;
- (f) “Council” means the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council established under section 3 of this Act;
- (g) “Counselor” means a person professionally trained and certified in mental health, adolescent psychology, or addiction recovery, and engaged by an educational institution under the guidelines of the State Control Authority;
- (h) “Designated Officer” means any officer authorized by the State Government, District Authority, or Educational Institution under this Act to carry out inspections, audits, or enforcement;
- (i) “Digital Surveillance System” means a technology-based monitoring infrastructure deployed by educational institutions or authorities for the purpose of identifying, reporting, and preventing substance abuse;
- (j) “District Authority” means the District Substance Abuse Control Authority constituted under this Act;
- (k) “Dropout” means any student who ceases to attend an educational institution without formal withdrawal or completion of the course, which may be linked to issues of substance abuse, as determined by the institutional committee;
- (l) “Educational Institution” means any school, college, university, polytechnic, training centre, coaching centre, or other academic establishment, whether public, private, aided, or autonomous, recognized by any competent authority within the State of Karnataka;
- (m) “Family Support Programme” means initiatives undertaken under this Act to involve parents and guardians in prevention and rehabilitation of students affected by substance abuse;
- (n) “First-time Offender” means a person, especially a student, who has committed a substance abuse-related offence for the first time, and has no prior disciplinary or criminal record in this regard;
- (o) “Head of Institution” means the principal, headmaster, vice-chancellor, director, or other administrative head of an educational institution;
- (p) “Hostel” means any on-campus or institution-affiliated residential facility provided to students for academic purposes;
- (q) “Illicit Substance” includes any narcotic drug, psychotropic substance, intoxicating liquor, tobacco product, inhalant, or other psychoactive item, whether natural or synthetic, the use or possession of which is prohibited or regulated under this Act or any other law in force;

- (r) “Institutional Committee” means the School Committee or College Committee constituted under this Act to carry out monitoring, awareness, surveillance, and rehabilitation duties;
- (s) “Minor” shall have the same meaning as assigned under the Indian Majority Act, 1875;
- (t) “Monitoring Mechanism” means a coordinated set of tools, reports, technologies, and oversight procedures for identifying and mitigating substance abuse within educational institutions;
- (u) “Parent Engagement Framework” refers to the official plan developed by the institution or authority to involve parents in workshops, awareness drives, counselling sessions, and rehabilitation efforts;
- (v) “Peer Educator” means a student trained and designated by the institutional committee to serve as a mentor, role model, or awareness ambassador under prevention programmes;
- (w) “Prescribed” means prescribed by the rules made under this Act and includes guidelines, directions, and circulars issued by the State Government or any authority constituted under this Act;
- (x) “Prohibited Substance” means any substance notified by the State Government, including alcohol, narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, synthetic cannabinoids, volatile solvents, e-cigarettes, and tobacco products, the sale or consumption of which is restricted within or near educational institutions;
- (y) “Psychotropic Substance” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under clause (xxiii) of section 2 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985;
- (z) “Rehabilitation Programme” means any structured clinical, psychological, or community-based recovery process aimed at the reintegration of a student or individual affected by substance abuse;
- (aa) “Repeat Offender” means a student, staff member, or other individual found guilty of substance abuse on two or more occasions, either by the institutional disciplinary committee or a court of law;
- (ab) “School Committee” means the committee constituted under this Act in every school to perform functions relating to awareness, prevention, and reporting of substance abuse;
- (ac) “Stakeholder” means any person, group, or entity involved in or affected by the implementation of this Act, including but not limited to students, teachers, parents, school staff, NGOs, and law enforcement;
- (ad) “State Authority” means the State Substance Abuse Control Authority established under section 25 of this Act;
- (ae) “State Council” means the State Substance Abuse Prevention Council constituted under section 9 of this Act;
- (af) “Student” means any person enrolled in an educational institution at any level of study, including school, pre-university, undergraduate, postgraduate, vocational, or research programmes;
- (ag) “Substance Abuse” means the habitual, harmful, or hazardous use of alcohol, narcotics, psychotropic substances, inhalants, synthetic drugs, or any other psychoactive substance, whether prescribed or illicit, in a manner that causes psychological, physical,

academic, or social impairment and includes usage notified under this Act by the State Government;

(ah) “Surveillance Report” means any official record maintained by the institutional committee, State or District Authority, containing observations, footage, data logs, and interventions regarding incidents of suspected or proven substance abuse;

(ai) “Transitional Accommodation” means any short-term residence provided to students or juveniles undergoing rehabilitation or recovery from substance abuse, managed either by the institution or an accredited partner agency;

(aj) “Zero Tolerance Policy” means an institutional policy adopted in accordance with the model guidelines of the State Authority that mandates immediate reporting, mandatory counselling, and strict disciplinary action for any confirmed incident of substance abuse on or near campus.

PART II
INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER II
SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION COUNCILS

3. Establishment of District Substance Abuse Prevention Council.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish a District Substance Abuse Prevention Council in each district of the State of Karnataka.

(2) The Council shall function under the administrative supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of the district.

4. Composition and Qualification of Members.- (1) Each District Council shall consist of the following members:

- a) The Deputy Commissioner — Chairperson, ex officio;
- b) The District Education Officer — Member;
- c) The Superintendent of Police — Member;
- d) One representative from an NGO working in substance abuse prevention — Member;
- e) One psychologist or counsellor from the district — Member;
- f) Two representatives from educational institutions — Members;
- g) One legal expert nominated by the State Council — Member;
- h) The District Health Officer — Member Secretary.

(2) The members shall possess qualifications and experience as may be prescribed.

5. Terms, Conditions, and Eligibility for Membership

(1) The term of non-ex officio members shall be three years from the date of appointment and shall be eligible for re-appointment.

(2) A person shall be disqualified for appointment if,—

- (a) he has been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude;
- (b) he is of unsound mind and has been so declared by a competent court;
- (c) he has been removed or dismissed from the service of the Government or any public body.

(3) The conditions of service, including honorarium or allowances payable, shall be such as may be prescribed.

6. Powers and Functions of District Council.- The District Council shall perform the following functions, namely:—

- (a) Formulate and monitor district-level strategies for prevention of substance abuse in educational institutions;
- (b) Conduct awareness programs and campaigns in collaboration with local stakeholders;
- (c) Monitor and report instances of substance abuse within educational institutions to appropriate authorities;
- (d) Recommend intervention measures for affected students, including counselling and rehabilitation;
- (e) Coordinate with local law enforcement and health departments for preventive and remedial action.

7. Procedure for Meetings and Decision-Making.- (1) The District Council shall meet at least once every quarter and at such other times as may be deemed necessary by the Chairperson.

(2) The quorum for a meeting shall be one-third of the total membership.

(3) Decisions of the Council shall be taken by a majority of members present and voting; in case of equality of votes, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.

(4) The manner of convening meetings and conduct of business shall be as may be prescribed.

8. Role in Local Policy Implementation.- (1) The District Substance Abuse Prevention Council (hereinafter referred to as the "District Council") shall be the principal coordinating body at the district level for implementing all substance abuse prevention and awareness policies pertaining to educational institutions.

(2) The District Council shall assist the State Substance Abuse Prevention Council (hereinafter referred to as the "State Council") in the effective execution of all schemes, guidelines, model protocols, and policy directives issued by the State Government under this Act.

(3) The functions of the District Council in local policy implementation shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) Translating State-level schemes into actionable district-specific implementation plans;
- (b) Advising educational institutions on compliance with State rules and protocols concerning awareness, surveillance, counselling, and disciplinary mechanisms;
- (c) Monitoring the functioning of School Committees and College Committees constituted under this Act;
- (d) Reviewing performance reports of institutions and recommending course corrections;
- (e) Coordinating with District Education Officers, law enforcement agencies, local health departments, and NGOs to operationalize policy mandates at the grassroots level.

(4) The District Council shall submit to the State Council:

- (a) Quarterly Implementation Reports, summarizing achievements, bottlenecks, and emerging trends;
- (b) Annual District Recommendations Report, containing district-level data, case studies, institutional rankings, and legislative or procedural suggestions;

- (c) Emergency Briefings, in instances of grave substance abuse incidents affecting multiple institutions or involving mass exposure, within forty-eight hours of occurrence.
- (5) The reports under sub-section (4) shall be submitted in formats and digital templates prescribed by the State Council and made accessible to the public, subject to anonymization and data protection guidelines issued under this Act.
- 9. Establishment of State Substance Abuse Prevention Council.-** (1) The State Government shall, by notification published in the Official Gazette, constitute a body to be known as the State Substance Abuse Prevention Council (hereinafter referred to as the “State Council”) for the purposes of exercising jurisdiction and oversight under this Act.
- (2) The State Council shall serve as the apex *policy formulation, coordination, oversight, and inter-agency convergence* body for matters related to substance abuse prevention and awareness within the jurisdiction of the State of Karnataka, specifically targeting educational institutions.
- (3) The State Council shall function under the administrative control of the Department of Education, but shall act in consultative and coordinative partnership with the following departments,-
- (a) Department of Health and Family Welfare;
 - (b) Department of Law and Parliamentary Affairs;
 - (c) Department of Higher Education;
 - (d) Department of Women and Child Development;
 - (e) Department of Home (Police).
- (4) The State Council shall have the following primary mandates,-
- (a) To develop model codes of conduct, disciplinary guidelines, and institutional procedures for preventing and addressing substance abuse in schools and colleges;
 - (b) To issue directions and policy instructions to District Councils and institutions for standardization and monitoring;
 - (c) To conduct research, collect statewide data, and publish white papers or policy briefs;
 - (d) To review reports submitted by District Councils and issue statewide annual compliance rankings of educational institutions;
 - (e) To develop and approve awareness materials, media campaigns, teacher training modules, and rehabilitation protocols;
 - (f) To oversee the convergence of State and Central government schemes in this domain;
 - (g) To recommend legislative, regulatory, or administrative reforms to the State Government based on ground-level feedback and expert consultations.
- (5) The State Government shall ensure that the State Council is,-
- (a) Adequately staffed with officers of requisite seniority and expertise from multiple departments;
 - (b) Equipped with budgetary support under a dedicated “Substance Abuse Prevention in Education” State fund;
 - (c) Supported by a Digital Secretariat, which shall manage online compliance dashboards, data portals, institutional correspondence, and policy dissemination;

- (d) Empowered to constitute Expert Task Forces and Thematic Committees on demand, including panels on digital addiction, youth psychiatry, campus policing, and legal literacy.
- (6) The State Council shall hold,-
 - (a) At least one bi-monthly plenary session to evaluate overall implementation progress;
 - (b) Emergency sessions upon receipt of urgent recommendations from three or more District Councils;
 - (c) Annual review conferences involving heads of major institutions and District Authority representatives.
- (7) The proceedings of the State Council shall be recorded, digitized, and published through its official website, subject to transparency and data security protocols.

10. Composition, Qualification, and Eligibility of Members.- (1) The State Council shall consist of,—

- (a) Minister in charge of Education — Chairperson;
- (b) Principal Secretary, Department of Education — Member;
- (c) Principal Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare — Member;
- (d) Director General of Police — Member;
- (e) Three experts in the field of addiction psychiatry, psychology, or public health — Members;
- (f) Two representatives from recognized educational institutions — Members;
- (g) One representative of parents' associations — Member;
- (h) Member Secretary to be nominated by the State Government.
- (2) The qualifications and tenure of non-official members shall be such as may be prescribed.

11. Powers and Functions of State Council.- The State Council shall,—

- (a) Frame State-level policy guidelines for prevention of substance abuse in educational institutions;
- (b) Supervise and monitor the functioning of District Councils;
- (c) Develop educational curricula, training modules, and guidelines for awareness programs;
- (d) Recommend legislative and regulatory measures for effective prevention;
- (e) Prepare and submit annual reports to the State Legislature.

12. Coordination with District Councils and Higher Authorities.- (1) The State Council shall facilitate coordination among District Councils, and between the Councils and relevant Government departments.

(2) It shall issue such guidelines or directions as necessary for the uniform implementation of this Act.

13. Procedure for Meetings and Reporting Obligations.-(1) The State Council shall meet at least twice in a year.

(2) The Council shall maintain minutes of meetings and furnish copies to the Department of Education.

(3) It shall submit an annual report to the State Government detailing performance, progress, and recommendations.

14. Establishment of Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board (Specific to Karnataka).- (1) The State Government may, by notification, establish a Central Substance

Abuse Advisory Board to oversee long-term strategies and research-based policy inputs related to substance abuse in educational settings within Karnataka.

(2) The Board shall consist of leading academicians, researchers, legal experts, and health professionals.

(3) The Board shall,—

- (a) Advise the State Government on reforms and legislative measures;
- (b) Facilitate partnerships with national institutions and international bodies;
- (c) Publish white papers and periodic reviews of intervention efficacy.

15. Composition, Qualification, and Terms of Members.- (1) The Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board established under section 14 shall comprise:

- (a) One eminent academician in public health or behavioural sciences — Chairperson;
- (b) One retired High Court judge — Member;
- (c) Two experts in addiction medicine or clinical psychology — Members;
- (d) One senior advocate with specialization in child rights or education law — Member;
- (e) One representative from the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) — Member;
- (f) Two education sector representatives — Members;
- (g) One civil society representative from a nationally recognized NGO working in substance abuse prevention — Member;
- (h) Director, Department of Education (Karnataka) — Member Secretary, ex officio.

(2) The non-official members shall be appointed by the State Government for a term of three years, extendable for one additional term.

(3) A member may resign by writing to the State Government, and such resignation shall take effect upon its acceptance.

(4) The State Government may remove any member before the expiry of the term on grounds of misconduct, incapacity, or violation of prescribed norms, after giving an opportunity of being heard.

(5) No person shall be appointed unless possessing a minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in the field of public health, education, addiction research, law, or governance.

16. Policy Formulation, Research & Innovation Mandate.- (1) The Board shall formulate evidence-based strategies for prevention, early detection, and mitigation of substance abuse in educational institutions.

(2) It shall promote and fund research programs, pilot interventions, and innovation projects, including but not limited to:

- (a) Behavioural interventions in adolescent populations;
- (b) Curriculum-based sensitization programs;
- (c) Teacher training and institutional leadership support modules;
- (d) Digital and app-based monitoring platforms.

(3) The Board shall collaborate with academic institutions, think tanks, and government research bodies for the development of guidelines, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and evaluation metrics.

(4) The Board shall ensure that all such policies are in line with the National Education Policy, 2020, and any allied policy frameworks notified by the Central or State Government.

17. National Collaborations and Reporting Mechanisms.-

- (1) The Board shall facilitate collaboration with national institutions including:
 - (a) Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment,
 - (b) Ministry of Education,
 - (c) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,
 - (d) Narcotics Control Bureau, and
 - (e) NITI Aayog.
- (2) The Board shall submit an annual report to the State Government and forward the same to the appropriate Central Government authorities for policy alignment.
- (3) The report shall include:
 - (a) Performance metrics of district and state authorities;
 - (b) Data trends and analysis on substance abuse cases in educational settings;
 - (c) Recommendations for legal, procedural, or administrative reform.
- (4) The State Government shall cause the report to be laid before both Houses of the State Legislature.

PART III

REGULATORY AUTHORITIES FOR ENFORCEMENT

CHAPTER III

DISTRICT SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONTROL AUTHORITY

18. Establishment of District Control Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a District Substance Abuse Control Authority (hereinafter “District Authority”) in each district.

(2) The District Authority shall act as the principal enforcement body for carrying out the provisions of this Act at the district level.

19. Appointment, Qualification, and Tenure of Members.- (1) Each District Authority shall consist of:

- (a) A retired or serving officer not below the rank of Additional Deputy Commissioner — Chairperson;
- (b) District Education Officer — Member;
- (c) District Health Officer — Member;
- (d) One psychiatrist or clinical psychologist with experience in adolescent care — Member;
- (e) District Child Protection Officer — Member;
- (f) Officer-in-charge of the District Special Juvenile Police Unit — Member;
- (g) Member Secretary to be nominated by the District Magistrate.

(2) The tenure of non-ex officio members shall be three years, and the qualifications shall be as may be prescribed.

20. Enforcement Powers and Functions.- The District Authority shall have the following powers and functions:

- (a) Monitor and enforce compliance of substance abuse prevention protocols in all educational institutions within the district;
- (b) Conduct surprise inspections and audits;
- (c) Issue notices and directions to institutions failing to comply with statutory obligations under this Act;

(d) Coordinate with law enforcement, health, and education departments for effective implementation;

(e) Submit monthly compliance and incident reports to the State Authority.

21. Investigation, Surveillance & Intervention Units.- (1) Each District Authority shall establish a Substance Abuse Surveillance and Intervention Unit, consisting of trained personnel from the education, health, and police departments.

(2) The unit shall:

(a) Receive and investigate complaints regarding substance abuse;

(b) Undertake risk assessments in educational zones;

(c) Conduct counselling and referral programs;

(d) Maintain a secure and confidential record of all cases.

(3) The mode of functioning, personnel standards, and operating procedures shall be as may be prescribed by rules.

22. Complaint Redressal and Reporting Mechanisms.- (1) Every educational institution shall appoint a Nodal Officer to coordinate with the District Authority.

(2) Students, parents, or staff may file complaints related to substance abuse incidents, which shall be addressed within 15 working days.

(3) Appeals from dissatisfied complainants shall lie to the District Authority.

(4) The District Authority shall maintain a central digital register of complaints and actions taken.

23. Role of District Education Officers.- (1) The District Education Officer shall act as the **liaison officer** for the purposes of this Act and shall:

(a) Ensure institutional compliance and reporting;

(b) Organize periodic training and workshops;

(c) Include substance abuse indicators in school inspection checklists;

(d) Coordinate student awareness drives.

24. Appeal and Review Mechanisms.- (1) Any institution or individual aggrieved by a decision of the District Authority may prefer an appeal to the State Substance Abuse Control Authority within thirty days.

(2) The State Authority may confirm, modify, or set aside such decision after affording a hearing.

(3) The decision of the State Authority shall be final and binding.

CHAPTER IV

STATE SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONTROL AUTHORITY

25. Establishment of the State Substance Abuse Control Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification published in the Official Gazette, establish a statutory body to be known as the State Substance Abuse Control Authority (hereinafter referred to as the "State Authority"), which shall serve as the apex body responsible for the implementation, enforcement, monitoring, and policy development under the provisions of this Act.

(2) The State Authority shall be a body corporate, having perpetual succession and a common seal, with the power to acquire, hold, and dispose of both movable and immovable property, to enter into contracts, and to sue and be sued in its name, and shall exercise all such powers and perform all such functions as may be necessary for the implementation of this Act.

(3) The headquarters of the State Authority shall be located in the capital city of the State, and the State Government may, by notification, establish regional offices in such other districts or divisions as it may deem necessary for the effective discharge of its functions.

26. Composition, Qualification, and Tenure of Members.- (1) The State Authority shall consist of the following members appointed by the State Government through a formal order:

- (a) a retired officer of the Indian Administrative Service not below the rank of Principal Secretary to the State Government — who shall serve as the Chairperson;
- (b) the Principal Secretary to the Government, Department of Education — Ex-Officio Member;
- (c) the Director, Department of Health Services — Ex-Officio Member;
- (d) the Director General of Police or an officer not below the rank of Inspector General nominated by the DGP — Ex-Officio Member;
- (e) three independent experts drawn from the fields of behavioural science, information technology, and education, respectively — Nominated Members;
- (f) a legal advisor or legal officer nominated by the Department of Law — Member;
- (g) an officer of the State Civil Services not below the rank of Deputy Secretary, appointed by the Government — Member Secretary, who shall also function as the administrative head and custodian of records of the Authority.

(2) The independent expert members shall be persons of eminence with not less than fifteen years of experience in their respective domains, and their nomination shall be based on a selection process as prescribed by rules framed under this Act.

(3) The tenure of the independent members shall be three years from the date of appointment, and they shall be eligible for re-appointment for one additional term, subject to satisfactory performance and absence of any disqualification.

(4) Any vacancy among the independent or ex-officio members shall be filled by the State Government within sixty days of such vacancy arising. No act or proceeding of the Authority shall be invalidated merely on the ground of any vacancy or defect in the constitution of the Authority.

27. Statewide Enforcement Powers and Functions.- The State Authority shall exercise the following powers and perform the following functions, namely:-

- (a) to supervise and coordinate the implementation of the provisions of this Act, and of all policies, schemes, and rules made thereunder, across all districts within the State;
- (b) to frame model regulations, operational protocols, standard operating procedures, institutional checklists, and measurable compliance indicators for educational institutions and District Authorities;
- (c) to conduct independent inspections, performance audits, surprise verifications, and compliance reviews of District Substance Abuse Control Authorities and institutional committees;
- (d) to maintain and manage a centralized digital compliance and enforcement portal that shall serve as the official database for reporting, data aggregation, and regulatory communications under this Act;

- (e) to recommend, based on prima facie evidence, the initiation of disciplinary or criminal proceedings against any institution, officer, staff member, or stakeholder found in willful or gross violation of the provisions of this Act;
- (f) to prepare the annual “State Substance Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Report” and submit it to the State Legislature through the Minister in charge of Education or Social Justice.

28. Monitoring of Technological Solutions and Data Systems.- (1) The State Authority shall design, develop, and oversee the implementation of a Statewide Digital Surveillance, Intervention, and Analytics System (SDSIAS) to support proactive and data-driven decision-making.

(2) The SDSIAS shall perform the following core functions,-

- (a) collection and aggregation of anonymized data on substance abuse incidents, student referrals, institutional interventions, and geographic patterns of high-risk zones;
- (b) real-time tracking and flagging of institutional compliance, including audit submissions, campaign reports, and Committee activity logs;
- (c) generation of dashboards, alerts, and performance metrics accessible to senior officials of the Government, relevant departments, and oversight bodies.

(3) The design and operation of all digital systems under this Act shall comply with,-

- (a) the Information Technology Act, 2000;
- (b) the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023;
- (c) such other cybersecurity and privacy rules as may be notified by the Government of India or the State Government from time to time.

(4) No personally identifiable information of any student, parent, or staff shall be stored or processed by the system except with express consent, and solely for statutory purposes. All sensitive data shall be encrypted, access-restricted, and regularly audited by an external cybersecurity auditor appointed by the State Government.

29. Reporting to the Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board.- (1) The State Authority shall prepare and submit a comprehensive quarterly report to the Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board constituted under Section 14 of this Act, not later than the 15th day of the month following each quarter.

(2) The quarterly report shall include,-

- (a) a detailed district-wise summary of all enforcement actions taken, including penalties imposed, institutions de-certified, and personnel proceeded against;
- (b) data on institutional compliance, categorized into fully compliant, partially compliant, and non-compliant institutions, with accompanying reasons and remedial measures suggested;
- (c) an analysis of emerging trends, demographic patterns, behavioural triggers, and operational challenges encountered during the implementation of the Act;
- (d) recommendations for Central Government action including resource allocation, inter-state coordination, model guideline revision, or amendments to the law.

(3) The State Authority may request a consultative meeting with the Central Advisory Board at least once annually to discuss challenges unique to the State and seek policy alignment or central assistance.

30. Appeal and Oversight Mechanisms.- (1) Any person, educational institution, or stakeholder aggrieved by a final and binding decision, direction, or order of the District Substance Abuse Control Authority may file an appeal before the State Authority within thirty days of such decision being communicated, in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

(2) The State Authority shall dispose of all appeals within ninety days of receipt, after affording the appellant an opportunity of being heard and upon recording reasons in writing. An appeal panel comprising the Chairperson and at least two non-official members shall hear and decide such matters.

(3) To ensure institutional accountability and transparency, the State Government shall constitute an Independent Review Committee every two years, consisting of retired High Court judges, civil society representatives, and subject-matter experts, to audit decisions, orders, and working processes of the State Authority.

(4) The findings of the Independent Review Committee shall be laid before the State Legislature and may include recommendations for structural reform, personnel rotation, procedural improvement, or disciplinary action if systemic irregularities are found.

(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, any person aggrieved by a final decision of the State Authority shall retain the right to seek judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, and nothing in this Act shall be deemed to bar such remedy.

PART IV

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEES IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER V

SCHOOL SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISCIPLINE COMMITTEES

31. Establishment of Discipline Committees in Schools.- (1) Every school, whether government-run, government-aided, or privately managed, providing primary or secondary education shall, within a period of ninety days from the date of commencement of this Act, constitute a committee to be known as the School Substance Abuse Discipline Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "School Committee").

(2) The establishment of such School Committee shall be mandatory for continued recognition or affiliation under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, and the rules made thereunder.

(3) The School Committee shall be responsible for the implementation of this Act within its institutional jurisdiction and shall serve as the primary body for monitoring, counselling, disciplinary action, and prevention related to substance abuse among students.

(4) No school shall be permitted to opt out or delay the constitution of the School Committee, and non-compliance may attract suspension of grants-in-aid, withdrawal of recognition, or other sanctions as may be prescribed by rules under this Act.

32. Composition, Qualification, and Roles of Members.- (1) The School Committee shall consist of the following members, to be nominated in consultation with the School Management Committee (SMC):

(a) Head of Institution (Principal or Headmaster) — Chairperson;

(b) One senior male teacher and one senior female teacher — Members;

- (c) One school counsellor or a trained mental health professional appointed by the school or District Authority — Member;
 - (d) One parent representative nominated from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) — Member;
 - (e) One student representative (from Standards IX to XII) to be elected annually by peers — Non-voting Member;
 - (f) One Nodal Officer for Substance Abuse appointed under Section 22 — Member Secretary.
- (2) No person against whom disciplinary or criminal proceedings are pending shall be appointed to or continue on the Committee.
- (3) The Committee shall,-
- (a) Identify patterns, environments, and persons contributing to substance abuse;
 - (b) Provide early counselling and psychological first aid;
 - (c) Initiate disciplinary proceedings in accordance with due process;
 - (d) Maintain a confidential case history of affected students and ensure non-stigmatization;
 - (e) Prepare an Annual Substance Abuse Response Plan in consultation with the District Authority.

33. Registration and Accountability to District Authority.- (1) Every School Committee constituted under this Act shall be registered with the District Substance Abuse Control Authority within a period of thirty days from the date of its constitution. The registration shall be a mandatory condition for the lawful functioning of the Committee and for eligibility to receive State-funded resources or technical assistance.

(2) The District Authority shall develop and maintain a secure, integrated digital registration portal specifically for the enrolment, verification, and ongoing management of School Committees within its jurisdiction. The portal shall include functionalities for member authentication, compliance tracking, document uploads, and internal messaging for inter-departmental coordination.

(3) Each School Committee shall undergo periodic validation of its membership composition, term continuity, and frequency of meetings as per the standards and formats prescribed by the State Control Authority. Any vacancy, disbandment, or restructuring of the Committee shall be notified to the District Authority within fifteen working days of such change.

(4) Every registered School Committee shall submit the following documentation to the District Authority on a quarterly basis:

- (a) a comprehensive status report detailing all awareness programmes conducted, surveillance measures implemented, and intervention activities initiated during the reporting period;
- (b) complete and anonymized records of all incidents involving suspicion, detection, or confirmation of substance abuse among students or staff, including the nature of the action taken and the outcome of follow-up processes such as counseling, parental notification, or referral to medical care;

- (c) independent recommendations submitted by the Committee on infrastructural upgrades, pedagogical reforms, or administrative actions necessary for strengthening the institution's prevention framework.
- (5) The District Authority shall be empowered to conduct physical inspections, surprise audits, or desk reviews of School Committees, either suo motu or upon receipt of complaints or reports of non-compliance. The Authority may issue time-bound directions for corrective action, including reconstitution of the Committee, which shall be binding upon the school management.
- (6) Any failure to register, report, or comply with directives issued under this section shall render the institution liable for administrative penalties under Chapter X of this Act, including temporary suspension of discretionary grants or withdrawal of accreditation under the "Substance Abuse-Free Institution" certification scheme.

34. Surveillance and Monitoring Systems.- (1) Every school, whether government-run, government-aided, private, or autonomous, shall be required to install and operationalize a basic monitoring and surveillance system within six months from the commencement of this Act, or from the date of its registration under Section 33, whichever is earlier.

(2) The surveillance infrastructure shall be designed primarily for the purpose of ensuring a secure educational environment, deterring the supply or consumption of prohibited substances, and facilitating early detection of high-risk behaviour among students. Such systems shall include, at a minimum:

- (a) installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras at strategic yet non-intrusive locations, including school gates, corridors, canteens, restrooms, and common areas, with signage informing about such surveillance;
 - (b) establishment of anonymous reporting mechanisms such as digital kiosks, toll-free helplines, QR-code based reporting forms, or locked physical drop-boxes accessible to students and staff;
 - (c) implementation of random, non-invasive screening procedures including the inspection of school bags, lockers, and personal items, subject to the presence of a parent or guardian where minors are concerned, and adherence to due process and dignity safeguards.
- (3) The design, installation, and use of surveillance mechanisms shall strictly adhere to model guidelines notified by the State Control Authority, developed in consultation with the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, and in compliance with:
- (a) the Information Technology Act, 2000;
 - (b) the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023; and
 - (c) any other prevailing laws protecting children's right to privacy, dignity, and non-discrimination.
- (4) Every instance of surveillance activity undertaken—whether routine, triggered, or investigatory—shall be recorded in a Surveillance Activity Log maintained by the school administration. Such logs shall be submitted to the School Committee for periodic review, and must contain justification for each activity, date and time stamps, personnel involved, and outcomes of any follow-up actions.

(5) The misuse of surveillance systems for punitive, discriminatory, or non-statutory purposes shall attract disciplinary proceedings against the responsible personnel under Section 76 of this Act, and may include liability under applicable child protection and data privacy laws.

35. Awareness and Prevention Campaigns.- (1) Every school shall be mandated to organize at least one structured awareness and prevention campaign on substance abuse in each academic term, with the objective of equipping students with knowledge, life skills, and access to supportive resources.

(2) The awareness programmes shall be inclusive, participatory, and adapted to the socio-cultural context of the student body. They shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) interactive workshops conducted by qualified health professionals, psychiatrists, de-addiction counselors, or youth speakers with lived experience of addiction and recovery;
- (b) student-led peer education modules that train and engage selected volunteers in disseminating accurate information, building life skills, and creating positive peer influence networks;
- (c) the use of visual and audio educational tools including multilingual posters, audio messages, skits, competitions, mobile exhibitions, and educational games delivered in regional languages and adapted for different age brackets.

(3) The curriculum, media content, and structure of these campaigns shall be reviewed and approved in advance by the District Substance Abuse Control Authority in consultation with child psychologists and curriculum experts to ensure age-appropriateness, scientific accuracy, and gender sensitivity.

(4) Each school shall earmark not less than 0.5% of its annual discretionary fund or school development budget exclusively for substance abuse prevention activities. In government schools, this expenditure may be supplemented through matching grants or CSR-linked partnerships approved by the District Authority.

(5) Schools failing to comply with this financial allocation or conduct of mandatory awareness campaigns without valid cause may be disqualified from State-level recognition schemes and may face budgetary restrictions for non-compliance.

36. Periodic Review and Reporting.- (1) The performance and functioning of each registered School Committee shall be subjected to a bi-annual institutional review conducted by the District Education Officer in coordination with the District Substance Abuse Control Authority, not later than the 30th of June and the 31st of December each year.

(2) The review shall involve an assessment of the following parameters:

- (a) the effectiveness of the Committee's composition, meeting frequency, and institutional engagement in promoting a drug-free school environment;
- (b) statistical trends related to student participation, referral rates to counseling or medical care, incident reporting frequency, and correlation with student absenteeism or dropout rates;
- (c) systemic challenges identified in implementation such as gaps in infrastructure, staffing limitations, resistance from stakeholders, or the absence of trained personnel.

(3) The findings of such reviews shall be compiled in a standardized evaluation report, a copy of which shall be:

- (a) shared with the school administration and the School Management Committee for corrective actions;
 - (b) transmitted to the State Substance Abuse Control Authority for data aggregation, policy feedback, and benchmarking purposes.
- (4) The District Authority may initiate a special audit or corrective intervention in any school found to be persistently underperforming or failing to implement directives under this Act. Such intervention may include temporary oversight, financial scrutiny, or external facilitation support.
- (5) The State Control Authority shall integrate the findings of all district-level reviews into the State Annual Report on Substance Abuse in Educational Institutions, which shall be tabled before the State Legislature and made available in the public domain.

CHAPTER VI

COLLEGE SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEES

37. Establishment of Disciplinary Committees in Colleges.- (1) All institutions offering post-secondary education, including degree colleges, polytechnics, technical institutions, universities, and vocational centres, shall constitute a College Substance Abuse Disciplinary Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "College Committee") within ninety days from the commencement of this Act.

(2) The requirement under sub-section (1) shall be a condition for continued affiliation or recognition by the relevant regulatory body including the University Grants Commission, All India Council for Technical Education, or the State Higher Education Department.

(3) The institution shall notify the constitution of such Committee on its official website and display relevant contact details at prominent locations within the campus.

38. Composition, Qualification, and Roles of Members.- (1) The College Committee shall consist of:

- (a) Principal or Director of the Institution — Chairperson;
- (b) Two senior faculty members, of whom at least one shall be female — Members;
- (c) One student counsellor or trained clinical psychologist — Member;
- (d) One legal expert or representative from the State Legal Services Authority — Member;
- (e) One elected student representative from final-year students — Member (non-voting);
- (f) Anti-Ragging Officer — Member Secretary.

(2) The Committee shall have powers to summon witnesses, record statements, and make recommendations to the institutional disciplinary committee or Governing Council.

(3) Its duties shall include:

- (a) Conducting fact-finding in reported incidents of substance use;
- (b) Facilitating peer-group recovery and counselling;
- (c) Initiating disciplinary or rehabilitative action in proportion to the violation;
- (d) Reporting serious matters to law enforcement through the Nodal Officer appointed under Section 22.

39. Registration and Accountability to District Authority.- (1) Every educational institution offering higher education, including degree colleges, universities, technical institutes, professional colleges, and any institution recognized by the Higher Education

Department of the State, shall constitute a College Substance Abuse Monitoring and Prevention Committee in accordance with the guidelines prescribed under this Act.

(2) The said Committee shall be mandatorily registered with the District Substance Abuse Control Authority within thirty days from the date of its constitution or within such extended time as may be notified by the Authority in writing.

(3) Each institution shall submit to the District Authority an Annual Compliance Statement duly signed by the Head of the Institution or Principal, attested by the Chairperson of the College Committee, affirming the following:

- (a) details of preventive and punitive actions taken against incidents of substance abuse during the academic year;
- (b) infrastructural readiness including the state of surveillance systems, counseling services, and awareness campaigns;
- (c) availability of peer support networks and functional grievance redressal mechanisms.

(4) Every College Committee shall submit copies of minutes of its monthly meetings and a written summary of:

- (a) cases reported or suspected, including anonymous tips;
- (b) actions taken by the institution under its internal protocol; and
- (c) referrals made to counselors, medical professionals, or law enforcement agencies.

(5) The District Substance Abuse Control Authority shall maintain a real-time digital dashboard, accessible to the State Control Authority and the Department of Higher Education, aggregating performance and compliance data across all institutions under its jurisdiction.

(6) The dashboard shall be used to develop sectoral performance scorecards evaluating institutions on defined metrics such as timely reporting, student participation, resolution efficiency, preventive outreach, and institutional readiness, which shall be made publicly available in anonymised form once every academic year.

40. Surveillance and Monitoring Systems.- (1) All colleges and higher educational institutions shall, within six months from the commencement of this Act or from the date of registration under Section 39, install and operationalize a comprehensive hybrid surveillance infrastructure, comprising both physical and digital tools to detect, deter, and document substance-related incidents.

(2) The surveillance infrastructure shall include, at a minimum.-

- (a) installation of high-resolution CCTV cameras with night vision capabilities at strategic locations such as entrances, exits, hostels, libraries, canteens, washrooms, and academic blocks, with feeds monitored regularly by a designated officer;
- (b) deployment of anonymous student feedback systems including secure online portals and physical drop-boxes for confidential tips;
- (c) enforcement of routine patrolling, especially during night hours, in hostels and known student congregating zones both within and around the campus, through college security personnel or in collaboration with local police.

(3) The collection, storage, processing, and destruction of all surveillance data shall strictly comply with,-

- (a) the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000;

- (b) the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023; and
 - (c) such data protection standards and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as may be notified by the State Control Authority from time to time.
- (4) All surveillance records and footage involving student activity, whether routine or suspicious, shall be encrypted and stored securely for a period not exceeding one year, unless,-
- (a) such data is under active investigation by the police, the District Authority, or any other competent authority;
 - (b) retention is required under any court order or lawful direction.
- (5) Unauthorized access, disclosure, or misuse of surveillance data by any member of the staff shall attract disciplinary proceedings and penalties as provided under this Act and applicable laws.

41. Awareness and Prevention Campaigns.- (1) Every College Committee registered under this Act shall organize a minimum of two major awareness campaigns per academic year, with the objective of promoting substance-free lifestyles, harm reduction, and legal literacy among students.

(2) These campaigns shall be designed to be participatory, student-centered, and evidence-based, and may include but are not limited to the following initiatives,-

- (a) formal collaboration with accredited NGOs, licensed rehabilitation centers, law enforcement bodies, and mental health organizations for workshops, street plays, and legal literacy drives;
 - (b) development of peer leadership programs, offering internship opportunities to students to serve as campus ambassadors for addiction prevention;
 - (c) establishment of student-led clubs or collectives that promote healthy lifestyles, organize community outreach, and celebrate “substance-free milestones” within the institution.
- (3) The State Substance Abuse Control Authority shall annually evaluate all registered institutions on the innovation, inclusivity, and impact of their awareness campaigns and shall publish a graded institutional awareness index ranking colleges by district and zone.
- (4) The top-performing institutions shall be recognized through official commendations, eligibility for special grants, and preferential selection in pilot projects or public-private partnerships led by the State.
- (5) The State Control Authority may prescribe minimum content and engagement standards for awareness activities and conduct random audits of campaign implementation.

42. Periodic Review and Reporting.- (1) Every College Committee shall submit to the District Substance Abuse Control Authority a semi-annual institutional review report, in the formats prescribed, by 30th June and 30th December each year.

- (2) The report shall provide detailed documentation of,-
- (a) all reported and confirmed incidents of substance possession, use, or distribution involving students, staff, or visitors;
 - (b) measures taken for investigation, rehabilitation, or disciplinary action;
 - (c) referrals made to certified medical, psychiatric, or legal professionals under institutional protocol;

- (d) feedback received from students, faculty, parents, and civil society stakeholders through structured and anonymized surveys.
- (3) The District Authority shall compile, review, and present a consolidated report of institutional compliance and trends to the State Control Authority each academic year.
- (4) All institutional reports submitted under this section shall be made publicly accessible on the official portal of the State Authority, subject to strict anonymisation protocols, data redaction standards, and privacy safeguards as notified.
- (5) In cases where an institution is found to be persistently non-compliant in reporting, or where review reports indicate systemic negligence, the Department of Higher Education may, after due notice and hearing, take corrective measures which may include,-
 - (a) temporary withdrawal of funding or eligibility for state-sponsored schemes;
 - (b) compulsory re-training of institutional staff and leadership;
 - (c) appointment of a Special Monitoring Officer for the institution for a period not exceeding one year.

PART V

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND DIGITAL ENFORCEMENT

CHAPTER VII

SMART MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE MECHANISMS

- 43. Centralized Substance Abuse Monitoring Portal (CSAMP).-** (1) The State Government shall, within a period of six months from the date of commencement of this Act, establish and operationalize a Centralized Substance Abuse Monitoring Portal (hereinafter referred to as "CSAMP") under the aegis of the State Substance Abuse Control Authority, in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and the Department of Health and Family Welfare.
- (2) The Portal shall be designed to function as a real-time, integrated, cloud-based platform for,-
- (a) Registration of all educational institutions and Disciplinary Committees established under this Act;
 - (b) Uploading and archival of incident reports related to substance abuse, interventions, counseling sessions, and rehabilitation status;
 - (c) Integration of surveillance footage, AI analytics, and rehabilitation data from various departments including Police, Health, and Education;
 - (d) Generating institution-specific and district-wise compliance dashboards and performance indices for policy evaluation.
- (3) The Portal shall include automated alert generation, geospatial mapping of high-risk zones, and API-based interoperability with relevant public health, law enforcement, and academic systems.
- (4) The Portal shall employ state-of-the-art encryption standards, role-based access controls, and maintain logs of all administrative actions to ensure transparency and accountability.
- (5) The use and maintenance of CSAMP shall be governed by detailed regulations to be prescribed by the State Government, in conformity with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

44. Deployment of AI-Based Predictive Analytics.-(1) The State Authority shall, in consultation with academic and technological experts, deploy AI-based predictive analytics tools within educational institutions to identify patterns indicative of potential substance abuse risks.

(2) Such analytics shall use anonymized data drawn from attendance records, academic performance, behavioral incidents, surveillance data, and peer group mapping to:

- (a) Develop institution-specific risk scores;
- (b) Alert school and college administrators to initiate preventive or counseling measures;
- (c) Provide early warning flags without profiling students by caste, religion, gender, or socio-economic status.

(3) The use of AI tools shall be subject to the following limitations:

- (a) No punitive action shall be taken based solely on AI-generated alerts without corroboration by human judgment and counseling sessions;
- (b) Every institution shall constitute an Ethics Review Panel to evaluate the fairness and accuracy of AI-based interventions;
- (c) Students and guardians shall be informed in writing about the nature, scope, and safeguards associated with such analytics.

45. Biometric and RFID-Based Attendance Monitoring.-(1) All recognized educational institutions shall implement a biometric or RFID-based attendance monitoring system within twelve months from the commencement of this Act.

(2) These systems shall be configured to,-

- (a) Track real-time entry and exit of students and staff;
- (b) Detect prolonged or repeated absences;
- (c) Generate alerts for intervention if patterns deviate from expected norms.

(3) The data collected shall be automatically synced with CSAMP and retained in secure servers for a minimum of one academic year, subject to review and deletion policies prescribed.

(4) Provided that attendance monitoring systems shall not be installed in areas that may compromise the personal privacy and dignity of students, including toilets, infirmaries, and changing rooms.

46. CCTV Surveillance and AI-Based Behavioral Analytics.-(1) Every educational institution shall install a minimum of one CCTV camera per 30 students enrolled, with strategic placement in high-footfall and secluded areas, excluding locations that would violate bodily privacy.

(2) The surveillance system shall include AI-assisted modules capable of,-

- (a) Identifying suspicious gatherings, exchanges of objects, or loitering;
- (b) Recognizing distress behavior and flagging possible instances of bullying or coercion;
- (c) Issuing automated alerts to the designated compliance officer.

(3) All footage shall be securely stored for a minimum of ninety days and reviewed periodically by a trained surveillance officer.

(4) Institutions shall prominently display signage notifying individuals of surveillance and publish a CCTV policy on their websites.

47. Anonymous Reporting Mobile Application.-(1) The State Government shall develop and maintain a secure and user-friendly mobile application allowing students, staff, parents, and citizens to anonymously report:

- (a) Incidents of suspected substance abuse;
 - (b) Unsafe zones or activities around institutions;
 - (c) Requests for counseling or support services.
- (2) The application shall include features such as:
- (a) Geotagging and time-stamped submissions;
 - (b) Options to upload images, audio, and video;
 - (c) Automated routing to the relevant District Control Authority.
- (3) Reports received shall be acknowledged within twenty-four hours and resolved in accordance with grievance redress protocols.

48. Deployment of Drone Surveillance.- (1) The District Authority may, in coordination with law enforcement and aviation regulators, deploy drone surveillance systems in areas identified as high-risk under Section 43.

- (2) Drones shall be used for monitoring external premises of educational institutions, isolated or forested paths, and public transport nodes commonly used by students.
- (3) Drone use shall be compliant with rules issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, wherever applicable.

49. Data Privacy, Protection, and Cybersecurity Measures.- (1) All digital data collected under this Act shall be governed by the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and its allied rules.

(2) Each educational institution shall designate a Data Protection Officer (DPO) responsible for ensuring,-

- (a) Safe data collection, processing, and retention;
 - (b) Implementation of cybersecurity best practices;
 - (c) Redressal of data breach incidents within seventy-two hours.
- (3) The State Authority shall conduct third-party security audits of CSAMP and all integrated platforms every six months.

50. Digital Dashboard for Real-time Tracking.- (1) CSAMP shall host a dynamic, real-time dashboard accessible to authorized users and containing,-

- (a) Incident heatmaps;
 - (b) Response timelines;
 - (c) Policy compliance scores.
- (2) Summary data shall be made public in anonymized format every quarter.

51. Integration with Police and Health Departments.- (1) CSAMP shall be digitally integrated with,-

- (a) FIR registration and monitoring systems of Karnataka Police;
 - (b) Health Department's mental health and rehabilitation tracking portals;
 - (c) Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees where applicable.
- (2) The integration shall support coordinated response protocols, including real-time alerts, inter-agency case tracking, and joint reporting.

PART VI
REHABILITATION, COUNSELING, AND SUPPORT SERVICES
CHAPTER VIII
INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION

52. Establishment of Student Rehabilitation and Counseling Centers.- (1) The State Government shall, within six months from the date of commencement of this Act, establish at least one fully operational Student Rehabilitation and Counseling Center in every district.

(2) The Centers shall be managed under the supervision of the District Substance Abuse Control Authority and shall be equipped to,-

- (a) Provide short-term and long-term residential and outpatient treatment for substance use disorders among students;
- (b) Conduct voluntary admission and court-referred addiction rehabilitation programs with due regard to individual consent and autonomy;
- (c) Provide integrated therapeutic services, including individual and group psychotherapy, psychiatric evaluation, cognitive behavioral therapy, family counseling, life skills education, and vocational training;
- (d) Ensure compliance with trauma-informed care protocols and uphold the rights and dignity of every student;
- (e) Maintain strict confidentiality of patient information in accordance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

(3) Provided that,-

- (a) No student shall be involuntarily institutionalized except by order of a Juvenile Justice Board or competent court;
- (b) Students below the age of eighteen shall be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian throughout the process unless the student is a ward of the State.

53. Accreditation and Regulation of Private Treatment Centers.- (1) The State Substance Abuse Control Authority shall develop and maintain a dynamic registry of accredited private treatment centers authorized to admit and treat student patients below twenty-five years of age.

(2) No private treatment center shall operate or advertise itself as an institution for student rehabilitation unless it is accredited under this Act.

(3) Accreditation shall be granted on the fulfillment of minimum criteria including:

- (a) A minimum of 20 bed capacity with gender-segregated wards, hygienic infrastructure, recreational facilities, and emergency medical support;
- (b) A minimum of two full-time qualified psychologists or psychiatrists, and support staff trained in child and adolescent care;
- (c) Documented policies ensuring informed consent, the prohibition of physical restraints except in emergency medical circumstances, non-coercive care standards, and anti-discriminatory practices;
- (d) Maintenance and monthly submission of registers documenting admissions, daily treatment logs, discharge summaries, follow-up data, relapse incidences, and complaints to the District Authority.

(4) The District Authority shall conduct random inspections and quality audits, and accreditation may be suspended or revoked for non-compliance.

54. Appointment of Certified School Counselors.- (1) Every government and private school with student enrollment exceeding 100 shall appoint, on a full-time basis, at least one Certified School Counselor.

(2) The minimum qualification for appointment shall be,-

- (a) A postgraduate degree in Psychology, Clinical Psychology, or Social Work with specialization in Child and Adolescent Counseling;
- (b) Registration with a recognized professional body or regulatory board, if applicable.

(3) Schools with fewer than 100 students may,-

- (a) Form joint-counseling networks with nearby institutions;
- (b) Seek shared-service approval from the District Authority, which shall allocate a roving counselor as required.

(4) Certified School Counselors shall,-

- (a) Provide routine and crisis counseling support;
- (b) Maintain individual student wellness records;
- (c) Coordinate with Peer Support Networks, parents, and rehabilitation centers as needed.

55. Appointment of Certified College Counselors.- (1) Every degree college, polytechnic, and professional institute shall,-

- (a) Appoint one full-time student counselor for every 500 enrolled students;
- (b) Engage at least one visiting addiction specialist on a consultancy basis every fortnight.

(2) Institutions with fewer than 500 students may request exception from the State Control Authority upon showing financial or operational constraints, provided that minimum counseling hours are met through alternative arrangements.

56. Peer Support Networks and Student Advocacy Clubs.- (1) All educational institutions shall constitute Peer Support Networks (PSNs) composed of trained student volunteers who shall be nominated through a transparent and inclusive process.

(2) Each PSN shall operate under the mentorship of the School or College Discipline Committee and shall,-

- (a) Actively identify and report early signs of distress, addiction, or substance use in peers;
- (b) Organize institutional and inter-school awareness campaigns, peer education programs, and poster drives;
- (c) Serve as the first line of psychosocial support and liaison with counselors.

(3) The District Authority shall frame guidelines on training, certification, incentives, and rotation of peer supporters.

57. Community and Parental Engagement.- (1) The District Substance Abuse Control Authority shall, in collaboration with local governing bodies, conduct monthly community engagement sessions aimed at,-

- (a) Educating parents, caregivers, and local leaders on early signs of substance abuse and referral mechanisms;
- (b) Promoting substance-free neighborhood initiatives around educational institutions.

- (2) Parental participation shall be,-
 - (a) Mandatory during the intake, midline, and discharge phases of any rehabilitation program for a student below the age of eighteen;
 - (b) Encouraged through Parent-Teacher Associations, community outreach, and digital communication tools.
- (3) Provided that failure of a parent or guardian to cooperate in the rehabilitation process shall be reported to the Child Welfare Committee for appropriate follow-up.

58. Aftercare Services and Mental Health Support.- (1) Every student who completes a rehabilitation program, whether institutional or community-based, shall be entitled to aftercare services for a minimum period of six months.

- (2) These services shall include,-
 - (a) Academic reintegration support, including remedial tutoring, flexible attendance, and examination accommodations;
 - (b) Monthly individual or group therapy sessions with a certified mental health professional;
 - (c) 24x7 access to verified emergency helplines for psychological distress or substance relapse emergencies.
- (3) The District Authority shall appoint an Aftercare Monitoring Officer to,-
 - (a) Track follow-up compliance of the rehabilitated student through CSAMP;
 - (b) Liaise with parents, institutions, and local counselors.
- (4) Provided that,-
 - (a) No rehabilitated student shall be denied re-enrollment or subjected to labeling or punitive measures on account of past substance abuse history;
 - (b) Any such violation shall be subject to disciplinary proceedings against the institution under rules made by the State Authority.

59. Monitoring and Case Coordination.- (1) Each educational institution shall appoint or designate a Case Coordinator for every student undergoing rehabilitation, selected from among its senior teaching, administrative, or counseling staff.

- (2) The Case Coordinator shall,-
 - (a) Serve as a single point of contact for the student, family, counselor, and District Authority;
 - (b) Maintain updated records of academic progress, behavioral indicators, attendance patterns, and counselor feedback;
 - (c) Submit monthly updates via CSAMP, to be reviewed by the District Substance Abuse Control Authority.
- (3) No record of past substance use or rehabilitation shall,-
 - (a) Be included in any transfer certificate, mark sheet, or character certificate;
 - (b) Be used as grounds for denying scholarships, hostel admission, or participation in extracurricular activities, except when the student poses an ongoing, documented threat to safety and the decision is reviewed by a competent authority.
- (4) Any breach of this provision shall be actionable under relevant service and administrative laws.

PART VII
EDUCATIONAL REFORMS AND AWARENESS INITIATIVES
CHAPTER IX
CURRICULUM AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS

60. Mandatory Substance Abuse Education in Curricula.- (1) The State Government shall, within a period not exceeding six months from the date of commencement of this Act, cause to be developed and incorporated a mandatory, comprehensive, and age-appropriate educational module on the prevention of substance abuse into the academic curricula of all educational institutions under its jurisdiction, including but not limited to schools, junior colleges, degree colleges, polytechnic institutes, and vocational training centres.

(2) The curriculum referred to in sub-section (1) shall include, but not be limited to, the following components,-

- (a) scientific instruction on the physiological, neurological, and psychological effects of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and inhalants;
- (b) a detailed overview of the legal framework governing substance use and abuse, particularly the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and any relevant State laws or notifications;
- (c) modules promoting resistance to peer pressure, decision-making skills, and real-life coping mechanisms based on experiential learning techniques;
- (d) awareness of helpline numbers, student support networks, institutional counselors, and rehabilitative referral services available to students;
- (e) integration of value-based education promoting self-respect, empathy, and community responsibility.

(3) The syllabus, textbooks, and pedagogical materials for the subject of substance abuse education shall be designed by the State Council for Educational Research and Training (SCERT) in consultation with the Department of Health and Family Welfare and experts in psychiatry, criminology, adolescent psychology, and pedagogy.

(4) No educational institution shall introduce any substance abuse education module or campaign content unless it has been formally vetted and approved by the SCERT.

61. Annual Anti-Drug Awareness Drives and Competitions.- (1) Every educational institution shall conduct, at least once in every academic year, a structured anti-drug awareness drive to educate, engage, and empower students against the dangers of substance use.

(2) The awareness drive under sub-section (1) shall include one or more of the following activities,-

- (a) written competitions such as essay writing, poetry, debates, and quizzes centered on the theme of drug abuse prevention;
- (b) creative expression programs such as poster-making, slogan-writing, and student-organised street plays or theatre;
- (c) film screenings, short film contests, or multimedia campaigns using digital platforms;
- (d) guest lectures, panel discussions, and Q&A sessions with certified healthcare professionals, law enforcement officials, reformed addicts, or social workers.

(3) The Head of Institution shall ensure that a comprehensive report detailing the activities conducted, participation metrics, expenditure incurred, and photographic or digital documentation is submitted to the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council within fifteen working days from the conclusion of such drive.

62. Collaboration with NGOs, Youth Groups, and Social Organizations.- (1) The District Authority shall, within three months from the commencement of this Act, establish and maintain a digital and physical registry of accredited non-governmental organisations, youth organisations, student groups, and civil society organisations having demonstrable experience in substance abuse prevention, rehabilitation, or adolescent mental health.

(2) Educational institutions may enter into Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with such accredited organisations for the purposes of,-

- (a) conducting on-campus and off-campus awareness workshops, seminars, and psychoeducational programs;
- (b) organising outreach initiatives within the local community, including slum areas, hostels, and tuition centres;
- (c) providing certified counseling, de-addiction referrals, and parental training programs.

(3) No educational institution shall engage with any external organisation or speaker for such collaborative purposes without obtaining the prior written approval of the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council.

63. Peer Education and Leadership Development Programs.- (1) All secondary schools, colleges, and technical institutions shall establish structured Peer Education and Leadership Development Programs designed to train and empower selected student leaders to act as positive role models and peer advocates against substance abuse.

(2) Every institution shall,-

- (a) conduct a transparent and inclusive selection process for student volunteers from senior classes or senior years of study;
- (b) arrange mandatory training sessions, workshops, or retreats for selected peer educators, delivered by certified counselors, behavioral health specialists, or resource persons nominated by the District Authority;
- (c) conduct quarterly assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the peer educators, gather student feedback, and review outcomes;
- (d) assign each peer educator to a mentor from the teaching or counseling staff for ongoing guidance.

(3) Peer educators shall not be assigned any disciplinary roles but shall serve in an advisory and supportive capacity, maintaining confidentiality and empathy towards fellow students.

64. Workshops on Digital Addiction and Behavioral Health.- (1) The State Substance Abuse Control Authority shall, in collaboration with SCERT and the Department of Information Technology, develop a standardized workshop module on digital addiction, gaming disorders, and adolescent behavioral health.

(2) Every educational institution shall conduct biannual workshops, one per semester, which shall include participation from students, educators, and at least one parent per student, where feasible.

- (3) The workshop module shall cover the following topics,-
- (a) signs, symptoms, and progression of digital addiction, including excessive gaming, screen dependency, and social media overuse;
 - (b) coping strategies and behavioral modification techniques rooted in cognitive-behavioral therapy and positive psychology;
 - (c) information on institutional and governmental support services, helplines, mobile applications, and digital detoxification initiatives.

65. Capacity Building for Educators and Non-teaching Staff.- (1) All full-time and part-time educators, administrative staff, and non-teaching personnel employed in an educational institution shall be required to undergo annual capacity-building programs aimed at,-

- (a) identifying early signs of drug use, mood changes, or social withdrawal among students;
 - (b) developing trauma-informed, compassionate responses to student distress or disclosures of substance use;
 - (c) understanding their statutory obligations for student referral, information confidentiality, and liaison with the institutional Discipline Committee.
- (2) Such training programs shall be conducted in collaboration with the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council and shall be recorded in the annual performance review of the staff.

66. Certification of Substance Abuse-Free Institutions.- (1) The District Authority shall, on an annual basis, conduct evaluations of educational institutions seeking certification as a “Substance Abuse-Free Institution”.

- (2) Certification shall be based on, but not limited to, the following criteria,-
- (a) full compliance with the mandatory curriculum and reporting norms specified under this Act;
 - (b) demonstrable implementation of zero-tolerance policies towards substance abuse on campus;
 - (c) active engagement of the institution in prevention, awareness, and counseling programs, including student, faculty, and parent participation.
- (3) Institutions that receive such certification shall be granted official recognition by the State Authority and may be prioritised for grants, infrastructural upgrades, or technological support under State schemes.
- (4) The certification shall be valid for a period of three years unless revoked earlier for non-compliance.

67. Annual Substance Abuse Prevention Week in Educational Institutions.- (1) Every educational institution shall observe the last week of August each year as the “Substance Abuse Prevention Week”, during which focused and intensive awareness activities shall be organised on campus.

- (2) Activities during such week shall include but not be limited to:
- (a) ceremonial pledge-taking events wherein students and staff commit to a drug-free lifestyle;
 - (b) expert-led lectures, psychoeducational talks, and panel discussions on health, law, and social impact of drug abuse;

- (c) student-led exhibitions, thematic installations, poster galleries, and visual displays against substance abuse.
- (3) The Head of Institution shall submit to the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council a detailed report outlining the events conducted, attendance details, feedback received, and media coverage, if any, within ten working days from the conclusion of the observance week.

PART VIII
REGULATIONS, ENFORCEMENT, AND PENALTIES
CHAPTER X
ENFORCEMENT AND PENAL PROVISIONS

68. Prohibition of Sale of Intoxicants Near Educational Institutions.- (1) No person, whether acting individually or through any enterprise, establishment, kiosk, vendor stall, or shop, shall sell, store, exhibit for sale, distribute, or offer for consumption any intoxicating substance, including but not limited to tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, or any chemically addictive substances, within a distance of one hundred meters from the outer perimeter of any educational institution, whether publicly or privately managed.

(2) For the purposes of this section, "educational institution" shall include pre-primary schools, primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities, coaching centres, and vocational training institutes.

(3) Any person who contravenes the provisions of sub-section (1) shall be liable to:

- (a) imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year;
- (b) a fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees; or
- (c) both such imprisonment and fine.

Provided that in the case of a repeat offence, the minimum term of imprisonment shall not be less than six months and may extend to two years, and the fine shall not be less than one lakh rupees.

(4) The State Government shall ensure the installation of appropriate signage boards outside every educational institution specifying the statutory prohibition and penalties under this section.

(5) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, the State Government may prescribe exemptions for medical establishments situated within the prescribed radius, provided such establishments are duly licensed under the relevant laws and do not sell substances to unauthorized persons or without valid medical prescriptions.

69. Surveillance of Substance Supply Chains and Markets.- (1) The District Substance Abuse Control Authority, in coordination with the local police and excise departments, shall maintain an active surveillance register of individuals, vendors, establishments, and known hotspots engaged in the supply or potential distribution of illicit or regulated substances within the district.

(2) The Authority shall,-

- (a) identify and track supply networks that are likely to target or affect educational institutions;
- (b) maintain intelligence on entry points of contraband substances into school and college zones;

- (c) share actionable intelligence with the State Control Authority and Central Substance Abuse Advisory Board;
 - (d) conduct periodic reviews of retail outlets, pharmacies, bars, and recreational establishments operating near educational campuses.
- (3) The Authority may, where necessary, collaborate with cybercrime units for digital surveillance and use technological solutions including AI-based monitoring tools, drones, and satellite data to identify patterns in trafficking and consumption near campuses.
- (4) The State Government shall notify rules under this Act to regulate the functioning of such surveillance mechanisms, ensuring adherence to privacy and procedural safeguards.
- 70. Inspection and Search Powers of Authorities.-** (1) Officers duly authorized by the District or State Substance Abuse Control Authorities shall have the power to enter, inspect, search, seize, and detain any substance or article suspected to be in contravention of this Act, in accordance with the procedures laid down under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.
- (2) No such search shall be conducted within the premises of an educational institution without:
- (a) prior written approval from the District Control Authority or in exigent circumstances duly recorded in writing;
 - (b) the presence of the head of the institution or a designated senior faculty member; and
 - (c) the presence of at least one female officer in cases involving searches of premises primarily occupied by female students.
- (3) All searches shall be documented and videographed to maintain transparency and evidentiary integrity.
- (4) The seizure report shall be submitted to the nearest magistrate within twenty-four hours and a copy furnished to the institution.

71. Penalty for Students Possessing Prohibited Substances.- (1) Any student found in possession of prohibited substances within the meaning of this Act or the NDPS Act, 1985 shall be:

- (a) referred to a certified counselor for clinical evaluation;
 - (b) presented before the institutional disciplinary committee within forty-eight hours;
 - (c) placed under temporary suspension, pending the outcome of counseling and disciplinary proceedings.
- (2) The student shall be required to participate in a rehabilitation program approved by the District Authority for a duration as recommended by the counselor.
- (3) Provided that first-time offenders below the age of eighteen years shall not be subjected to criminal prosecution unless there is sufficient evidence of:
- (a) active participation in distribution or coercive administration of substances to others; or
 - (b) involvement in a substance abuse-related act that causes serious physical or psychological harm to others.
- (4) In such cases, proceedings shall be conducted under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

72. Penalty for Repeated Offenders.- (1) A student shall be deemed a repeated offender if two or more distinct incidents of possession, consumption, or distribution of prohibited

substances are confirmed through disciplinary or criminal proceedings within a span of twenty-four months.

(2) Such a student shall be,-

- (a) compulsorily admitted to a six-month structured rehabilitation and monitoring program;
- (b) enrolled in weekly behavioral counseling sessions with documented progress reporting to the institution and District Authority;
- (c) monitored through the Centralized Substance Abuse Monitoring Portal (CSAMP) by a designated case coordinator.

(3) Provided that expulsion of such a student shall not be executed unless:

- (a) recommended by a three-member committee comprising the Principal, the Head Counselor, and a representative of the District Authority;
- (b) approved by the State Substance Abuse Control Authority after due hearing of the student and his or her guardians, if applicable.

73. Penalty for Staff or Management Involvement in Substance Abuse.- (1) Any member of the teaching or non-teaching staff, administrative staff, or management body of an educational institution found:

- (a) using, possessing, distributing, or facilitating the distribution of prohibited substances;
- (b) deliberately concealing incidents of substance abuse;
- (c) interfering with or obstructing an official investigation; or
- (d) tampering with documentary or electronic evidence pertaining to substance abuse,

shall be subject to:

- i. immediate suspension and initiation of departmental proceedings;
- ii. dismissal from service upon confirmation of charges;
- iii. debarment from appointment in any educational institution or public employment for a minimum period of five years; and
- iv. criminal prosecution under the provisions of this Act and any other applicable law.

(2) Provided that the principles of natural justice shall be strictly observed in all disciplinary proceedings under this section.

(3) All findings and penalties imposed shall be communicated to the State Control Authority and entered into the institutional integrity register maintained under this Act.

74. Closure of Unlicensed Treatment and Rehabilitation Centers.- (1) No person, organization, or entity shall establish, operate, or maintain any treatment, detoxification, counselling, or rehabilitation centre for students affected by substance abuse unless such centre is duly registered and licensed under the provisions prescribed by the State Government.

(2) Any centre found functioning without such registration and license shall be liable to immediate closure by the Competent Authority, which shall issue a written order specifying the reasons for such closure.

(3) The Competent Authority shall, before passing such an order, provide the centre concerned an opportunity to show cause within a period not exceeding fifteen days from the date of receipt of notice:

Provided that where the Authority is satisfied that immediate closure is necessary in the interest of the safety, health, or welfare of students, it may order interim closure without prior notice, subject to a post-decisional hearing within seven days.

(4) Any student undergoing treatment or rehabilitation in such unlicensed centre shall, upon closure, be transferred forthwith to a duly recognized and licensed facility, with all necessary medical and psychological safeguards.

(5) Any person who contravenes the provisions of this section shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees, or with both.

75. Penalty for Non-compliance with Surveillance and Reporting Norms.- (1) Every educational institution, counselling centre, or hostel affiliated thereto shall maintain such surveillance, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms relating to substance abuse as may be prescribed under this Act or by rules framed thereunder.

(2) Any institution that fails to install and maintain the prescribed surveillance systems, submit periodic compliance reports and incident data to the Competent Authority, or cooperate with inspections, investigations, or data collection exercises carried out under this Act shall be deemed to have contravened the mandatory surveillance and reporting norms.

(3) For such contravention, the institution shall be liable to a monetary penalty not less than fifty thousand rupees but which may extend to five lakh rupees, depending on the gravity and recurrence of the offence.

(4) In case of repeated default, the institution may further be subjected to suspension of recognition, cancellation of affiliation, or such other regulatory action as the State Government may deem fit.

(5) The imposition of penalties under this section shall not preclude the initiation of criminal proceedings under other applicable laws in cases where such non-compliance is found to have facilitated trafficking, distribution, or endangerment of students.

76. Penalty for Management Negligence in Preventive Measures.- (1) It shall be the duty of every management, governing body, or administrative head of an educational institution to ensure compliance with preventive obligations mandated under this Act, including the adoption of Substance-Free Institution Policies, constitution of Discipline and Safety Committees, conduct of awareness programmes, maintenance of counselling linkages, and timely reporting of substance abuse incidents to the designated authorities.

(2) Where it is established that the management of an educational institution has wilfully neglected or failed to implement the preventive measures as required under this Act, and such neglect results in substance abuse incidents within the premises, the management shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees.

(3) In cases where gross negligence of the management is found to have directly contributed to severe harm, overdose, or death of a student, the head of the institution or such responsible person shall be liable to imprisonment which may extend to three years, in addition to fine:

Provided that no person shall be convicted under this section unless it is proved that the offence was committed with knowledge or deliberate disregard of preventive obligations.

(4) For the purposes of this section, “management negligence” shall include failure to act upon repeated warnings, ignoring reports of substance abuse on campus, or deliberately concealing such incidents to avoid regulatory scrutiny.

PART IX
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
CHAPTER XI

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

77. Establishment of Village and Ward-level Anti-Substance Committees.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, mandate the constitution of Anti-Substance Committees at every village and ward level for the purpose of monitoring, awareness, and prevention of substance abuse within the local community.

(2) Each Committee shall comprise representatives of the Panchayati Raj Institutions or Urban Local Bodies, school management committees, parent-teacher associations, local health workers, law enforcement representatives, youth groups, and such other stakeholders as may be prescribed.

(3) The functions of such Committees shall include,-

- (a) conducting awareness drives within the community;
- (b) reporting incidents of substance abuse to designated authorities;
- (c) assisting institutions in preventive education; and
- (d) facilitating referral of affected students to appropriate counselling and rehabilitation services.

(4) The Committees shall submit quarterly reports of their activities to the District Substance Abuse Prevention Council.

78. Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Awareness Campaigns.- (1) Panchayati Raj Institutions shall play an active role in disseminating awareness on substance abuse prevention through village assemblies, local campaigns, cultural programmes, and public meetings.

(2) It shall be the duty of Panchayati Raj Institutions to allocate a portion of their annual development funds for the organization of such awareness activities in coordination with schools, colleges, and community organizations.

(3) The State Government shall provide guidelines, training, and financial assistance to Panchayati Raj Institutions for implementing substance abuse prevention campaigns at the grassroots level.

79. Collaboration with Local Health and Social Welfare Departments.- (1) Local Health Departments and Social Welfare Departments shall extend support to educational institutions and community committees in matters relating to preventive healthcare, mental health counselling, detoxification, and rehabilitation services.

(2) The Departments shall designate nodal officers at the taluk and district levels to coordinate with educational institutions and community bodies on substance abuse prevention programmes.

(3) Joint action plans may be drawn by such Departments in collaboration with law enforcement, schools, and community organizations for conducting health camps, counselling sessions, and awareness workshops.

80. Parental Education and Counselling Programs.- (1) Every educational institution shall, in collaboration with parent-teacher associations and local community bodies, organize periodic parental education and counselling programmes on substance abuse prevention.

(2) Such programmes shall include training for parents on early identification of substance abuse symptoms, communication strategies with adolescents, and referral mechanisms for counselling and treatment.

(3) The State Government shall issue detailed guidelines for the design and implementation of parental counselling programmes, ensuring that such programmes are culturally appropriate and accessible to diverse communities.

81. Public-Private Partnerships for Rehabilitation and Awareness Infrastructure.- (1) The State Government may, for the effective implementation of this Act, encourage public-private partnerships with hospitals, corporate entities, non-governmental organizations, and charitable trusts.

(2) Such partnerships may extend to the establishment and maintenance of rehabilitation centres, community counselling facilities, awareness campaigns, digital resource platforms, and training programmes for educators and community leaders.

(3) The State Government shall frame rules for regulating such partnerships to ensure accountability, transparency, and compliance with prescribed standards.

82. Community Substance Abuse Monitoring Volunteers.- (1) The State Government may authorize the engagement of trained community volunteers to assist in monitoring substance abuse trends and reporting incidents within villages, wards, and institutional neighbourhoods.

(2) Such volunteers shall function under the supervision of Village or Ward Anti-Substance Committees and shall coordinate with local law enforcement authorities and Protection Officers.

(3) Volunteers shall be entitled to receive training, identification credentials, and such allowances or honorarium as the State Government may determine.

83. Incentive and Recognition Programs for Substance-free Institutions.- (1) The State Government shall establish incentive and recognition programmes to encourage educational institutions to maintain substance-free campuses.

(2) Institutions demonstrating exemplary performance in prevention, awareness, and rehabilitation initiatives shall be recognized through awards, public honours, grants, or preferential access to government schemes.

(3) The criteria for recognition shall include adherence to institutional protocols, innovative awareness programmes, effective community participation, and transparent reporting mechanisms.

84. Measures to Address Online Drug Markets and Digital Substance Abuse.- (1) The State Government shall, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies and cyber security cells, undertake measures to identify, monitor, and curb the use of online platforms, social media, and digital channels for drug trafficking and substance abuse.

(2) Educational institutions shall organize digital literacy programmes to sensitize students about the risks of online drug markets, cyber exploitation, and digital anonymity in substance transactions.

(3) Any person or institution found facilitating, promoting, or ignoring online drug trade targeting students shall be subject to penalties as prescribed under this Act and other applicable laws.

(4) The State Government shall establish a digital reporting and redressal portal enabling students, parents, and institutions to confidentially report instances of online substance-related activities.

PART X
MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS
CHAPTER XII
GENERAL PROVISIONS

85. Delegation of Powers to Authorities and Officers.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, delegate such of its powers, functions, or duties under this Act, except the power to make rules, to any authority, officer, or body as it may deem necessary for the efficient implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(2) Such delegation may be made subject to conditions, restrictions, limitations, and time-frames as may be specified in the notification.

(3) Every authority or officer exercising delegated powers under this section shall be deemed to be acting as an agent of the State Government and shall be bound to submit periodic reports of action taken to the Government.

(4) The delegation of powers under this section shall not divest the State Government of its right to exercise such powers, and the Government may revoke, modify, or revise such delegation at any time.

86. Protection of Actions Taken in Good Faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, any authority, officer, committee, or person, for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or any rule, regulation, or order made thereunder.

(2) Protection under this section shall extend to,-

- (a) educational institutions acting in compliance with directions issued under this Act;
- (b) parents, volunteers, and community members assisting in preventive activities; and
- (c) medical professionals, counsellors, and rehabilitation service providers engaged in referral or treatment activities.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the expression “good faith” shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 52 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and shall not protect acts of gross negligence, deliberate omission, or malafide intent.

87. Emergency Situations and Crisis Management Provisions.- (1) Where the State Government is satisfied that a grave emergency exists in relation to substance abuse in educational institutions or student communities, it may invoke special crisis management powers under this section.

(2) Such emergency may include, but not be limited to,-

- (a) mass incidents of overdose or poisoning among students;
- (b) discovery of organized trafficking networks operating within or near educational campuses;
- (c) sudden outbreaks of synthetic drug use with immediate risk to health and safety; or
- (d) any other circumstance declared by the State Government to pose imminent danger to the student community.

(3) In such emergencies, the State Government may, by order,-

- (a) direct temporary closure of institutions or hostels for security or medical purposes;
- (b) deploy mobile medical units, counselling teams, and crisis helplines;
- (c) authorize immediate suspension or removal of any staff, vendor, or contractor suspected of involvement;
- (d) requisition premises, resources, or personnel necessary for emergency response; and
- (e) establish a special crisis coordination cell with representation from Health, Education, Police, and Women & Child Development Departments.

(4) Any action taken under this section shall be reviewed by the State Legislature within three months and placed on record in an official report.

88. Financial Provisions: Funds, Grants, and Budgetary Allocations.- (1) The State Government shall establish a dedicated fund to be called the Karnataka Educational Substance Abuse Prevention Fund for financing programmes under this Act.

(2) The Fund shall consist of,-

- (a) budgetary allocations made by the State Legislature;
- (b) contributions from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) obligations of companies;
- (c) donations, endowments, and grants from individuals, organizations, or trusts;
- (d) amounts collected through penalties and fines imposed under this Act; and
- (e) any other source as may be notified by the State Government.

- (3) The Fund shall be applied for,-
- (a) conducting awareness and educational programmes;
 - (b) establishment and operation of counselling and rehabilitation centres;
 - (c) training of teachers, staff, volunteers, and Protection Officers;
 - (d) technological interventions, including surveillance, monitoring, and digital portals; and
 - (e) research, surveys, and evaluation activities under this Act.

(4) The Fund shall be maintained in such manner as may be prescribed, and its accounts shall be audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or by such authority as the State Government may appoint.

89. Power to Frame Rules, Regulations, and Guidelines.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, such rules may provide for,-

- (a) procedures for licensing and regulating rehabilitation centres;
 - (b) standards of surveillance and reporting by institutions;
 - (c) constitution, powers, and functions of Committees and Councils;
 - (d) qualifications, roles, and duties of Protection Officers and Inspectors;
 - (e) adjudication procedures for penalties and offences; and
 - (f) guidelines for research, surveys, data protection, and public disclosure.
- (3) The State Government may also issue regulations, notifications, and administrative guidelines to institutions and authorities for implementation of specific provisions of this Act.
- (4) Every rule, regulation, and guideline framed under this Act shall be laid before the State Legislature as soon as may be, and shall be subject to such modifications, annulments, or approvals as the Legislature may determine.

90. Establishment of Grievance Redressal and Feedback Portals.- (1) The State Government shall establish digital grievance redressal and feedback portals to enable students, parents, teachers, and community stakeholders to report substance abuse incidents, institutional negligence, or non-compliance with this Act.

(2) Such portals shall,-

- (a) ensure confidentiality and anonymity of complainants;
 - (b) provide acknowledgement and time-bound responses;
 - (c) allow escalation of unresolved grievances to higher authorities; and
 - (d) maintain transparency through periodic publication of aggregate data without disclosing personal identities.
- (3) Every educational institution shall prominently display the details of such portals on its notice boards, admission materials, and official website.

91. Periodic Review, Monitoring, and Compliance Audits.- (1) All educational institutions covered under this Act shall be subject to compliance audits relating to substance abuse prevention measures at least once every academic year.

(2) The audits shall be carried out by,-

- (a) designated authorities under the Education Department; or
 - (b) accredited third-party agencies empanelled by the State Government.
- (3) The audit shall cover preventive education programmes, institutional protocols, surveillance systems, reporting mechanisms, and grievance redressal performance.
- (4) A summary of audit findings shall be submitted to the State Substance Abuse Prevention Council, which shall compile an annual compliance index for institutions.
- (5) Institutions with repeated failures shall face penalties including withdrawal of recognition, denial of grants, or such regulatory actions as may be prescribed.

92. Mandatory Research, Surveys, and Data Collection.- (1) The State Government shall conduct regular research studies and surveys to assess the prevalence, causes, and trends of substance abuse among students in Karnataka.

(2) Such research shall be undertaken in collaboration with universities, research institutes, healthcare organizations, and civil society bodies.

(3) Educational institutions shall be required to provide relevant data for such studies, subject to safeguards of student privacy, confidentiality, and data protection norms.

(4) Findings from such research shall be made public, except where disclosure is likely to compromise confidentiality or security, and shall be used for policy-making, curriculum design, and institutional planning.

93. Provisions for Repeal and Amendment of Inconsistent Laws.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall prevail notwithstanding anything inconsistent contained in any other State law for the time being in force.

(2) If any such law is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by notification, repeal or amend such law to the extent of such inconsistency.

(3) Nothing in this section shall prevent the concurrent application of central legislation on narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, or public health, where applicable.

94. Annual Reporting to State Legislature and Public Disclosure.- (1) The State Government shall prepare a comprehensive annual report on the implementation of this Act, containing,-

- (a) data on substance abuse trends in educational institutions;
- (b) actions taken by institutions, Committees, and Councils;
- (c) financial expenditure and utilization of the dedicated Fund;
- (d) details of rehabilitation and counselling initiatives; and
- (e) audit findings, compliance records, and penalty actions.

(2) Such report shall be laid before the State Legislature every year and published on the official website of the State Government.

(3) A student-friendly summary of the report shall also be made available in Kannada and other major regional languages of Karnataka.

95. Savings and Transitional Provisions.- (1) Nothing contained in this Act shall affect the validity of actions taken under any law in force prior to the commencement of this Act, insofar as such actions are consistent with its objectives.

(2) All committees, officers, or authorities performing functions related to substance abuse prevention immediately before the commencement of this Act shall, until reconstituted or replaced, be deemed to be acting under this Act.

(3) Transitional arrangements, including continuation of existing schemes and utilization of ongoing funds, shall be made by the State Government until the establishment of new structures under this Act.

96. Power to Remove Difficulties in Implementation.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the purposes of this Act as appear to it to be necessary for removing the difficulty.

(2) No such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(3) Every such order shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before the State Legislature.

PART XI
ADDITIONAL ENFORCEMENT, PENAL AND FUTURE READINESS
PROVISIONS
CHAPTER XIII
ADVANCED ENFORCEMENT, LIABILITY, AND SYSTEMIC FUTURE-
READINESS

97. Institutional Liability for Negligence and Omission.- (1) Where any educational institution fails to take reasonable steps as mandated under this Act to prevent substance abuse or fails to report an incident of substance possession, supply, or consumption, the management shall be held liable for dereliction of duty.

(2) The following shall constitute gross institutional negligence,-

- (a) Non-formation or improper functioning of the institutional Discipline Committee;
- (b) Willful suppression or manipulation of incident data or complaints;
- (c) Failure to comply with mandatory surveillance, awareness, or rehabilitation provisions as outlined in Chapters V to IX;
- (d) Employment of unqualified or unvetted counselors or security staff in violation of prescribed norms.

(3) Upon such failure, the following actions may be initiated:

- (a) Imposition of administrative fines ranging from ₹1,00,000 to ₹10,00,000;
- (b) Suspension or revocation of institutional accreditation for a period up to one academic year;
- (c) Initiation of criminal proceedings against the head of the institution or responsible official under Section 188 IPC and other applicable laws.

98. Mandatory Reporting and Whistleblower Protection.- (1) Every institution shall appoint a designated Substance Abuse Reporting Officer (SARO), who shall act as the nodal person for incident reporting and compliance communication with the District Authority.

(2) Any student, staff, or third party with credible knowledge of a substance-related violation shall have the right to file a complaint with the SARO or District Authority.

(3) The identity of whistleblowers shall be protected under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, and no victimization or punitive action shall be initiated against such individuals.

(4) Any act of retaliation or suppression of whistleblowers shall attract,-

- (a) A fine of ₹50,000;
- (b) Disqualification of the institution from grants-in-aid for two academic years;
- (c) Criminal liability under the relevant provisions of the IPC and this Act.

99. Emergency Coordination and Multi-Agency Action Protocols.- (1) The State Control Authority shall frame and notify Emergency Response Protocols (ERPs) for substance abuse crises occurring within or near educational institutions.

(2) The ERP shall provide for,-

- (a) Immediate coordination between police, health, and educational authorities;
- (b) Medical emergency response through nodal hospitals;
- (c) Temporary closure of campuses, if warranted, and deployment of trauma counseling teams.

(3) All institutions shall maintain a contingency plan, with designated roles and communication trees for rapid action in case of a substance-related emergency.

(4) Failure to comply with ERP obligations shall attract financial penalties up to ₹5,00,000 and trigger a mandatory audit by the State Control Authority.

100. Blacklisting and Disqualification of Vendors, Contractors, and External Partners.-

(1) Any vendor, food contractor, security agency, or third-party partner found complicit or negligent in facilitating access to substances on campus shall be blacklisted for a minimum of five years.

(2) The institution shall be held jointly liable if it failed to conduct due diligence or ignored red flags relating to the vendor's conduct.

(3) The District Authority shall maintain a public registry of blacklisted vendors accessible through the Centralized Substance Abuse Monitoring Portal (CSAMP).

101. Special Penalties for Technology-Based Offenses.- (1) Any person using online platforms, messaging apps, or social media channels to facilitate substance abuse among students shall be liable under this Act in addition to the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(2) Special provisions shall include,-

(a) Blocking of such platforms or groups under Section 69A of the IT Act;

(b) Penal action including imprisonment up to three years and fine up to ₹2,00,000;

(c) Confiscation of digital equipment used for dissemination or distribution.

102. Periodic Third-Party Institutional Compliance Audits.- (1) Every institution shall be subjected to third-party compliance audits once every two years, conducted by an independent auditor empaneled with the State Authority.

(2) The audit shall evaluate,-

(a) Institutional infrastructure for prevention and surveillance;

(b) Functioning of committees and rehabilitation units;

(c) Responsiveness to complaints and legal compliance.

(3) Audit scores shall be published publicly and shall be linked to eligibility for government grants, recognitions, and awards.

103. Future-Readiness Research Fund and Innovation Sandbox.- (1) A dedicated Future-Readiness Research Fund shall be established by the State Government to,-

(a) Fund pilot projects, digital tools, AI-based threat detection models, and youth behavioranalysis;

(b) Promote collaboration with national and international research institutes on substance abuse prevention technologies.

(2) The State Council shall establish a regulatory "Innovation Sandbox" for startups, universities, and health-tech developers to test and deploy digital solutions with institutional partnerships.

(3) Prototypes developed through such initiatives shall be evaluated annually and may be recommended for statewide implementation upon successful results.

THE KARNATAKA DIRECTORATE OF LEGAL EDUCATION BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for the establishment of a statutory Directorate to regulate, coordinate, promote and standardise legal education in the State of Karnataka, and to ensure academic excellence, research promotion, faculty development, equitable access and innovation in the legal education sector, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

WHEREAS the legal profession is an integral part of the justice delivery system and legal education constitutes a fundamental pillar of the rule of law in a democratic society;

AND WHEREAS the Constitution of India, under Article 41, obligates the State to make effective provision for securing the right to education and under Article 46 to promote educational and economic interests of the weaker sections;

AND WHEREAS the current landscape of legal education in the State necessitates a uniform and dynamic regulatory framework to ensure quality, innovation, practical training, social justice orientation, and global relevance;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to establish a statutory body to coordinate, monitor, regulate and promote legal education and research within the State of Karnataka;

BE it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Advocates Act” means the Advocates Act, 1961 (25 of 1961), as amended from time to time;

(b) “Bar Council of India” means the Bar Council of India constituted under section 4 of the Advocates Act, 1961, and vested with the powers and functions relating to the regulation of legal education and professional standards in India;

(c) “Centre for Excellence” means a specialised academic or research unit established within a legal education institution with the prior approval of the Directorate, aimed at fostering innovation, interdisciplinary study, policy research, or advanced training in specified areas of law;

(d) “Common Entrance Test” or “Law CET” means a merit-based admission test conducted or recognised by the Directorate for admission to law programmes in institutions governed under this Act;

- (e) “Continuing Legal Education” means structured learning, certification, or capacity-building initiatives undertaken by law graduates, advocates, faculty, or professionals post formal legal education, including refresher courses, workshops, online learning or clinical training programmes;
- (f) “Directorate” means the Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education established under section 3 of this Act, as a statutory body for regulating, standardising, and promoting legal education within the State of Karnataka;
- (g) “Director-General” means the Director-General of the Directorate appointed under section 8 of this Act, and includes any person acting in such capacity under a valid order of the State Government or under delegation by the Directorate;
- (h) “faculty” means teaching staff appointed in accordance with norms prescribed by the Directorate, University Grants Commission, or Bar Council of India, and includes Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Professors, Adjunct Faculty, Visiting Faculty, and Guest Lecturers engaged in legal instruction or research;
- (i) “grievance” means a formal complaint raised by a student, faculty member, staff, or stakeholder concerning an act of omission or commission by a legal education institution, including issues of academic unfairness, discrimination, harassment, or administrative inaction;
- (j) “institution” means and includes any Government, Government-aided, private, autonomous, deemed-to-be university, college, school, or recognised centre within Karnataka that offers legal education and is approved or recognised by the Directorate or by a statutory authority empowered under law;
- (k) “legal aid clinic” means a clinical legal education initiative operating within a law institution with the objective of offering supervised legal assistance, awareness, or dispute resolution to members of the public, particularly marginalised or disadvantaged persons;
- (l) “legal education” means education, instruction, training, research, or continuing professional development in the field of law, including undergraduate, postgraduate, doctoral, vocational, paralegal or certificate-level legal programmes, whether delivered in physical, hybrid or digital modes, and includes the study of statutes, case law, jurisprudence, legal systems, procedure, and legal practice;
- (m) “Legal Education Appellate Authority” means the appellate body constituted under section 48 of this Act to adjudicate grievances and appeals arising from decisions or actions taken under the provisions of this Act;
- (n) “notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette of the State of Karnataka, and the term “notified” shall be construed accordingly;
- (o) “peer review” means an evaluation or audit undertaken by subject-matter experts, either internal or external, on the academic, administrative, or institutional performance of a legal education institution, with or without rating or benchmarking;
- (p) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made by the State Government under this Act;
- (q) “recognised institution” means any legal education institution that has been granted recognition, registration, or approval under this Act or by the Directorate to offer one or more law programmes;

- (r) “regulations” means regulations made by the Directorate under section 73 of this Act for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act, and includes academic, administrative, and financial norms applicable to institutions;
- (s) “scholarship” includes any grant, fellowship, fee waiver, stipend, or financial aid provided to eligible students enrolled in legal education programmes, whether by the Directorate, State Government, or external sponsor;
- (t) “social audit” means an independent assessment of an institution’s performance in achieving goals of access to justice, equity, inclusion, and public accountability, conducted through participatory methods and stakeholder engagement;
- (u) “State Government” means the Government of Karnataka in the Department of Higher Education or such other Department as may be notified for the purpose of implementation of this Act;
- (v) “University Grants Commission” or “UGC” means the University Grants Commission established under section 4 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (3 of 1956), and includes any statutory body succeeding it in its functions;
- (w) “virtual legal education platform” means an online system or interface developed, licensed, or approved by the Directorate for imparting legal instruction, assessment, certification, or continuing education through digital means including LMS, MOOCs, or e-classrooms;
- (x) “zone” means a territorial division of the State as may be notified by the State Government for the purposes of establishing zonal centres or ensuring equitable representation and implementation of legal education schemes.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIRECTORATE

- 3. Establishment of the Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education.-** (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish, with effect from such date as may be specified therein, an authority to be known as the Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education, to carry out the purposes of this Act.
- (2) The Directorate shall be responsible for,-
- (a) promoting and maintaining uniform standards of legal education in the State;
 - (b) recognising and monitoring institutions imparting legal education;
 - (c) advising the State Government on policy matters concerning legal education and research;
 - (d) coordinating with national regulatory bodies and professional councils;
 - (e) facilitating innovation, access, and quality in the legal education ecosystem.
- (3) The Directorate shall be subject to such general or special directions as the State Government may issue from time to time for the proper discharge of its functions and responsibilities.
- 4. Incorporation and legal status.-** (1) The Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold, administer and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to enter into contracts, and shall by the said name sue and be sued.
- (2) The Directorate shall be deemed to be a statutory authority for the purposes of,-

- (a) the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act, 1999;
 - (b) the Right to Information Act, 2005; and
 - (c) any other law for the time being in force applicable to public bodies or authorities established by law.
- (3) All acts done by the Directorate under this Act shall be deemed to be done in discharge of its public and statutory functions and shall have binding effect on all institutions covered under this Act.

5. Headquarters and regional offices.- (1) The headquarters of the Directorate shall be located at Bengaluru or at such other place as the State Government may, by notification, specify.

(2) The Directorate may, with the prior approval of the State Government, establish regional or divisional offices in such districts or zones of the State as it deems necessary for effective administration, regulation, and outreach.

(3) The regional offices shall function under the overall supervision of the Directorate and shall discharge such functions as may be delegated by the Directorate or prescribed by regulations.

6. Establishment of regional and zonal centres.- (1) The Directorate may, with the approval of the State Government, establish zonal centres, monitoring units, or sub-directorates to facilitate decentralised implementation of its regulatory and developmental functions.

(2) The functions and powers of such zonal centres or units shall include,-

- (a) regional inspection and evaluation of law institutions;
- (b) academic coordination with universities and colleges within the zone;
- (c) grievance redressal and outreach; and
- (d) such other functions as may be assigned by the Directorate.

(3) The staffing pattern, operational jurisdiction, and reporting structure of such zonal centres shall be as prescribed by regulations made under this Act.

(4) Every regional and zonal centre shall maintain records, publish periodic reports, and assist the Directorate in compiling State-wide data on legal education and research.

CHAPTER III ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

7. Constitution and composition of the Directorate.- (1) The Karnataka Directorate of Legal Education shall consist of the following members, namely:-

- (a) The Director-General, who shall be the Chairperson, ex officio;
- (b) One nominee of the State Higher Education Council not below the rank of a Professor;
- (c) One representative of the Bar Council of India, to be nominated by its Chairperson;
- (d) One retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka, to be nominated by the Chief Justice of the High Court;
- (e) Two eminent legal educationists, including one woman, nominated by the State Government from among persons having not less than twenty years' experience in the field of legal education or research;
- (f) One representative from the National Law School of India University, Bengaluru;

- (g) One serving Principal or Dean from any Government Law College in the State, nominated by the State Government on a rotation basis;
- (h) The Member-Secretary, who shall be a full-time officer appointed under section 10, and shall be responsible for the administrative functions of the Directorate.
- (2) The Directorate shall be a policy-making and supervisory body, and shall meet at least once in every quarter to review the performance and compliance of institutions and to formulate or revise guidelines.
- (3) The non-official members shall hold office for a term of three years and shall be eligible for re-nomination for one further term.
- (4) The appointment of members and vacancies therein shall be notified in the Official Gazette.

8. Appointment of the Director-General.- (1) The State Government shall appoint a Director-General of the Directorate from amongst persons of eminence in the field of law, legal education, or judicial service, having,—

- (a) a minimum of twenty-five years of experience in teaching, legal practice, research, or judicial service; and
- (b) demonstrated capacity in administration and legal policy formulation.
- (2) The Director-General shall be appointed for a term of four years and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term.
- (3) The terms and conditions of service of the Director-General shall be such as may be prescribed, and until so prescribed, shall be governed by executive instructions issued by the State Government.

9. Powers and functions of the Director-General.- (1) The Director-General shall be the principal executive officer of the Directorate and shall,—

- (a) exercise general supervision over the day-to-day affairs and operations of the Directorate;
- (b) be responsible for the execution of policies, decisions and directions issued by the Directorate;
- (c) represent the Directorate before governmental bodies, courts, and national regulatory authorities;
- (d) ensure coordination between institutions, academic councils and professional bodies;
- (e) prepare and submit annual reports, budget estimates, audit statements and policy papers;
- (f) act as the disciplinary authority for staff and officers of the Directorate;
- (g) perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Directorate or prescribed by rules.
- (2) In the event of a vacancy or absence of the Director-General, the State Government may designate a senior officer of the Directorate to discharge the functions of the Director-General temporarily.

10. Other officers and employees.- (1) The Directorate shall have such number of officers and other employees as the State Government may determine, including but not limited to,—

- (a) a Member-Secretary;
- (b) Deputy Directors for Academic Affairs, Legal Research, and Institutional Development;

- (c) Zonal Officers for regional coordination and enforcement;
 - (d) Legal Officers, Finance Officers, and administrative support staff.
- (2) The qualifications, method of recruitment, salaries, allowances, and service conditions of such officers and employees shall be such as may be prescribed by rules.
- 11. Conditions of service, tenure, and removal.-** (1) The officers and employees of the Directorate shall hold office for such term and under such conditions of service as may be prescribed.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), the State Government may remove any officer or employee of the Directorate, after providing a reasonable opportunity of being heard, on the following grounds,—
- (a) proven misconduct or inefficiency;
 - (b) physical or mental incapacity;
 - (c) conviction in a criminal case involving moral turpitude; or
 - (d) violation of the provisions of this Act or rules made thereunder.
- 12. Procedure for meetings and business.-** (1) The Directorate shall meet at least once in every three months at such place and time as may be fixed by the Director-General.
- (2) One-third of the total members of the Directorate shall constitute a quorum for a meeting.
- (3) All matters shall be decided by a majority of votes of the members present and voting, and in the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- (4) The procedure for convening meetings and transaction of business shall be such as may be prescribed by regulations.

CHAPTER IV

OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

- 13. Objectives of the Directorate.-** The objectives of the Directorate shall be to,—
- (a) establish and maintain uniform academic and administrative standards across legal education institutions in the State;
 - (b) promote legal research, innovation and practical legal training through structured and experiential programs;
 - (c) ensure access to legal education for all sections, particularly underrepresented communities and differently-abled persons;
 - (d) foster inter-institutional collaboration, including with judicial academies, law firms, government departments and bar associations;
 - (e) prepare students for national and global legal challenges in emerging areas of law.
- 14. Powers and general functions of the Directorate.-** The Directorate shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, have the following powers and functions, namely:-
- (a) to frame regulations for the recognition, accreditation, and withdrawal of recognition of institutions offering legal education;
 - (b) to prescribe minimum standards of infrastructure, faculty, curriculum and evaluation;
 - (c) to advise the State Government and other regulatory bodies on all matters relating to legal education and training;
 - (d) to conduct or commission research, policy studies, and evaluation reports;
 - (e) to oversee the conduct of common entrance tests and examinations where necessary;

- (f) to promote innovation in pedagogy, including through online legal education, simulation, and interdisciplinary learning;
- (g) to organise workshops, conferences, seminars and professional development programmes;
- (h) to collaborate with national and international institutions, bodies, and agencies for academic excellence.

15. Power to issue directions, guidelines and advisories.- (1) The Directorate may issue binding directions to all institutions recognized under this Act to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Act, rules, and regulations.

(2) The Directorate may, from time to time, issue academic, operational, or administrative guidelines and advisories for the better implementation of its functions.

(3) Every institution to which such direction is issued shall comply with the same within the time specified therein and report such compliance in the prescribed manner.

16. Power to call for returns, reports and statistics.- (1) The Directorate may require any institution offering legal education in the State to furnish such data, reports, returns, statistics or other information as it may consider necessary for the discharge of its functions.

(2) If any institution fails to furnish the same within the stipulated time, the Directorate may initiate action including warning, suspension of recognition, or imposition of penalties, as prescribed.

17. Annual report and compliance statements.- (1) The Directorate shall prepare an Annual Report detailing,—

- (a) the work performed by it during the year;
- (b) policy decisions undertaken;
- (c) compliance levels of institutions and enforcement actions; and
- (d) recommendations for legal education reforms.

(2) The Annual Report shall be submitted to the State Government and laid before both Houses of the Karnataka State Legislature.

(3) Every institution recognised under this Act shall submit an Annual Self-Compliance Statement in such format and manner as may be prescribed by regulations.

CHAPTER V

REGULATION OF LEGAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

18. Recognition and registration of law institutions.- (1) No university, college, school or institution within the State of Karnataka shall commence or continue to offer legal education or confer degrees or diplomas in law unless it is recognised and registered under this Act.

(2) An application for recognition shall be made to the Directorate in such form, accompanied by such documents and fees, as may be prescribed.

(3) The Directorate shall, after such inspection and inquiry as it deems fit, grant recognition to the institution if it satisfies the prescribed norms relating to,—

- (a) academic governance and autonomy;
- (b) physical and digital infrastructure;
- (c) student–faculty ratio and faculty qualifications;
- (d) curriculum design, pedagogy, and student services.

(4) Recognition shall be granted for an initial period not exceeding five years and shall be renewable subject to compliance.

(5) Every institution granted recognition shall be assigned a unique Institutional Registration Number and shall be entered in the Register of Legal Education Institutions maintained by the Directorate.

19. Standardisation of curriculum and calendar.- (1) The Directorate shall, in consultation with the Bar Council of India, the Karnataka State Higher Education Council, and academic experts, frame minimum standards for curriculum and academic calendar for undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma and research programmes in law.

(2) The curriculum shall ensure a blend of theory, skill-based learning, clinical legal education, and research components, including contemporary and emerging areas of law such as cyber law, environmental law, artificial intelligence, and international human rights.

(3) All recognised institutions shall adopt the standardised curriculum with such modifications as may be approved by the Directorate in accordance with their academic structure.

(4) The academic calendar shall be structured to ensure minimum instructional days, timely examinations, student evaluations, and inter-institutional synchronisation.

20. Norms for academic, library and infrastructural standards.- (1) The Directorate shall prescribe detailed norms for academic infrastructure, including but not limited to,—

- (a) minimum classroom size, library space and technology-enabled classrooms;
- (b) access to online legal databases and physical library resources;
- (c) student and faculty amenities;
- (d) IT and administrative facilities;
- (e) accessible infrastructure for differently-abled students.

(2) Institutions failing to maintain such standards shall be issued notices of deficiency and may be subjected to penalties under this Act.

21. Faculty qualifications, training and recruitment.- (1) The Directorate shall, in alignment with the University Grants Commission and Bar Council of India norms, prescribe minimum qualifications, teaching hours, and research output expectations for full-time and part-time faculty in law.

(2) No institution shall appoint any faculty member who does not fulfil the minimum academic and professional criteria prescribed under this Act or under any regulation made thereunder.

(3) The Directorate may organise or accredit faculty development programmes, pedagogical training, and refresher courses, and may require mandatory completion thereof for continued approval of faculty appointments.

(4) Institutions shall submit faculty rosters annually, along with appointment letters, qualifications, pay structure and work allocations, for verification.

22. Inspection, monitoring and audit procedures.- (1) The Directorate or any officer authorised by it may, after giving prior notice, conduct academic, infrastructural, administrative and financial inspection of any institution recognised under this Act.

(2) The inspections may be periodic, random, or based on complaints, and shall include,—

- (a) verification of compliance with norms and standards;

- (b) scrutiny of admission procedures, faculty workload and internal assessment practices;
 - (c) assessment of student feedback, grievances and redressal mechanisms.
- (3) The institution shall be provided with a written report post-inspection and granted a reasonable period for rectification of deficiencies, failing which action under section 23 may be initiated.

23. Suspension, withdrawal and revocation of recognition.- (1) Where the Directorate is satisfied, after giving the institution an opportunity of being heard, that,—

- (a) recognition was obtained by misrepresentation or fraud;
- (b) the institution is not complying with the provisions of this Act, rules or directions issued thereunder;
- (c) academic or infrastructural standards are not maintained; or
- (d) there are financial irregularities or ethical violations,

It may, by order and for reasons recorded in writing,—

- (i) suspend the recognition for a specified period;
 - (ii) withdraw or revoke recognition permanently.
- (2) Institutions whose recognition is suspended or withdrawn shall not admit any new students during the period of suspension and shall make arrangements for the academic continuity of currently enrolled students, as directed by the Directorate.

CHAPTER VI

ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

24. Academic and institutional accreditation system.- (1) The Directorate shall develop and administer a comprehensive accreditation framework for law institutions in the State, which shall include grading of institutions based on academic inputs, research outputs, student outcomes and social impact.

(2) The accreditation shall be granted in three categories,—

- (a) Apex Accredited Institution;
- (b) Accredited Institution;
- (c) Institution under Review.

(3) Accreditation status shall be valid for a term not exceeding five years, and shall be subject to renewal upon reassessment.

(4) Accreditation results shall be published annually on the official website of the Directorate.

25. Internal and external quality assurance mechanisms.- (1) Every institution recognised under this Act shall establish an Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) in accordance with the guidelines prescribed by the Directorate.

(2) The Directorate shall conduct External Quality Assurance Reviews (EQARs) at intervals not exceeding three years, through teams comprising academic experts, former judges, legal practitioners, and public representatives.

(3) The parameters for quality assurance shall include,—

- (a) learning outcomes and teaching quality;
- (b) research productivity and social engagement;
- (c) student progression and alumni tracking;
- (d) transparency, governance and accountability.

26. Publication of performance scorecards.- (1) The Directorate shall annually publish an Institutional Performance Scorecard, ranking law institutions on the basis of defined academic, infrastructural, research and outreach metrics.

(2) The scorecard shall include,—

- (a) accreditation grade and status;
- (b) faculty–student ratio;
- (c) research publications and grants received;
- (d) moot court, clinical and practical training scores;
- (e) student satisfaction indicators.

(3) The scorecard shall be used for institutional funding, incentives, and eligibility for collaborations.

27. Independent evaluation and peer reviews.- (1) The Directorate may empanel a body of Peer Reviewers comprising legal academics, former regulators, retired judges, or eminent professionals, for independent evaluation of legal education institutions.

(2) Peer review visits may be initiated,—

- (a) on application by an institution seeking improved accreditation status;
- (b) upon complaints or adverse reports;
- (c) suo motu by the Directorate.

(3) The report of the peer reviewers shall be made public, and its recommendations shall be acted upon within a reasonable time.

CHAPTER VII

LEGAL RESEARCH, SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND PRACTICAL TRAINING

28. Establishment of Legal Research and Innovation Cells.- (1) The Directorate shall, in consultation with recognised law institutions, facilitate the establishment of Legal Research and Innovation Cells (LRICs) in each accredited institution, which shall function as the nodal units for promoting research, interdisciplinary studies, innovation, and policy contributions.

(2) The objectives of such Cells shall include,—

- (a) undertaking empirical, doctrinal, socio-legal and policy-based research;
- (b) promoting student and faculty research publications in indexed journals;
- (c) securing research grants, collaborations and consultancy;
- (d) encouraging innovations in legal technology, access to justice, and public interest law.

(3) The Directorate may provide grants, guidelines, and support for inter-institutional LRICs on emerging themes such as climate law, artificial intelligence, public health law and cyber law.

29. Clinical legal education, internships and live law projects.- (1) Every recognised law institution shall establish at least one Student Legal Aid and Clinical Legal Education Centre, under the supervision of a designated faculty-in-charge and in consultation with the Directorate.

(2) Such centres shall engage in,—

- (a) legal awareness and legal literacy programs;
- (b) live client counselling and pro bono legal services under supervision;
- (c) preparation of paralegal materials and model pleadings;
- (d) support to government legal aid authorities.

(3) The Directorate shall frame Internship Guidelines prescribing minimum duration, eligibility, institutional responsibilities, and mandatory documentation for internships undertaken by law students.

(4) Law institutions shall maintain internship records and report the same to the Directorate on an annual basis.

30. Moot court competitions, simulations and advocacy programs.- (1) The Directorate shall promote and support the integration of moot court exercises, trial simulations, arbitration advocacy, and legislative drafting into the formal curriculum.

(2) Institutions shall organise intra- and inter-institutional competitions and participate in national and international moots and simulation contests.

(3) The Directorate may organise a State-level Annual Moot Court and Advocacy Championship, and provide academic and logistical support for participation in national and global events.

(4) The Directorate may issue standards for moot court assessment and incorporate such training into evaluation parameters for practical legal training.

31. Judicial and professional collaborations.- (1) The Directorate shall collaborate with the Karnataka Judicial Academy, High Court Legal Services Committee, Bar Associations, law firms, government departments, and quasi-judicial bodies for,—

- (a) facilitating professional mentorship and exposure;
- (b) providing guest lectures, externships, and bar readiness programs;
- (c) enabling student observation of court proceedings and dispute resolution forums;
- (d) developing professional ethics, legal drafting, and litigation management modules.

(2) The Directorate shall also establish an Advisory Board on Legal Practice Integration comprising members of the Bar, Bench, academia and legal industry, to guide experiential learning initiatives.

CHAPTER VIII

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT

32. International partnerships, exchange and dual degrees.- (1) The Directorate shall promote and regulate international partnerships between recognised law institutions in Karnataka and accredited foreign law schools, universities, and research institutions.

(2) Such partnerships may relate to,—

- (a) faculty and student exchange programs;
- (b) dual and joint degree arrangements;
- (c) co-hosted conferences and joint publications;
- (d) access to online international resources and library networks.

(3) No institution shall enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for academic collaboration with any foreign institution without prior intimation to the Directorate and compliance with guidelines issued under section 33.

33. Guidelines for collaboration with foreign institutions.- (1) The Directorate shall issue Guidelines on International Academic Collaboration, specifying,—

- (a) due diligence to be undertaken by Indian institutions;
- (b) minimum equivalence standards for foreign qualifications;
- (c) approval procedures for dual/joint degrees and credit transfer;
- (d) intellectual property protection and data sharing norms.

(2) Institutions shall submit annual reports on international activities and achievements to the Directorate.

(3) The Directorate may publish a white-list of foreign law schools and international partnerships recognised for academic and professional equivalence.

34. Scholarship, grant and financial assistance schemes.- (1) The Directorate shall formulate and administer Student Scholarship and Financial Aid Schemes, which may include—

- (a) need-based and merit-based scholarships;
- (b) fellowships for academic and research excellence;
- (c) fee waivers for marginalised and differently-abled students;
- (d) travel grants for national and international competitions, research or internships.

(2) The State Government shall allocate a separate budget for such schemes and may also permit contributions from public and private donors, CSR funds and alumni foundations.

(3) Institutions shall establish a Student Financial Aid Committee, and submit annual utilisation reports in the format prescribed by the Directorate.

35. Legal Education Internationalisation Council.- (1) The State Government may, on the recommendation of the Directorate, constitute a Legal Education Internationalisation Council (LEIC) to advise and assist the Directorate on all matters concerning international legal education strategy.

(2) The LEIC shall comprise,—

- (a) legal educationists with international experience;
- (b) members from globally ranked law institutions;
- (c) former diplomats, legal practitioners, and alumni from foreign universities.

(3) The LEIC shall,—

- (a) review internationalisation efforts of law institutions in the State;
- (b) recommend participation in global legal networks and competitions;
- (c) suggest reforms to make Karnataka a hub for global legal education.

CHAPTER IX

DIGITAL AND CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

36. Online legal education and virtual platforms.- (1) The Directorate shall develop and maintain a Unified Digital Legal Education Platform, providing,—

- (a) open access digital courses, lectures and e-modules;
- (b) legal databases, e-libraries and judgment repositories;
- (c) virtual class infrastructure, learning management systems and secure examination portals.

(2) Institutions may be permitted to offer hybrid or online courses subject to compliance with standards specified by the Directorate and national regulators.

37. Development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and hybrid learning.-

(1) The Directorate shall identify priority subjects and facilitate the development of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in collaboration with reputed faculty, practitioners, and national platforms like SWAYAM and NPTEL.

(2) MOOCs and hybrid courses shall be credit-linked, subject to approval by academic councils and assessment standards as prescribed by the Directorate.

(3) The Directorate may accredit institutions as Digital Law Education Centres to develop, host, or deliver such courses.

38. Continuing legal education for practitioners and faculty.- (1) The Directorate shall initiate a Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Framework, mandating periodic upskilling, knowledge refreshers, and new area training for,—

- (a) legal practitioners registered with the Bar Council of Karnataka;
- (b) in-service faculty members in law institutions.

(2) CLE modules shall include short courses, certifications, virtual lectures and simulations on evolving fields such as data privacy, corporate compliance, international trade law, digital forensics and AI in law.

(3) The Directorate may prescribe mandatory CLE requirements for faculty promotion or law license renewals in coordination with relevant authorities.

39. Inclusion of disadvantaged, rural and differently-abled students.- (1) The Directorate shall frame an Inclusive Legal Education Policy to ensure access, support and participation of,—

- (a) Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes;
- (b) economically weaker sections;
- (c) differently-abled students and persons with disabilities;
- (d) students from rural and underserved regions.

(2) Such policy shall include,—

- (a) reservation of seats and remedial education modules;
- (b) provision of assistive technologies and accessible infrastructure;
- (c) sensitisation of faculty and support staff;
- (d) dedicated helplines, counselling and grievance redressal.

(3) The Directorate may empanel NGOs, legal aid groups, and student organisations to assist in outreach and implementation of inclusion initiatives.

CHAPTER X

ADMISSION, FEE REGULATION AND COVERAGE

40. Common Entrance Test and merit-based admissions.- (1) The Directorate shall, in consultation with the State Government and relevant universities, conduct a Common Entrance Test (Law CET) for admissions to all undergraduate and postgraduate law programmes in institutions governed by this Act.

(2) Admissions shall be made strictly on the basis of merit obtained in the Law CET, subject to reservation policies and eligibility criteria prescribed under law.

(3) The Directorate may permit separate entrance tests for postgraduate or research programmes, subject to prior approval.

(4) No institution shall admit any student to a legal education programme unless such student qualifies under the CET or other process recognised by the Directorate.

(5) The Directorate shall prescribe guidelines for counselling, seat allotment, and spot admissions, ensuring transparency, accessibility, and grievance redressal.

41. Regulation of fee structure and fee reimbursement policies.- (1) The Directorate shall frame a Model Fee Framework for legal education institutions in the State, ensuring,—

- (a) reasonable correlation between tuition fees and infrastructure, faculty, and quality standards;
 - (b) prevention of profiteering or capitation fees;
 - (c) differential fee slabs for government, aided, unaided and private institutions;
 - (d) inclusion of scholarships and fee waivers for disadvantaged students.
- (2) Every institution shall submit its proposed fee structure for prior approval to the Directorate, along with audited financials and justification.
- (3) The Directorate shall establish a Fee Regulation Committee to assess and approve fee proposals, and recommend action for violations.
- (4) The State Government shall notify Fee Reimbursement Schemes, which shall be implemented in coordination with the Directorate, ensuring timely disbursement to eligible students.

42. Applicability of the Act to State, Central, Private, Deemed and Autonomous law institutions.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall apply to,—

- (a) all Government Law Colleges and Universities established by the State of Karnataka;
 - (b) all private and aided law colleges affiliated to any university in the State;
 - (c) all institutions declared as deemed-to-be universities under section 3 of the University Grants Commission Act, 1956, located within Karnataka and offering legal education;
 - (d) autonomous institutions and Centres of Excellence in law, whether State-established or private;
 - (e) any campus of a Central University located within Karnataka offering legal education, to the extent not inconsistent with Central law.
- (4) The Directorate shall frame operational guidelines for coordinated application of this Act across such categories, ensuring that regulatory objectives are uniformly met.

CHAPTER XI

STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

43. Establishment of institutional grievance redressal committees.- (1) Every recognised legal education institution shall constitute an Institutional Grievance Redressal Committee (IGRC) comprising,—

- (a) a senior faculty member as Chairperson;
 - (b) one faculty representative;
 - (c) one student representative;
 - (d) one external member nominated by the Directorate.
- (2) The IGRC shall hear complaints relating to academic matters, discrimination, harassment, fee disputes, and service conditions, and dispose of such complaints within thirty days.
- (3) A report of proceedings and outcomes shall be submitted biannually to the Directorate.

44. State-level Grievance Redressal Cell under the Directorate.- (1) The Directorate shall establish a State Grievance Redressal Cell for Legal Education (SGRC-LE) to,—

- (a) hear appeals against orders of Institutional Grievance Redressal Committees;
 - (b) entertain complaints involving multiple institutions or systemic violations;
 - (c) initiate suo motu inquiries in matters of urgent public importance.
- (2) The SGRC-LE shall be chaired by a retired District Judge or Professor of Law, and shall include members with experience in education regulation and public administration.

(3) Orders of the SGRC shall be binding and enforceable, subject to further appeal under Chapter XII.

45. Public consultation with students, faculty, judiciary, and Bar.- (1) The Directorate shall institutionalise mechanisms for stakeholder consultations on matters concerning policy formulation, curriculum revision, regulatory changes, and academic reforms.

(2) Such consultations may include,—

- (a) public hearings;
- (b) focus groups with students, teachers, and researchers;
- (c) roundtables with judges, Bar representatives, and NGOs;
- (d) invitation of written comments from the public.

(3) A summary of stakeholder feedback and Directorate responses shall be published along with final decisions, wherever feasible.

46. Right of representation before the Directorate.- (1) Any person or institution affected by a decision, policy, or directive issued under this Act may submit a representation to the Directorate within thirty days from the date of such decision.

(2) The Directorate shall consider such representation on merits and pass appropriate orders, recording reasons.

(3) A second representation shall not be entertained unless new and substantial grounds are established.

CHAPTER XII

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPELLATE AUTHORITY

47. Jurisdiction and scope of disputes under this Act.- (1) All disputes arising out of,—

- (a) recognition, derecognition, or suspension of institutions;
- (b) fee fixation and admission grievances;
- (c) regulatory action under inspection, monitoring, or audit;
- (d) disciplinary actions against institutions or faculty;

shall be adjudicated by the Legal Education Appellate Authority constituted under section 48.

(2) The jurisdiction of the Authority shall extend to any person, institution or stakeholder affected by the actions of the Directorate.

48. Constitution of the Legal Education Appellate Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute the Karnataka Legal Education Appellate Authority (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”), consisting of,—

- (a) a Chairperson, who shall be a retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka;
- (b) one legal academic of eminence;
- (c) one member from the Bar, with at least twenty years of practice.

(2) The Authority shall be a quasi-judicial body with powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 in respect of—

- (a) summoning persons and documents;
- (b) recording evidence;
- (c) enforcing attendance and orders.

(3) The headquarters of the Authority shall be at Bengaluru, with powers to hold sittings at regional offices.

49. Powers and procedure of the Appellate Authority.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to,—

- (a) admit and adjudicate appeals filed by aggrieved institutions, faculty, or students;
- (b) confirm, modify, or set aside any decision of the Directorate;
- (c) issue directions to the Directorate for reconsideration or compliance.

(2) Appeals must be filed within sixty days of the date of the impugned order, extendable by a further period of thirty days for sufficient cause.

(3) The procedure for hearing and disposal shall be prescribed by regulations framed by the State Government in consultation with the Chairperson.

50. Time limit for disposal and enforceability of orders.- (1) The Authority shall, as far as possible, dispose of every appeal or proceeding within ninety days from the date of filing.

(2) Orders of the Authority shall be binding on the parties and enforceable as if they were decrees of a civil court.

51. Review and revision by the State Government.- (1) The State Government may, either suo motu or on application, call for the records of any case decided by the Authority, where it is of the opinion that—

- (a) there has been gross miscarriage of justice; or
- (b) the decision is contrary to the provisions of this Act.

(2) After giving an opportunity of hearing, the Government may pass appropriate orders, including remand, revision, or reversal, subject to judicial review under Article 226 of the Constitution of India.

52. Bar of jurisdiction of civil courts.- No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceeding in respect of any matter which the Directorate, the State Grievance Redressal Cell, or the Appellate Authority is empowered to determine under this Act.

CHAPTER XIII

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

53. Self-assessment and internal compliance reports by institutions.- (1) Every recognised legal education institution shall conduct a comprehensive annual self-assessment of academic performance, regulatory compliance, faculty development, student services, and infrastructure benchmarks, in accordance with the formats and indicators prescribed by the Directorate.

(2) The self-assessment shall be certified by the head of the institution and shall include,—

- (a) status of compliance with directives issued by the Directorate;
- (b) progress on curriculum delivery, research output, student placements, and inclusivity measures;
- (c) a financial declaration on fee utilisation, scholarships granted, and infrastructural spending.

(3) Such reports shall be submitted to the Directorate by 30th June every year, failing which the institution may be subjected to scrutiny or penal action under this Act.

54. External audit, third-party evaluation and social audit.- (1) The Directorate shall develop a multi-tiered external audit and evaluation framework to periodically assess the functioning, quality, and public accountability of recognised institutions.

- (2) Such external mechanisms shall include,—
- (a) academic and infrastructural audits conducted by experts empanelled by the Directorate;
 - (b) third-party evaluations conducted by autonomous education quality assessment agencies;
 - (c) social audit reports based on stakeholder surveys, community feedback, and access-to-justice impact metrics.
- (3) Reports of all audits and evaluations shall be published annually on the official website of the Directorate and may be used as a basis for ranking institutions and allocating grants.

55. Promotion of research in law and emerging domains.- (1) The Directorate shall promote cutting-edge legal research in emerging domains, including but not limited to,—

- (a) Artificial Intelligence and Law;
 - (b) Cybersecurity, Privacy and Data Protection;
 - (c) Climate Change, Environment and Sustainable Development Law;
 - (d) Technology Law and Intellectual Property;
 - (e) Public Health and Human Rights Law;
 - (f) Access to Justice and Legal Aid Technology.
- (2) The Directorate may provide competitive research grants, post-doctoral fellowships, publication support, and research awards to faculty and institutions in these areas.
- (3) A Research Advancement Board, comprising legal scholars, jurists, scientists, and practitioners, shall be constituted by the Directorate to periodically review research trends, advise on funding priorities, and assess institutional performance in legal scholarship.

56. Establishment of Centres for Excellence and Legal Start-ups.- (1) The Directorate shall encourage the creation of Centres for Excellence in Legal Education and Research (CE-LER) within institutions that demonstrate academic distinction and innovation capacity.

- (2) Each Centre for Excellence shall focus on specific themes and undertake,—
- (a) high-impact interdisciplinary research;
 - (b) advanced legal training modules;
 - (c) policy advocacy and public engagement.
- (3) The Directorate shall facilitate the establishment of a Legal Start-up Incubation Programme in at least one leading law institution in each zone of the State, providing,—
- (a) funding support, seed grants and mentorship to legal start-ups;
 - (b) co-working spaces, digital tools, and access to legal databases;
 - (c) capacity-building for law-tech ventures, social justice innovation, and community law services.
- (4) The Directorate may collaborate with the Department of Innovation and Technology, industry partners, and law firms for funding and technical support to such initiatives.

CHAPTER XIV

COORDINATION WITH OTHER REGULATORY AND STATUTORY BODIES

57. Coordination with Bar Council of India, UGC and National Legal Education Council.- (1) The Directorate shall ensure institutional and policy coordination with the Bar Council of India (BCI), University Grants Commission (UGC), and any other relevant authority established by or under a Central Act for the purpose of regulating legal education.

- (2) The Directorate shall,—
- (a) align its standards for curriculum, faculty norms, infrastructure, and accreditation with those prescribed by the BCI and UGC;
 - (b) consult with these bodies while framing rules, issuing recognition, or proposing reforms;
 - (c) nominate representatives to national working groups or expert committees, where invited.
- (3) The Directorate shall periodically forward data on compliance, inspection outcomes, and performance assessments to such central regulatory bodies.

58. Alignment with National Education Policy and legal reforms.- (1) The Directorate shall ensure that its objectives, regulations, and institutional reforms are in consonance with the principles and directions set out under the National Education Policy, 2020 and other national initiatives concerning legal and higher education.

- (2) In particular, the Directorate shall,—
- (a) promote multidisciplinary legal education and flexibility in academic pathways;
 - (b) implement outcome-based legal education and credit transfer systems;
 - (c) encourage integration of ethics, constitutional values, and digital fluency into legal curricula;
 - (d) adopt academic bank of credit mechanisms and support blended learning models.
- (3) The Directorate shall regularly publish a Policy Compliance Report, demonstrating its alignment with national reforms and best practices in global legal education.

59. Advisory role in central accreditation or national policy processes.- (1) The Directorate shall represent the State of Karnataka in any national committees, advisory councils, or commissions constituted by the Central Government or national statutory bodies relating to legal education and professional training.

- (2) The Directorate may provide research inputs, policy suggestions, and institutional data to national agencies involved in,—
- (a) curriculum reform;
 - (b) bar examination and licensing reforms;
 - (c) ranking and accreditation of legal education institutions;
 - (d) quality benchmarks and regulatory frameworks.
- (3) The Directorate shall ensure that law institutions in Karnataka are active participants in central accreditation exercises and comply with nationally recognised evaluation indicators.

CHAPTER XV

FINANCE, FUNDING AND AUDIT

60. Grants and contributions by State Government and other sources.- (1) The State Government shall, after due appropriation made by the Legislature, make to the Directorate such grants-in-aid, block grants, and scheme-based financial allocations as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions under this Act.

- (2) The Directorate may also receive,—
- (a) contributions and endowments from public or private sources;
 - (b) funds from Central Government schemes or international institutions, subject to applicable law;

- (c) allocations under any public-private partnership (PPP), CSR initiative, or alumni foundation, with prior approval of the State Government.
- (3) All such receipts shall be credited to the Fund established under section 61.
- 61. Establishment and administration of the Karnataka Legal Education Fund.-** (1) There shall be established a Fund to be called the Karnataka Legal Education Fund, which shall be maintained and administered by the Directorate.
- (2) The Fund shall consist of,—
- (a) grants made under section 60;
 - (b) user charges, application fees, and other receipts from institutions under this Act;
 - (c) income from research projects, consultancy, publications, or collaborative programmes;
 - (d) interest or income from investments of the Fund.
- (3) The Fund shall be utilised for,—
- (a) institutional grants for legal education improvement;
 - (b) research support, scholarships, and innovation projects;
 - (c) administrative expenses and staffing;
 - (d) infrastructure development and capacity building.
- (4) The Fund shall be operated through a designated bank account under joint authorization of the Director-General and the Financial Officer.
- 62. Designated Financial Officer and financial powers.-** (1) The State Government shall appoint or designate a Chief Financial Officer or equivalent officer not below the rank of Joint Director (Finance), who shall,—
- (a) maintain accounts and ensure financial compliance;
 - (b) supervise preparation of the annual budget and fund utilisation statements;
 - (c) advise the Director-General on financial policy and control.
- (2) The Financial Officer shall ensure that all expenditures are incurred in accordance with the Karnataka Financial Code, Treasury Rules, and instructions issued by the State Government or Accountant General.
- 63. Preparation of budget estimates and approval.-** (1) The Directorate shall prepare an annual budget estimate of its income and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year and submit the same to the State Government for approval at least three months before the beginning of the financial year.
- (2) The budget shall be classified into plan and non-plan components and shall reflect anticipated receipts, committed liabilities, and proposed schemes.
- (3) The State Government may approve the budget with or without modifications and communicate the sanctioned provisions in writing.
- (4) No expenditure shall be incurred unless it is covered under the approved budget, except with prior sanction of the competent authority.
- 64. Accounts, audit and inspection by Comptroller and Auditor General of India.-**
- (1) The accounts of the Directorate shall be maintained in such form and manner as may be prescribed by rules, and shall be subject to audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG).

(2) The CAG or any officer authorised by him in connection with the audit of accounts shall have the same rights, privileges, and authority in relation to such audit as he has in connection with audit of Government accounts.

(3) The audited accounts, together with the audit report, shall be forwarded annually to the State Government and laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.

65. Annual financial statement and audit report to State Legislature.- (1) The Directorate shall, within six months of the close of each financial year, prepare and submit to the State Government,—

(a) an Annual Financial Statement, showing receipts and expenditure;

(b) the Audited Statement of Accounts;

(c) a Performance Report linked to financial outlay.

(2) The State Government shall cause the said documents to be laid before the Legislative Assembly, preferably in the next budget session, for information and oversight.

CHAPTER XVI

OFFENCES, PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT

66. Penalty for furnishing false information or non-compliance.- (1) Any institution, officer, or individual who,—

(a) knowingly furnishes false or misleading information to the Directorate;

(b) obstructs or refuses inspection, audit, or monitoring;

(c) fails to comply with directions issued under this Act or rules thereunder, shall be liable to a penalty up to five lakh rupees, as may be imposed by the Directorate after giving due opportunity of hearing.

(2) In case of continuing default, an additional fine of twenty-five thousand rupees for every day of default may be imposed.

(3) Any penalty unpaid within sixty days shall be recoverable as arrears of land revenue under the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964.

67. Compounding of certain offences.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, the Directorate may, by order and for reasons recorded in writing, permit compounding of any offence punishable under section 66, subject to payment of prescribed compounding fees.

(2) No offence shall be compounded without the written consent of the person aggrieved, if any, and such compounding shall discharge the person from further proceedings under this Act in respect of such offence.

(3) The Directorate shall maintain a register of compounded offences, which shall be submitted annually to the State Government.

68. Power of the Directorate to impose administrative penalties.- (1) Where the Directorate is satisfied that any institution or person has committed a contravention of this Act or any rule, regulation or order made thereunder, but such contravention does not constitute an offence, the Directorate may impose an administrative penalty including,—

(a) warning or censure;

(b) temporary suspension of recognition or registration;

(c) withholding of grants or incentives;

(d) debarment from participation in official schemes or activities.

(2) Before imposing any such penalty, the affected party shall be given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

69. Procedure for adjudication and appeal.- (1) No penalty under this Chapter shall be imposed unless the person or institution concerned is served with a notice in writing, stating the nature of the alleged contravention and given not less than fifteen days to respond.

(2) The Directorate shall pass a reasoned order after considering all submissions and evidence, and such order shall be communicated to the party concerned.

(3) Any person aggrieved by such order may prefer an appeal to the Legal Education Appellate Authority within thirty days of receipt of the order.

(4) The Appellate Authority shall dispose of such appeal within ninety days and its decision shall be final and binding, subject to revision under section 51.

CHAPTER XVII

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

70. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Directorate, its officers, or any person acting under the authority of this Act or rules made thereunder, for anything which is done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of the provisions of this Act.

(2) For the purpose of this section, the expression "good faith" shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 14 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

71. Power of State Government to issue directions.- (1) The State Government may, from time to time, issue to the Directorate such general or special directions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as it may deem necessary in the public interest or for effective implementation of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, such directions may relate to,—

- (a) coordination with national regulatory bodies;
- (b) implementation of government schemes and policies;
- (c) matters concerning national security, public order or constitutional obligations.

(3) The Directorate shall be bound to comply with all such directions and shall report compliance within such time as may be specified.

72. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for,—

- (a) qualifications and method of recruitment of officers and employees of the Directorate;
- (b) financial management, preparation of budget, maintenance of accounts and audit procedures;
- (c) conduct of Common Entrance Test, fee regulation, and seat allocation mechanisms;
- (d) manner of recognition, accreditation, and periodic evaluation of law institutions;
- (e) scholarship and grant-in-aid mechanisms for students and institutions;
- (f) compounding of offences and scale of compounding fees;
- (g) any other matter which is required to be, or may be, prescribed under this Act.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the Legislative Assembly of the State while it is in session for a total period of thirty days.

73. Power to make regulations.- (1) The Directorate may, with the prior approval of the State Government, by notification, make regulations not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder, for the efficient administration of its affairs.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such regulations may provide for—

- (a) academic frameworks, credit systems, and curriculum models for law programmes;
- (b) faculty development programmes, refresher courses, and professional training standards;
- (c) functioning of Legal Research and Innovation Cells and Centres of Excellence;
- (d) establishment and operation of grievance redressal committees and appellate bodies;
- (e) conduct of peer reviews, audits, and publication of scorecards;
- (f) stakeholder engagement mechanisms and consultation protocols;
- (g) administrative procedures and codes of conduct for recognised institutions.

(3) All regulations made by the Directorate shall be published on its official website and in such manner as may be prescribed to ensure public access.

74. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the purposes of this Act as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) No such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(3) Every order made under this section shall, as soon as may be after it is made, be laid before the Legislative Assembly.

75. Repeal and savings.- (1) On and from the date of commencement of this Act, all existing executive orders, circulars, notifications or instructions relating to legal education governance and institutional regulation in the State, in so far as they are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, shall stand repealed.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done, any action taken or decision made, under the repealed provisions shall, in so far as it is not inconsistent with this Act, be deemed to have been done, taken or made under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

(3) All recognitions granted, approvals issued or institutions registered before the commencement of this Act shall continue to be valid for the period for which they were granted, subject to review under the provisions of this Act.

THE KARNATAKA ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION BILL, 2025

A Bill to institutionalise, regulate, and promote the use of technology-enabled platforms for the resolution of disputes through online mediation, arbitration, and negotiation mechanisms in the State of Karnataka and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Whereas, it is expedient to provide a comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible framework for the resolution of disputes through Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) mechanisms including mediation, arbitration, conciliation, and negotiation using digital infrastructure;

And Whereas, the conventional justice delivery system is overburdened, and the need for an effective, time-bound, and cost-efficient resolution mechanism has become an urgent imperative, particularly in the context of expanding digital connectivity and the goals of ‘Digital India’;

And Whereas, Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, which includes the right to access justice and legal remedies in an efficient and timely manner;

And Whereas, it is necessary to harness technological innovations and establish a robust institutional framework for the administration and regulation of ODR systems across Karnataka, especially for the benefit of rural and underserved communities;

BE it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PART I PRELIMINARY CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of the Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Act” means the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Act, 2025;

(b) “Authority” means the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Authority established under section 6 of this Act;

(c) “Chairperson” means the Chairperson of the Authority appointed under section 10;

(d) “Digital platform” means any technology-enabled interface which facilitates online communication, data exchange, and interaction among disputing parties and neutrals;

(e) “Dispute” includes any civil, commercial, contractual, consumer, or family matter capable of being resolved through negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or conciliation, but shall not include matters relating to criminal offences other than compoundable offences;

- (f) “Member” means a Member of the Authority appointed under section 11;
- (g) “ODR” or “Online Dispute Resolution” means the use of digital technology and communication tools, including artificial intelligence and online platforms, to facilitate dispute resolution mechanisms such as negotiation, mediation, conciliation, and arbitration;
- (h) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (i) “Regulations” means regulations made by the Authority under this Act;
- (j) “State Government” means the Government of Karnataka.

3. Declaration of public purpose and applicability.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall be deemed to be in furtherance of public purpose, to promote efficient administration of justice and public access to speedy dispute resolution.

(2) This Act shall apply to all disputes which:

- (a) are of civil nature or related to rights in personam;
- (b) are capable of being resolved by parties voluntarily through alternative dispute resolution;
- (c) may be contractually referred to ODR; or
- (d) are referred to the Authority by courts, tribunals, or consumer forums, wherever legally permissible.

4. Objectives and scope of the Act.- The objectives of this Act shall be,—

- (a) to promote the use of technology for the resolution of disputes through online mechanisms;
- (b) to establish a dedicated statutory Authority for facilitating and regulating ODR in Karnataka;
- (c) to reduce the pendency of cases before courts and tribunals by diverting eligible disputes to ODR platforms;
- (d) to ensure that such platforms are accessible, inclusive, and available to all citizens, especially in rural and remote areas;
- (e) to institutionalise and standardise the use of online mediation, arbitration, and conciliation in accordance with the principles of natural justice, data privacy, and digital security.

5. Overriding effect of the Act.- The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force in the State of Karnataka, or in any instrument having effect by virtue of any such law.

PART II

ESTABLISHMENT AND GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER II

KARNATAKA ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION AUTHORITY

6. Establishment of the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an authority to be known as the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Authority (hereinafter referred to as the “Authority”) for the purposes of administering, regulating, promoting, and facilitating Online Dispute Resolution mechanisms across the State of Karnataka.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate, having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall, by the said name, sue and be sued.

(3) The Authority shall act as the nodal institution for enabling legal, institutional, technological, and regulatory architecture to support online arbitration, mediation, conciliation, negotiation, and hybrid mechanisms, in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(4) The Authority shall be under the administrative control of the Department of Law, Government of Karnataka.

7. Incorporation and legal status.- (1) The Authority shall be deemed to be a statutory body for the purposes of Article 12 of the Constitution of India and shall be subject to the writ jurisdiction of the High Court of Karnataka.

(2) The Authority shall enjoy functional autonomy in the discharge of its duties under this Act, subject to such general superintendence and directions as may be issued by the State Government, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

(3) The Authority shall be entitled to receive grants, donations, and contributions from the State Government, Central Government, public or private institutions, or any other lawful source, subject to compliance with applicable financial and audit norms.

8. Headquarters and regional offices.- (1) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located at Bengaluru or such other place as the State Government may, by notification, determine.

(2) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, establish such number of regional, divisional, or district-level digital ODR facilitation centres, zonal coordination offices, or mobile units, as may be necessary to discharge its functions effectively across the territory of Karnataka, especially in rural and underserved areas.

(3) The Authority shall, in establishing such centres or offices, ensure digital accessibility, language inclusivity, and user-friendly interface for persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and marginalized groups.

9. Composition of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following Members, to be appointed by the State Government through a transparent and merit-based selection process,-

- (a) A Chairperson, who shall be a person of eminent standing having not less than twenty years of experience in the fields of law, technology, public administration, or judicial services;
- (b) Not more than six Members, of whom,—
 - (i) one shall be a retired Judge of the High Court or a person eligible to be so appointed;
 - (ii) one shall be an expert in alternative dispute resolution, including arbitration and mediation;
 - (iii) one shall have a background in information and communication technology, with expertise in cybersecurity or artificial intelligence;
 - (iv) one shall be a representative from civil society or academia with demonstrated contribution to access to justice or legal aid;

- (v) one shall be a financial or governance expert, preferably with experience in legal technology entrepreneurship or e-governance systems; and
 - (vi) one shall be an administrative services officer not below the rank of Secretary, Department of Law, ex officio.
- (5) Adequate representation shall be given to women and persons belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes in the composition of the Authority, subject to availability of qualified candidates.

10. Appointment, powers, and functions of the Chairperson.- (1) The Chairperson shall be appointed by the State Government on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of,—

- (a) The Chief Justice of the High Court of Karnataka or his nominee – Chair;
 - (b) The Chief Secretary to the State Government – Member;
 - (c) The Advocate General of Karnataka – Member.
- (2) The Chairperson shall,—
- (a) preside over all meetings of the Authority and oversee its policy and operational functions;
 - (b) coordinate with national and international institutions, courts, and government bodies on behalf of the Authority;
 - (c) ensure compliance with statutory obligations under this Act and rules or regulations made thereunder;
 - (d) represent the Authority in all legal proceedings and public forums unless otherwise directed.
- (3) The Chairperson shall also exercise administrative powers relating to financial approvals, appointment of consultants and technical personnel, and such other matters as may be delegated by the Authority.

11. Appointment, powers, and functions of Members.- (1) The Members of the Authority shall be appointed by the State Government on the recommendation of the Selection Committee referred to in section 10.

- (2) Each Member shall have the duty to contribute to the policymaking, regulatory oversight, and advisory functions of the Authority and shall be assigned specific subject-matter portfolios by the Chairperson.
- (3) Members shall participate in the adjudication of complaints, issuance of guidelines, accreditation of ODR platforms and professionals, and such other matters as may be delegated or assigned by the Authority.
- (4) A Member shall not participate in any matter where there is a direct or indirect conflict of interest and shall disclose such conflict at the earliest opportunity.

12. Term of office, conditions of service, and removal.- (1) The Chairperson and every Member shall hold office for a term of three years from the date of assumption of office and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term, subject to maximum age of seventy years.

- (2) The salary, allowances, and other conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed and shall not be varied to their disadvantage after appointment.

(3) The Chairperson or any Member may be removed from office by the State Government, on any of the following grounds, after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard,—

- (a) insolvency;
- (b) unsoundness of mind;
- (c) conviction for an offence involving moral turpitude;
- (d) abuse of position or power;
- (e) proven misconduct or incapacity.

(4) A reference to initiate removal proceedings may also be made by the Authority or the Selection Committee to the State Government.

13. Powers to constitute Committees and Expert Panels.- (1) The Authority may, for efficient discharge of its functions, constitute such Committees, Working Groups, or Expert Panels as may be necessary from time to time.

(2) The composition, mandate, term of reference, and functioning of such bodies shall be determined by the Authority and may include,—

- (a) Technology Advisory Committee;
- (b) Legal and Procedural Standards Committee;
- (c) Outreach and Inclusion Committee;
- (d) Ethics and Quality Assurance Panel.

(3) The Authority may co-opt individuals from the judiciary, academia, industry, bar associations, or civil society with domain expertise as members of such committees, who shall serve in an honorary or part-time capacity unless otherwise approved.

14. Secretariat of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall have a Secretariat to assist in the implementation, coordination, and administrative tasks related to the discharge of its functions.

(2) The Secretariat shall be headed by a Secretary, appointed by the State Government in consultation with the Authority, and shall be of the rank of not less than a Joint Secretary to Government.

(3) The functions of the Secretariat shall include,—

- (a) maintenance of records and registers;
- (b) coordination of meetings, consultative processes, and training sessions;
- (c) liaison with other departments, platforms, and the judiciary;
- (d) publication of annual reports and data disclosures;
- (e) financial and legal administration.

15. Officers and staff of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall be provided with such number of officers, employees, and technical experts as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions.

(2) The appointment, qualifications, pay scales, and service conditions of the officers and staff shall be such as may be prescribed or determined in consultation with the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms.

(3) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, engage consultants or outsourced technical agencies for specific purposes including cybersecurity audits, software development, or monitoring and evaluation.

CHAPTER III

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE AUTHORITY

16. General functions of the Authority.- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Authority shall perform all such functions as are necessary to promote, regulate, facilitate, and strengthen the Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) ecosystem in the State of Karnataka.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the functions of the Authority shall include,—

- (a) formulation and promotion of uniform standards, ethical practices, and procedural safeguards for ODR;
- (b) enabling innovation and adoption of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, blockchain, and machine learning in ODR processes;
- (c) creation and maintenance of a public digital repository of accredited ODR Service Providers, empanelled neutrals, and dispute resolution schemes;
- (d) promoting accessibility and inclusivity of ODR services, including through multilingual interfaces, low-bandwidth platforms, and provisions for persons with disabilities;
- (e) fostering collaboration between courts, tribunals, industry associations, and civil society to mainstream ODR;
- (f) conducting research, publishing best practices, and facilitating academic collaborations;
- (g) undertaking any other activity as may be incidental or conducive to the attainment of the objectives of this Act.

17. Powers to regulate, supervise, and accredit ODR Service Providers.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to regulate and supervise the functioning of all ODR Service Providers operating within the territorial jurisdiction of Karnataka.

(2) The Authority shall prescribe criteria, norms, and procedures for the accreditation and de-accreditation of ODR Service Providers and may maintain a public register of all such accredited entities.

(3) The Authority may inspect, audit, or require any information from an ODR Service Provider to verify compliance with this Act, the rules, and any applicable regulations.

(4) The Authority may issue show-cause notices, seek rectification, and initiate proceedings for suspension, penalty, or revocation of accreditation in accordance with Chapter IV.

18. Powers to issue binding guidelines, codes, and protocols.- (1) The Authority may, from time to time, issue binding guidelines, codes of conduct, protocols, advisories, and operating procedures, consistent with the objectives of this Act, which shall be applicable to all stakeholders including,—

- (a) ODR Service Providers;
 - (b) neutrals (mediators, arbitrators, conciliators);
 - (c) parties participating in online dispute resolution;
 - (d) institutions referring disputes to ODR.
- (2) Such guidelines or codes may relate to,—
- (a) digital evidence handling and verification standards;
 - (b) procedural fairness and due process;

- (c) language and accessibility requirements;
 - (d) training and certification of neutrals;
 - (e) data protection, cybersecurity, and platform integrity.
- (3) Every such code or guideline issued shall be published on the official website of the Authority and in the Official Gazette and shall have the force of law.

19. Powers to ensure interoperability and standardization of ODR platforms.- (1) The Authority shall specify technical standards, protocols, and norms to ensure interoperability, data security, privacy, and integrity across all ODR platforms functioning within the State.

(2) The Authority may mandate the adoption of Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), encryption protocols, identity verification mechanisms, and other common digital infrastructure by ODR Service Providers.

(3) The Authority may, in consultation with national agencies such as the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, recommend or adopt open standards and public digital infrastructure for integration with eCourts, eLokAdalats, and Digital India platforms.

20. Powers to facilitate integration with courts, tribunals, and regulatory bodies.- (1)

The Authority shall take proactive steps to integrate ODR systems with,—

- (a) the Karnataka judiciary including District Courts, Family Courts, Commercial Courts, and Lok Adalats;
 - (b) regulatory bodies such as the Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA), State Consumer Commissions, and Labour Commissioners;
 - (c) police, municipal bodies, and public grievance redressal cells of Government departments.
- (2) Such integration may include,—
- (a) referring eligible cases to ODR platforms through structured referral mechanisms;
 - (b) maintaining e-links with case management systems of courts and tribunals;
 - (c) enabling judicial acceptance and enforcement of ODR outcomes as per the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 or the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.

21. Powers to promote public awareness and capacity building in ODR.- (1) The Authority shall undertake extensive public awareness campaigns across print, electronic, and digital media to promote the understanding and adoption of ODR, particularly in rural and marginalized communities.

- (2) The Authority shall organise training programmes, workshops, and continuing legal education modules for,—
- (a) judicial officers;
 - (b) legal practitioners;
 - (c) accredited neutrals;
 - (d) technology developers and platform managers.
- (3) The Authority may collaborate with educational institutions, bar associations, law schools, and non-governmental organisations to design curriculum and certification courses on ODR.
- (4) The Authority shall promote multilingual ODR literacy through vernacular content, digital literacy drives, and inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities.

PART III
ONLINE DISPUTE RESOLUTION ECOSYSTEM
CHAPTER IV

ACCREDITATION AND REGULATION OF ODR SERVICE PROVIDERS

22. Eligibility criteria and registration of ODR Service Providers.- (1) No person, organisation, or entity shall operate as an Online Dispute Resolution Service Provider within the State of Karnataka without obtaining prior registration and accreditation from the Authority.

(2) The eligibility criteria for registration shall include,—

- (a) technical capacity to host secure and accessible digital platforms;
- (b) availability of qualified and trained neutrals;
- (c) adherence to privacy, data protection, and cybersecurity norms;
- (d) legal capacity to enter into enforceable contracts and handle proceedings;
- (e) any other criteria as may be prescribed.

(3) The Authority shall maintain an online public register of accredited ODR Service Providers, including their contact information, area of specialisation, language support, and compliance status.

23. Code of conduct for ODR Service Providers.- (1) Every accredited ODR Service Provider shall adhere to a Code of Conduct as may be specified by the Authority, which shall cover,—

- (a) integrity, fairness, and impartiality in all proceedings;
- (b) transparency in fees, terms, and resolution processes;
- (c) prohibition of deceptive marketing or misrepresentation;
- (d) proper grievance redressal mechanisms for parties.

(2) The Code of Conduct shall be binding and any violation thereof shall attract penalties as specified under this Act.

24. Obligations regarding impartiality, neutrality and confidentiality.- (1) All ODR Service Providers shall ensure that their platforms and empanelled neutrals maintain impartiality and neutrality at every stage of dispute resolution.

(2) Confidentiality of all proceedings, records, submissions, and communications shall be strictly maintained, unless otherwise mandated by law or with the written consent of all parties.

(3) The Authority shall prescribe protocols for data anonymisation, encryption, and secure storage to enforce confidentiality obligations.

25. Mechanisms for conflict of interest disclosures.- (1) Every neutral empanelled or engaged by an ODR Service Provider shall disclose any existing, potential, or perceived conflict of interest to the parties and the platform, at the earliest opportunity.

(2) The ODR Service Provider shall provide a mechanism for replacement or recusal of a neutral in the event of a conflict.

(3) Failure to disclose conflicts or suppress material facts shall render the proceedings liable to be set aside and may invite penal action under this Act.

26. Annual compliance reporting by ODR Service Providers.- (1) Every registered ODR Service Provider shall submit to the Authority, annually, a compliance report in such form and manner as may be prescribed, containing,—

- (a) volume and nature of cases handled;
- (b) disposal rates and average resolution time;
- (c) list of empanelled neutrals and their qualifications;
- (d) grievance redressal statistics;
- (e) security audits and data protection measures.

(2) The Authority may inspect such records and require clarification on any matter in the compliance report.

27. Suspension and revocation of accreditation.- (1) The Authority may, after affording a reasonable opportunity of being heard, suspend or revoke the accreditation of an ODR Service Provider on any of the following grounds,—

- (a) violation of any provision of this Act, rules, or code of conduct;
- (b) submission of false or misleading information during registration or compliance;
- (c) persistent complaints from users regarding misconduct, bias, or inefficiency;
- (d) failure to maintain technical, legal, or ethical standards prescribed by the Authority.

(2) An appeal against the order of suspension or revocation shall lie before the Appellate Authority as may be notified by the State Government.

28. Penalties for non-compliance and malpractice.- (1) Any ODR Service Provider who—

- (a) provides services without registration;
- (b) violates confidentiality or data protection standards;
- (c) engages in fraud, manipulation, or misrepresentation;

shall be liable to a monetary penalty which may extend to five lakh rupees for the first contravention and up to ten lakh rupees for every subsequent contravention.

(2) In addition to the penalty, the Authority may order suspension, cancellation, or blacklisting of such Service Provider, and may also initiate prosecution under applicable laws.

(3) The imposition of penalty under this Act shall not preclude action under the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, or any other law for the time being in force.

CHAPTER V

ODR NEUTRALS AND PROFESSIONALS

29. Accreditation of mediators, arbitrators, conciliators, and experts.- (1) No person shall act as a neutral in any online dispute resolution proceeding facilitated under this Act unless he or she is duly accredited as a mediator, arbitrator, conciliator, or expert by the Authority or any institution authorised by the Authority for such purpose.

(2) The Authority shall lay down the minimum eligibility criteria for accreditation, which may include,—

- (a) educational qualifications in law, social sciences, technology, or allied fields;
- (a) prior experience in alternative dispute resolution or domain expertise;
- (b) training from a recognised institution in ODR or relevant ADR processes;
- (c) good moral character and absence of any criminal conviction involving moral turpitude.

(3) The accreditation shall be valid for a period of five years and may be renewed subject to compliance with prescribed conditions and demonstrated professional integrity.

(4) The Authority shall maintain a public digital registry of all accredited neutrals along with their qualifications, specialisations, languages, and experience.

30. Code of ethics and professional standards for ODR Neutrals.- (1) The Authority shall, by regulation, prescribe a binding Code of Ethics for all accredited neutrals which shall include,—

- (a) a duty to act with fairness, impartiality, integrity, and independence;
- (b) a duty to maintain confidentiality and avoid disclosure of any matter discussed or disclosed during proceedings, except as required by law;
- (c) prohibition on conflict of interest, ex parte communication, or undue influence;
- (d) a duty to disclose any prior connection or familiarity with the parties or subject matter;
- (e) professional conduct and decorum during ODR proceedings.

(2) A breach of the Code of Ethics shall invite disciplinary action including suspension, de-accreditation, and monetary penalties under this Act.

31. Training, certification, and continuing education programs.- (1) The Authority shall develop and mandate training, certification, and continuing education programmes for all categories of ODR neutrals either directly or through recognised institutions.

(2) The training modules shall include,—

- (a) principles and practices of mediation, arbitration, and conciliation;
- (b) procedural rules and legal framework governing ODR;
- (c) technology platforms, cybersecurity awareness, and digital literacy;
- (d) ethics, neutrality, and online behavioural standards.

(3) All accredited neutrals shall undergo periodic refresher courses, as may be prescribed by the Authority, and submit proof of completion for renewal of accreditation.

(4) The Authority shall promote academic collaboration with law schools, bar councils, training institutes, and judiciary training academies for the advancement of ODR capacity building.

32. Disciplinary mechanisms for misconduct by ODR Neutrals.- (1) The Authority shall constitute a Disciplinary Committee for ODR Neutrals comprising of,—

- (a) a retired judge of the High Court or a former judicial officer of equivalent rank — Chairperson;
- (b) a senior member of the Bar or accredited mediator — Member;
- (c) an academician or domain expert in legal ethics or dispute resolution — Member.

(2) The Committee shall inquire into complaints made by parties, ODR platforms, or suo motu by the Authority, against any neutral for misconduct, breach of professional duties, or incompetence.

(3) Upon such inquiry, the Committee may recommend one or more of the following actions

- (a) warning or censure;
- (b) temporary suspension of accreditation;
- (c) permanent de-accreditation;
- (d) recommendation for prosecution under relevant laws.

(4) The proceedings of the Committee shall be conducted in accordance with the principles of natural justice, and the affected neutral shall be given an opportunity of being heard.

33. Empanelment and de-empanelment procedures.- (1) Every ODR Service Provider shall empanel neutrals from the list of accredited professionals registered with the Authority.

(2) The empanelment shall be based on fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory criteria as may be prescribed by the Authority, ensuring diversity in terms of gender, region, language, and expertise.

(3) The empanelment shall specify,—

- (a) the category of disputes the neutral is qualified to handle;
- (b) language and jurisdictional competencies;
- (c) fee structures, if any.

(4) A neutral may be de-empanelled by the ODR Service Provider for proven inefficiency, breach of code, or violation of any provision of this Act, with due notice to the Authority and the concerned neutral.

CHAPTER VI

ODR PLATFORMS AND TECHNOLOGICAL STANDARDS

34. Development of State ODR Portal.- (1) The Authority shall develop, operate, and maintain a dedicated State Online Dispute Resolution Portal (hereinafter referred to as the “ODR Portal”) to serve as the unified digital infrastructure for dispute resolution services in Karnataka.

(2) The ODR Portal shall,—

- (a) provide a secure interface for registration, case management, and communication among parties and neutrals;
- (b) allow integration with government departments, courts, and authorised private ODR platforms;
- (c) offer multilingual, mobile-friendly, and inclusive access;
- (d) provide dashboards, analytics, and user-feedback systems for monitoring and transparency.

(3) The ODR Portal shall operate in compliance with the Information Technology Act, 2000, and shall be audited for security and data compliance on an annual basis.

35. Interoperability standards for private ODR platforms.- (1) The Authority shall prescribe minimum interoperability standards for all private ODR platforms seeking registration or integration with the State ODR Portal.

(2) Such standards shall cover,—

- (a) uniform APIs, interface protocols, and metadata formats;
- (b) single sign-on and identity authentication frameworks;
- (c) compatibility with government digital services such as DigiLocker, Aadhaar, and e-Courts.

(3) The Authority may publish a list of certified platforms that are compliant with these standards and allow their integration on the Portal on a plug-and-play basis.

36. Data protection, privacy, and cybersecurity obligations.- (1) All ODR platforms and Service Providers shall comply with the applicable provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the rules made thereunder, including the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011.

- (2) Every ODR platform shall implement,—
- (a) end-to-end encryption;
 - (b) role-based access controls;
 - (c) audit trails and access logs;
 - (d) incident response protocols for data breaches.
- (3) The Authority may prescribe additional measures consistent with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, once notified.

37. Use of AI, machine learning, and emerging technologies in ODR.- (1) The Authority shall encourage the use of artificial intelligence (AI), natural language processing, and machine learning tools in ODR for purposes including—

- (a) dispute triaging and risk assessment;
 - (b) matching of cases to appropriate neutrals;
 - (c) automated negotiation and legal analytics.
- (2) Any use of AI tools shall be governed by ethical principles ensuring—
- (a) transparency and explainability;
 - (b) non-discrimination and accountability;
 - (c) absence of bias and human oversight.
- (3) The Authority shall publish guidelines on responsible AI deployment, and may require ODR platforms to undergo AI ethics audits.

38. Digital evidence admissibility and authentication norms.- (1) All digital evidence presented before an ODR platform shall be admissible in accordance with sections 65A and 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

- (2) The Authority shall prescribe protocols for—
- (a) authentication, time-stamping, and chain of custody of digital records;
 - (b) cross-platform and cloud-based evidence validation;
 - (c) voice, video, and electronic record verification.
- (3) No ODR award, settlement, or report shall be invalid solely on the ground of electronic evidence format, provided it complies with prescribed standards.

39. Accessibility standards for differently-abled and marginalized groups.- (1) All ODR platforms shall ensure compliance with accessibility standards prescribed under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, and related central guidelines.

- (2) Such standards shall include,—
- (a) screen-reader compatibility;
 - (b) sign-language enabled video proceedings;
 - (c) text-to-speech and language translation tools;
 - (d) rural offline access kiosks, where required.
- (3) The Authority shall promote the creation of inclusive user manuals, training materials, and voice-based assistance to ensure barrier-free access to justice.

40. Compliance with Information Technology Act, 2000 and allied laws.- (1) All ODR Service Providers, platforms, neutrals, and stakeholders operating under this Act shall ensure compliance with the Information Technology Act, 2000, and the relevant subordinate legislation made thereunder.

- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the ODR ecosystem shall be subject to compliance with,—

- (a) The Indian Contract Act, 1872;
 - (b) The Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996;
 - (c) The Indian Evidence Act, 1872;
 - (d) The Personal Data Protection laws as applicable;
 - (e) The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 (where applicable).
- (3) In case of any inconsistency, the provisions of this Act shall prevail, to the extent of such inconsistency, unless otherwise directed by a competent court.

PART IV

INSTITUTIONAL ODR INTEGRATION

CHAPTER VII

INTEGRATION WITH JUDICIAL AND QUASI-JUDICIAL BODIES

- 41. Framework for integration of ODR with courts and tribunals.-** (1) The Authority shall, in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka and the Department of Law, develop a legally enforceable framework to facilitate structured integration of Online Dispute Resolution systems with courts and tribunals operating within the State.
- (2) The integration framework shall provide for,—
- (a) technical interoperability between the e-Courts system and ODR platforms;
 - (b) standard protocols for the referral of pending and pre-litigation cases to ODR;
 - (c) legal recognition of ODR awards, settlements, and proceedings;
 - (d) training and sensitisation of judicial officers regarding ODR tools and procedures.
- (6) The Authority shall facilitate digital infrastructure, including secure internet facilities, e-signature capabilities, and virtual courtrooms to support such integration.
- 42. E-filing and case management through ODR platforms.-** (1) All registered ODR platforms shall provide seamless e-filing, document upload, case management, and communication interfaces for use by litigants, counsels, neutrals, and court staff.
- (2) The Authority shall prescribe standards for—
- (a) the format and admissibility of e-filed pleadings and annexures;
 - (b) timelines for e-service and case progression;
 - (c) secure communication and scheduling of virtual hearings.
- (3) Courts and tribunals may, by notification or judicial order, permit litigants to opt for ODR-based case management, mediation, or adjudication during the pendency of proceedings.
- 43. Mandatory pre-litigation ODR in specified cases.-** (1) The State Government may, on the recommendation of the Authority and the High Court, by notification, mandate ODR as a pre-litigation process in specified classes of disputes including,—
- (a) commercial disputes of a specified value;
 - (b) contractual and service-related claims involving public authorities;
 - (c) consumer complaints of a non-criminal nature;
 - (d) disputes under tenancy and urban property governance.
- (2) No suit or proceeding in such specified matters shall be entertained by a court unless the plaintiff or petitioner furnishes a certificate of attempted ODR issued by an accredited ODR Service Provider.

(3) The Authority shall publish the list of disputes to which such mandatory pre-litigation ODR shall apply and may revise such list periodically.

44. Voluntary referral of cases to ODR by courts and authorities.- (1) Any civil court, tribunal, or quasi-judicial authority may, with the consent of the parties and having regard to the nature of the dispute, refer the matter at any stage of the proceedings to an ODR platform for resolution by way of mediation, arbitration, or conciliation.

(2) Upon referral, the court may fix timelines for conclusion of the ODR process and submission of outcome reports, consistent with the principles of natural justice.

(3) The referral order shall clearly identify the ODR Service Provider or platform to which the case is assigned, and parties shall be bound to participate in good faith.

(4) Where the ODR process results in a settlement or award, such outcome may, on application, be recorded and enforced by the referring court as a decree under the Civil Procedure Code, 1908.

45. Recognition and enforcement of ODR outcomes (awards, settlements).- (1) All outcomes arising from ODR proceedings, including arbitral awards, mediated settlements, and conciliatory agreements, shall have legal recognition and enforceability in accordance with the provisions of,—

- (a) the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996;
- (b) the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908;
- (c) any other applicable enactment.

(2) An ODR outcome may be filed before a competent court for enforcement along with an e-certificate issued by the platform authenticating the conduct and conclusion of the process.

(3) Digital signatures or verifiable e-records of the neutral and the parties shall constitute valid execution of the outcome under applicable law.

46. Appeals and challenges against ODR outcomes.- (1) Any challenge to an arbitral award, mediated settlement, or conciliatory agreement rendered through an accredited ODR platform shall lie before the jurisdictionally competent court as per the relevant substantive law.

(2) Grounds for challenge may include,—

- (a) fraud, coercion, or undue influence;
- (b) denial of opportunity to present one's case;
- (c) conflict of interest or bias on part of the neutral;
- (d) violation of statutory or procedural requirements.

(3) No appeal or revision shall lie solely on the ground that the process was conducted in digital format, if the procedural safeguards were duly followed.

47. Collaboration with National Legal Services Authority and Karnataka State Legal Services Authority.- (1) The Authority shall collaborate with the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA) to promote access to ODR for eligible beneficiaries including,—

- (a) economically weaker sections;
- (b) women, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities;
- (c) Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and backward classes.

- (2) The Authority shall integrate ODR services into Lok Adalats, legal aid clinics, and legal literacy programmes administered by KSLSA.
- (3) Accredited ODR platforms shall be empanelled by KSLSA to handle legal aid cases, and neutrals shall be paid honoraria as per State Legal Services Authority norms.

CHAPTER VIII

SECTORAL AND GOVERNMENT DISPUTES

48. Sector-specific ODR schemes (consumer, MSMEs, e-commerce, financial services).-

- (1) The Authority shall, in consultation with relevant sectoral regulators, notify special schemes for ODR in key sectors including,—
- (a) consumer disputes under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019;
 - (b) micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) payment disputes;
 - (c) e-commerce transactions;
 - (d) banking and financial service complaints.
- (2) Sector-specific schemes may include expedited timelines, simplified procedures, and specialised neutrals or panels.
- (3) The Authority may issue sectoral codes and conduct capacity-building workshops in collaboration with the concerned sector bodies and ombudsmen.

49. ODR mechanisms for public grievances and citizen services.- (1) The Authority shall assist the State Government in designing and implementing ODR-enabled mechanisms for resolution of public grievances arising from citizen services including,—

- (a) utility billing disputes;
 - (b) municipal services;
 - (c) land and revenue records;
 - (d) ration, health, and pension delivery issues.
- (2) Every department shall designate an ODR Liaison Officer to interface with the Authority for technology adoption and process integration.
- (3) The Authority may create dedicated grievance redressal dashboards and mobile platforms for fast-track resolution through digital conciliation or mediation.

50. Mandatory ODR in government contracts and procurement disputes.- (1) All contracts, tenders, and procurement agreements entered into by any department, public sector undertaking, or local authority under the State Government shall include a mandatory clause for resolution of disputes through ODR.

- (2) The Government of Karnataka shall notify a model ODR clause to be incorporated in all public procurement and service agreements.
- (3) Disputes referred under such clauses shall be processed by an accredited ODR platform approved by the Authority, unless the agreement specifies a particular platform.

51. Facilitation of Lok Adalat and Gram Nyayalaya integration with ODR.- (1) The Authority shall take necessary steps to digitise and support the functioning of Lok Adalats and Gram Nyayalayas through virtual platforms, video conferencing tools, and case management systems.

- (2) Integration shall include,—
- (a) digital case intake and e-service of notice;
 - (b) remote participation by parties and neutrals;

- (c) digital settlement records, e-signatures, and transmission to courts.
 - (3) The Karnataka State Legal Services Authority shall work in tandem with the Authority to enable training and infrastructure upgrades for Lok Adalat officials and Gram Nyayalayas.
- 52. ODR for tenancy, property, and urban governance disputes.-** (1) The State Government may notify certain categories of tenancy, rent control, property, building by-laws, or municipal regulation disputes to be mandatorily or preferentially resolved through ODR.
- (2) The Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority, urban local bodies, and revenue authorities shall facilitate the referral of such disputes to accredited ODR platforms.
 - (3) ODR platforms may host specialised mediation cells for landlord-tenant, encroachment, and property boundary disputes in urban and peri-urban areas.

PART V

FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER IX

FINANCE, ACCOUNTS, AND AUDIT

- 53. Grants by State Government.-** (1) The State Government shall, after due appropriation made by the State Legislature by law in this behalf, make to the Authority such initial and recurring grants as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions under this Act.
- (2) The amount of such grants shall be determined with regard to,—
 - (a) the expenditure on establishment and operational costs of the Authority;
 - (b) development and maintenance of ODR infrastructure and platforms;
 - (c) research, awareness, and capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the Authority;
 - (d) subsidies for ODR services provided to disadvantaged sections of society.
 - (7) The Authority may submit to the State Government, annually or at such intervals as may be prescribed, a statement of estimated receipts and expenditure for the ensuing financial year.
- 54. Establishment of Karnataka ODR Development Fund.-** (1) There shall be established a fund to be called the Karnataka Online Dispute Resolution Development *Fund* (hereinafter referred to as “the Fund”) which shall be maintained and administered by the Authority.
- (2) The Fund shall consist of,—
 - (a) all grants and loans made by the State Government;
 - (b) all fees, charges, penalties, and other sums received under this Act;
 - (c) donations, contributions, or assistance from national and international institutions, public sector undertakings, or private entities, subject to approval of the State Government;
 - (d) income from investments and proceeds of any property or asset acquired by the Authority.
 - (3) The Fund shall be utilised for the following purposes, namely—
 - (a) development, expansion, and upkeep of ODR platforms and digital tools;
 - (b) promotion of research, innovation, and training in ODR;
 - (c) provision of legal aid and subsidised access to ODR services;
 - (d) administrative and technical expenses of the Authority.

(4) The Fund shall be operated in such manner and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

55. Levy of fees, charges, and penalties.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to levy reasonable fees and charges for,—

- (a) registration and accreditation of ODR Service Providers and Neutrals;
- (b) use of the State ODR Portal and digital infrastructure;
- (c) training, certification, or educational programmes conducted by or on behalf of the Authority.

(2) The Authority may also impose penalties for non-compliance, misconduct, or breaches of this Act or regulations made thereunder, in accordance with prescribed procedures.

(3) All fees, charges, and penalties collected under this section shall be credited to the Karnataka ODR Development Fund.

(4) The Authority shall ensure that fee structures are transparent, non-exploitative, and subject to periodic review.

56. Budget preparation and financial management.- (1) The Authority shall prepare, in such form and at such time in each financial year as may be prescribed, a budget showing the estimated receipts and expenditure for the next financial year.

(2) The budget shall clearly specify proposed allocations for,—

- (a) institutional expenses;
- (b) technological infrastructure;
- (c) outreach and education programmes;
- (d) training, research, and innovation initiatives.

(3) The budget shall be submitted to the State Government for approval, and the Authority shall not incur any expenditure beyond the approved estimates without prior sanction.

(4) The Authority shall adopt such principles of financial prudence, transparency, and accountability in financial management as may be specified by the Government or Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

57. Maintenance of accounts and audits.- (1) The Authority shall maintain proper accounts and other relevant records and prepare an annual statement of accounts in such form and manner as may be prescribed by the State Government, in consultation with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

(2) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or by any person appointed by him in this behalf.

(3) The audit report shall be furnished to the Authority and the State Government and shall include observations, comments, and recommendations for corrective measures.

(4) The Authority shall, within three months from the receipt of the audit report, take appropriate action to remedy the deficiencies, if any, and submit a compliance report to the State Government.

58. Annual report to be laid before State Legislature.- (1) The Authority shall, as soon as may be after the end of each financial year, prepare and submit to the State Government an annual report giving a full account of its activities during the preceding year.

(2) The report shall, inter alia, include,—

- (a) an overview of the development and implementation of ODR mechanisms;
- (b) statistical data on disputes resolved, referral sources, and success rates;

- (c) financial statements and audit findings;
 - (d) progress on awareness, training, and innovation objectives;
 - (e) recommendations for policy or legislative improvements.
- (3) The State Government shall cause a copy of the report to be laid before the each house of the state legislative , as soon as may be, after its receipt.

PART VI

PROMOTION, INNOVATION, AND CAPACITY BUILDING

CHAPTER X

PROMOTION OF ODR AWARENESS AND LITERACY

59. ODR awareness campaigns and public outreach.- (1) The Authority shall undertake extensive public awareness campaigns, using both traditional and digital media, to disseminate knowledge about the availability, benefits, and procedures of Online Dispute Resolution.

- (2) Such campaigns shall specifically target,—
- (a) rural and semi-urban populations;
 - (b) women, senior citizens, youth, and marginalised communities;
 - (c) small businesses, traders, and self-employed professionals.
- (3) The campaigns may include,—
- (a) radio and television advertisements;
 - (b) social media and mobile-based educational content;
 - (c) street plays, workshops, and community outreach events.
- (4) The Authority may collaborate with Government departments, Panchayati Raj institutions, civil society organisations, and local bodies for on-ground execution of such programmes.

60. Partnerships with academic institutions and legal bodies.- (1) The Authority shall collaborate with universities, law schools, legal aid clinics, and academic research bodies to further the cause of ODR development and legal innovation.

- (2) The partnerships may include,—
- (a) joint research projects on legal tech and dispute resolution;
 - (b) ODR awareness drives and field studies;
 - (c) exchange programmes with faculty, students, and professionals.
- (3) The Authority may also partner with Bar Councils, Bar Associations, and judicial academies for sensitisation and continuing education of legal professionals.

61. Development of ODR curriculum in law schools and training institutes.- (1) The Authority shall, in consultation with the Karnataka State Higher Education Council and the Bar Council of India, recommend the inclusion of ODR-related content in the curricula of law schools, universities, and judicial training institutes.

- (2) The curriculum may cover,—
- (a) fundamentals of dispute resolution and digital justice;
 - (b) procedural aspects of ODR systems;
 - (c) practical training in ODR tools, ethics, and case simulations.

(3) The Authority shall accredit such courses and provide scholarships or incentives to students undertaking ODR certification.

62. Collaboration with industry bodies, chambers of commerce.- (1) The Authority shall establish strategic partnerships with industry associations, chambers of commerce, trade federations, and sectoral regulators to mainstream ODR in business-to-business and business-to-consumer relationships.

(2) The Authority shall,—

- (a) promote the adoption of model ODR clauses in commercial contracts;
- (b) develop customised ODR mechanisms for dispute resolution in banking, fintech, logistics, real estate, and e-commerce sectors;
- (c) host joint conclaves, roundtables, and capacity-building workshops for industry stakeholders.

(3) Such partnerships shall aim to institutionalise ODR as an industry best practice and strengthen Karnataka's position as a hub of tech-enabled justice.

CHAPTER XI

INNOVATION AND EMERGING AREAS

63. Research and development in technology-enabled dispute resolution.-(1) The Authority shall actively promote research and development in the fields of artificial intelligence, machine learning, blockchain, and emerging technologies for their application in Online Dispute Resolution.

(2) The Authority shall,—

- (a) fund or co-fund research proposals submitted by academic institutions, legal think tanks, or independent researchers;
- (b) establish research fellowships and grants for the study of legal technology, digital dispute resolution ethics, and access to justice innovation;
- (c) encourage empirical, comparative, and interdisciplinary studies on ODR impact.

(3) The Authority shall publish and disseminate research findings to guide policy, platform design, and capacity-building strategies.

64. Incubation support for ODR start-ups and innovators.- (1) The Authority shall establish an ODR Innovation and Incubation Programme for supporting early-stage start-ups, legal-tech innovators, and digital justice entrepreneurs.

(2) The incubation support may include,—

- (a) seed funding and access to venture grants;
- (b) mentorship from legal and technological experts;
- (c) access to sandbox environments for pilot testing;
- (d) regulatory guidance for compliance with this Act and allied laws.

(3) The Authority may enter into memoranda of understanding with incubators, accelerators, industry associations, and academic centres of excellence to implement this programme.

65. Sandboxes and pilot programs for new ODR models.- (1) The Authority may establish regulatory sandboxes for testing innovative ODR models, tools, or business approaches on a limited scale, in a controlled environment.

(2) A sandbox participant shall be permitted temporary relaxation from certain regulatory requirements, subject to—

- (a) submission of a sandbox proposal;
 - (b) adherence to specified safeguards to protect users;
 - (c) submission of periodic monitoring reports.
- (3) The Authority may also conduct sector-specific pilot programmes to assess feasibility and scalability of emerging ODR practices before formal adoption.
- 66. International collaborations and cross-border ODR mechanisms.-** (1) The Authority shall promote international cooperation in the field of Online Dispute Resolution through bilateral and multilateral engagements, including with,—
- (a) foreign dispute resolution institutions;
 - (b) United Nations bodies and development agencies;
 - (c) cross-border e-commerce platforms and financial regulators.
- (2) Such collaborations may relate to,—
- (a) harmonisation of procedural standards;
 - (b) enforcement of cross-border ODR outcomes;
 - (c) joint training, capacity building, and data sharing.
- (3) The Authority shall also explore participation in international digital dispute resolution networks and contribute to the development of transnational ODR frameworks.
- 67. Support for multilingual and vernacular ODR services.-** (1) The Authority shall take measures to ensure that ODR platforms and processes are accessible in Kannada and other regional languages prevalent in Karnataka.
- (2) For this purpose, the Authority may,—
- (a) mandate language localisation standards for accredited ODR Service Providers;
 - (b) provide translation and interpretation support, including AI-based language tools;
 - (c) empanel vernacular neutrals and offer training in multilingual dispute resolution.
- (3) The Authority shall prioritise inclusion of linguistic minorities, rural populations, and digitally underserved groups through these vernacular enablements.

PART VII

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

CHAPTER XII

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE MECHANISMS

- 68. Annual performance indicators and scorecards.-** (1) The Authority shall prescribe performance indicators and scorecard templates for evaluating the effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity of all registered ODR Service Providers and affiliated platforms.
- (2) Such indicators shall include,—
- (a) number and type of cases resolved;
 - (b) average resolution time and success rates;
 - (c) user satisfaction ratings;
 - (d) compliance with ethical and procedural norms.
- (3) The Authority shall publish an annual *ODR Performance Report* ranking service providers, identifying best practices, and flagging areas for improvement.
- 69. Self-assessment and external audits of ODR Service Providers.-** (1) Every registered ODR Service Provider shall submit an annual self-assessment report in such form and manner as may be prescribed by the Authority.

(2) The Authority may appoint independent third-party evaluators to conduct external audits of ODR platforms, with specific focus on,—

- (a) data protection and cybersecurity practices;
- (b) procedural fairness and transparency;
- (c) technological adequacy and compliance with interoperability norms.

(3) The Authority may issue improvement notices, warnings, or initiate suspension proceedings on the basis of such audit reports.

70. User feedback and satisfaction measurement.- (1) All ODR platforms shall establish mechanisms to collect structured and anonymised feedback from users after completion of dispute resolution processes.

(2) The Authority shall develop a *Standardised ODR Satisfaction Index* incorporating factors such as,—

- (a) ease of access;
- (b) neutrality and empathy of the mediator/arbitrator;
- (c) procedural clarity and digital interface quality;
- (d) satisfaction with the final outcome.

(3) The cumulative feedback scores shall form part of the public scorecards under section 68 and shall be used to guide accreditation renewal.

71. Social impact assessment of ODR adoption.- (1) The Authority shall conduct periodic social impact assessments to evaluate the outcomes of ODR mechanisms on access to justice, particularly for underprivileged, rural, and marginalised groups.

(2) Such assessments shall analyse,—

- (a) inclusivity in participation across gender, region, and socio-economic strata;
- (b) affordability and cost-effectiveness of the ODR process;
- (c) systemic efficiency gains for courts and tribunals.

(3) The findings shall be shared with policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders, and shall inform revisions to strategy, legislation, and outreach programmes.

72. Publication of annual reports and white papers.- (1) The Authority shall, by the end of each calendar year, publish an Annual Report containing,—

- (a) a summary of ODR activities undertaken during the year;
- (b) detailed performance data from service providers and stakeholders;
- (c) insights from research, innovation pilots, and grievance trends;
- (d) recommendations for legal and policy reform.

(2) The Authority may also publish thematic white papers on emerging trends in ODR, international practices, and regulatory evolution.

(3) All reports and white papers shall be made available in the public domain, both in digital and print formats, and may be submitted to the State Legislature or tabled before relevant Standing Committees, as required.

CHAPTER XIII

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL FRAMEWORK

73. Establishment of Grievance Redressal Cell in the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall establish a Grievance Redressal Cell for the purpose of receiving, processing, and resolving complaints and grievances arising out of the functioning of ODR Service Providers, registered neutrals, users, or stakeholders under this Act.

(2) The Grievance Redressal Cell shall consist of such officers, experts, and support staff as may be appointed or designated by the Authority and shall function in accordance with the regulations made under this Act.

(3) The Cell shall maintain a digital complaint tracking system that ensures transparency, traceability, and timely resolution of all grievances.

(4) The Cell shall endeavour to resolve all complaints within a period not exceeding thirty days from the date of receipt, except where a longer period is necessary in view of the complexity of the matter, which shall be recorded in writing.

74. User complaint mechanisms against ODR Service Providers.- (1) Every ODR Service Provider accredited under this Act shall establish a dedicated User Complaint Desk or mechanism to receive and address user grievances arising during or after the ODR process.

(2) Such mechanisms shall comply with standards prescribed by the Authority and shall include,—

- (a) a nodal grievance officer designated for resolution;
- (b) time-bound resolution protocols;
- (c) escalation procedures in case of unsatisfactory resolution.

(3) If a user remains dissatisfied with the outcome or conduct of the Service Provider's grievance redressal process, they may escalate the matter to the Authority's Grievance Redressal Cell under section 73.

(4) Repeated or systemic failure by a Service Provider to maintain an effective grievance redressal system shall be grounds for penalty or suspension of accreditation.

75. Right to appeal orders of the Authority.- (1) Any person aggrieved by a decision, order, or direction issued by the Authority under this Act may prefer an appeal to the Appellate Authority designated by the State Government by notification.

(2) Such appeal shall be filed within sixty days from the date of receipt of the impugned order:

Provided that the Appellate Authority may entertain an appeal after the expiry of the said period if it is satisfied that the appellant was prevented by sufficient cause from filing the appeal in time.

(3) The Appellate Authority shall, after giving the parties an opportunity to be heard, dispose of the appeal by a reasoned order and may confirm, modify, or set aside the order of the Authority.

(4) The decision of the Appellate Authority shall be final and binding, subject to judicial review by a court of competent jurisdiction.

76. Stakeholder consultative forums and advisory councils.- (1) The Authority shall, from time to time, constitute stakeholder consultative forums and advisory councils comprising representatives of,—

- (a) ODR Service Providers and platforms;

- (b) legal professionals, law schools, and judges;
 - (c) industry and trade associations;
 - (d) civil society organisations and digital rights advocates;
 - (e) consumer groups and marginalized communities.
- (2) The functions of such forums shall include,—
- (a) deliberation on emerging trends and challenges in ODR;
 - (b) submission of recommendations for reforms and innovation;
 - (c) feedback on the performance of the Authority and Service Providers.
- (3) The Authority shall conduct at least one annual stakeholder dialogue and publish a summary of inputs and action taken reports on its official portal.

PART VIII

OFFENCES, PENALTIES, AND ENFORCEMENT

CHAPTER XIV

OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

77. Penalty for unauthorized operation of ODR services.- (1) No person or entity shall operate, offer, or advertise Online Dispute Resolution services to the public within the State of Karnataka unless duly accredited under the provisions of this Act.

(2) Any person who contravenes the provisions of sub-section (1) shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to ten lakh rupees, and in the case of a continuing offence, an additional fine of twenty-five thousand rupees for each day during which the contravention continues.

(3) The Authority may, in addition, order the immediate cessation of services and deactivation of platforms or facilities operated in violation of this section.

78. Penalty for breach of confidentiality and data protection.- (1) Any ODR Service Provider, Neutral, officer, or employee who,—

- (a) intentionally or negligently discloses, misuses, or fails to protect the confidentiality of proceedings; or
- (b) violates data protection obligations under this Act, rules made thereunder, or the Information Technology Act, 2000,

shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to twenty lakh rupees and, where appropriate, suspension or debarment from further participation in ODR services.

(2) Where such breach causes demonstrable harm to any party to the dispute, they shall be entitled to claim appropriate compensation or initiate civil action under the applicable law.

79. Penalty for fraudulent practices and misrepresentation.- (1) Any person who knowingly furnishes false information or misrepresents facts,—

- (a) for obtaining accreditation or registration;
- (b) during the course of any ODR proceeding; or
- (c) in any compliance, audit, or inspection procedure,

shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten lakh rupees and disqualification from participation in any ODR platform for a period up to five years.

(2) Where such act is proved to be wilful and fraudulent, the offender shall also be punishable under section 417 and section 420 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, as applicable.

80. Provisions for civil and criminal liability.- (1) The imposition of penalties under this Act shall be without prejudice to any civil liability, contractual remedy, or criminal prosecution which may arise under any other law for the time being in force.

(2) Any offence punishable under this Act may be investigated and prosecuted by a police officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police or such officer as may be authorised by the State Government.

(3) In cases involving public interest or systemic breach, the Authority may initiate a complaint or represent affected parties before appropriate forums or courts.

81. Compounding of offences.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, any offence punishable under this Act, except those involving fraud, breach of trust, or wilful misconduct, may be compounded by the Authority, either before or after the institution of proceedings.

(2) The compounding may be permitted on such terms and conditions, including payment of monetary penalties or undertaking corrective action, as the Authority may determine in the interest of justice and deterrence.

(3) Where an offence is compounded under this section, no further proceedings shall lie in respect of the same matter, and any existing proceedings shall stand withdrawn.

CHAPTER XV

INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT POWERS

82. Power to call for information and documents.- (1) The Authority, or any officer duly authorised by it in this behalf, may, for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act, require any ODR Service Provider, registered Neutral, or other person engaged in ODR-related activities to,—

- (a) furnish in writing such information or explanation relating to its affairs;
- (b) produce such books, registers, accounts, documents, or other records as may be required.

(2) Every such requisition shall be complied with within such period and in such manner as may be specified by the Authority, failing which it shall be deemed a contravention liable to penalty.

(3) The Authority may make regulations prescribing the nature and format of disclosures required under this section.

83. Power to conduct inspections, audits, and inquiries.- (1) The Authority may, either suo motu or on the basis of a complaint, conduct an inspection or audit of any ODR Service Provider or Neutral to examine compliance with the provisions of this Act and the rules or regulations made thereunder.

(2) For this purpose, the Authority may,—

- (a) enter the premises of such Service Provider;
- (b) inspect or take copies of books, accounts, records, software, and systems;
- (c) interview employees, contractors, or other persons related to its operations.

(3) Where necessary, the Authority may appoint a committee of independent auditors or experts to conduct specialised inquiries, and such committee shall submit its report within the time stipulated.

(4) The subject of the inspection shall be provided a reasonable opportunity to respond to the findings before final action is taken.

84. Power to summon individuals and examine witnesses.- (1) The Authority shall have the same powers as vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, while trying a suit, in respect of the following matters;

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
- (b) requiring the discovery and production of documents;
- (c) receiving evidence on affidavit;
- (d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any office.

(2) Any proceeding before the Authority under this section shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

(3) Non-compliance with a summons issued under this section shall constitute an offence punishable under this Act.

85. Power to impose fines and sanctions.- (1) Where, upon inquiry, the Authority is satisfied that any person has contravened the provisions of this Act or has failed to comply with any rule, regulation, guideline, or direction issued thereunder, it may,—

- (a) impose such monetary fines as may be prescribed;
- (b) suspend or revoke accreditation, registration, or access to the State ODR Portal;
- (c) debar such person or entity from providing ODR services for a specified period.

(2) Before imposing any fine or sanction, the Authority shall give the concerned person an opportunity to be heard.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a register of sanctioned entities, accessible to the public.

86. Power to recover dues as arrears of land revenue.- (1) If any person fails to pay a fine, fee, charge, or penalty imposed under this Act or any rule made thereunder, such amount shall be recoverable as an arrear of land revenue in accordance with the provisions of the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964.

(2) The Authority may forward a certificate under its seal to the District Collector or other authorised officer, who shall thereupon proceed to recover the amount specified therein in the same manner as an arrear of land revenue.

(3) This shall be without prejudice to the right of the Authority to pursue any other remedy available under law for the recovery of the amount due.

PART IX MISCELLANEOUS CHAPTER XVI

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

87. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Authority, any member, officer, employee, or any other person acting under its direction, for anything which is done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of the provisions of this Act or the rules, regulations, or orders made thereunder.

(2) For the purposes of this section, “good faith” shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 52 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

88. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for,—

- (a) eligibility conditions and procedures for accreditation of ODR Service Providers;
- (b) functions and responsibilities of the Authority and its officers;
- (c) fee structures, audit protocols, and reporting formats;
- (d) time limits for disposal of grievances and appeals;
- (e) any other matter which may be prescribed under this Act.

(3) Every rule made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be, before each house of the State Legislative, and shall be subject to such modifications or annulments as that House may make.

89. Power to issue regulations, notifications, and guidelines.- (1) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, issue such regulations, notifications, standards, protocols, or guidelines consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder, as may be necessary for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular, such regulations may provide for,—

- (a) technical standards for ODR platforms;
- (b) ethical and procedural codes for Neutrals;
- (c) rating and evaluation of Service Providers;
- (d) model clauses for inclusion in contracts referring disputes to ODR.

(3) All such regulations and notifications shall be published on the official website of the Authority and in the Official Gazette.

90. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as may appear to it to be necessary for removing the difficulty.

(2) No such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of two years from the commencement of this Act.

(3) Every order made under this section shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.

91. Repeal and savings.- (1) On and from the commencement of this Act, any order, notification, circular, guideline, or direction issued by any department of the Government of Karnataka in respect of Online Dispute Resolution, to the extent it is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, shall stand repealed.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done or any action taken under such earlier orders, notifications, or directions shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act and shall remain valid until amended, repealed, or replaced.

92. Power to frame subordinate legislation.- (1) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, frame and issue subordinate legislation, including regulations, standards, and procedural rules for the implementation of this Act.

- (2) Subordinate legislation issued under this section shall have the force of law and shall be binding on all accredited ODR Service Providers, Neutrals, and users of the ODR system established under this Act.
- (3) Such subordinate legislation shall be subject to prior public consultation and stakeholder input wherever feasible and shall be notified in the Official Gazette.

**THE KARNATAKA CYBERCRIME PREVENTION PUBLIC SAFETY
BILL, 2025**

**CHAPTER I
PRELIMINARY**

A Bill to address this systemic gap by establishing a comprehensive legal and institutional architecture for prevention, detection, and enforcement of cybercrimes while ensuring public digital safety.

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislative in the Seventy-Sixth year of the Republic of India as follows:

1. Short title, extent, and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention and Public Safety Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Act” means the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention and Public Safety Act, 2025;

(b) “Authority” means the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Authority established under section 6 of this Act;

(c) “Cybercrime” includes any unlawful act punishable under any law for the time being in force, which involves or is facilitated through the use of information technology, computer resources, communication devices, digital platforms, or cyberspace, and shall include but not be limited to offences under the Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000), the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860), and any rules, notifications, or directions issued thereunder;

(d) “Cybercrime Officer” means any police officer or authorised personnel appointed under section 10 of this Act to perform functions related to cybercrime investigation, enforcement, monitoring, or prosecution;

(e) “Director General (Cybercrime)” means the Director General of the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Authority appointed under section 9 of this Act, who shall be the chief executive of the Authority;

(f) “Information system” means any physical or virtual arrangement of computer hardware, software, firmware, databases, networks, applications, cloud infrastructure, storage devices, or other electronic means used to collect, store, process, transmit, or disseminate data or information;

(g) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules made by the State Government under this Act;

(h) “Public Safety” includes the protection of citizens, digital communities, public and private infrastructure, and online ecosystems from threats including cyber terrorism, misinformation, radicalisation, online exploitation, cyberbullying, financial fraud, identity theft, and any acts affecting public order, health, safety, morality, or national integrity;

(i) “Rules” means the rules made by the State Government under this Act;

(j) “State Government” means the Government of Karnataka;

(k) “Technical Expert” means any person possessing professional qualifications, academic expertise, or specialised training in computer science, cybersecurity, cyber forensics, data

science, artificial intelligence, cryptography, network security, or such other domains as may be prescribed;

(l) “Digital platform” means any software-based interface, application, website, or technology-enabled service that enables user-generated content, data exchange, social interaction, e-commerce, or public engagement in the digital environment;

(m) “Intermediary” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under clause (w) of sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and includes any entity that stores or transmits electronic records on behalf of another person;

(n) “Significant social media intermediary” means an intermediary having such user base or impact as may be classified by the Central Government under Rule 2(1)(v) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021;

(o) “Critical information infrastructure” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it in clause (n) of section 70 of the Information Technology Act, 2000;

(p) “Cybersecurity” means the practice of protecting internet-connected systems, networks, hardware, software, and data from unauthorised access, attacks, or disruption, and includes proactive, defensive, and preventive measures for digital safety;

(q) “Cyber hygiene” means the practices, behaviours, and protocols followed by users and organisations to maintain the health, security, and integrity of information systems and digital devices;

(r) “Deepfake” means any synthetically generated or manipulated audio, visual, or audiovisual content created using artificial intelligence or machine learning techniques to impersonate or distort the identity, voice, or likeness of an individual or event with the potential to mislead, deceive, or cause harm;

(s) “Digital identity” includes any unique representation of an individual, group, or entity in electronic form, including identifiers such as Aadhaar number, mobile number, IP address, biometric signature, user profile, or any combination thereof used for digital authentication, representation, or access control;

(t) “CSAM” means Child Sexual Abuse Material and includes any visual representation, text, animation, image, audio, video, or data file depicting sexually explicit conduct involving a child, and includes digitally altered, morphed, or AI-generated content of such nature.

(u) “Electronic record” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under clause (t) of section 2 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, and includes data, record or data generated, image or sound stored, received or sent in an electronic form or microfilm or computer-generated microfiche;

(v) “Artificial Intelligence (AI)” means the capability of a machine, computer system, or software to perform tasks commonly associated with human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, understanding language, and perception, and includes machine learning and deep learning systems used for surveillance, content moderation, threat detection, or pattern recognition;

(w) “Machine learning model” means an automated or semi-automated system that uses data to infer relationships or predict outputs, and includes predictive models used in cybercrime prevention, profiling, risk analysis, or digital surveillance;

- (x) “Phishing” means the fraudulent practice of sending deceptive emails, messages, or links impersonating trusted entities for the purpose of inducing individuals to reveal personal information, such as passwords, credit card numbers, or Aadhaar credentials;
- (y) “Online radicalisation” means the process by which individuals or groups are exposed to, persuaded by, or mobilised through digital content, platforms, or networks into adopting violent, extremist, or unlawful ideologies or behaviours, often leading to acts that threaten public safety or national integrity;
- (z) “Cyber terrorism” means any premeditated, politically motivated attack against information systems, programs, data, or services which threatens the sovereignty, integrity, or security of India, causes widespread panic or disruption, or is intended to intimidate government or civilian populations, and includes offences under section 66F of the Information Technology Act, 2000;
- (za) “Digital forensics” means the scientific examination, collection, analysis, preservation, and presentation of electronic evidence in a manner admissible before a court of law, and includes forensic imaging, recovery of deleted files, metadata analysis, and mobile or cloud-based investigations;
- (zb) “Cloud service provider” means any entity offering cloud-based services such as Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), or Software as a Service (SaaS), including storage, computing, or networking services, and subject to data protection, access, and compliance obligations under this Act;
- (zc) “Cyber Security Operations Centre (CSOC)” means the State-level monitoring, detection, and incident response facility established under section 22 of this Act for real-time cyber threat management and coordination with public and private entities;
- (zd) “Digital public infrastructure” means any publicly accessible digital platform, network, service delivery system, or governance interface developed or maintained by the State or its agencies for the purpose of service delivery, e-governance, or data interoperability, including but not limited to e-KYC, DigiLocker, land records portals, or UPI;
- (ze) “User” means any natural or legal person who accesses, uses, transacts with, or otherwise engages with any digital service, platform, application, or network infrastructure, either directly or through automated means;
- (zf) “Vulnerability” means any weakness, flaw, or gap in an information system or digital infrastructure that can be exploited to gain unauthorised access, cause data breach, or disrupt normal operations;
- (zg) “Incident response” means the procedures, actions, and measures taken by any individual, agency, or authority to detect, contain, investigate, and recover from a cyber incident, threat, or attack;
- (zh) “Threat intelligence” means data, information, or analysis regarding existing or emerging cyber threats, including indicators of compromise, tactics, techniques, and procedures used by malicious actors, collected for the purpose of proactive threat mitigation and defence;
- (zi) “Electronic surveillance” means the covert or overt monitoring of electronic communication, network traffic, or digital activity, authorised by law for the purposes of ensuring national security, crime prevention, or public safety, and subject to safeguards under

applicable laws, including the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Information Technology Act, 2000;

(zj) “Misleading content” means any manipulated, false, or intentionally deceptive digital material, including fake news, altered media, or contextually misleading information, capable of influencing public opinion, causing unrest, or leading to financial or reputational harm;

(zk) “Online harassment” includes cyberstalking, cyberbullying, doxxing, trolling, non-consensual sharing of private information or imagery, sending of sexually explicit messages or threats, or any persistent digital behaviour intended to cause distress, fear, or humiliation;

(zl) “Cyber patrolling” means systematic observation, analysis, and monitoring of digital spaces, platforms, websites, or user-generated content by authorised officers for the purpose of detecting criminal activity, misinformation, hate speech, or threats to public order;

(zm) “Digital grievance redressal mechanism” means any platform, process, or designated officer appointed under law to receive, process, and resolve complaints related to digital harms, cyber offences, or content moderation;

(zn) “Electronic evidence” means any data or record stored, transmitted, or created electronically that is relevant and admissible in proceedings under the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, including but not limited to email logs, IP addresses, audio-video files, messages, or screenshots;

(zo) “Zero-day vulnerability” means a previously unknown flaw in software or hardware for which no patch or remedy is immediately available and which may be exploited for unlawful access or system compromise;

(zp) “Multi-stakeholder framework” means an inclusive governance or consultation model involving representatives of government, industry, academia, technical community, and civil society to ensure collaborative decision-making, especially in areas of technology regulation, content moderation, and digital safety.

3. Application and scope of the Act.- (1) This Act shall apply to all cybercrimes and digital threats having a direct or indirect impact on individuals, institutions, critical infrastructure, or public safety within the territory of Karnataka.

(2) The provisions of this Act shall apply to—

(a) all persons within the State of Karnataka;

(b) any offence committed in cyberspace where either the victim or the offender or the digital infrastructure is located within Karnataka;

(c) service providers, intermediaries, data centres, and platforms operating or offering services in Karnataka.

(3) Nothing in this Act shall affect the powers of the Central Government under the Information Technology Act, 2000, or any other Central law for the time being in force.

4. Overriding effect and relation with existing laws.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, the provisions of any other law for the time being in force.

(2) In the event of any inconsistency between the provisions of this Act and any other State law, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.

5. Objectives and purpose of the Act.- (1) The objectives and purpose of this Act are,—

(a) to establish a comprehensive legal and institutional framework for the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of cybercrimes in the State of Karnataka;

- (b) to protect digital infrastructure, ensure public safety, and promote responsible digital citizenship;
- (c) to create a specialised and technologically equipped Authority for coordination, threat intelligence, and response to cyber incidents;
- (d) to build institutional capacities and technological capabilities at the district, taluk, and local levels for cybercrime reporting and redressal;
- (e) to collaborate with law enforcement, judiciary, civil society, and private actors for robust cyber governance;
- (f) to ensure the protection of fundamental rights, especially under Articles 21 and 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, by addressing cyber threats including identity theft, data breaches, online harassment, misinformation, financial fraud, and child pornography;
- (g) to facilitate awareness, research, and education on cyber hygiene, digital ethics, and cybersecurity among all sections of society;
- (h) to implement a coordinated cybercrime reporting, intelligence-sharing, and redressal mechanism through dedicated infrastructure and trained personnel.

CHAPTER II

ESTABLISHMENT OF KARNATAKA CYBERCRIME PREVENTION AUTHORITY

6. Establishment of Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an Authority to be known as the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Authority (hereinafter referred to as "the Authority") for the purposes of exercising the powers conferred upon it and performing the functions assigned to it under this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue and be sued.

(3) The Authority shall be deemed to be a State-level law enforcement and policy-coordinating agency with regulatory, advisory, investigative, monitoring, and technical capabilities, operating under the administrative control of the Home Department of the State Government.

(4) The Authority shall be responsible for the strategic oversight, inter-agency coordination, capacity-building, infrastructure development, intelligence-sharing, and public safety initiatives pertaining to cybercrime prevention and cybersecurity governance within the State of Karnataka.

7. Headquarters, regional offices, and cyber cells.- (1) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located at Bengaluru or at such other place as the State Government may, by notification, determine.

(2) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, establish regional offices or zonal headquarters in such cities or districts as may be deemed necessary for ensuring timely investigation, technical coordination, and response to cyber incidents.

(3) Without prejudice to sub-section (2), the Authority shall establish, operate, and maintain—

- (a) District Cybercrime Units in all Commissionerates and Police Districts;

- (b) Specialised Cyber Cells for offences involving financial fraud, ransomware, cyberterrorism, child exploitation, data breaches, and digital surveillance; and
 - (c) Integrated Forensic and Incident Response Centres equipped with certified labs for digital forensic analysis.
- (4) The Authority may also designate nodal cyber police stations or coordinate with existing police stations notified under the Information Technology Act, 2000 for registration and investigation of cyber offences.

8. Composition of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely,-

- (a) The Director General (Cybercrime), who shall be the Chairperson, ex officio;
 - (b) Two officers of the rank of Secretary or above from the Home Department, nominated by the State Government;
 - (c) One senior police officer of the rank of Inspector General or above with expertise in cybercrime investigation, nominated by the State Government;
 - (d) One officer not below the rank of Additional Secretary from the Department of Electronics, Information Technology and Biotechnology;
 - (e) Two independent technical experts or academics of eminence in the field of cyber law, information security, or digital forensics, nominated by the State Government;
 - (f) One representative each from the Department of Education, the Department of Finance, and the Department of Urban Development, to be nominated by the respective Departments;
 - (g) Such other members as may be prescribed by the State Government, having regard to the need for inter-sectoral coordination.
- (2) The term of nominated members shall be three years and they shall be eligible for re-nomination for one additional term.
- (3) The Authority shall meet at least once in every two months and shall regulate its own procedure, including that of its committees and sub-committees, as may be prescribed or decided by regulations made by the Authority.

9. Appointment, powers, and functions of the Director General (Cybercrime).- (1) The State Government shall appoint an officer not below the rank of Director General of Police to be the Director General (Cybercrime) who shall be the executive head and Chairperson of the Authority.

- (2) The Director General (Cybercrime) shall,—
- (a) be responsible for the overall management, policy direction, and coordination of all units, cells, and regional offices established under this Act;
 - (b) supervise investigation of cybercrimes and ensure uniform application of procedures and standards in digital evidence gathering;
 - (c) serve as the principal nodal officer for liaison with the Ministry of Home Affairs, CERT-In, National Cybercrime Coordination Centre (NCCC), and other central agencies;
 - (d) recommend infrastructure and personnel requirements to the State Government;
 - (e) approve guidelines and standard operating procedures for secure data collection, evidence preservation, and cross-jurisdictional coordination;

(f) exercise such other powers and perform such other functions as may be delegated by the Authority or prescribed under this Act.

(3) The Director General (Cybercrime) may, in consultation with the Authority, constitute specialized task forces or sector-specific response teams, as may be necessary, to respond to emerging cyber threats or critical incidents.

10. Appointment and roles of Cybercrime Officers and Technical Experts.- (1) The Authority may appoint or designate officers not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police as Cybercrime Officers for purposes of cyber investigation, digital evidence collection, and prosecutorial liaison under this Act.

(2) Cybercrime Officers shall exercise powers of investigation as provided under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and shall be deemed to be police officers within the meaning of section 36 of the said Code.

(3) The Authority may also engage, on contract or deputation basis, Technical Experts having requisite academic qualifications and practical experience in cybersecurity, digital forensics, threat intelligence, blockchain analysis, or cyber law.

(4) The roles and responsibilities of Technical Experts shall include—

- (a) advising Cybercrime Officers in investigations involving complex technologies or anonymised networks;
- (b) conducting forensic examination and preparing expert opinions admissible under section 45 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872;
- (c) auditing security architecture of government platforms or public utilities, upon request of the Authority;
- (d) supporting public awareness programmes and professional training initiatives.

(5) The qualifications, method of recruitment, conditions of service, tenure, and remuneration of such Cybercrime Officers and Technical Experts shall be such as may be prescribed.

11. Terms of office, conditions of service, and removal.- (1) The term of office, emoluments, allowances, leave, retirement benefits, and other conditions of service of the Director General, Cybercrime Officers, Technical Experts, and other personnel of the Authority shall be such as may be prescribed by rules.

(2) The State Government may, by order and for reasons to be recorded in writing, remove from office any member, officer, or expert of the Authority, if such person—

- (a) is adjudged to be of unsound mind by a competent court;
- (b) has been convicted of an offence which, in the opinion of the Government, involves moral turpitude;
- (c) has been declared insolvent;
- (d) has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially the discharge of official functions;
- (e) has abused the position of office or has been guilty of misconduct or persistent default.

Provided that no such person shall be removed without being given a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

12. Advisory Council for Cybercrime Policy and Public Safety.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute an Advisory Council for Cybercrime Policy and

Public Safety (hereinafter referred to as "the Council") to advise and assist the Authority in matters of public policy, strategy, and inter-sectoral coordination.

- (2) The Council shall consist of the following members, namely—
- (a) The Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Home Department — Chairperson;
 - (b) One representative each from NLSIU, IIIT-B, and IISc Bangalore, nominated by the State Government;
 - (c) One representative from the Karnataka High Court or Judicial Academy, not below the rank of District Judge;
 - (d) Three representatives from the private sector, including major IT and fintech companies, nominated in consultation with industry bodies;
 - (e) One member from a registered civil society organisation working in digital rights or cyber safety education;
 - (f) One representative from CERT-In, Government of India — special invitee;
 - (g) Such other members as the State Government may deem fit.
- (3) The functions of the Council shall include,—
- (a) reviewing emerging cyber threats and recommending policy responses;
 - (b) suggesting capacity-building programmes for law enforcement and judicial officers;
 - (c) identifying areas for public-private cooperation and innovation;
 - (d) proposing frameworks for public awareness, grievance redressal, and victim protection in cyberspace.
- (4) The Council shall meet at least once every quarter and shall forward its recommendations to the Authority and the State Government.
- (5) The procedures for appointment, meetings, allowances, and functioning of the Council shall be such as may be prescribed.

CHAPTER III

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE AUTHORITY

13. General functions of the Authority.—(1) The Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Authority shall be the principal agency of the State Government for planning, implementing, supervising, and reviewing all matters related to cybercrime prevention, cybersecurity enforcement, and digital public safety.

- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Authority shall,—
- (a) formulate a comprehensive State Cybercrime Prevention and Response Strategy;
 - (b) develop, maintain, and update cybersecurity protocols and best practices for government departments and public bodies;
 - (c) assist law enforcement agencies in the detection, investigation, and prosecution of cyber offences under any law for the time being in force;
 - (d) facilitate training, skill-building, and certification programmes in collaboration with police training academies, universities, and technical institutions;
 - (e) undertake public awareness campaigns, including cyber safety education in schools and community outreach;
 - (f) provide advisory support to the State Government on policy issues related to cyber law, data protection, and digital rights;

- (g) conduct research, case audits, and publication of annual reports and threat assessments;
 - (h) maintain and manage a state-wide secure cybercrime reporting and case management portal.
- (3) The Authority shall function as the State's nodal body for digital public safety under the National Cyber Security Policy framework and shall integrate its operations with national platforms including Cyber Swachhta Kendra, NCCC, and CERT-In as necessary.

14. Powers to prevent, detect, and investigate cybercrimes.- (1) Subject to the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974) and the Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000), the Authority and its designated Cybercrime Officers shall have the power to,—

- (a) receive, register, and investigate complaints relating to offences committed using computers, mobile phones, digital networks, or any other electronic means;
 - (b) initiate suo motu proceedings or take cognizance of offences upon receipt of credible information, threat intelligence, or public disclosures;
 - (c) conduct cyber forensic analysis, trace IP addresses, decrypt data when legally authorised, and preserve digital evidence for judicial proceedings;
 - (d) seize, seal, or take possession of servers, hardware, or software suspected to be used in the commission of cyber offences, in accordance with the applicable law;
 - (e) issue lawful directions to service providers, telecom operators, cloud platforms, and data intermediaries to provide access to relevant logs, metadata, or user information, as per due process of law.
- (2) The Authority may also constitute or designate specialised cyber investigation units for high-risk cases involving financial fraud, ransomware, cyber terrorism, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), identity theft, and digital blackmail.
- (3) All officers of the Authority shall be deemed to be police officers for the purpose of investigation under this Act and shall have powers under Chapter XII of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

15. Regulation of cybersecurity infrastructure in public and private sectors.- (1) The Authority shall be empowered to regulate and oversee the cybersecurity infrastructure and standards in both public and designated private sector entities operating within the State of Karnataka.

- (2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority may,—
- (a) issue mandatory cybersecurity compliance guidelines to all State Government departments, State public sector undertakings (PSUs), statutory authorities, and municipal bodies;
 - (b) require periodic cyber audits and penetration testing of public digital platforms or databases handling sensitive or personal data;
 - (c) designate private organisations, critical service providers, healthcare institutions, fintech operators, and educational institutions handling large-scale personal or financial data as *Cybersecurity-Relevant Entities (CREs)*;
 - (d) mandate reporting of cyber incidents by such CREs within a prescribed timeline and format;

- (e) impose compliance obligations and data retention norms in accordance with the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011 and allied guidelines.

(3) Any failure on the part of a CRE to comply with the cybersecurity requirements under this Act or the rules made thereunder may attract penal consequences as prescribed in this Act, in addition to any liability under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

16. Coordination with Central Government and international agencies.- (1) The Authority shall serve as the principal liaison agency of the State Government for coordination with,—

- (a) the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In);
- (b) the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC), and other national-level cybercrime investigation or policy institutions;
- (c) national nodal police and intelligence agencies dealing with digital threats, cyber espionage, and transnational offences;
- (d) INTERPOL, UNODC, and any other international organisation or foreign government agencies involved in cybercrime investigation, as authorised by the Central Government.

(2) The Authority shall facilitate the exchange of intelligence, technical collaboration, joint capacity building, mutual legal assistance, and extradition coordination in cases involving cross-border digital offences.

(3) The Authority may also enter into memoranda of understanding, protocols, or working arrangements with national or international institutions, subject to prior approval of the State Government and, where applicable, the Central Government.

17. Cyber threat intelligence and early warning system.- (1) The Authority shall establish a State-level Cyber Threat Intelligence and Early Warning System (CTIEWS) for the continuous monitoring of cyber threats, vulnerabilities, malware activity, and data breach indicators within Karnataka.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority shall,—

- (a) collect and analyse cyber threat intelligence from open-source, proprietary, and governmental sources;
- (b) issue public and classified alerts to relevant stakeholders, institutions, and infrastructure operators;
- (c) disseminate actionable threat advisories to law enforcement, critical infrastructure controllers, and digital platforms;
- (d) maintain a real-time cyber incident tracker and emergency response dashboard, linked with national platforms and CERT-In.

(3) The Authority shall notify thresholds and reporting mechanisms for threat indicators, and may collaborate with CERT-In, ISPs, data centres, CSIRTs, and ethical hacking communities for this purpose.

18. Power to issue binding directions and circulars.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to issue binding directions, circulars, technical bulletins, and advisories to any individual, entity, or public authority in the State in relation to,—

- (a) cybercrime prevention and reporting obligations;

- (b) cybersecurity compliance measures;
- (c) response protocols for cyber incidents or emergencies;
- (d) data protection, privacy, encryption, or information-sharing frameworks.

(2) Every direction issued by the Authority under sub-section (1) shall be binding on the addressee and shall have the same force as if it were a direction issued by the State Government under executive powers under Article 162 of the Constitution.

(3) Failure to comply with any such direction without lawful justification shall attract penalties and, where applicable, prosecution under this Act and other relevant laws.

19. Power to notify critical information infrastructure (CII).- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Information Technology Act, 2000, the State Government may, on the recommendation of the Authority and in consultation with CERT-In, notify specific systems, platforms, databases, or digital assets as *State Critical Information Infrastructure (SCII)* if their incapacitation or destruction shall have debilitating impact on—

- (a) public health or safety;
- (b) law and order or public administration;
- (c) essential government services; or
- (d) economic security or financial stability.

(2) The Authority shall prepare and periodically update a registry of such SCII assets and prescribe mandatory cybersecurity obligations, audit standards, and access control mechanisms for their administrators.

(3) Any unauthorised access, tampering, destruction, or disruption of a notified SCII asset shall be an aggravated offence under this Act, without prejudice to action under section 66F of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(4) The Authority shall also coordinate with CERT-In and NCIIPC to ensure the integration of SCII assets with national-level protection and monitoring frameworks.

CHAPTER IV

CYBERCRIME PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

20. Framework for cybercrime risk assessment and management.- (1) The Authority shall develop and implement a State-wide Cybercrime Risk Assessment and Management Framework (CRAMF) to identify, evaluate, and mitigate risks arising from cyber threats across sectors and jurisdictions.

(2) The Framework shall include—

- (a) categorisation of assets, systems, and institutions based on cyber risk profiles;
- (b) formulation of standardised risk metrics and incident likelihood models;
- (c) periodic risk-based audits and vulnerability assessments;
- (d) real-time risk alerts and escalation protocols; and
- (e) mechanisms for crisis response, including cyber insurance and legal readiness.

(3) All departments, State public sector undertakings, notified private entities, and digital infrastructure operators shall be required to submit periodic risk assessments to the Authority in such form and manner as may be prescribed.

(4) The Authority may prescribe sector-specific cybersecurity resilience standards and require third-party verification of compliance.

21. Cybercrime surveillance and monitoring mechanisms.- (1) The Authority shall establish and operate advanced cybercrime surveillance and monitoring systems to identify, track, and analyse unlawful online activity.

(2) For this purpose, the Authority may,—

- (a) monitor public-facing websites, platforms, and applications for content promoting criminal activities, misinformation, hate speech, or prohibited materials;
- (b) develop or acquire real-time scanning tools and predictive analytics engines;
- (c) issue takedown requests or content blocking recommendations to intermediaries and platforms under section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, where necessary.

(3) Surveillance and monitoring under this section shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality, and subject to applicable judicial and constitutional safeguards, including the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

(4) The Authority shall maintain audit logs of all surveillance activity and ensure oversight by an internal committee comprising senior officers and legal experts.

22. Establishment of State-level Cyber Security Operations Centre (Karnataka CSOC).

(1) The State Government shall establish a State Cyber Security Operations Centre (Karnataka CSOC) under the administrative control of the Authority, for real-time cyber incident detection, analysis, and coordinated response.

(2) The Karnataka CSOC shall,—

- (a) serve as the State's central nerve centre for digital threat monitoring and cyber emergency management;
- (b) be integrated with National CSOCs, CERT-In, and police emergency response systems;
- (c) host advanced Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) tools, threat intelligence feeds, and automated alerts;
- (d) support 24x7 operations and coordinate cyber emergency drills across departments.

(3) The CSOC shall also provide tiered support to district-level cyber cells and regional cybercrime control hubs and act as a knowledge and training platform for government entities and critical service providers.

23. Deployment of AI and machine learning for cybercrime detection.- (1) The Authority shall facilitate the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and data analytics tools in cybercrime prevention, detection, and response.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority may,—

- (a) adopt AI-powered detection algorithms for identifying anomalies, patterns, and suspicious digital behaviour;
- (b) develop automated classification tools to detect deepfakes, misinformation, or coordinated bot activity;
- (c) collaborate with academic institutions and private firms to develop indigenous cybersecurity AI systems with contextual adaptability.

(3) Use of AI and ML tools shall be governed by data minimisation principles, explainability requirements, and safeguards against algorithmic bias.

(4) All automated decision-making processes involving user data shall be subject to human review and due process protections.

24. Cyber patrolling and threat hunting initiatives.- (1) The Authority shall institutionalise and operationalise a *Cyber Patrolling and Threat Hunting Programme* to proactively identify and neutralise digital threats before they materialise into harm.

(2) The programme shall involve,—

- (a) regular cyber sweeps across darknet, encrypted networks, gaming platforms, and public forums;
- (b) deployment of trained cyber intelligence units for open-source intelligence (OSINT) gathering and behavioural analytics;
- (c) identification of suspicious profiles, fake accounts, and illicit networks involved in phishing, radicalisation, or illegal trade.

(3) Officers deployed under this initiative shall be trained in ethical online engagement, covert surveillance, and digital undercover operations, subject to oversight and internal control measures.

25. Use of digital forensics and evidence preservation technologies.- (1) The Authority shall establish and maintain *State Digital Forensic Laboratories* and Mobile Forensic Units equipped with tools necessary for the scientific examination of electronic devices, storage media, and digital networks.

(2) The forensic units shall support,—

- (a) data recovery, integrity verification, and hash-based evidence validation;
- (b) live forensics of compromised systems and remote digital acquisition;
- (c) chain - of- custody documentation and admissibility certification in accordance with section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

(3) The Authority shall adopt advanced digital preservation protocols, including blockchain-based tamper-proof storage and cloud-based evidence vaults.

(4) All forensic procedures shall adhere to due process and ensure protection of personal data and constitutional rights of the accused and victims alike.

26. Measures to prevent online financial frauds and phishing attacks.- (1) The Authority shall devise and implement a State Financial Cyber Fraud Prevention Plan in collaboration with banks, payment intermediaries, fintech entities, and telecom service providers.

(2) Measures under the Plan shall include,—

- (a) real-time fraud detection and blocking protocols integrated with UPI, IMPS, and internet banking ecosystems;
- (b) centralised grievance redressal and helpline for victims of online frauds;
- (c) dynamic blacklisting of scam numbers, domains, and mule accounts;
- (d) periodic consumer awareness campaigns against phishing, smishing, and investment scams.

(3) The Authority shall coordinate with the Reserve Bank of India, NPCI, and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) for threat intelligence sharing and fund tracing.

27. Prevention of cyber terrorism and national security threats.- (1) The Authority shall work in tandem with national security agencies to detect, prevent, and respond to cyber

terrorism, sabotage of critical infrastructure, or digitally-enabled threats to sovereignty and integrity of India.

(2) For the purpose of this section, "cyber terrorism" shall include offences under section 66F of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and related provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

(3) The Authority shall establish a high-risk incident response protocol, including:

- (a) threat classification and alert escalation matrix;
- (b) decryption and packet capture systems approved by competent authorities;
- (c) cybersecurity drills involving law enforcement, disaster management, and intelligence agencies.

(4) All investigations under this section shall be supervised by a designated officer not below the rank of Inspector General and carried out in accordance with statutory authorisations and legal safeguards.

28. Combating child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and online exploitation.- (1) The Authority shall establish a dedicated unit within its framework to detect, remove, and prosecute offences involving child sexual abuse material (CSAM), online grooming, sextortion, and trafficking.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority may,—

- (a) collaborate with INTERPOL, NCMEC, and national law enforcement agencies for real-time CSAM alert exchange;
- (b) deploy content hashing, age estimation, and image-matching technologies to identify and remove CSAM;
- (c) direct online platforms and content hosts to block access to CSAM under the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

(3) The Authority shall also coordinate with child welfare committees, counsellors, and NGOs for victim rehabilitation and psychosocial support.

29. Framework for preventing cyberbullying, harassment, and trolling.- (1) The Authority shall develop a comprehensive framework to detect and address online harassment, cyberbullying, stalking, impersonation, and hate-driven digital abuse.

(2) The framework shall provide for,—

- (a) immediate complaint reporting tools, anonymity-preserving mechanisms, and rapid response timelines;
- (b) identification and blocking of abusive accounts and repeat offenders in coordination with platforms;
- (c) protocols for content moderation, counter-speech promotion, and psychological support to victims.

(3) Special measures shall be taken to address gender-based online abuse, including abuse targeting women, LGBTQIA+ persons, and marginalised communities.

(4) Every educational institution, workplace, and public authority shall be encouraged to adopt internal digital safety guidelines and grievance mechanisms consistent with this Act.

CHAPTER V

PUBLIC SAFETY IN DIGITAL SPACE

30. Digital safety initiatives for women, children, and vulnerable groups.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Cybercrime Prevention Authority established under this Act, frame and implement schemes and programmes for the protection of women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable persons from cybercrimes and online threats.

(2) Such schemes shall, inter alia, include,—

- (a) deployment of mobile applications with emergency SOS features, geo-tagging, and real-time location sharing, especially designed for women and minors;
- (b) integration of these applications with emergency response systems such as Dial 112 and local law enforcement;
- (c) establishment of Women and Child Cybersecurity Response Units at the district level, staffed by trained personnel and psychological counsellors;
- (d) a dedicated helpline and chatbot-based grievance system for anonymous and time-sensitive reporting of online abuse, including cyberstalking, impersonation, grooming, and threats.

(3) The Authority shall collaborate with the Department of Women and Child Development to ensure institutional support, rehabilitation, and legal aid to victims of digital abuse and cybercrimes.

31. Cyber awareness campaigns and digital literacy programmes.- (1) The State Government shall undertake State-wide cyber awareness and digital literacy campaigns designed to improve the cybersecurity posture of individuals and communities across urban, semi-urban, and rural areas.

(2) The campaigns shall,—

- (a) be conducted in Kannada, English, and other local languages;
- (b) use a mix of print, radio, television, social media, street theatre, and interactive workshops;
- (c) be executed through schools, colleges, panchayats, anganwadis, women's self-help groups, and housing societies;
- (d) focus on practical guidance to avoid phishing, social engineering, malware, sextortion, and financial scams.

(3) The curriculum of all government and private schools shall mandatorily include modules on digital ethics, cybersecurity basics, and safe digital citizenship, to be introduced from Class VI onward.

(4) The Authority may empanel certified NGOs, cybersecurity experts, and digital educators to conduct these programmes under official supervision.

32. Mandatory cyber hygiene protocols for public institutions.- (1) Every public authority, including departments of the State Government, public sector undertakings, urban local bodies, and educational institutions, shall comply with mandatory cyber hygiene protocols as notified by the Authority.

(2) Such protocols shall include, but not be limited to,—

- (a) the use of secure firewalls, endpoint detection, and antivirus software;
- (b) multi-factor authentication for access to official digital services and databases;

- (c) periodic password rotation, encryption of sensitive data, and access control systems;
- (d) annual cybersecurity training and phishing simulations for employees;
- (e) appointment of a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) or equivalent personnel for cybersecurity oversight.

(3) Any breach of the protocols under this section, whether through omission or negligence, shall attract administrative penalties under this Act, and such breach shall be reported to the Authority within 24 hours of discovery.

33. Protection against online radicalisation and hate speech.- (1) The State Government shall establish a Digital Surveillance and Risk Analysis Cell (DSRAC) to monitor, detect, and flag online content promoting radicalisation, extremist ideologies, sectarian hate speech, or incitement to violence.

(2) The Cell shall,—

- (a) use AI/ML-based tools to scan open web and dark web platforms;
- (b) maintain a repository of flagged content for analysis and future prosecution;
- (c) work in tandem with national cybersecurity agencies, intelligence agencies, and law enforcement authorities.

(3) Intermediaries and platforms shall be under a legal duty to act upon takedown requests within the timeframe specified under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

(4) The Authority may issue advisories to educational institutions, community centres, and online forums for promoting digital peace and counter-narratives to extremist content.

34. Prevention of misinformation, fake news, and deepfakes.- (1) No person shall create, transmit, publish, or distribute any misinformation, deepfake, or manipulated digital content with the intent to,—

- (a) cause panic, violence, or public disorder;
- (b) undermine electoral processes or constitutional authorities;
- (c) defame any individual or institution; or
- (d) distort historical or scientific facts to mislead the public.

(2) The Authority shall set up a State Digital Verification Unit to,—

- (a) fact-check viral content and public claims;
- (b) issue certified clarifications and counter-narratives;
- (c) develop a public dashboard to track and debunk hoaxes.

(3) Any person aggrieved by being the subject of deepfake or manipulated content may file a complaint before the Authority or the nearest cybercrime police station.

(4) The Authority may frame regulations mandating watermarking, AI transparency, and disclaimers on manipulated audio-visual content.

35. Cybersecurity in critical urban infrastructure and smart cities.- (1) All urban infrastructure projects using digital or IoT-based technology, including traffic management systems, water and power distribution networks, surveillance systems, and smart mobility platforms, shall comply with cybersecurity standards as notified by the Authority.

(2) Such compliance shall include,—

- (a) air-gapped network design to prevent external penetration;
- (b) intrusion detection systems, log audits, and blacklisting of malicious IPs;

- (c) business continuity and disaster recovery protocols;
- (d) end-user device hardening and update policies.

(3) A Cyber Audit Certification shall be mandatory before commissioning any smart city or e-governance project.

36. Regulation of social media platforms for public safety.- (1) Social media intermediaries with more than ten lakh registered users in the State shall,—

- (a) appoint a State Compliance Officer to interface with the Authority;
- (b) maintain a 24x7 grievance redressal cell and nodal contact person for law enforcement;
- (c) retain user data and logs for 180 days as per data retention guidelines.

(2) The Authority may issue directions to,—

- (a) disable access to content that poses a threat to public order or morality;
- (b) prevent viral spread of rumours, communal instigation, and targeted harassment;
- (c) publish monthly compliance and moderation transparency reports.

(3) Non-compliance with orders issued under this section shall be punishable with penalties, deregistration, and prosecution under this Act and the IT Act, 2000.

37. Cyber safety protocols in schools, colleges, and universities.- (1) All educational institutions in Karnataka shall adopt comprehensive cyber safety policies, which shall include,—

- (a) regular audits of internet usage logs;
- (b) banning of unauthorised peer-to-peer software, anonymising tools, and VPNs;
- (c) immediate response protocols for reporting cyberbullying, child sexual exploitation, and grooming.

(2) Every institution shall designate a Cyber Safety Coordinator and establish a Cyber Safety Club for awareness, student participation, and peer-led education.

(3) Schools shall educate parents through digital safety workshops and shall secure parental consent for children's use of online educational platforms.

38. Regulation of online gaming to prevent addiction and fraud.- (1) The Authority shall classify online games into skill-based, chance-based, and hybrid models and prescribe regulatory measures accordingly.

(2) No online game shall,—

- (a) target children with in-app purchases or gambling simulations;
- (b) include loot boxes, microtransactions, or addictive feedback loops without clear disclosures.

(3) All platforms shall display the odds of winning, player-time spent, and daily monetary expenditure limits.

(4) Parental control features, time caps, and self-regulation warnings shall be mandatory for users below the age of 18 years.

39. Framework for protection of digital identities and personal data.- (1) The Authority shall formulate a State Digital Identity and Privacy Protection Policy aligned with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(2) The policy shall ensure,—

- (a) secure storage and transmission of Aadhaar-linked or biometric data;
 - (b) mandatory breach reporting within 24 hours of detection;
 - (c) lawful access protocols for law enforcement, with audit trails and user consent.
- (3) Identity theft, digital impersonation, and illegal profiling of individuals shall be punishable offences under this Act.

40. Promotion of safe digital financial practices.- (1) The State Government shall, through the Cyber Authority, Reserve Bank of India, and NPCI, promote secure usage of digital financial services.

- (2) The Authority shall,—
- (a) launch community-level UPI fraud awareness drives in rural and urban slums;
 - (b) set up district-level Cyber Financial Fraud Helplines and recovery portals;
 - (c) mandate periodic security compliance by banks, NBFCs, and fintech entities.
- (3) Any digital payment application or wallet operating in Karnataka shall,—
- (d) obtain certification for cybersecurity protocols;
 - (e) maintain logs of all high-value transactions;
 - (f) immediately freeze suspicious accounts and notify users of anomalies.

CHAPTER VI

INVESTIGATION, ENFORCEMENT, AND PROSECUTION

41. Special Cybercrime Investigation Units.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish Special Cybercrime Investigation Units (hereinafter referred to as “SCIU”) in each district, comprising personnel trained in digital forensics, cyber law, and information technology.

(2) Each SCIU shall function under the control and supervision of the Superintendent of Police or Commissioner of Police, as the case may be, and shall—

- (a) register and investigate all cognizable and non-cognizable offences under this Act and allied cyber laws;
- (b) maintain coordination with national and international cybercrime coordination centres;
- (c) assist other police stations and enforcement agencies in cybercrime detection and response.

(3) SCIUs shall operate round-the-clock and shall maintain an online FIR registration facility linked with the State Crime Records Bureau.

42. Powers of search, seizure, and arrest.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, any officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector authorised by the State Government or designated by the Authority may, upon reasonable grounds to believe that an offence under this Act has been committed,—

- (a) enter, search, and inspect any computer system, network, server, data centre, or cloud infrastructure;
- (b) seize or freeze any digital evidence, hardware, storage device, or server logs that may aid investigation;
- (c) arrest any person involved, with or without a warrant, as per law.

(2) The officer conducting the search or seizure shall comply with the safeguards laid down under section 100 and section 165 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(3) A detailed inventory of the seized digital material shall be prepared, signed, and digitally recorded to maintain transparency and integrity of the evidence.

43. Procedure for digital evidence collection and chain of custody.- (1) All digital evidence collected under this Act shall be secured and preserved following standard operating procedures (SOPs) notified by the Authority to ensure admissibility in judicial proceedings.

(2) The procedure for evidence collection shall include,—

(a) creation of forensic images or bit-by-bit clones with secure hash verification (SHA-256 or higher);

(b) timestamping of extraction, transfer, and storage operations using secure time protocols;

(c) tamper- proof storage in digital evidence vaults with access logs.

(3) The investigating officer shall maintain a chain of custody record indicating the identity of every person who handled the evidence, the date, time, and purpose of such handling.

(4) Violation of chain of custody protocols may render the evidence inadmissible unless justified by special reasons recorded in writing.

44. Establishment of Cybercrime Digital Forensics Labs.- (1) The State Government shall establish Cybercrime Digital Forensics Laboratories in each Commissionerate and range headquarters for the examination, certification, and analysis of digital evidence.

(2) The forensic labs shall be accredited by a national or internationally recognised body and shall follow ISO/IEC 27037 standards or any higher standard notified by the Authority.

(3) The labs shall have capabilities for,—

(a) data recovery from compromised systems, mobile phones, encrypted drives, and servers;

(b) analysis of metadata, logs, and digital footprint tracing;

(c) extraction and authentication of audio-visual content, including deepfake detection.

(2) The Authority may permit collaboration with private certified forensic laboratories subject to compliance with prescribed data security norms

45. Appointment of Public Prosecutors for cybercrime cases.- (1) The State Government shall appoint a panel of specially designated Public Prosecutors trained in cyber laws, electronic evidence, and digital procedure for the prosecution of offences under this Act.

(2) Every cybercrime court shall have a designated Public Prosecutor from the said panel to represent the State.

(3) The Directorate of Prosecution shall maintain a continuous capacity-building programme for these prosecutors in collaboration with the Authority.

46. Jurisdiction and territorial applicability for cyber offences.- (1) For the purposes of investigation, prosecution, and trial under this Act, a cyber offence shall be deemed to have been committed at any of the following places:

(a) the place from where the accused initiated the act or attempted to commit the offence;

(b) the place where the victim resides or where the consequence of the offence has occurred;

- (c) any location in Karnataka where the data, device, or network used in commission of the offence is situated.
- (2) The provisions of this Act shall apply to,—
 - (a) all persons within the territory of Karnataka;
 - (b) all persons outside Karnataka who commit cyber offences affecting any person, property, or digital infrastructure within Karnataka;
 - (c) intermediaries, platforms, and service providers operating or offering services within the State.

47. Fast-track Cybercrime Courts and Special Benches.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka, designate one or more Sessions Courts in each division as Fast-track Cybercrime Courts to exclusively try offences under this Act.

(2) The High Court may also establish Special Benches in its principal seat or benches to hear appeals, revisions, or writ petitions arising under this Act.

(3) The designated courts shall be equipped with,—

- (a) digital infrastructure for e-evidence presentation, video conferencing, and electronic records management;
- (b) trained court staff proficient in handling electronic documents, e-filing, and certified digital records.

48. Use of virtual hearings and e-evidence in cybercrime cases.- (1) All cybercrime courts constituted under this Act may, to the extent practicable, conduct proceedings through virtual mode including recording of witness depositions, submission of digital evidence, and arguments.

(2) Admissibility of electronic evidence shall be governed by sections 65A and 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, and the procedure for its certification and submission shall be prescribed by rules.

(3) The Authority shall assist in the development of secure digital platforms and protocols for such virtual judicial proceedings.

49. Time-bound investigation and disposal of complaints.- (1) Every SCIU shall complete the investigation of any offence under this Act within a period of ninety days from the date of registration of the First Information Report.

(2) The Public Prosecutor shall file the charge sheet before the appropriate court within thirty days of completion of investigation.

(3) Fast-track Cybercrime Courts shall endeavour to dispose of each case within one hundred eighty days from the date of cognizance, extendable by reasons recorded in writing.

(4) Failure to comply with the timelines without sufficient cause shall be subject to internal review by the Director-General of Police or such disciplinary authority as may be prescribed.

50. Whistleblower protection in cybercrime reporting.- (1) Any person who provides information about the commission of a cyber offence under this Act in good faith shall be granted protection against any form of retaliation, coercion, or discrimination.

(2) The State Government shall establish a confidential cyber whistleblower portal for submission of reports, with an optional anonymous reporting feature.

(3) The identity of the whistleblower shall not be disclosed except—

- (a) to a law enforcement authority with prior written consent of the whistleblower; or
- (b) under an express direction of a court of law.

(4) No legal proceedings shall lie against a whistleblower for providing information, unless such information is found to be false and maliciously intended.

CHAPTER VII

DATA PROTECTION, PRIVACY, AND SECURITY OBLIGATIONS

51. Obligations of Data Fiduciaries and Processors.- (1) Every data fiduciary or data processor operating within the territorial jurisdiction of Karnataka shall ensure lawful, transparent, and accountable processing of personal data, including sensitive and critical personal data, in compliance with this Act, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act), and the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), all data fiduciaries shall:

- (a) obtain explicit and informed consent of the data principal prior to data collection or processing;
- (b) ensure data is collected only for specified, legitimate, and lawful purposes and is not processed in a manner incompatible with those purposes;
- (c) adopt adequate technical and organisational measures to prevent unauthorised access, disclosure, loss, destruction or modification;
- (d) appoint a Data Protection Officer (DPO), where applicable, and maintain a grievance redressal mechanism;
- (e) ensure that any third-party processors or cloud service providers they engage follow equivalent data protection obligations.

(3) Public institutions and digital service providers collecting citizen data for governance or public services shall be deemed "significant data fiduciaries" and subject to enhanced compliance obligations as notified by the State Government.

52. Mandatory Reporting of Cyber Incidents and Data Breaches.- (1) Any data fiduciary, processor, digital platform, or intermediary shall report, within twenty-four hours of becoming aware, any,-

- (a) data breach or compromise of a system;
 - (b) incident involving ransomware, malware, DDoS attack, or unauthorised access;
 - (c) breach involving loss of biometric or financial information;
- to the State Cyber Response Centre and to the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).

(2) The notification shall include,-

- (a) a summary of the incident;
- (b) categories of data affected;
- (c) the estimated number of affected users;
- (d) remedial and containment measures taken;
- (e) point of contact for further coordination.

(3) Failure to report such incidents shall attract penalties under this Act and action under the IT Act, 2000, including cancellation of licenses or suspension of operations.

53. Data Anonymisation, Encryption, and Retention Policies.- (1) All personal and sensitive personal data shall be encrypted using industry-standard protocols (e.g., AES-256) both in transit and at rest.

(2) Where data retention is not required by law or judicial order, data fiduciaries shall,-

- (a) anonymise or pseudonymise such data in accordance with privacy-by-design principles;
 - (b) erase such data from storage systems after expiry of the retention period;
 - (c) issue a compliance certificate on demand to the Directorate.
- (3) Government departments shall develop and publish a data retention and archival policy covering:
- (a) education and health records;
 - (b) law enforcement and criminal justice data;
 - (c) e-governance user profiles;
- in accordance with the National Digital Governance Framework and applicable central laws.

54. Biometric Data Protection and Surveillance Safeguards.- (1) No person or authority shall collect or process biometric identifiers (such as facial images, iris scans, fingerprints, gait patterns, or voice prints) without obtaining prior written or digital consent, except,-

- (a) under lawful government orders;
 - (b) for authentication under the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016;
 - (c) in the course of criminal investigation as per CrPC, 1973 and judicial orders.
- (2) Deployment of biometric surveillance technologies in public spaces shall be permissible only where,-
- (a) authorised by law;
 - (b) necessary and proportionate for a legitimate aim (e.g., crime prevention, missing person search);
 - (c) subject to independent audit and public transparency requirements.
- (3) Every entity collecting biometric data shall maintain,-
- (a) secure servers with encryption and access logs;
 - (b) breach notification protocols;
 - (c) deletion and consent revocation mechanisms.

55. Cross-Border Data Sharing and Compliance.- (1) No entity shall transfer personal or sensitive personal data outside India unless,-

- (a) the transfer is to a country or entity approved by the Central Government as having adequate data protection safeguards;
 - (b) the data principal has provided explicit consent for such transfer;
 - (c) the transfer is necessary for medical emergency, international legal cooperation, or contract fulfilment.
- (2) All cross-border data transfers shall be documented and subject to review by the Directorate upon request.
- (3) The Directorate may suspend or restrict transfers if such movement of data,-
- (a) poses risk to State security or public order;
 - (b) undermines rights of data principals under Indian law;
 - (c) violates bilateral data adequacy treaties or agreements.

56. Compliance with Personal Data Protection and IT Acts.- (1) All data fiduciaries, processors, intermediaries, and State departments shall ensure compliance with,-

- (a) the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023;
 - (b) the Information Technology Act, 2000 and its rules, including the IT (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data) Rules, 2011;
 - (c) guidelines issued by CERT-In, Reserve Bank of India (for financial data), and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- (2) The Directorate shall notify additional State-level compliance guidelines, especially for,-
- (a) public health data systems;
 - (b) education databases;
 - (c) smart city and urban mobility platforms;
 - (d) to harmonise with the national regulatory framework.

57. Audit of Cybersecurity Practices and Systems.- (1) Every significant data fiduciary or designated critical digital infrastructure operator shall undergo an annual cybersecurity audit conducted by a certified auditor empanelled by the Directorate or CERT-In.

- (2) The audit shall assess,-
- (a) implementation of data protection and access controls;
 - (b) endpoint and network security configurations;
 - (c) compliance with incident response protocols;
 - (d) readiness for ransomware and zero-day threats.
- (3) Non-compliance with audit recommendations may result in suspension of digital operations, imposition of penalties, or prosecution as per this Act.

58. Prohibition of Unauthorized Surveillance and Snooping.- (1) No person or agency shall engage in,-

- (a) interception of electronic communication;
- (b) unauthorised CCTV, drone or spyware surveillance;
- (c) keylogging, browser fingerprinting or tracking cookies;

except as authorised by a competent authority under the provisions of Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.

(2) Any violation of this section shall constitute a cognizable offence, punishable with imprisonment up to three years and fine up to ten lakh rupees.

(3) The Directorate shall maintain a public register of authorised surveillance orders, redacted to protect national security and individual privacy.

59. Regulations for Internet of Things (IoT) Security.- (1) Every manufacturer or distributor of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, including smart home systems, wearables, connected vehicles, and health monitors, shall:

- (a) implement secure boot mechanisms, encrypted firmware, and over-the-air update systems;
- (b) adopt minimal data collection and opt-out settings by default;
- (c) provide user instructions on data privacy and security configurations.

(2) The Directorate shall issue IoT Device Security Guidelines in consultation with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), and ensure alignment with global norms such as ETSI EN 303 645 and ISO/IEC 27402.

(3) Periodic penetration testing and security certification shall be mandatory for all government-purchased IoT systems.

60. Measures Against Identity Theft and Account Hacking.- (1) The State Government shall establish a Unified Digital Identity Protection Portal enabling:

- (a) citizens to report digital identity theft or unauthorised usage of Aadhaar, PAN, bank accounts, or social media profiles;
- (b) public platforms to verify claims and take protective action including suspension of fraudulent accounts or freezing transactions;
- (c) victims to receive time-bound resolution and counselling support.

(2) The Directorate shall,-

- (a) issue advisories on password hygiene, phishing scams, and social engineering;
- (b) publish quarterly reports on identity fraud trends;
- (c) coordinate with fintech companies, banks, and platforms for preventive frameworks and user protection protocols.

(3) Any entity failing to act on reported identity theft or account takeover within 72 hours of notification shall be deemed non-compliant under this Act.

CHAPTER VIII

COMPLIANCE AND REGULATORY OBLIGATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

61. Duties of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Intermediaries.- (1) Every Internet Service Provider, telecom operator, web-hosting service, content delivery network, messaging service, and intermediary as defined under clause (w) of sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, operating within the territorial jurisdiction of the State of Karnataka, shall be under a statutory duty to ensure digital safety, lawful cooperation with law enforcement, and compliance with applicable norms.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), every such intermediary or service provider shall,—

- (a) take all reasonable and technically feasible measures to prevent the hosting, display, publication, transmission, or storage of any unlawful content including child sexual abuse material (CSAM), incitement to violence, online gambling, misinformation, impersonation, or threats to the sovereignty and integrity of India, as defined under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021;
- (b) furnish all relevant technical assistance, digital access credentials (where lawfully requisitioned), content takedown cooperation, or forensic mirror copies, to any law enforcement agency duly authorised by law, for the purposes of cybercrime prevention, investigation, or prosecution, subject to applicable judicial or statutory authorisation;
- (c) appoint a resident grievance officer and a nodal contact person who shall be available 24x7 to receive and act upon lawful orders, user complaints, blocking directions, and takedown requests from the Directorate or law enforcement authorities;
- (d) maintain user data, IP addresses, login timestamps, traffic metadata, and communication logs in encrypted and secure formats for such minimum period as

- may be prescribed under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 or any rules made under this Act;
- (e) ensure end-to-end cooperation with State-authorised monitoring systems, lawful interception mechanisms, and threat intelligence grids, consistent with directions under section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- (3) Any intermediary or Internet Service Provider found to have wilfully neglected or refused to perform its duties under this section shall, in addition to penalties under the Information Technology Act, 2000, be liable under this Act to,—
- (a) monetary fines not exceeding ten lakh rupees for each instance of non-compliance;
 - (b) de-prioritisation or suspension of operations within the State in severe or repeated violations;
 - (c) referral to the appropriate regulatory authority for cancellation or suspension of licences or authorisations.

62. Content Moderation Obligations for Social Media Platforms.- (1) Every Social Media Intermediary and Significant Social Media Intermediary as defined under Rule 2(1)(v) and (w) of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, and operating within the State of Karnataka, shall ensure that the platform's operations do not compromise public safety, human dignity, or digital constitutional rights.

(2) Without prejudice to general obligations under Rule 3 of the said Rules, every such platform shall,—

- (a) adopt and deploy a content moderation architecture that integrates both human moderation teams and artificial intelligence tools, specifically trained to identify and prevent the dissemination of prohibited content including CSAM, hate speech, incitement to communal violence, cyber terrorism content, or deepfake pornography;
 - (b) process user complaints, government orders, and takedown requests promptly, and in no case later than seventy-two hours from receipt, except where an earlier timeline is specified under applicable law;
 - (c) publish clear disclosures about their content moderation policies, including the basis for content takedown, account suspensions, algorithmic promotion or suppression of content, and shadow banning, in a manner accessible to users in English and Kannada;
 - (d) ensure that all moderation decisions are reasoned, subject to review, and open to appeal under an *Internal Grievance Redressal Mechanism* available on the platform itself;
 - (e) ensure that significant content-related decisions involving high-reach users or public interest content are taken with human oversight and in accordance with transparency standards.
- (3) The Directorate may, having regard to public safety, issue specific directions or sectoral codes of practice applicable to platforms,—
- (a) with over five lakh active users within Karnataka, or
 - (b) whose services are repeatedly used for unlawful content dissemination, cyberbullying, or misinformation campaigns.

(4) Failure to comply with obligations under this section may result in penalties as specified in Chapter X of this Act, and may also attract prosecution under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

63. Digital Advertisement Fraud Prevention Regulations.- (1) Every digital advertising intermediary, programmatic ad network, online publisher, and advertiser targeting or operating within the State of Karnataka shall ensure the integrity, security, and legality of advertisements displayed or distributed via online, mobile, or OTT platforms.

(2) For the purposes of preventing fraud and protecting digital consumers, it shall be the duty of all such entities to,—

- (a) prevent the insertion, distribution, or targeting of deceptive, click-bait, impersonated, or falsely labelled advertisements;
 - (b) screen all advertisements to ensure that no ad leads to phishing websites, malicious applications, identity theft portals, or any source of malware or spyware distribution;
 - (c) ensure that every advertisement displayed is verifiably traceable to a legitimate advertiser via a certified ad attribution mechanism, such as verified publisher or advertiser ID tokens;
 - (d) maintain an internal fraud detection protocol using AI-based click fraud detectors, impression anomaly logs, and bot traffic filters;
 - (e) submit quarterly reports to the Directorate containing metrics on ad impressions, click-through frauds identified, ad delistings, and blacklisted advertiser accounts.
- (3) Any person or platform found violating the obligations under this section shall be liable to
- (a) monetary penalties up to twenty lakh rupees for each fraudulent campaign;
 - (b) suspension or blacklisting of offending advertisements from being served in the State;
 - (c) notification to the relevant trade regulator or consumer protection body for further action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.
- (4) The Directorate may, by notification, prescribe additional safeguards for digital ads in sensitive sectors such as healthcare, finance, gaming, and education, and mandate labelling or risk disclosures for certain categories of ads.

64. Cybersecurity Compliance for E-commerce Platforms.- (1) Every e-commerce platform including marketplace entities and inventory-based models shall,—

- (a) implement robust payment security protocols and PCI-DSS compliant data storage practices;
 - (b) provide secure user authentication, OTP-based confirmations, and order verification systems;
 - (c) maintain logs of seller-buyer communications and transaction records for a minimum period of one year;
 - (d) develop internal systems for detecting fake listings, fraudulent sellers, and counterfeit product networks.
- (2) Platforms shall establish a dedicated cybersecurity cell and file quarterly compliance reports with the Directorate.

65. Regulation of VPNs, Anonymizers, and Privacy Tools.- (1) Every Virtual Private Network (VPN) provider, anonymization service, or encrypted browsing tool operating within Karnataka shall,—

- (a) register with the Directorate and provide a declaration of their data retention, user logs, and lawful access policies;
 - (b) retain metadata such as user IP addresses, session duration, and device identifiers for a period not less than five years;
 - (c) comply with orders issued by a competent authority for lawful interception, user traceability, or cybercrime investigation.
- (2) Failure to register or refusal to comply with the provisions of this section shall result in a prohibition on operations within Karnataka and punitive action under applicable laws.

66. Cybersecurity Standards for Banks and Financial Institutions.-(1) All banks, digital payment operators, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs), and fintech entities operating in Karnataka shall,—

- (a) implement end-to-end encryption, strong customer authentication, and transaction risk scoring systems;
 - (b) comply with the Reserve Bank of India's Cybersecurity Framework for Banks and relevant guidelines issued from time to time;
 - (c) report cybersecurity incidents involving customer data breach, payment fraud, or ransomware within six hours to the Directorate and CERT-In;
 - (d) establish internal cyber risk management committees and undergo annual audits.
- (2) Non-compliance shall invite penalties under this Act and under sector-specific financial regulations.

67. Framework for Lawful Interception and Monitoring.- (1) Any interception, monitoring, or decryption of information by a service provider shall only be carried out—

- (a) upon a lawful order issued under Section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 or any other relevant central law;
 - (b) with prior authorisation of the Competent Authority as designated by the State Government;
 - (c) in strict adherence to the principles of necessity, proportionality, and procedural safeguards established by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1.
- (2) All intercepted data shall be handled with confidentiality and access logs must be retained for at least one year.

68. Compliance Audits and Penalties for Non-Compliance.-(1) The Directorate shall have the power to conduct suo motu or complaint-based compliance audits of any service provider, digital platform, or data fiduciary.

- (2) Upon such audit, if any instance of non-compliance is established, the Directorate may,—
- (a) impose administrative fines proportionate to the breach, up to ₹2 crore per incident;
 - (b) issue directions to suspend services, remove content, or remediate systems within a specified timeline;
 - (c) recommend criminal prosecution where fraud, negligence, or deliberate non-compliance is proved.
- (3) An appeal against such order shall lie with the Cyber Appellate Tribunal constituted under this Act.

69. Code of Conduct for Digital Platforms in Karnataka.- (1) The Directorate shall notify, in consultation with stakeholders, a Code of Conduct for digital platforms operating in Karnataka, including but not limited to,—

- (a) respect for user privacy and data minimisation;
- (b) transparency in algorithmic decision-making and advertisement targeting;
- (c) prohibition of hate speech, incitement to violence, and disinformation;
- (d) grievance redressal, content moderation, and right to appeal.

(2) The Code shall be binding and enforceable, and shall be periodically revised based on evolving technologies and public feedback.

70. Cybersecurity Certification for Private Sector Entities.- (1) The State Government, in consultation with the Directorate, shall establish a Cybersecurity Assurance and Certification Scheme for private entities including software companies, telecom firms, startups, and IT-enabled service providers.

(2) Certification shall be based on,—

- (a) adherence to national and international cybersecurity standards (such as ISO 27001, NIST, or CERT-In guidelines);
- (b) audit of data handling and security infrastructure;
- (c) documented incident response and recovery mechanisms.

(3) Entities holding certification shall be granted priority in State procurement, eligibility for startup incentives, and recognition in public directories.

(4) Misrepresentation or breach of certified standards shall result in revocation of certification and blacklisting from public contracts for up to three years.

CHAPTER IX

PUBLIC GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AND VICTIM SUPPORT

71. Establishment of State-level Cybercrime Helpline and Complaint Portal.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Directorate, establish and operationalize a unified, toll-free State Cybercrime Helpline and an integrated, multilingual Online Cyber Complaint Portal for the registration of grievances arising from cyber offences under this Act or any other law for the time being in force.

(2) The helpline and portal shall be accessible on a 24x7 basis and shall,—

- (a) Enable the complainant to file a First Information Report (FIR) or preliminary complaint electronically;
- (b) Provide end-to-end complaint tracking with acknowledgment receipts and reference numbers;
- (c) Integrate with the Police IT system, Digital India portals, and relevant centralised databases for prompt referral and action.

(3) The portal shall be equipped with AI-enabled triaging for prioritising offences involving,—

- (a) Women and children;
- (b) Financial fraud or large-scale public deception;
- (c) Threats to critical information infrastructure or national security.

(4) It shall be mandatory for all internet service providers, social media intermediaries, and relevant digital platforms to prominently display a link to the State Cybercrime Complaint Portal on their home pages.

Provided that this section shall not prevent any person from filing a complaint in person at a police station or through other legally recognised means.

72. Establishment of Cybercrime Grievance Redressal Cells.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish Cybercrime Grievance Redressal Cells at the State level and in every police district, which shall act as specialised administrative units under the Directorate for the resolution of cybercrime-related complaints.

(2) Each Cell shall comprise,-

- (a) A Deputy Superintendent of Police or equivalent officer, designated as Nodal Officer;
- (b) A legal officer with qualifications in cyber law or digital evidence law;
- (c) A forensic technology expert or digital analyst nominated by the Directorate;
- (d) A certified psychological counsellor where appropriate.

(3) The Cells shall be vested with powers to,-

- (a) Conduct preliminary inquiries and recommend registration of FIRs where warranted;
- (b) Provide interim digital protection including disabling malicious content, freezing compromised digital assets, or coordinating with platforms for immediate content takedown;
- (c) Refer cases to special cybercrime police units for investigation, as per Chapter VI.

(4) The Cells shall maintain a digital log of all complaints, actions taken, and resolution timelines, accessible to the complainant and the Directorate for oversight.

73. Time-bound Resolution of Grievances and Appeals.- (1) Every complaint received under this Act shall be resolved within the following prescribed timelines unless the nature of the offence necessitates further inquiry,-

- (a) Registration and acknowledgment of complaint – within 48 hours;
- (b) Preliminary response or action taken report – within 7 working days;
- (c) Full resolution or referral to investigating authority – within 21 working days;
- (d) Disposal of appeal before the Directorate – within 30 working days from filing.

(2) An appeal against the decision of the Grievance Redressal Cell may be made to the Directorate by the aggrieved party within 15 days from the date of communication of such decision.

Provided that the Directorate may, for reasons recorded in writing, condone a delay of not more than 15 additional days if sufficient cause is shown.

Explanation:For the purpose of this section, “resolution” includes referral, closure, administrative action, or initiation of investigation.

74. Cybercrime Victim Assistance Fund.- (1) The State Government shall constitute a Fund to be called the Karnataka Cybercrime Victim Assistance Fund, which shall be administered by the Directorate for the purpose of providing monetary relief and rehabilitative assistance to victims of cybercrime.

(2) The Fund shall consist of,-

- (a) Grants and allocations made by the State Government;
- (b) Contributions or donations from corporations, individuals, or statutory bodies;

- (c) Sums recovered by way of fines or penalties under this Act, if directed by the Government;
 - (d) Other sources as may be prescribed.
- (3) The Fund may be used for,-
- (a) Providing financial compensation to victims of financial fraud, online sexual exploitation, or digital identity theft;
 - (b) Funding medical and psychological care for victims of severe emotional distress caused by cyber offences;
 - (c) Supporting access to legal aid, forensic recovery, or digital restoration services;
 - (d) Awareness and outreach campaigns targeted towards high-risk or vulnerable populations.
- (4) The Fund shall be administered by a Managing Committee constituted by the State Government, and its accounts shall be audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

75. Psychological Counselling and Rehabilitation Support.- (1) The Directorate shall make appropriate arrangements for the provision of trauma-informed psychological counselling, mental health support, and victim rehabilitation services to individuals affected by cyber offences under this Act.

- (2) Such services shall be provided through,-
- (a) State-run mental health institutions and counselling centres;
 - (b) Accredited private institutions and clinical psychologists empanelled by the Directorate;
 - (c) Digital counselling services in local languages via secure tele-therapy platforms.
- (3) Victims of online sexual harassment, bullying, or stalking shall be given priority access to counselling support and their anonymity shall be protected.

Provided that any therapy records or information disclosed by the victim shall not be admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceedings without the express written consent of the victim.

76. Confidentiality and Protection of Victim Identity.- (1) No authority, public servant, intermediary, or any person involved in the handling, reporting, or adjudication of a cybercrime shall disclose any personal information, social media profile, address, or identifiable data of the victim, without the express consent of such victim.

- (2) In cases involving minors, women, transgender persons, or persons with mental or physical disabilities, disclosure of identity shall be prohibited, and all proceedings shall be conducted in-camera wherever feasible.
- (3) Violation of this provision shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years or with fine which may extend to ₹1 lakh or with both.

Explanation: “Disclosure” includes unauthorised publication on social media, leaks to media, or sharing of screenshots or digital evidence in public forums.

77. Collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society.- (1) The Directorate shall maintain a registry of accredited non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society bodies, digital safety groups, women’s organisations, and educational institutions for the purpose of assisting in public awareness, counselling, victim support, and outreach.

- (2) Such organisations may be entrusted with the following functions,-
 - (a) Conducting digital safety awareness camps and educational programs;
 - (b) Providing paralegal support and digital recovery assistance to victims;
 - (c) Operating women- and child-focused helplines or community support centres;
 - (d) Collaborating with police stations and district Cells for outreach.
 - (3) Accredited organisations shall submit periodic performance reports to the Directorate and shall be eligible for funding under the Cybercrime Victim Assistance Fund, subject to compliance and evaluation.
- 78. Public Feedback and Participatory Policy-making.-** (1) The Directorate shall frame mechanisms for public engagement, feedback collection, and participatory rule-making in matters relating to cybercrime prevention, digital safety, and victim redressal.
- (2) The following mechanisms shall be institutionalized,-
 - (a) Annual Cybercrime Consultative Forums at the district and State levels;
 - (b) Public notice and comment process for new guidelines and advisories issued under this Act;
 - (c) Inclusion of representatives from student bodies, youth forums, women's groups, digital platforms, and educational institutions in stakeholder dialogues.
 - (3) Suggestions and representations received under this section shall be compiled in an annual consultative report and shall be placed before the State Cybercrime Advisory Board constituted under this Act, if any.

CHAPTER X

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

79. Promotion of Research and Development in Cybersecurity and Cyber Forensics.-

- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Directorate, formulate and implement schemes for the promotion of scientific research, technological innovation, and development of indigenous tools in the fields of cybersecurity, cyber forensics, digital forensics, and information assurance.
- (2) The Directorate may,-
 - (a) Facilitate collaborative research projects with academic institutions, think tanks, and research laboratories;
 - (b) Provide financial assistance, grants, and endowments to researchers, institutions, and consortia working on cyber threat mitigation, encryption technologies, and forensic analysis;
 - (c) Establish Research Fellowships for doctoral and post-doctoral studies in cyberlaw, cyberpsychology, cryptography, and data science.
- (3) Priority shall be accorded to projects addressing threats to critical infrastructure, deepfake detection, child safety, ransomware prevention, and dark web surveillance.

80. Establishment of Cybersecurity Innovation Hubs.- (1) The State Government may, by notification, establish one or more Cybersecurity Innovation Hubs across different zones of the State as centres for excellence and technological incubation in the domain of cyber safety and digital public infrastructure.

- (2) Each Innovation Hub shall act as a multi-stakeholder platform involving,-
 - (a) Startups and technology entrepreneurs;

- (b) Cybersecurity solution providers;
 - (c) Government cyber agencies and law enforcement units;
 - (d) Academic collaborators and international partners.
- (3) The objectives of the Innovation Hubs shall include,-
- (a) Development of scalable, secure solutions for threat intelligence;
 - (b) Testing and deployment of open-source security tools;
 - (c) Hosting sandbox environments for ethical hacking, vulnerability assessments, and red teaming exercises;
 - (d) Facilitating Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in the field of cyber governance.

81. Collaboration with Academic Institutions and Startups.- (1) The Directorate shall promote institutional partnerships with law universities, engineering colleges, IITs, IIITs, NITs, and private research centres, to encourage interdisciplinary approaches to cybersecurity, cyber law, and digital forensics.

- (2) The Directorate may, through a notification,-
- (a) Facilitate incubation of cybersecurity startups by providing co-working spaces, funding support, and technical mentorship;
 - (b) Commission innovation challenges or ideathons on solving real-time cybercrime threats;
 - (c) Encourage universities to introduce domain electives and minors in cybersecurity, digital law, and cyber ethics.

Explanation:For the purpose of this section, "academic institutions" shall include technical universities, law schools, and recognised educational institutions in Karnataka.

82. Skill Development Programs in Cyber Investigation.- (1) The Directorate shall establish and coordinate Skill Development Programs aimed at training youth, IT professionals, law students, and government personnel in areas including but not limited to,-

- (a) Ethical hacking and penetration testing;
 - (b) Digital evidence recovery and chain of custody;
 - (c) Cybercrime reporting and investigation protocols;
 - (d) OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) and threat hunting.
- (2) Such programs shall be offered through blended formats, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and certified modules delivered in collaboration with,-
- (a) National Skill Development Corporation;
 - (b) Industrial Training Institutes and Polytechnics;
 - (c) Cybersecurity companies and domain experts.

83. Mandatory Cybercrime Training for Police and Judiciary.- (1) Every police officer, prosecutor, and judicial officer dealing with cybercrime matters under this Act shall undergo mandatory certified training on digital investigation and electronic evidence law, in such manner as may be prescribed.

- (2) The Directorate shall collaborate with the Karnataka Judicial Academy, Police Training Institutions, and National Law Universities to develop,-
- (a) Specialised training manuals and judicial primers;
 - (b) Simulation-based practical workshops on digital forensics and cross-jurisdictional evidence;

- (c) Courses on balancing privacy rights, surveillance obligations, and data protection under Indian constitutional law.
- (3) A refresher training shall be conducted every three years or whenever there is a material update in legal or technological standards applicable to cyber offences.

84. Cybersecurity Awareness in Corporate Governance.- (1) The State Government shall promote corporate cybersecurity responsibility by requiring every company operating within Karnataka and falling under such thresholds as may be notified, to:

- (a) Appoint a Cybersecurity Compliance Officer;
 - (b) Conduct periodic cyber risk assessments and vulnerability scans;
 - (c) Implement employee cybersecurity awareness programs and digital ethics codes.
- (2) The Directorate shall publish a Cybersecurity Best Practices Handbook for Corporate Entities, covering,-
- (a) Data handling and breach response protocols;
 - (b) Insider threat detection and mitigation;
 - (c) Reporting obligations under applicable data protection laws.

Provided that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) shall be provided capacity-building support and exemption from mandatory compliance, unless otherwise prescribed.

85. International Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange.- (1) The State Government, in consultation with the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, may enter into collaborative arrangements with foreign governments, cybersecurity agencies, and international organisations for,-

- (a) Exchange of technical expertise, forensic technologies, and legal frameworks;
 - (b) Participation in global cybercrime conventions, capacity-building missions, and training programs;
 - (c) Cooperation in combating cross-border cyber threats and digital financial frauds.
- (2) International collaborations under this section shall be conducted in accordance with,-
- (a) Article 253 of the Constitution of India;
 - (b) Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs), international law, and applicable data transfer protocols.

86. Cybersecurity Competitions, Hackathons, and Awards.- (1) The Directorate shall annually organise Cybersecurity Competitions, Hackathons, Capture-the-Flag (CTF) contests, and Innovation Challenges for students, professionals, and researchers to promote ethical hacking, problem-solving, and technological creativity.

- (2) The winners of such events shall be eligible for,-
- (a) State Fellowships in Cybersecurity and Digital Governance;
 - (b) Scholarships for advanced study or industry internships;
 - (c) Recognition by the State in the form of “Cyber Sentinel of Karnataka” awards.
- (3) The Directorate shall maintain a digital repository of winning solutions and publish whitepapers or toolkits derived from competition results.

87. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, and Quantum Computing for Security.- (1) The Directorate shall explore the adoption of emerging technologies, including but not limited to,-

- (a) Artificial Intelligence (AI) for automated threat detection, phishing pattern analysis, and anomaly detection in digital transactions;
 - (b) Blockchain for tamper-proof evidence management, integrity of chain-of-custody systems, and secure registry of e-records;
 - (c) Quantum computing research for future-ready encryption, key management, and vulnerability testing.
- (2) Pilot projects and testbeds using such technologies shall be conducted through public-private-academic partnerships, and the findings shall inform the Directorate's evolving digital security framework.
- (3) The Directorate may issue technical guidelines and procurement standards for government departments adopting AI or blockchain-based cybersecurity tools, ensuring alignment with ethical AI principles and data protection norms.

CHAPTER XI

FINANCE, ACCOUNTS, AND AUDIT

88. Grants and financial support by State Government.- (1) The State Government shall, after due appropriation made by the State Legislature by law in this behalf, provide to the Cybercrime Prevention Authority established under this Act such grants-in-aid, loans, advances, and other financial support as it may deem necessary for the efficient discharge of the functions of the Authority.

(2) The State Government may also,-

- (a) Sanction special grants for technological modernisation, capacity building, digital infrastructure enhancement, and research projects in cybersecurity;
- (b) Allocate contingency funds in cases of cyber emergencies, mass-scale cyberattacks, or crisis response;
- (c) Institute incentive-based performance grants for compliance, innovation, and effective grievance redressal outcomes achieved by subordinate cybercrime units or departments.

(3) The Authority may also receive funds from national schemes, international agencies, or public-private partnerships, with the prior approval of the State Government and subject to compliance with applicable laws.

89. Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Fund.- (1) There shall be constituted a fund to be called the Karnataka Cybercrime Prevention Fund (hereinafter referred to as "the Fund"), which shall be maintained and administered by the Authority under the supervision of the Chief Financial Officer designated under this Act.

(2) The Fund shall consist of,—

- (a) Grants, loans, and allocations made by the State Government under section 88;
- (b) Contributions from any national or international agency, public or private entity, or philanthropic organisation, with prior approval of the State Government;
- (c) Income generated through training programs, consultancy, publications, or other authorised services rendered by the Authority;
- (d) Penalties, fines, and compounding fees collected under the provisions of this Act;
- (e) Any other receipts, accruals, or interest income from investments, subject to rules made in this behalf.

- (3) The Fund shall be utilised exclusively for the following purposes,-
- (a) Establishment and maintenance of cybercrime units, forensics labs, and cybersecurity infrastructure;
 - (b) Conduct of awareness campaigns, hackathons, training, and workshops;
 - (c) Financial assistance to victims of cybercrime, where eligible;
 - (d) Operational and administrative expenses of the Authority;
 - (e) Any other purpose as may be notified by the State Government in furtherance of the objectives of this Act.

Explanation: No portion of the Fund shall be diverted for purposes unrelated to the enforcement, capacity building, or public safety initiatives in the digital domain under this Act.

90. Budgeting, fund allocation, and utilization.- (1) The Authority shall prepare, in such form and at such time each financial year as may be prescribed, a budget estimate of its income and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year and submit the same to the State Government for approval.

- (2) The budget shall include provisions for,-
- (a) Recurring and non-recurring expenditures on establishment, infrastructure, and personnel;
 - (b) Capital expenditure on cyber forensics laboratories, technology acquisition, and innovation hubs;
 - (c) Victim support schemes, grievance redressal infrastructure, and cyber awareness programs;
 - (d) Grants-in-aid or performance-linked disbursements to subordinate offices and collaborating agencies.
- (3) All expenditures shall be made strictly in accordance with the approved budget and financial guidelines issued by the State Government or the Finance Department.
- (4) The Authority shall ensure optimal and efficient utilisation of funds and maintain transparency in fund disbursal and procurement, subject to audit.

91. Maintenance of accounts and statutory audit.- (1) The Authority shall maintain proper books of accounts and relevant records, in such manner and form as may be prescribed, including detailed records of receipts, expenditures, investments, and liabilities.

(2) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or any person authorised by him in this behalf, in accordance with applicable provisions of law.

(3) The Authority shall make available to the Comptroller and Auditor General or any officer appointed by him,—

- (a) All such books of accounts, records, and documents as may be required for audit;
 - (b) All statements, returns, and explanations relating to the affairs of the Authority.
- (4) The audit report, together with the Authority's comments, shall be submitted to the State Government, which shall cause the same to be laid before the State Legislature.

92. Annual report submission to State Legislature.- (1) The Authority shall, as soon as may be after the end of each financial year, prepare and submit to the State Government an Annual Report containing,-

- (a) A detailed statement of its activities, achievements, and initiatives undertaken during the preceding year;
 - (b) A financial statement including income and expenditure;
 - (c) Details of cybercrime trends, case resolutions, victim assistance measures, and performance metrics;
 - (d) A summary of compliance with legal obligations, directions issued, and enforcement action taken.
- (2) The Annual Report shall be submitted to the State Government within six months from the end of the financial year.
- (3) The State Government shall cause a copy of the Annual Report, along with a memorandum explaining action taken thereon, to be laid before both Houses of the State Legislature.
- (4) The Annual Report may be made publicly available in such manner and through such platforms as may be specified by regulations, ensuring transparency and citizen awareness.

CHAPTER XII

OFFENCES, PENALTIES, AND ENFORCEMENT

93. Offences and penalties for cybercrimes.- (1) Any person who, without authorisation, intentionally accesses, hacks, or causes to be accessed any computer system, network, database, or device, shall be punishable with,-

- (a) Imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years, or
 - (b) Fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees, or
 - (c) Both.
- (2) Whoever engages in phishing, online impersonation, or any deceptive act with the intent to obtain passwords, personal data, or financial credentials, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term not less than one year but which may extend to five years, and with fine not less than two lakh rupees but which may extend to ten lakh rupees.
- (3) Whoever commits identity theft, commits fraud through fake websites, emails, or social engineering techniques, shall be liable under this Act in addition to provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860) and the Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000).

Explanation:-For the purpose of this section, “hacking” includes unauthorised intrusion into data, disruption of services, or deletion or alteration of information on a digital device.

94. Penalties for data breaches and privacy violations.- (1) Any person or entity who causes or negligently permits a data breach resulting in the loss, theft, exposure, or unauthorised access of personal or sensitive personal data shall be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty lakh rupees.

- (2) Where the data breach was intentional or results in significant harm to individuals, the offender shall be punishable with,-
- (a) Imprisonment up to three years, and/or
 - (b) Fine up to one crore rupees.
- (3) The Authority shall have the power to classify the severity of the data breach and the extent of liability, having regard to,-
- (a) The nature and volume of data compromised;

- (b) The sensitivity of the information involved;
- (c) The duration and scope of exposure;
- (d) Prior violations by the same offender.

Provided: No penalty shall be imposed without giving the person concerned a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

95. Punishment for dissemination of illegal content.- (1) Any person who knowingly or recklessly creates, transmits, shares, or hosts content that is,-

- (a) Obscene or sexually explicit involving children;
- (b) Promoting terrorism, hate speech, or religious disharmony;
- (c) Defamatory, fake, or manipulated using deepfake technologies,

shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term not less than two years but which may extend to seven years, and with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees.

(2) If such dissemination causes public disorder or leads to incitement to violence, the punishment may extend to ten years of imprisonment under aggravated circumstances.

(3) The offence under this section shall be cognizable and non-bailable.

96. Corporate liability for cybersecurity failures.- (1) Where a body corporate, company, partnership, or any other institution fails to adopt adequate cybersecurity safeguards as mandated under this Act or any rule made thereunder, and such failure results in:

- (a) A cyber incident or breach, or
- (b) Harm to any consumer, citizen, or digital system,
- (a) the entity shall be liable to a civil penalty up to two crore rupees.

(2) The Authority may further direct the entity to,-

- (a) Undertake mandatory audit and risk assessment;
- (b) Appoint a Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) within a stipulated period;
- (c) Suspend operations of non-compliant digital systems.

(3) Repeated or wilful non-compliance shall attract criminal liability for key managerial persons, including imprisonment up to three years and fine up to fifty lakh rupees.

97. Penalties for non-compliance by intermediaries.-(1) Any intermediary, including social media platforms, hosting service providers, or cloud infrastructure operators, who fails to,-

- (a) Take down unlawful content within the timeline prescribed;
- (b) Provide information as required under lawful requests or orders;
- (c) Implement due diligence and traceability norms,

shall be liable to a fine not exceeding one crore rupees, and in case of continuing default, an additional fine up to five lakh rupees per day.

(2) The Authority may also recommend suspension of operations or revocation of licenses after repeated violations.

Explanation: “Intermediary” shall have the same meaning as assigned under section 2(1)(w) of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

98. Enforcement of fines, confiscation, and prosecution.- (1) Any fine or penalty imposed under this Act shall be recoverable as an arrear of land revenue under the Karnataka Revenue Recovery Act, 1966 or any other applicable law.

(2) The Authority shall have the power to:

- (a) Issue attachment and confiscation orders against any digital device, server, asset, or proceeds derived from a cyber offence;
 - (b) Initiate criminal prosecution or refer the case to designated Cyber Police Stations for investigation;
 - (c) Suspend or blacklist offending service providers, platforms, or persons from participation in public digital infrastructure.
- (3) The Authority shall publish periodic reports of enforcement actions taken, while ensuring confidentiality of ongoing investigations and protection of victim identity.
- 99. Compounding of offences and adjudication process.-** (1) The Authority may, either before or after the institution of prosecution, compound any offence punishable under this Act, except those punishable with imprisonment exceeding three years or offences involving harm to children or national security.
- (2) The compounding shall be done by an Adjudicating Officer appointed by the State Government, in such manner and subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed.
- (3) The Adjudicating Officer shall have the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, including:
- (a) Summoning and enforcing attendance of witnesses;
 - (b) Requiring production of documents or electronic records;
 - (c) Receiving evidence on affidavit;
 - (d) Issuing directions to secure compliance or prevent recurrence.
- (4) Any person aggrieved by the order of the Adjudicating Officer may file an appeal before the Cyber Appellate Authority constituted under this Act.
- 100. Offences by companies and vicarious liability provisions.-** (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company, every person who, at the time of commission of the offence, was in charge of and responsible for the conduct of business shall be deemed to be guilty and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.
- (2) Provided that such person shall not be liable if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he had exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.
- (3) Notwithstanding anything in sub-section (1), where an offence is committed by a company, and it is proved that the offence was committed with the consent, connivance, or attributable to any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary, or other officer, such person shall also be deemed to be guilty and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.
- (4) For the purposes of this section,-
- (a) "Company" means any body corporate and includes a firm, association of persons, society, or trust;
 - (b) "Director" in relation to a firm means a partner in the firm.

CHAPTER XIII MISCELLANEOUS

101. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Government, any officer of the Government, the Authority established under this Act, or any person acting under the direction of the Government or the

Authority for anything which is done or intended to be done in good faith under this Act or the rules or regulations made thereunder.

(2) For the purposes of this section, “good faith” shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 52 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860).

102. Power to make rules, regulations, and guidelines.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:—

- (a) The manner of appointment, qualifications, and conditions of service of officers under this Act;
- (b) Standards for cybersecurity practices to be followed by intermediaries, service providers, and other stakeholders;
- (c) The manner and timelines for reporting cyber incidents and data breaches;
- (d) The form and manner of appeals, applications, and submissions;
- (e) Any other matter which is to be or may be prescribed under this Act.

(3) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, frame regulations, circulars, standard operating procedures, and cybersecurity advisories, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(4) All rules and regulations made under this section shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly as soon as may be after they are made.

103. Power to issue clarifications and advisories.- (1) The State Government or the designated Authority may, from time to time, issue,—

- (a) Clarifications regarding the interpretation of any provision of this Act;
- (b) General or specific advisories, safety bulletins, and cyber hygiene alerts;
- (c) Operational guidelines to agencies, intermediaries, platforms, and regulated entities for compliance purposes.

(2) Such advisories and clarifications shall not have the force of law but shall serve as persuasive and recommendatory instruments, unless otherwise notified.

104. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be made after the expiry of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

(2) Every order made under this section shall be laid before the State Legislature.

105. Repeal, amendments, and savings.- (1) If any law in force in the State of Karnataka is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (21 of 2000), Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860), the Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, or any other applicable central or state laws.

(3) Notwithstanding the repeal of any notification, order, direction, or circular under earlier laws, anything done or any action taken under the provisions so repealed shall, in so far as it

is not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

106. Transitional provisions and legacy system integration.-(1) The State Government may frame schemes or issue directions for the seamless transition of cybercrime prevention and digital safety systems operating prior to the commencement of this Act.

(2) All existing digital complaint portals, public safety platforms, institutional frameworks, or cyber forensic systems shall, to the extent feasible, be integrated within the structures established under this Act.

(3) All ongoing investigations, prosecutions, or inquiries pertaining to cybercrimes shall continue under the applicable laws and shall not abate merely by reason of the enactment of this Act.

107. Jurisdiction of civil courts barred.- No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceeding in respect of any matter which the Authority, the Appellate Authority, or the State Government is empowered by or under this Act to determine, and no injunction shall be granted by any court or other authority in respect of any action taken or to be taken in pursuance of any power conferred under this Act.

108. Power to review and revise digital public safety policies.- (1) The State Government shall, at intervals not exceeding three years, review the policies and frameworks governing digital safety, cybersecurity, and cybercrime prevention in the State.

(2) Such reviews may consider,-

- (a) Developments in global best practices, including norms established by the United Nations, OECD, and other international bodies;
- (b) Recommendations from cyber policy think tanks, public consultation forums, and judicial pronouncements;
- (c) Technological advances such as quantum computing, AI ethics, data localisation frameworks, or surveillance laws.

(3) Upon such review, the Government may issue revised policies, amendments to existing rules or regulations, or propose legislative changes to the Act, to ensure the State remains at the forefront of cyber safety governance.

THE KARNATAKA AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE AND PATIENT RIGHTS BILL, 2025

A Bill to ensure the provision of affordable, accessible, and accountable healthcare services in the State of Karnataka; to safeguard the legal rights of patients; to regulate the cost of medical treatment in public and private healthcare institutions; to ensure transparency in hospital billing and insurance practices; to protect citizens from medical exploitation; and to promote equity, dignity, and justice in the healthcare system.

Whereas, Article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees the right to life which includes the right to health, medical care, and dignity;

And Whereas, Articles 38 and 47 of the Constitution direct the State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people and to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and improve public health;

And whereas, it is expedient to establish a legal framework to define patient rights, ensure quality healthcare delivery, regulate hospital charges, strengthen public accountability, and expand the scope of universal health coverage in the State of Karnataka;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PART I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent, and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Affordable Healthcare and Patient Rights Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) "Act" means the Karnataka Affordable Healthcare and Patient Rights Act, 2025;

(b) "Authority" means the Karnataka Healthcare Cost and Quality Authority constituted under section 26 of this Act;

(c) "clinical establishment" includes any hospital, nursing home, maternity home, dispensary, clinic, sanatorium, diagnostic centre, or any other institution that offers services for diagnosis, treatment, surgery, rehabilitation or care of illness, injury, pregnancy or any medical condition, in any recognised system of medicine, whether allopathic or AYUSH, owned or controlled by the Government or private entity, whether for profit or not-for-profit;

(d) "emergency medical care" means urgent medical intervention necessary to prevent death, serious bodily harm, significant impairment, or further deterioration of a patient's health;

(e) "grievance" means any written or verbal complaint relating to denial of service, overcharging, delay, misdiagnosis, unethical conduct, non-disclosure, discrimination, or violation of patient rights under this Act;

(f) "healthcare provider" includes a registered medical practitioner, nurse, specialist, paramedical staff, laboratory personnel, or any other person or institution providing healthcare services, either independently or under a registered establishment;

- (g) "insurance provider" means any public or private company or organisation engaged in providing health insurance coverage registered under the Insurance Act, 1938 and regulated by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI);
- (h) "patient" means any individual who avails of or seeks to avail of medical or healthcare services from a clinical establishment, either directly or through a representative or guardian;
- (i) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules, regulations, or notifications made under this Act;
- (j) "State Government" means the Government of Karnataka in the Department of Health and Family Welfare or any other department as notified by the Government;
- (k) "treatment cost" includes consultation fees, diagnostic tests, inpatient and outpatient charges, pre-operative and post-operative care, surgical procedures, ICU and ventilator costs, medicines, disposables, rehabilitation services, and any incidental or ancillary charges, whether itemised or in package form.

Explanation: Words and expressions used but not defined in this Act shall have the meanings assigned to them in the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010 or any other applicable law for the time being in force.

3. Act to override other laws.- The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force, or in any contract, custom, usage, judgement, order, or administrative practice having force of law.

4. Objectives and guiding principles.- The objectives of this Act are,—

- (a) To guarantee every resident of Karnataka access to affordable, equitable, safe, and quality healthcare services without financial hardship;
- (b) To promote transparency in healthcare costs and prevent unjustified overcharging and commercial exploitation;
- (c) To codify and enforce fundamental rights of patients in public and private healthcare institutions;
- (d) To establish mechanisms for regulation of pricing and ensure cost-effective treatment through oversight and standardisation;
- (e) To create grievance redressal platforms that empower patients and foster accountability in healthcare delivery;
- (f) To ensure compliance with the constitutional mandate under Article 21 and the Directive Principles under Articles 38 and 47 of the Constitution of India.

Explanation.—This Act shall be interpreted in furtherance of the right to health and human dignity, and all authorities shall act in a manner consistent with these objectives.

5. Application to public and private healthcare establishments.- (1) This Act shall apply to all clinical establishments operating within the State of Karnataka, whether owned, managed, operated or financed by,—

- (a) the Central Government or State Government;
- (b) any local authority or municipal body;
- (c) any trust, society, non-governmental organisation, private company, public sector undertaking, or any individual, whether for profit or not-for-profit.

(2) This Act shall apply to all types of healthcare services, including preventive, promotive, diagnostic, curative, rehabilitative, palliative, emergency, and mental health services.

(3) The provisions of this Act shall also apply to all health insurance providers, third-party administrators (TPAs), empanelled agencies, and digital health platforms engaged in the financing or delivery of healthcare services within the State.

PART II
RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS OF PATIENTS
CHAPTER I

PATIENT RIGHTS AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS

6. Right to emergency medical care.- (1) Every person shall have the unqualified right to receive immediate, stabilising, and life-saving emergency medical care at any clinical establishment, public or private, without the requirement of prior payment, identity proof, referral, or insurance verification.

(2) Emergency care shall be provided irrespective of the individual's nationality, residency, legal status, economic condition, religion, gender, caste, or any other social identifier.

(3) The attending medical practitioner shall stabilise the patient, conduct triage in accordance with clinical urgency, and ensure either complete management or safe and documented referral to a higher centre.

(4) It shall be the duty of the healthcare provider to document the clinical need, intervention provided, and transfer decisions in the patient's emergency chart.

(5) Any refusal or delay in providing emergency medical treatment shall attract penal consequences under Chapter X, and may lead to suspension, cancellation, or non-renewal of registration under this Act.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "emergency care" includes trauma, road traffic accidents, obstetric emergencies, acute psychiatric crises, poisoning, myocardial infarction, strokes, respiratory distress, and other acute life-threatening conditions as notified by the Authority from time to time.

7. Right to non-discriminatory treatment.- (1) Every patient shall be entitled to receive healthcare services without any form of direct or indirect discrimination in admission, treatment, discharge, or follow-up care.

(2) Discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, language, physical or mental disability, marital status, occupation, or insurance coverage is strictly prohibited.

(3) All clinical establishments shall frame and publish internal non-discrimination policies, undertake periodic training for staff, and establish protocols for redress of grievances arising out of discriminatory conduct.

(4) Any act of bias, stigma, or neglect in contravention of this section shall be liable for civil penalty, disciplinary action, and compensation as per provisions of this Act.

Explanation: Differential pricing, denial of admission, sub-standard treatment, or humiliation based on perceived social worth shall amount to discriminatory treatment.

8. Right to informed consent and refusal.- (1) Every patient or their legally authorised representative shall have the right to receive complete, comprehensible, and culturally

appropriate information regarding the patient's medical condition, nature of proposed treatment, benefits, risks, alternatives, and expected prognosis.

(2) No diagnostic test, procedure, treatment, anaesthesia, surgery, or enrolment in research trial shall be undertaken without the free, prior, and informed written consent of the patient or their guardian, except in cases of certified medical emergencies where consent cannot reasonably be obtained.

(3) Patients shall retain the right to withdraw consent or refuse any part of the treatment plan at any stage without affecting their right to receive other appropriate care.

(4) Clinical establishments shall maintain standardised, bilingual consent forms and preserve them as part of the patient's permanent medical record.

(5) Violation of informed consent obligations shall constitute professional misconduct and be referred to the appropriate medical ethics board for sanction.

9. Right to privacy and confidentiality.- (1) Patients shall have the right to physical privacy during medical examination, treatment, and care, including the presence of a chaperone when requested.

(2) All personal, diagnostic, billing, and clinical data shall be treated as confidential and stored securely with access only to authorised personnel.

(3) Disclosure of patient information shall be permissible only,—

- (a) with explicit and written consent of the patient or authorised representative;
- (b) when required by a court of competent jurisdiction; or
- (c) in circumstances where disclosure is mandated under public health, epidemiological, or legal obligations.

(4) Breach of confidentiality, whether by commission or omission, shall invite penalties including monetary compensation, disciplinary proceedings, and suspension of licence.

Explanation: Recording or sharing patient photographs, videos, or identifiable data for publicity, commercial, or non-clinical academic purposes without consent shall amount to breach of privacy.

10. Right to second opinion and medical records.- (1) Every patient shall be free to seek an independent second opinion from any registered healthcare provider of their choice without threat, obstruction, delay, or prejudice by the attending establishment.

(2) Clinical establishments shall, on written request of the patient or authorised person, provide within seventy-two hours,—

- (a) all medical records including outpatient notes, inpatient charts, operation theatre notes, discharge summaries, and clinical imaging;
- (b) reports of diagnostic and pathological tests, prescriptions, and medication schedules; and
- (c) a final bill showing item-wise breakup of charges levied.

(3) No additional fees shall be charged for the first copy of such medical records. Any delay beyond seventy-two hours shall be presumed to be obstruction and liable to penalty under this Act.

(4) Failure to provide records or denial of second opinion shall constitute professional misconduct and shall be reported to the appropriate regulatory body.

CHAPTER II

PATIENT INFORMATION AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS

11. Patient Rights Charter.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, publish a comprehensive Patient Rights Charter that shall be legally binding on all clinical establishments, both public and private, operating within the State.

(2) The Charter shall enshrine, inter alia, the following enforceable entitlements,-

- (a) Right to accessible, affordable, timely, and quality healthcare without discrimination;
- (b) Right to receive medical information in understandable language including treatment options, risks, and expected outcomes;
- (c) Right to informed consent, refusal, and participation in decision-making;
- (d) Right to privacy, dignity, and confidentiality of health information;
- (e) Right to obtain a second medical opinion and access to personal health records within seventy-two hours;
- (f) Right to grievance redressal, legal remedy, and compensation for medical negligence, overcharging, or denial of services.

(3) The Charter shall be developed in consultation with stakeholders including the Karnataka Healthcare Cost and Quality Authority, State Human Rights Commission, medical professionals, civil society organisations, legal experts, and patient advocacy groups.

(4) The Charter shall be reviewed and updated at least once every three years, and translated into Kannada and other regional languages for public display and awareness.

(5) The State Government may incorporate the Charter into the service conditions of licensed establishments and link it to empanelment under government health schemes.

12. Display of information in healthcare establishments.- (1) Every clinical establishment shall prominently display, in Kannada and English, at the reception area, billing counter, outpatient department, wards, and waiting area,-

- (a) The Patient Rights Charter as notified under section 11;
- (b) A certified schedule of fees, charges, and treatment package rates as approved by the Authority;
- (c) Emergency services offered and applicable fees, if any;
- (d) Contact details of the Grievance Officer and State Health Ombudsman;
- (e) List of Standard Treatment Packages (STPs), insurance tie-ups, and eligibility for free or subsidised care.

(2) All displayed information shall be,-

- (a) Legibly printed in font sizes prescribed by rules;
- (b) Updated every six months or immediately upon revision of rates or services;
- (c) Digitally available through the Unified Health Portal and QR codes at each counter.

(3) Non-compliance with this section shall attract monetary penalties and, in cases of repeated default, suspension of license or empanelment.

13. Establishment of Patient Help Desks.- (1) Every clinical establishment with more than twenty inpatient beds shall establish and maintain a Patient Help Desk to assist patients and caregivers.

(2) The Help Desk shall,-

- (a) Distribute printed materials on patient rights, grievance procedure, treatment costs, and insurance policies;
 - (b) Guide patients in registration, billing, consent processes, insurance claims, and discharge procedures;
 - (c) Accept verbal or written complaints and immediately forward them to the designated Grievance Officer;
 - (d) Provide updates on pending grievances and maintain a public complaint register;
 - (e) Assist vulnerable patients including the elderly, disabled, and non-literate persons.
- (3) The Help Desk shall operate during all business hours and be staffed with trained personnel proficient in Kannada and one other regional language.
- (4) In smaller facilities, a designated Nodal Officer shall discharge these responsibilities.
- (5) Each Help Desk shall maintain a daily log of patient interactions and submit a monthly report to the District Health Oversight Committee.

14. Hospital grievance redress mechanisms.- (1) Every clinical establishment shall constitute an internal Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) to investigate complaints and ensure accountability.

- (2) The GRC shall consist of,-
- (a) One senior medical professional not directly involved in the subject matter;
 - (b) One administrative representative with authority to take action;
 - (c) One external member representing patients' rights or nominated by the Authority.
- (3) All grievances shall,-
- (a) Be acknowledged within twenty-four hours of receipt;
 - (b) Be resolved within seven working days, with reasons recorded in writing;
 - (c) Be communicated to the complainant in writing with a receipt of delivery.
- (4) A dedicated grievance register shall be maintained both physically and digitally and be open to audit.
- (5) Summary statistics of grievances and action taken shall be submitted quarterly to the District Committee and uploaded to the Unified Health Portal.

15. Patient grievance escalation to Health Ombudsman.- (1) Any person aggrieved by the decision of the GRC or delay in resolution may approach the State Health Ombudsman for adjudication.

- (2) The Ombudsman shall,-
- (a) Register and investigate the complaint independently;
 - (b) Require appearance or submission of records from the clinical establishment or insurer;
 - (c) Issue a reasoned and binding order including directions for compensation, refund, corrective action, or disciplinary referral.
- (3) No complaint shall be rejected without affording the complainant an opportunity to be heard.
- (4) The Ombudsman shall dispose of each complaint within thirty days unless extended by written order citing complexity.
- (5) Orders of the Ombudsman shall be enforceable as if issued by a civil court and may be appealed before the Healthcare Appellate Tribunal within sixty days.

(6) There shall be no fee for filing complaints before the Ombudsman, and patients may be assisted by legal aid or designated representatives.

PART III

AFFORDABLE TREATMENT AND PRICING REGULATION

CHAPTER III

REGULATION OF MEDICAL COSTS

16. Declaration of affordable treatment list.- (1) The Karnataka Healthcare Cost and Quality Authority (hereinafter referred to as "the Authority") shall, in consultation with the State Government, State Medical Councils, public health institutions, and relevant stakeholders, notify from time to time a comprehensive and categorised list of Affordable Essential Treatments (AETs).

(2) The AET list shall be based on criteria including public health importance, prevalence of conditions, standard treatment guidelines, impact on mortality and morbidity, and cost-effectiveness of care.

(3) The AET list shall mandatorily include, but not be limited to, the following categories:

- (a) Primary care and outpatient medical consultations;
- (b) Maternal, neonatal, and child health services including antenatal care, delivery, immunisation, and paediatric care;
- (c) Standard treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension, asthma, and epilepsy;
- (d) Common surgical procedures such as hernia repair, cataract surgery, appendectomy, and cholecystectomy;
- (e) Emergency and first-line trauma care including fracture management, wound repair, and basic life support.

(4) All registered clinical establishments, irrespective of size or ownership, shall be obligated to provide AETs at the standardised prices notified under this Act and in accordance with prescribed quality protocols.

(5) The Authority shall publish the AET list and pricing details in Kannada and English on the Unified Health Portal and ensure wide dissemination through public notices.

(6) The AET list shall be reviewed and updated annually or as required in response to emerging public health needs.

17. Notification of maximum chargeable rates.- (1) The Authority shall determine and notify the Maximum Chargeable Rates (MCRs) for all major categories of medical services including consultations, diagnostic tests, inpatient treatment, surgeries, procedures, and emergency care.

(2) MCRs shall be derived through a transparent methodology based on,-

- (a) Benchmarking of cost data from public and private sector hospitals;
- (b) Clinical input from standard treatment protocols issued by national and state health agencies;
- (c) Economic evaluations including cost-of-care analysis and public affordability parameters;
- (d) Consultations with hospital associations, insurance companies, consumer bodies, and public health experts.

- (3) MCRs shall be tiered as per the following classification,-
 - (a) Type of establishment — public, private for-profit, charitable/non-profit;
 - (b) Infrastructure category — primary, secondary, and tertiary care institutions;
 - (c) Location — urban, semi-urban, rural, and remote/tribal areas.
- (4) Charging in excess of notified MCRs shall be considered unlawful and any excess amount billed shall be refunded to the patient along with interest at a rate to be prescribed by rules.
- (5) Repeated or wilful overcharging shall attract penalties including blacklisting, licence suspension, and civil liability under Chapter X.

18. Cost ceiling on diagnostics, surgery, and ICU charges.- (1) The Authority shall fix upper ceilings for frequently availed and high-cost medical services, including,-

- (a) Radiological and diagnostic imaging services such as X-ray, CT scan, MRI, and ultrasound;
 - (b) Common pathology tests and panels including blood counts, liver function, kidney function, lipid profiles, and infectious disease markers;
 - (c) Operating theatre use and standard surgical packages, including pre- and post-operative care;
 - (d) Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admissions, ventilator support, and monitoring.
- (2) The cost ceilings shall specify bundled pricing formats inclusive of professional fees, consumables, equipment use, and procedural charges across different room categories—general, semi-private, private, and deluxe.
- (3) The following practices shall be strictly prohibited,-
- (a) Arbitrary or inflated pricing of consumables including gloves, syringes, gowns, and cannulas;
 - (b) Charges for routine disposables, linen, admission kits, or file maintenance as separate billable items.
- (4) Clinical establishments shall publicly display itemised pricing for these services at their premises and publish the same digitally.
- (5) All bills shall be subject to regular audit by the District Health Oversight Committee.

19. Cap on emergency care pricing.- (1) The Authority shall prescribe Emergency Stabilisation Ceiling Rates (ESCRs) applicable to the first 24 hours of emergency medical care for specified life-threatening conditions.

- (2) ESCRs shall include comprehensive coverage for triage, resuscitation, stabilisation, essential diagnostics, ICU admission, and first-line treatment.
- (3) Emergency conditions for which ESCRs shall apply include, but are not limited to:
- (a) Road traffic injuries, polytrauma, and head injuries;
 - (b) Acute myocardial infarction, cerebrovascular accidents, and acute heart failure;
 - (c) Maternal and neonatal emergencies including postpartum haemorrhage, eclampsia, and obstructed labour;
 - (d) Poisonings, seizures, acute infections including sepsis and dengue shock.
- (4) No clinical establishment shall demand or collect any amount exceeding the ESCR prior to the completion of the first 24 hours of care.
- (5) Violation of this provision shall be treated as serious misconduct and shall be punishable with fines, deregistration, and potential criminal prosecution for negligence or denial of care.

20. Advance deposit and billing transparency.- (1) No clinical establishment shall demand advance deposits exceeding 50% of the estimated cost of treatment at the time of admission, except in cases of elective surgeries or foreign nationals availing services.

(2) A written estimate of the treatment cost shall be provided to the patient or attendant at the time of admission, along with itemised details and explanatory notes in Kannada or the language requested.

(3) Daily interim bills shall be mandatorily issued and shared electronically and physically, along with explanations for each charge.

(4) A final consolidated bill shall be issued within six hours of discharge and shall include:

- (a) All itemised medical services rendered;
- (b) Amounts covered under insurance, subsidy schemes, or discounts;
- (c) Refunds due for provisional payments or overbilling, along with account reconciliation.

(5) No patient shall be denied discharge or the release of a deceased body on account of pending bills. Such disputes shall be resolved post-discharge through the prescribed grievance mechanism.

(6) Billing disputes, if unresolved by the establishment, may be escalated to the District Health Oversight Committee or the Health Ombudsman for redressal within seven working days.

CHAPTER IV

MEDICAL PACKAGES AND INSURANCE INTEGRATION

21. State Standard Treatment Packages (SSTPs).- (1) The Authority shall formulate and notify State Standard Treatment Packages (SSTPs) that define standardised, cost-regulated, and clinically approved treatment bundles for common medical and surgical conditions.

(2) The SSTPs shall be developed in accordance with,-

- (a) National Clinical Guidelines and Indian Public Health Standards;
- (b) Protocols issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), National Health Mission (NHM), and other expert bodies;
- (c) Cost-effectiveness evaluations and health technology assessments;
- (d) Inputs from medical practitioners, hospitals, insurers, and patient advocacy groups.

(3) Each SSTP shall include pre-defined components covering,-

- (a) Consultation and diagnostic investigations;
- (b) Pre-operative, intra-operative, and post-operative care;
- (c) Hospital accommodation, nursing charges, consumables, and essential medicines;
- (d) Follow-up care and discharge consultation.

(4) No clinical establishment shall fragment or unbundle SSTP components for separate billing unless specifically authorised by the Authority under special medical circumstances.

(5) The SSTPs shall be revised annually to reflect evolving clinical practices, inflation trends, and patient safety improvements.

22. Integration of health insurance schemes.- (1) The State Government shall ensure alignment of State-run and Central Government health insurance schemes including Ayushman Bharat, Yeshasvini, and Arogya Karnataka with the SSTPs and cost norms established under this Act.

(2) All insurers offering health coverage in Karnataka shall align benefit packages, reimbursement ceilings, and tariff agreements with the MCRs and SSTPs notified by the Authority.

(3) Clinical establishments shall not apply discriminatory pricing, denial of package benefits, or arbitrary exclusions to insured patients or those covered under government schemes.

(4) The Authority may issue binding directions to insurance providers for:

(a) Adoption of simplified, paperless, and technology-enabled claim settlement procedures;

(b) Uniformity in package pricing and medical documentation requirements;

(c) Timely release of payments and penalties for undue delay.

23. Mandatory cashless coverage in emergencies.- (1) All clinical establishments empanelled under any government health insurance programme shall mandatorily provide cashless medical treatment to eligible beneficiaries in notified emergency conditions.

(2) In cases where empanelment is under process or where technical barriers exist, the establishment shall extend treatment in good faith and be entitled to reimbursement upon verification and audit by the District Health Oversight Committee.

(3) No clinical establishment shall demand a deposit or advance from an insured patient seeking emergency care, failing which the licence of the establishment may be suspended or cancelled.

(4) Any denial, delay, or refusal to provide cashless treatment in emergencies shall constitute a gross violation and attract penalties including blacklisting under this Act.

24. Transparency in insurer-provider contracts.- (1) All contractual agreements between insurance companies and healthcare providers shall be registered with the Authority and conform to the principles of fairness, transparency, and mutual accountability.

(2) Such agreements shall,-

(a) Avoid exploitative clauses mandating forced discounts or retrospective claim deductions;

(b) Specify service delivery standards, turnaround time for approvals, and billing protocols;

(d) Incorporate mechanisms for grievance redressal and dispute resolution.

(3) The Authority may,-

(a) Prescribe model contract formats for public use;

(b) Review and direct modification of terms that are one-sided, coercive, or against public interest.

(4) Clinical establishments shall disclose abridged versions of such contracts to patients and provide access upon reasonable request.

25. Regulation of out-of-pocket expenses.- (1) The Authority shall ensure progressive reduction of Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) on healthcare services by,-

(a) Promoting rational pricing of diagnostics, medicines, and consumables;

(b) Enhancing coverage under insurance schemes;

- (c) Strengthening availability of subsidised services through the public sector.
- (2) No clinical establishment shall levy prices exceeding the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) on any medicine, device, implant, or consumable used in the course of treatment.
- (3) Patients shall retain the right to purchase medicines or materials from external pharmacies or suppliers, without coercion or denial of care.
- (4) All establishments shall maintain digitised records of OOPE incurred per patient, segregated by category of service, and submit quarterly reports to the Authority.
- (5) Where OOPE crosses a notified threshold for a given condition or category of care, the Authority may order a targeted audit, impose corrective measures, or suspend package permissions for such providers.

PART IV

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES

CHAPTER V

KARNATAKA HEALTHCARE COST AND QUALITY AUTHORITY

26. Establishment of the Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a statutory body to be known as the Karnataka Healthcare Cost and Quality Authority (hereinafter referred to as “the Authority”).

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, with the power to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, enter into contracts, and sue or be sued in its name.

(3) The Authority shall function independently and act as the primary regulator for matters relating to cost regulation, quality assurance, patient rights enforcement, insurance coordination, and transparency in healthcare services within the State.

27. Composition and tenure of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall comprise the following members appointed by the State Government on the recommendation of a high-level Selection Committee:

- (a) A Chairperson, possessing at least twenty years of experience in health policy, health law, public administration, or economics;
- (b) One Member (Finance), with expertise in health economics, cost accounting, actuarial science, or public finance;
- (c) One Member (Medical Standards), a senior clinician or hospital administrator with at least fifteen years of clinical experience;
- (d) One Member (Legal), a retired judge of a District Court or legal expert with specialisation in health and consumer law;
- (e) One Member (Public Health), an epidemiologist, public health expert, or academician with recognised contribution in the field;
- (f) One Member (Civil Society), an experienced representative of a reputed NGO or patients’ rights organisation.

(2) The term of office for the Chairperson and Members shall be three years from the date of appointment, extendable by one further term, provided that no member shall continue beyond the age of 70 years (Chairperson) or 65 years (other members).

(3) The conditions of service, honorarium, and removal procedures shall be as prescribed by rules.

28. Powers and functions of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall perform the following functions,-

- (a) Determine and notify Maximum Chargeable Rates (MCRs) and Standard Treatment Package (STP) rates in accordance with evidence-based cost studies;
- (b) Identify and revise from time to time the list of Affordable Essential Treatments (AETs) based on disease burden and public health priority;
- (c) Register and monitor insurance-provider agreements with clinical establishments to ensure fair and transparent billing practices;
- (d) Enforce compliance with patient rights, service transparency, and pricing norms by conducting regular audits and inspections;
- (e) Hear cases of systemic overcharging or unethical practices and impose penalties, issue warnings, or recommend license suspension as appropriate;
- (f) Maintain the Unified Health Portal for publication of hospital ratings, patient feedback, tariff information, and redressal outcomes;
- (g) Recommend model regulations, contracts, and compliance formats for cost and quality control;
- (h) Advise the State Government on legislative and administrative measures to enhance transparency and affordability in healthcare.

(2) The Authority may delegate such of its powers and duties, by order and subject to conditions, to officers or sub-authorities as it deems fit.

29. Meetings, quorum, and decision-making.- (1) The Authority shall meet at least once a month and at such other times as deemed necessary by the Chairperson.

(2) The quorum for meetings shall be not less than four members including the Chairperson or a Member authorised to preside in their absence.

(3) All decisions of the Authority shall be made by simple majority of votes of the members present; the Chairperson shall have a casting vote in case of equality of votes.

(4) Minutes of all meetings shall be duly recorded and a summary placed in the public domain subject to confidentiality requirements.

30. Advisory Committee and technical panels.- (1) The Authority shall constitute a permanent Advisory Committee with representation from key stakeholders, including,-

- (a) Indian Medical Association (Karnataka Chapter);
- (b) Karnataka State Insurance Regulatory Cell;
- (c) Representatives of private hospitals and diagnostic centres;
- (d) Government hospital administrators;
- (e) Recognised civil society organisations and patient advocacy groups;
- (f) Public health research and academic institutions.

(2) The Advisory Committee shall meet at least once every quarter and shall,-

- (a) Review and provide recommendations on draft regulations and revisions to MCRs and AET lists;
 - (b) Monitor the implementation of patient rights and cost control norms across institutions;
 - (c) Advise on systemic gaps, emerging trends, and grievance resolution strategies.
- (3) The Authority may constitute expert Technical Panels to assist on subject-specific matters including surgical costing, digital health systems, biomedical audits, or public health emergencies.

CHAPTER VI

DISTRICT HEALTH OVERSIGHT COMMITTEES

31. Constitution of District Committees.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish a District Health Oversight Committee (DHOC) in each district to serve as the local enforcement and monitoring arm of the Authority.

(2) Each DHOC shall be composed of,-

- (a) Deputy Commissioner — Chairperson;
- (b) District Health Officer — Member Secretary;
- (c) Medical Superintendent of District Hospital — Member;
- (d) A representative nominated by the District Legal Services Authority;
- (e) One private hospital representative nominated by the Authority;
- (g) One member representing a civil society group or NGO working in healthcare.

32. Role in hospital inspections and audits.- (1) The DHOC shall,-

- (a) Conduct periodic and surprise inspections of hospitals and clinics to ensure compliance with notified treatment rates and patient rights;
- (b) Audit billing records, complaints registers, and displayed information in line with formats prescribed by the Authority;
- (c) Record findings and submit inspection reports with specific observations and recommendations.

(2) DHOCs shall have powers to summon any records or call upon the attendance of any officer or healthcare provider for the purpose of inquiry.

(3) Serious violations shall be escalated with recommendations for suspension, blacklisting, or prosecution.

33. Reporting on cost compliance and patient rights.- (1) Each DHOC shall prepare a comprehensive monthly report detailing,-

- (a) Number and nature of inspections conducted;
- (b) Instances of overcharging, lack of transparency, or patient rights violations;
- (c) Grievance statistics and redressal actions;
- (d) Recommendations for follow-up, sanctions, or systemic reform.

(2) The report shall be submitted to the Authority, the Zilla Panchayat, and published online through the Unified Health Portal.

34. Coordination with insurance providers.- (1) The DHOC shall act as a nodal district-level forum for interaction with insurance providers and Third-Party Administrators (TPAs) to,-

- (a) Facilitate prompt authorisations and cashless settlements;
- (b) Address delays and discrepancies in patient reimbursements;

- (c) Promote alignment of packages with SSTPs and MCRs.
- (2) The Committee shall convene quarterly coordination meetings and forward compliance data to the Authority.

35. Monthly public disclosure of enforcement.- (1) Every DHOC shall publish on a monthly basis,-

- (a) Names and details of institutions inspected and their compliance status;
 - (b) Summary of key violations and enforcement actions taken;
 - (c) Aggregated data on billing disputes, resolved grievances, and compensation awarded.
- (2) This disclosure shall be made available on district-level notice boards, health department websites, and the Unified Health Portal for public access.
- (3) Reports shall also be submitted to the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission, State Health Authority, and District Planning Committee for further oversight.

PART V

TRANSPARENCY, LICENSING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

CHAPTER VII

LICENSING AND CLASSIFICATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS

36. Mandatory licensing for all clinical establishments.- (1) No clinical establishment shall commence, carry on, or continue to operate in the State without obtaining a valid licence under this Act, notwithstanding any other law in force.

(2) The licence shall be issued by the designated Licensing Authority notified by the State Government and shall be subject to compliance with the provisions of this Act, the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010, and any rules or standards prescribed.

(3) Separate licences shall be required for each unit, branch, or location, irrespective of ownership by the same entity.

(4) No establishment shall advertise, promote, or solicit patients in any manner without possessing a valid licence.

(5) Any person or establishment operating without a valid licence shall be liable for closure, penalty, and prosecution as specified under Chapter X of this Act.

37. Classification based on services, beds, and specialty.- (1) The Licensing Authority shall classify every clinical establishment in the State based on the following criteria,-

- (a) Level of care: primary, secondary, or tertiary;
 - (b) Type of services provided: general, multi-speciality, super-speciality, diagnostic, day-care, or rehabilitative;
 - (c) Bed capacity: fewer than 20 beds, 20–100 beds, or more than 100 beds;
 - (d) Nature of ownership: government, public sector undertaking, private for-profit, private not-for-profit, or charitable trust.
- (2) Classification shall determine the applicable regulatory requirements, including,-
- (a) Maximum Chargeable Rates (MCRs) and SSTP categories;
 - (b) Infrastructure and human resource standards;
 - (c) Audit frequency and reporting formats;
 - (d) Minimum obligations for patient services and community engagement.

(3) The classification status and licensing certificate shall be,-

- (a) Prominently displayed at the main entrance of the establishment;
- (b) Published on the establishment's website and Unified Health Portal.

38. Licensing authority and renewal conditions.- (1) The State Government shall designate the District Health Officer (DHO), or any other designated officer, as the Licensing Authority for the purposes of this Act.

(2) Every application for grant or renewal of licence shall be submitted in the prescribed format and shall be accompanied by,-

- (a) Documentary proof of infrastructure, equipment, and qualified personnel;
- (b) Details of compliance with notified MCRs, SSTPs, AETs, and ESCRs;
- (c) Certificates of accreditation or empanelment, if any;
- (d) Proof of functioning grievance redressal mechanism and patient help desk.

(3) A licence shall be valid for a period of five years and may be renewed for successive five-year terms subject to satisfactory inspection and continued compliance.

(4) Establishments found to have committed repeated or serious violations of provisions under this Act may be,-

- (a) Denied renewal;
- (b) Granted conditional renewal with mandated corrective measures and timelines;
- (c) Subject to enhanced oversight, fines, or licence suspension.

39. Criteria for cost transparency and reporting.- (1) Every clinical establishment shall, as a condition of maintaining its licence,-

- (a) Publish and submit quarterly returns disclosing tariffs for outpatient services, inpatient care, diagnostics, surgical packages, and emergency care;
- (b) Provide disaggregated data on:
 - (i) Patient enrolment under SSTPs;
 - (ii) Total number of patients served by category;
 - (iii) Out-of-pocket expenditure averages;
 - (iv) Reimbursements from insurance providers.
- (c) Ensure real-time publication of updated rates on the Unified Health Portal.

(2) Any revision in rates shall be,-

- (a) Notified to the Authority 30 days in advance;
- (b) Applicable only after approval or absence of objection within the prescribed period.

(3) Misreporting, manipulation, or non-submission of cost data shall be deemed a violation and subject to inspection, fines, or suspension.

40. Power to inspect and suspend operations.- (1) The Licensing Authority, District Health Oversight Committee, or any officer duly authorised by the Authority may conduct inspections of any clinical establishment, with or without prior notice, to verify compliance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) Inspections may be undertaken on grounds including,-

- (a) Receipt of a written or digital complaint regarding overcharging, denial of emergency care, negligence, or rights violations;
- (b) Failure to submit cost returns or compliance reports;
- (c) Periodic or random audit requirements as per protocol.

- (3) Where a violation is found, the inspecting officer shall prepare a written report and the Authority may,-
- (a) Issue a show-cause notice specifying the nature of breach;
 - (b) Order rectification within a specified time frame;
 - (c) Suspend, cancel, or conditionally renew the licence;
 - (d) Initiate recovery proceedings or prosecution under Chapter X.
- (4) Provided that no order of suspension or cancellation shall be passed without giving the affected party an opportunity of being heard.

CHAPTER VIII

DIGITAL HEALTH AND RECORDS ACCESS

41. Implementation of digital patient health records.- (1) All clinical establishments shall digitise and maintain electronic health records (EHRs) for every registered patient in accordance with technical standards notified under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) or any rules framed by the State Government for this purpose.

- (2) The EHR shall include, but not be limited to,-
- (a) Unique patient identification and demographic information;
 - (b) Clinical data including diagnosis, prescriptions, procedures, and laboratory test reports;
 - (c) History of inpatient and outpatient services received;
 - (d) Details of insurance, billing, and consent forms, where applicable.
- (3) Each clinical establishment shall,-
- (a) Ensure real-time, secure entry and updating of patient data;
 - (b) Allow access to patients or their legal representatives within seventy-two hours of request, either digitally or in print;
 - (c) Maintain logs of access and modifications to ensure data traceability and auditability.
- (4) Records shall be stored in encrypted form with appropriate backup and disaster recovery protocols, and retained for a minimum period of five years from the date of the last clinical encounter or as may be prescribed.
- (5) The State Government shall provide support, including software and training, to ensure compliance by establishments with fewer than 20 beds or operating in rural areas.

42. Integration with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.- (1) All clinical establishments shall register with the Health Facility Registry and comply with protocols for interoperability and data exchange as laid out by the National Health Authority under the ABDM.

- (2) Health Information Providers (HIPs) and Health Information Users (HIUs) shall operate only through consent-based digital exchange mechanisms using Health IDs.
- (3) The Unified Health Portal established under this Act shall be linked to the ABDM infrastructure for seamless flow of clinical and billing information.
- (4) The Authority shall coordinate with the State Health Department to ensure,-
- (a) Technical assistance to providers;
 - (b) Compliance audits;
 - (c) Capacity-building programmes for healthcare workers on ABDM standards.

43. Access to medical records by patients and authorities.- (1) Every patient shall have the right to access their medical records maintained by clinical establishments, including both digital and paper-based records.

(2) Such access shall be provided,-

- (a) Free of charge for the first copy;
- (b) Within 72 hours of request;
- (c) In language and format accessible to the patient, either printed or via secure digital platform.

(3) Clinical establishments shall not deny access on grounds of unpaid bills or ongoing treatment, except where disclosure is likely to harm the patient's physical or mental well-being as certified by the treating physician.

(4) The Authority, Health Ombudsman, District Committee, or any legally empowered body shall have the right to request and obtain relevant records for investigation, grievance redressal, or enforcement purposes.

(5) Failure to provide records or tampering with data shall be an offence under this Act and shall invite penalties under Chapter X.

44. Mandatory e-billing and real-time price display.- (1) All clinical establishments shall generate electronic bills (e-bills) for every outpatient and inpatient transaction, and upload such bills to the Unified Health Portal in prescribed format.(2) The e-bill shall contain,-

- (a) Unique patient ID and case number;
- (b) Itemised cost of consultations, investigations, procedures, drugs, consumables, taxes, discounts, and insurance deductions;
- (c) Time and date of service;
- (d) Signature or digital authentication of billing authority.

(3) Each clinical establishment shall maintain LED or digital display boards at,-

- (a) Reception area;
- (b) Billing counters;
- (c) Pharmacy and diagnostic kiosks, —

showing updated SSTP rates, emergency ceilings, room tariffs, and diagnostic prices.

(4) Establishments failing to maintain digital transparency shall be liable to fines and temporary suspension of billing privileges under government schemes.

45. Data privacy and cyber-security obligations.- (1) Clinical establishments shall implement technical and organisational safeguards in compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and related rules.

(2) They shall ensure,-

- (a) End-to-end encryption of personal health records;
- (b) Role-based access control for staff;
- (c) Use of secure servers with geo-redundant backup.

(3) In case of a data breach affecting patient records,-

- (a) The establishment shall report the incident to the Authority and Karnataka CERT within 72 hours;
- (b) Provide immediate notice to affected patients detailing the nature of breach and remedial actions taken.

(4) Repeat violations or failure to protect patient data shall invite regulatory sanctions including monetary penalty, deregistration of digital interfaces, and referral for criminal prosecution, as the case may be.

PART VI
SAFEGUARDS FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS
CHAPTER IX

INCLUSIVE ACCESS AND EQUITY MEASURES

46. Special protection for BPL and SC/ST patients.- (1) All public and private clinical establishments shall ensure that patients belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) households and those belonging to Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) receive free, timely, and non-discriminatory access to all categories of medical care, including emergency, outpatient, diagnostic, and inpatient services.

(2) No such patient shall be asked to pay any upfront deposit or fees prior to initial medical examination or emergency treatment.

(3) The State Government shall issue a list of acceptable documents to establish BPL, SC/ST status, which may include ration cards, caste certificates, or Aadhaar-linked poverty indicators.

(4) Clinical establishments shall,-

(a) Designate a nodal officer to assist such patients in document verification and entitlement facilitation;

(b) Maintain digital and physical registers recording the number and category of BPL/SC/ST patients treated monthly;

(c) Submit compliance reports quarterly to the District Committee and the Authority.

(5) Any denial or delay in treatment of eligible patients under this section shall be deemed a major violation and attract penalties under Chapter X.

47. Reservation of free beds in private hospitals.- (1) All private hospitals having more than fifty (50) inpatient beds shall reserve,-

(a) Not less than ten percent (10%) of general beds for BPL or indigent patients;

(b) Not less than five percent (5%) of ICU beds for similar categories in need of critical care.

(2) Patients admitted under the reserved quota shall receive,-

(a) Free diagnostics, surgery, medication, follow-up, and discharge counselling;

(b) Cashless treatment, if linked with a government scheme.

(3) Hospitals shall claim reimbursement from notified schemes like Ayushman Bharat, Arogya Karnataka, or any other scheme notified by the State Government.

(4) Each hospital shall,-

(a) Display real-time availability of reserved beds on its website and digital display boards;

(b) Submit a certified monthly utilisation statement to the Authority.

(5) Hospitals violating this provision shall be liable for penalties, cancellation of empanelment, and name disclosure in the Unified Health Portal.

48. Language and disability-inclusive services.- (1) All clinical establishments shall ensure language access and physical inclusivity for patients with disabilities and linguistic minorities.

(2) Mandatory services include,-

- (a) Use of Kannada in registration, billing, consent, and discharge documentation;
- (b) Audio-visual tools or interpreters for visually or hearing-impaired patients;
- (c) Display of bilingual signage (Kannada and English) throughout the hospital.

(3) All facilities shall provide,-

- (a) Step-free ramps, accessible lifts, handrails, tactile flooring, and disabled toilets;
- (b) Dedicated service counters for persons with disabilities and elderly patients.

(4) Establishments with more than fifty (50) beds shall,-

- (a) Appoint an Accessibility and Inclusion Officer;
- (b) Train front-line staff annually on disability etiquette and inclusive care.

49. Mobile health units and tribal outreach.-(1) The State Government shall, through public-private partnerships or direct deployment, operate Mobile Health Units (MHUs) in Scheduled Areas and other underserved tribal or forested zones.

(2) MHUs shall include a medical team comprising,-

- (a) A medical officer, nurse, pharmacist, and lab technician;
- (b) A vehicle equipped with basic diagnostics, cold chain, and referral systems.

(3) Services shall include,-

- (a) OPD consultations, first aid, and chronic illness management;
- (b) Maternal and child health services, immunisation, TB and malaria screening;
- (c) Digital health registration and referral tracking.

(4) Each MHU shall operate at least 20 service days per month and coordinate with Panchayats for route scheduling.

(5) Monitoring shall include GPS tagging, random inspections by District Health Officers, and a publicly available monthly outreach calendar.

50. Non-exclusion based on insurance status.- (1) No clinical establishment shall deny or delay treatment solely on the ground that the patient is enrolled in a public insurance scheme such as Ayushman Bharat, Arogya Karnataka, or Jan Arogya Yojana.

(2) The following shall not be valid grounds for denial,-

- (a) Absence of digital authentication or e-KYC;
- (b) Delay in pre-authorisation or cashless processing.

(3) Hospitals shall provide stabilisation and initiate treatment in such cases, with reimbursement to be settled subsequently by the relevant insurer or the State Government.

(4) Every establishment shall designate a Scheme Facilitation Officer responsible for coordinating with TPAs and ensuring no patient is refused on insurance-related grounds.

(5) Non-compliance shall be recorded by the Authority and reported to the empanelment authority for necessary action including fines, suspension, or blacklisting.

PART VII
ENFORCEMENT, PENALTIES, AND OFFENCES
CHAPTER X
PENALTIES AND OFFENCES

51. Penalty for overcharging or non-disclosure.-(1) Any clinical establishment that charges patients in excess of the notified Maximum Chargeable Rates (MCRs), State Standard Treatment Package (SSTP) rates, or fails to transparently display its pricing and billing information as mandated, shall be liable to:

- (a) A monetary penalty ranging from ₹1,00,000 to ₹10,00,000 per violation, depending on the severity and recurrence;
- (b) Mandatory refund of the excess amount charged with interest at the rate of 12% per annum from the date of overcharging;
- (c) Public disclosure of the violation on the Unified Health Portal and a warning notice;
- (d) Suspension of empanelment or operating licence for repeat violations beyond two instances in a calendar year.

(2) The Authority shall, upon receipt of a complaint or suo motu, conduct a verification audit within ten (10) working days and take necessary enforcement action.

52. Penalty for denial of emergency services.- (1) Any clinical establishment that fails to provide timely emergency medical care, including triage, stabilisation, or referral, without justifiable cause, shall be subject to,-

- (a) A penalty of not less than ₹2,00,000 and up to ₹15,00,000;
- (b) Suspension of operating licence for up to three (3) months;
- (c) Permanent revocation of licence where such denial results in irreversible harm or death.

(2) Emergency care shall include treatment for all life-threatening conditions regardless of payment capacity, pending insurance verification, or documentation.

(3) An expedited inquiry shall be initiated within seventy-two (72) hours by the District Committee, with findings submitted to the Authority within fifteen (15) days.

53. Penalty for data breach and refusal to provide records.- (1) Any unauthorised access, modification, loss, or disclosure of patient data stored in physical or digital form shall be penalised in accordance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and this Act.

(2) In addition to the above,-

- (a) The establishment shall be liable to pay a fine of up to ₹20,00,000 per breach, depending on the scale and nature of the violation;
- (b) Affected patients shall be notified in writing within seventy-two (72) hours of discovery;
- (c) The matter shall be reported to the Data Protection Board and the Health Ombudsman.

(3) Any failure to provide medical records to patients or their authorised representatives within seventy-two (72) hours of written request, without valid justification, shall attract,-

- (a) A fine of ₹50,000 per day of delay, subject to a ceiling of ₹5,00,000;
- (b) Suspension of digital access and licence for repeat offences;
- (c) Referral to criminal prosecution if malafide intent is established.

54. Penalty for discrimination or harassment.- (1) If any clinical establishment or its staff discriminate against a patient on the basis of caste, creed, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, insurance status, language, or economic background, such acts shall be deemed cognisable under this Act.

(2) The consequences of such conduct shall include,-

- (a) A fine between ₹1,00,000 and ₹10,00,000 for each act of discrimination;
- (b) Mandatory diversity, sensitivity, and ethics training for staff as a precondition for continued licensure;
- (c) Suspension of licence on second proven offence;
- (d) Recommendation to law enforcement for criminal prosecution under the Indian Penal Code, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989, or other relevant legislation.

(3) Harassment or intimidation of patients or their caregivers, whether verbal, physical, or financial (including coercive billing practices), shall be treated as a serious violation and referred to the Health Ombudsman and police.

55. Compounding of offences and recovery of charges.- (1) Notwithstanding the penalties under this Chapter, the Authority may allow compounding of first-time minor offences, including non-display of tariffs or clerical errors, for a compounding fee not exceeding fifty percent (50%) of the maximum applicable fine.

(2) Any unauthorised or excess amount charged to patients in contravention of this Act shall be refunded within thirty (30) days from the date of order issued by the Authority or competent authority.

(3) Interest at the rate of 12% per annum shall be applicable on the refunded amount from the date of actual payment by the patient until the date of refund.

(4) If the clinical establishment fails to make the refund within the specified timeline, the Authority shall,-

- (a) Enter the amount in a Recovery Register;
 - (b) Initiate recovery proceedings as arrears of land revenue under the Karnataka Revenue Recovery Act, 1966;
 - (c) Impose additional penalty for non-compliance up to ₹5,00,000.
- (4) The Recovery Register maintained by the Authority shall be publicly accessible and updated monthly.

PART VIII

LIABILITY, ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

CHAPTER XI

BLACKLISTING AND CIVIL LIABILITY

56. Blacklisting of repeated violators.- (1) The Authority shall maintain a Register of Blacklisted Establishments comprising clinical establishments that have,-

- (a) Committed three or more serious violations under this Act within a period of 12 months;
- (b) Failed to comply with refund or penalty orders within the stipulated time;
- (c) Obstructed inspections or falsified records to evade regulation.

- (2) Blacklisting shall entail,-
 - (d) Cancellation of empanelment under government health insurance schemes;
 - (e) Suspension or cancellation of operating licence for a period up to five (5) years;
 - (f) Ineligibility for renewal of licence or accreditation for the same duration.
- (3) A clinical establishment proposed to be blacklisted shall be issued a show-cause notice with a 15-day response window before final action is taken.
- (4) The final order of blacklisting shall be published on the Unified Health Portal and in at least two widely circulated newspapers.

57. Civil liability and compensation for harm.-

- (1) Where any patient or their family suffers,-
 - (a) Physical harm,
 - (b) Psychological injury,
 - (c) Financial loss, or
 - (d) Violation of legal rights
 as a direct consequence of a clinical establishment's negligence, overcharging, discrimination, denial of emergency care, or breach of statutory duty, such establishment shall be liable to pay compensation.
- (2) The Health Ombudsman shall have jurisdiction to order interim compensation up to ₹10,00,000, subject to further proceedings before a consumer court, civil court, or the Karnataka State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
- (3) The Authority may create a 'Healthcare Compensation Corpus' for interim payments, recoverable from errant establishments.
- (4) Compensation orders shall be binding and enforceable as decrees of civil courts.

58. Protection of whistle-blowers.- (1) Any person, including a healthcare worker, patient, caregiver, or employee of a clinical establishment, who discloses information in good faith regarding violations of this Act, shall be entitled to whistle-blower protection.

- (2) Such persons shall not be subject to,-
 - (a) Suspension, dismissal, demotion, coercion, or harassment;
 - (b) Legal proceedings or retaliation;
 - (c) Denial of further access to healthcare or employment opportunities.
- (3) The identity of the whistle-blower shall be kept confidential unless disclosure is mandated by law.
- (4) The Authority shall frame a Whistle-blower Protection Scheme, including reward mechanisms for verified disclosures.

59. Publication of violations and enforcement dashboard.- (1) The Authority shall develop and maintain a public-facing 'Healthcare Enforcement Dashboard' accessible via the Unified Health Portal.

- (2) The Dashboard shall publish in real-time,-
 - (a) Penalties imposed under this Act;
 - (b) Establishments under investigation or suspended;
 - (c) Names of blacklisted clinical establishments;
 - (d) Number and type of grievances received, redressed, and pending.

(3) The Dashboard shall be updated monthly and integrated with the Karnataka Open Data Initiative for transparency.

(4) The Authority shall issue an annual report summarising compliance, penalties, appeals, compensation orders, and enforcement trends.

60. Provision for class action by patient groups.- (1) Any registered patient welfare organisation, public health NGO, or group of not less than ten (10) affected patients may file a class action petition before the Health Ombudsman or the appropriate Consumer Forum.

(2) Relief under such petitions may include:

(a) Refunds and compensation orders;

(b) Orders directing policy change, training, or service improvements;

(c) Declaratory relief or injunctions.

(3) The Authority may, in public interest, join as co-petitioner or issue policy directives based on such class actions.

(4) The provisions of Order I Rule 8 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 shall apply mutatis mutandis to all class action petitions filed under this section.

PART VIII

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPEALS

CHAPTER XII

HEALTH OMBUDSMAN AND TRIBUNAL

61. Establishment of State Health Ombudsman.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish the office of the State Health Ombudsman for the purpose of receiving, inquiring into, and resolving grievances or complaints relating to violations, non-compliance, denial of patient rights, or maladministration under this Act.

(2) The appointment of the Health Ombudsman shall be made by the State Government on the recommendation of a three-member selection committee consisting of—

(a) The Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka (Chairperson);

(b) The Principal Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare; and

(c) A retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka nominated by the State Government.

(3) The person appointed as Ombudsman shall,—

(a) Be of high moral character and integrity;

(b) Possess demonstrated experience of not less than fifteen years in public administration, public health policy, patient rights, health regulation, or consumer affairs.

(4) The term of office of the Ombudsman shall be five years from the date of appointment or until the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier.

(5) The office of the Ombudsman shall be autonomous and function in a quasi-judicial capacity, supported by adequate legal, administrative, and medical staff as may be notified.

(6) The salary, allowances, and terms and conditions of service of the Ombudsman shall be as may be prescribed by rules.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “quasi-judicial” shall mean the authority to hear parties, examine evidence, and issue binding decisions.

62. Powers and procedures of Ombudsman.- (1) The Ombudsman shall have the authority to entertain complaints relating to:

- (a) Overcharging or non-disclosure of rates;
 - (b) Denial of emergency medical services;
 - (c) Violation of patient rights and discrimination;
 - (d) Data breaches or refusal to provide medical records;
 - (e) Any other violation of provisions under this Act.
- (2) The Ombudsman may exercise the following powers,-
- (a) Summon any person whose attendance is considered necessary;
 - (b) Require production of documents or medical records from any clinical establishment;
 - (c) Conduct site visits or inspections;
 - (d) Recommend penalties, order refunds, or direct interim relief or compensation not exceeding ₹10,00,000 per case.
- (3) Proceedings shall be summary in nature and conducted in accordance with principles of natural justice.
- (4) The Ombudsman shall attempt to dispose of each complaint within thirty (30) days from its receipt, with reasons recorded in writing for any delay.
- (5) All orders passed by the Ombudsman shall be binding, unless reversed or modified by the Karnataka Healthcare Appellate Tribunal.
- Provided that, in case of life-threatening or grievous matters, the Ombudsman may issue an interim order within seventy-two (72) hours.

63. Establishment of Karnataka Healthcare Appellate Tribunal.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a Karnataka Healthcare Appellate Tribunal to hear appeals against the orders of the Ombudsman or Authority and to ensure expeditious redressal of grievances under this Act.

- (2) The Tribunal shall consist of,—
- (a) A Chairperson, who shall be a retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka;
 - (b) One expert member having not less than fifteen years of experience in health regulation, health law, or public health governance;
 - (c) One medical member, being a senior medical professional with minimum twenty years of practice or administrative experience in tertiary healthcare.
- (3) The Tribunal shall have its principal bench at Bengaluru and may hold circuit benches at such other places as the State Government may notify.
- (4) The salaries, allowances, and service conditions of the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed by rules.

64. Jurisdiction and appeal procedures.- (1) Any person aggrieved by,—

- (a) An order or award passed by the Ombudsman; or
 - (b) A penalty, blacklisting, or licence suspension order issued by the Authority—may prefer an appeal before the Tribunal within sixty (60) days of such order.
- (2) The Tribunal may condone delay in filing the appeal for sufficient cause recorded in writing.
- (3) The Tribunal shall follow a summary, non-adversarial procedure and may, after giving parties an opportunity of hearing:
- (a) Confirm, modify, or reverse the decision appealed against;
 - (b) Grant interim relief to prevent irreparable harm;
 - (c) Issue directions to the Authority or clinical establishment.

(4) The Tribunal shall endeavour to dispose of all appeals within ninety (90) days from the date of admission.

Explanation: Nothing in this section shall preclude a patient or establishment from seeking additional remedies under other applicable laws.

65. Finality and enforcement of decisions.- (1) Every order or award made by the Ombudsman or the Tribunal under this Act shall have the same effect as a decree of a civil court and shall be executable accordingly.

(2) In case of non-compliance with such orders, the defaulter shall be liable to,-

- (a) Attachment and sale of property;
- (b) Suspension or revocation of the licence of the clinical establishment;
- (c) Blacklisting under this Act and recovery of dues as arrears of land revenue.

(3) No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceeding on a matter which is cognisable by the Ombudsman or the Tribunal under this Act, except in cases expressly provided.

Provided that the High Court may exercise writ jurisdiction under Article 226 or 227 of the Constitution of India in appropriate cases.

PART IX

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

CHAPTER XIII

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

66. Mediation centres for patient-provider disputes.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish District Mediation Centres under the supervision of the State Health Authority, for resolving healthcare-related disputes between patients, caregivers, clinical establishments, or insurers, through structured and voluntary mediation.

(2) The Mediation Centres shall operate independently and may function in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority or any notified Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) institution.

(3) Each Mediation Centre shall maintain a panel of accredited mediators, including at least,-

- (a) One retired judicial officer of the District or Subordinate Courts;
- (b) One senior public health expert;
- (c) One representative of a registered patient welfare association.

(4) The following categories of disputes may be referred to mediation,-

- (a) Disputes relating to billing, overcharging, or denial of refunds;
- (b) Grievances regarding quality of care, misdiagnosis, or patient mistreatment;
- (c) Issues related to insurance claim delays or hospital denial of coverage;
- (d) Any matter referred by the Health Ombudsman or Appellate Tribunal, with mutual consent of the parties.

(5) Participation in mediation shall not prejudice the right of parties to seek statutory remedies under this Act or any other law.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "mediation" means a process wherein an impartial third party facilitates voluntary resolution of a dispute between two or more parties without imposing a binding decision.

67. Conciliation and voluntary settlement.- (1) Any party to a healthcare dispute may initiate conciliation proceedings by submitting an application in the prescribed form to the District Mediation Centre.

(2) Upon receipt of the application, the Mediation Centre shall,-

- (a) Notify the respondent party within three working days;
- (b) Obtain consent for mediation within seven working days;
- (c) Schedule the first joint sitting of parties within ten working days from such consent.

(3) The proceedings shall be informal, confidential, and non-adversarial, and the mediator shall facilitate open dialogue to arrive at a mutually agreeable settlement.

(4) Any mediated settlement shall be,-

- (a) Recorded in writing and signed by both parties and the mediator;
- (b) Filed with the Mediation Centre;
- (c) Forwarded to the Health Ombudsman and the Authority for recordkeeping and enforcement.

(5) Where a settlement is not reached, the parties may approach the appropriate forum including the Health Ombudsman or the Appellate Tribunal for further adjudication.

Provided that if either party fails to appear for two consecutive sittings without sufficient cause, the mediator may terminate the conciliation and refer the matter to the appropriate authority.

68. Enforcement of mediated awards.- (1) A mediated settlement agreement filed under sub-section (4) of section 67 shall be treated as an enforceable contract and shall have the same status as an award under section 74 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

(2) In case of non-compliance with such settlement terms, the aggrieved party may,-

- (a) Seek execution before the civil court having local jurisdiction; or
- (b) Approach the Health Ombudsman for issuing binding compliance directions.

(3) The Health Authority shall maintain a Digital Register of Mediated Settlements, which shall include,-

- (a) Names of parties (subject to privacy safeguards);
- (b) Date of agreement and terms of settlement;
- (c) Compliance status and follow-up action.

(4) Non-compliance with a mediated award may attract,-

- (a) Monetary penalty under Chapter X;
- (b) Temporary suspension of registration or empanelment in government health schemes;
- (c) Referral to the Tribunal for contempt or enforcement orders.

PART IX

MISCELLANEOUS AND TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER XIV

RULE-MAKING AND OVERSIGHT

69. Power of State Government to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions and purposes of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for,—

- (a) The qualification, appointment, service conditions, code of conduct, and disciplinary procedures for members of the Authority, Ombudsman, Tribunal, and their officers;
 - (b) Forms, formats, and digital platforms for applications, registrations, complaints, audits, and appeals under this Act;
 - (c) Ceiling limits for service charges, penalties, compensation, refunds, and advances;
 - (d) Procedures for inspections, data collection, stakeholder consultations, and class action mechanisms;
 - (e) Maintenance of electronic health records, audit of compliance, and privacy safeguards; and
 - (f) Any other matter which is required to be, or may be, prescribed for the effective implementation of this Act.
- (3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly as soon as may be after it is made and shall be subject to such modifications as the Assembly may make.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “rule” shall include any notification, order, guideline, or form issued by the State Government in exercise of its powers under this Act.

70. Power to amend Schedules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, add to, amend, vary or delete any of the Schedules to this Act.

(2) Every such notification shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly, and unless disapproved or modified within thirty days of laying, shall have the force of law.

(3) Such amendments shall not affect the previous operation of the Schedule prior to the date of modification.

71. Periodic review and impact assessment.- (1) The Authority shall conduct an annual performance review of the implementation of this Act and place its findings before the Department of Health and Family Welfare.

(2) Every three years, an independent performance and impact evaluation shall be conducted by a university, health research body, or public policy institution empanelled for the purpose, and shall assess,—

- (a) Access to affordable and quality healthcare across districts;
- (b) Effectiveness of cost regulation, insurance schemes, and redressal mechanisms;
- (c) Progress in achieving universal healthcare equity and transparency.

(3) The reports shall be made available in the public domain and submitted to the State Government and the Karnataka Legislative Assembly for policy feedback.

Provided that the first impact evaluation shall be conducted within two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

72. Reporting to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.- (1) The Authority shall submit an annual report on the administration of this Act to the State Government, within six months of the close of each financial year.

(2) The report shall include,—

- (a) Data on complaints received, penalties levied, and cases disposed of;
- (b) Progress on licensing, inspections, audits, and corrective measures;
- (c) Performance benchmarks of clinical establishments and insurance partners;
- (d) Public outreach, capacity-building, and healthcare awareness measures.

(3) The State Government shall lay such report before each house of the State Legislature, along with a statement of action taken.

Explanation: The report under this section shall serve as the primary instrument for legislative oversight and public accountability of the healthcare regulatory framework.

CHAPTER XV

DELEGATION AND COORDINATION

73. Delegation of powers and functions.- (1) The State Government, the Authority, or any other designated agency under this Act may, by general or special order, delegate any of their powers, functions, or duties, except the power to make rules, to any officer, local authority, public body, or statutory agency, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be specified in the order.

(2) The delegate shall be responsible for exercising the delegated powers in conformity with the provisions of this Act and shall report periodically to the delegating authority.

(3) The delegation of power shall not divest the principal authority of its oversight responsibility.

Explanation: Delegation under this section may include powers relating to inspection, enforcement, grievance redressal, and monitoring of compliance with standards and licensing requirements.

74. Coordination with other State and Central agencies.- (1) The Authority shall coordinate with relevant State and Central Government departments, statutory bodies, regulatory authorities, and insurance agencies for effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), such coordination shall include,—

- (a) Information exchange and data interoperability with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the National Health Authority (NHA);
- (b) Joint inspections or enforcement action with district magistrates, police, legal services authorities, or health officers;
- (c) Alignment with national digital health platforms such as Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

(3) The Authority may enter into memoranda of understanding (MoUs) or inter-departmental protocols for the purposes of this section.

75. Public-private partnership models.- (1) The State Government may encourage and implement public-private partnership (PPP) models to support objectives under this Act, including,-

- (a) Development of primary health infrastructure and mobile health units;
- (b) Delivery of diagnostics and tertiary care services in underserved areas;
- (c) Implementation of telemedicine, e-health platforms, and rural health information systems.

(2) All PPP models under this Act shall ensure adherence to patient rights, pricing regulations, data privacy norms, and quality standards prescribed by the Authority.

(3) The Authority shall frame guidelines for operational, financial, and governance aspects of such partnerships, including risk-sharing, performance incentives, and exit protocols.

Provided that no PPP arrangement shall compromise the equitable access to healthcare, particularly for economically weaker sections, marginalised groups, and persons in disaster-affected regions.

CHAPTER XVI

SAVINGS, REPEAL AND TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

76. Continuance of actions taken under repealed laws.- (1) All actions, orders, notifications, proceedings, rules, regulations, licences, permits, approvals, and authorisations made or issued under any law in force before the commencement of this Act, which are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, shall be deemed to have been made, issued, or undertaken under the corresponding provisions of this Act.

(2) Such actions shall continue in force unless and until they are expressly modified, rescinded, or replaced under the provisions of this Act.

(3) All proceedings, including enquiries, investigations, and adjudications initiated under any repealed law, shall be deemed to have been commenced under the provisions of this Act and shall be continued accordingly.

77. Repeal and amendment of inconsistent provisions.- (1) On and from the date of commencement of this Act, all laws in force in the State of Karnataka or any part thereof, which are inconsistent with any provision of this Act, shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, stand repealed or deemed to be amended, as the case may be.

(2) The enactments specified in the First Schedule shall be amended in the manner and to the extent mentioned therein.

(3) The repeal or amendment of any law under this section shall not,—

(a) Affect any right, obligation, or liability acquired, accrued, or incurred under such repealed or amended law;

(b) Affect any penalty, punishment, or proceeding in respect of any offence committed under such law.

78. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Authority, the Ombudsman, any public servant, or any person acting on behalf of any such authority for anything done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of this Act or any rule, regulation, order, or direction made or issued thereunder.

(2) For the purposes of this section, the expression “good faith” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under Section 52 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860).

(3) The protection under this section shall apply regardless of whether the act or omission was found to be incorrect in hindsight, provided it was taken with due diligence and honest intent.

79. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as may appear to it to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of removing such difficulty.

(2) Every such order shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly within three months from the date of its publication.

(3) No such order shall be made after the expiry of a period of three years from the date of commencement of this Act.

Explanation: The power under this section is intended solely to smoothen the implementation and shall not be construed as a power to amend the substantive provisions of this Act.

80. Act to be in addition to other laws and not in derogation.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to, and not in derogation of, any other law for the time being in force, including the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010.

(2) In case of any inconsistency between this Act and any other law in force, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.

(3) Nothing in this Act shall prevent any person from seeking redressal under any other applicable law, provided that the remedies are not mutually exclusive or barred by any statutory prohibition.

Explanation: This section affirms the concurrent and supplementary nature of remedies and rights provided under this Act in harmony with other central and state legislations.

THE KARNATAKA DIGITAL LAND RECORDS BILL, 2025

A Bill to establish a comprehensive, secure, transparent, and legally recognised framework for the digitisation, maintenance, and governance of land records in the State of Karnataka; to ensure efficient public access, inter-departmental coordination, legal sanctity of digital records, and technology-driven land administration; to provide for the establishment of the Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority as a statutory institution; and to facilitate dispute resolution, citizen services, innovation, and integration with national digital infrastructure and emerging technologies; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

WHEREAS, land is an essential resource that underpins individual identity, economic security, agricultural production, urban planning, infrastructure development, and effective governance;

AND WHEREAS, the State recognises the urgent need to transform its land governance systems through a unified, technology-enabled framework to reduce disputes, enhance transparency, ensure real-time data accuracy, and promote good governance;

AND WHEREAS, the proliferation of fragmented, manual, and legacy record-keeping systems has resulted in widespread inefficiencies, legal ambiguities, and public inconvenience across rural and urban Karnataka;

AND WHEREAS, the Government of Karnataka is committed to aligning its land administration systems with the objectives of the Digital India programme, the National Land Records Modernisation Programme, and constitutional principles of access to justice, transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric governance;

AND WHEREAS, it is expedient to provide statutory backing to digital land records, legal recognition to digitally issued land documents, and institutional mechanisms to ensure interoperability, data security, citizen redressal, and use of emerging technologies including blockchain, GIS, and AI in land records management;

BE it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-Sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

PART I
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

CHAPTER I
SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND DEFINITIONS

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Digital Land Records Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Act” means The Karnataka Digital Land Records Act, 2025, as amended from time to time;

(b) “Authority” means the Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority established under section 3 of this Act, entrusted with the responsibility of implementing, regulating, and supervising digital land records governance in the State;

(c) “Chief Commissioner” means the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority appointed under section 7 of this Act, who shall be responsible for the strategic, technical, operational, and administrative leadership of the Authority;

(d) “Digital land record” means any record or information pertaining to rights, title, ownership, possession, cultivation, tenancy, encumbrance, occupancy, classification, land use, valuation, registration, survey details, or any other land-related information maintained in a digitised, geo-referenced, and machine-readable format, authenticated and validated in accordance with the provisions of this Act or the rules and regulations made thereunder, and having the status of legally admissible evidence under section 29;

(e) “District Unit” means a District Land Records Unit constituted under section 6 of this Act, functioning under the overall control of the Authority, responsible for the implementation, monitoring, updation, and coordination of digital land records at the revenue district level;

(f) “Government” or “State Government” means the Government of Karnataka in the Department of Revenue or any other department or authority as notified by the State from time to time in relation to the implementation of this Act;

(g) “Land parcel” means a contiguous and uniquely identifiable plot or area of land, demarcated on the basis of cadastral survey, spatial mapping, or geo-referencing technologies, assigned a Unique Parcel Identification Number (UPIN) or Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), and may comprise one or more survey numbers, sub-

divisions, or built-up or vacant units, for the purposes of recordkeeping, taxation, registration, or legal reference under this Act;

(h) “Notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette of the Government of Karnataka, and includes any order, rule, regulation, direction, or public notice issued thereunder;

(i) “Prescribed” means prescribed by the rules made by the State Government or by the regulations, directions, or guidelines issued by the Authority under this Act;

(j) “Regional Commissioner” means an officer appointed under section 8 of this Act to oversee the regional implementation of the Act in a group or cluster of districts, coordinate district-level activities, ensure uniformity of practice, and supervise compliance with technological and service standards in land records governance;

(k) “Registrar” shall have the same meaning as assigned to it under the Registration Act, 1908 (Central Act 16 of 1908) and shall include a Sub-Registrar, Joint Sub-Registrar, or any other officer empowered under the said Act to register instruments relating to land, immovable property, or related interests;

(l) “Survey” means the process of identifying, demarcating, mapping, measuring, and classifying land parcels, boundaries, and usage using any of the following methodologies or a combination thereof, namely:

- (i) traditional ground-based cadastral survey;
- (ii) re-survey using total stations or GPS technology;
- (iii) mutation-triggered parcel mapping or verification;
- (iv) digital survey using remote sensing, satellite imagery, LiDAR, drones, GIS, geospatial replication, or any other technology or method as may be notified by the Authority;

(m) “User agency” means any department of the Central or State Government, local self-government, urban local body, financial institution, insurance company, utility service provider, statutory authority, registered society, technology platform, court, tribunal, public sector undertaking, academic institution, or any other public or private body or entity which has been authorised by the Authority under this Act to access, integrate with, or utilise the digital land records system for lawful, public, developmental, or regulatory purposes, subject to terms and conditions as may be prescribed;

(n) “Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)” means a 16-digit alphanumeric code generated for each land parcel using geo-spatial coordinates, administrative boundaries, ownership metadata and other attributes, issued in compliance with the guidelines of the Department of Land Resources, Government of India, and forming the central digital identity of the parcel across departments;

(o) “Digital mutation” means the digital recording of change in ownership, title, classification, or any interest in a land parcel, whether by sale, inheritance, partition, gift,

lease, mortgage, decree, or operation of law, duly validated and updated through an automated or semi-automated workflow system in the digital land records platform;

(p) “Public portal” means the official digital interface provided by the Authority for access to land records by citizens, institutions, government bodies, and other authorised stakeholders for services such as RoR download, e-Khata, e-mutation, encumbrance search, title status, grievance tracking, or any other function as may be specified;

(q) “Encumbrance certificate” means a digitally generated certificate, issued on request by the Authority or Registrar, containing particulars of registered transactions or attachments, if any, on a specified land parcel or property, as recorded in the digital database, including absence thereof;

(r) “Audit trail” means a secure and tamper-proof chronological record of access, modification, mutation, verification, or use of digital land records, maintained by the system automatically for transparency, forensic investigation, and accountability;

(s) “Grievance redressal mechanism” means the system established under this Act for receiving, processing, hearing, and resolving citizen or institutional complaints, service deficiencies, or record discrepancies in a time-bound and transparent manner, including appellate or online dispute resolution procedures;

(t) “Legacy record” means any existing physical, semi-digital or pre-digitised document relating to land title, revenue, survey, registration, or mutation which existed prior to the commencement of this Act and is subject to digitisation, validation, or migration to the official digital repository in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

PART II INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER II ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSTITUTION OF AUTHORITY

3. Establishment of the Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an Authority to be known as the Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to enter into contracts and shall, by the said name, sue and be sued.

(3) The Authority shall function as the apex institution for,—

- (a) digitisation, authentication and maintenance of land records in digital format;
- (b) formulation and enforcement of data standards, interoperability frameworks, and security protocols;
- (c) coordination among departments concerned with revenue, survey, registration, rural and urban governance, and planning;

(d) delivery of citizen-facing land record services through digital platforms.

4. Incorporation and Legal Status.- (1) The Authority shall be deemed to be a statutory body within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution of India.

(2) The Authority shall exercise such powers and perform such functions as are conferred upon it under this Act or the rules made thereunder.

(3) The Authority shall, for the purposes of jurisdiction and transparency, be a “public authority” under the Right to Information Act, 2005 (22 of 2005), and shall comply with the obligations of proactive disclosure and citizen access as provided therein.

5. Headquarters and Regional Offices.- (1) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located at Bengaluru or such other place as the State Government may notify.

(2) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, establish such regional or divisional offices as may be necessary for the efficient discharge of its functions.

(3) Each such office shall be headed by an officer not below the rank of Joint Commissioner and shall be staffed in accordance with such norms as may be prescribed.

6. Constitution of State and District Land Records Units.- (1) The Authority shall constitute,—

- (a) a State Land Records Coordination Unit for overseeing standard setting, interoperability, monitoring and capacity building; and
- (b) a District Land Records Unit in each district of the State for operational digitisation, public service interface, and record verification.

(2) Each District Unit shall function under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of the district concerned and shall coordinate with the offices of the Tahsildar, Sub-Registrar, Survey Department, and local self-government institutions.

(3) The composition, powers, responsibilities and administrative procedures of the Units referred to in sub-section (1) shall be such as may be prescribed.

CHAPTER III OFFICERS AND STAFF

7. Appointment and powers of the Chief Commissioner.- (1) The State Government shall appoint a Chief Commissioner of the Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority who shall be the principal executive and administrative head of the Authority.

(2) The Chief Commissioner shall,—

- (a) be of such qualifications and experience as may be prescribed;
- (b) be a person not below the rank of Principal Secretary to the Government;
- (c) possess demonstrated competence in law, land administration, digital governance, or public policy.

(3) The Chief Commissioner shall,—

- (a) implement the decisions of the Authority and ensure the execution of its mandate;
- (b) oversee integration of digital systems across departments;
- (c) issue operational and technical guidelines to subordinate officers;
- (d) ensure accuracy, integrity and security of the digital land records system;
- (e) represent the Authority in all legal and administrative matters;
- (f) perform such other functions as may be assigned by the Authority or prescribed under this Act.

8. Appointment of Regional Commissioners and other officers.- (1) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, appoint such number of Regional Commissioners, District Land Records Officers, survey experts, IT managers, legal officers, and other staff as may be necessary for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) The qualifications, powers, duties, and service conditions of officers and employees appointed under sub-section (1) shall be such as may be prescribed.

(3) The Regional Commissioners shall,—

- (a) supervise the functioning of District Land Records Units within their respective jurisdictions;
- (b) ensure adherence to service delivery timelines and technical standards;
- (c) report to and assist the Chief Commissioner in coordinating activities at the regional level

9. Conditions of service, tenure and removal.- (1) The Chief Commissioner and other officers appointed under this Act shall hold office for such term, not exceeding five years, as may be specified in their order of appointment.

(2) The Chief Commissioner may be reappointed for a further term, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed.

(3) The Chief Commissioner shall not be removed from office except by an order of the Government made after,—

- (a) giving him or her an opportunity of being heard;
- (b) holding an inquiry in accordance with the principles of natural justice;
- (c) being satisfied that the removal is on grounds of misconduct, incapacity, or breach of fiduciary duty.

(4) All officers and employees of the Authority shall be deemed to be public servants within the meaning of section 21 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (45 of 1860).

10. Meetings of the Authority and transaction of business.- (1) The Authority shall meet at such intervals and places as may be prescribed by regulations framed under this Act.

(2) The quorum for a meeting of the Authority shall be one-third of its total strength, and the Chief Commissioner or any member authorised by him or her shall preside.

(3) All decisions of the Authority shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting. In case of an equality of votes, the presiding member shall have a casting vote.

PART III

OBJECTIVES, FUNCTIONS AND POWERS

CHAPTER IV

MANDATE OF THE AUTHORITY

11. Objectives of the Authority.-(1) The Karnataka Digital Land Records Authority shall be established with the following objectives,—

- (a) to establish and maintain a legally valid, transparent, reliable and tamper-proof digital land records system across the State of Karnataka;
- (b) to digitise, integrate, and standardise all forms of land records including ownership, rights, tenancy, cultivation, land use, spatial boundaries, and encumbrances;
- (c) to enhance public access, improve citizen services, and reduce litigation by creating a one-stop platform for all land-related data and transactions;
- (d) to foster inter-departmental coordination among Revenue, Survey and Settlement, Urban and Rural Development, Registration, and Panchayat departments;
- (e) to promote the use of advanced technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), satellite imagery, blockchain, and artificial intelligence for land administration;
- (f) to ensure legal sanctity, auditability, and accuracy of land records through robust governance, verification, and security protocols.

12. General Functions of the Authority.-(1) Without prejudice to the generality of its objectives, the Authority shall discharge the following functions,—

- (a) digitise and preserve existing textual and spatial land records from various departments in accordance with prescribed standards;
- (b) create and maintain a Unified Land Records Database integrating cadastral, registry, revenue, and survey information;
- (c) formulate data architecture, metadata standards, and protocols for integration and interoperability of land-related systems;
- (d) facilitate assignment of Unique Land Parcel Identification Numbers (ULPINs) and ensure its universal application for identification of land parcels;
- (e) provide a secure, tamper-proof, and auditable digital platform for viewing, accessing, updating, and verifying land records by citizens and public authorities;
- (f) serve as the coordinating body for implementation of the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) and related central schemes;
- (g) promote capacity building, awareness generation, training and research in the field of digital land governance;

- (h) maintain periodic backups, ensure disaster recovery mechanisms, and preserve digital integrity of land records for long-term use;
- (i) establish grievance redressal mechanisms for digital record disputes and coordinate with the appropriate adjudicating authorities.

13. Powers to Issue Regulations, Directions and Guidelines.- (1) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, issue such regulations, directions, notifications, standard operating procedures, and guidelines as may be necessary for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), such regulations or directions may relate to,—

- (a) procedures for digitisation, authentication and mutation of land records;
 - (b) protocols for inter-departmental data sharing and access permissions;
 - (c) security, audit and archival standards for digital records;
 - (d) technological standards, tools, and formats for geospatial data collection and integration;
 - (e) user charges and service delivery timeframes for public access to digital records;
 - (f) obligations of departments, officers, and user agencies interfacing with the digital land records infrastructure.
- (1) Every regulation, guideline, or direction issued under this section shall be laid before the State Legislature, as soon as may be, after it is issued.

14. Power to Requisition Records, Statistics and Data.- (1) The Authority shall have the power to requisition from any department, local authority, statutory body, or agency of the State Government such land-related records, survey maps, statistical data, or registry documents as may be necessary for the purposes of this Act.

(2) It shall be the duty of every such authority or agency to furnish the records or data requisitioned under sub-section (1) within such period as may be specified.

(3) The Authority may also call for explanations, clarifications or supporting documents for resolving discrepancies or verifying authenticity of any land-related entry.

15. Annual Reports, Audits and Performance Review.- (1) The Authority shall prepare, in such form and manner as may be prescribed, an annual report of its activities, achievements, constraints, and audited financial accounts for each financial year.

(2) The annual report shall include,—

- (a) status of digitisation, integration and updation of land records;
- (b) use of emerging technologies and system performance indicators;
- (c) number of citizen services delivered, grievances redressed and records accessed;
- (d) compliance with service delivery standards and public disclosure norms;
- (e) summary of third-party technical and performance audits conducted.

(3) A copy of the annual report shall be laid before the State Legislature and made publicly available on the official portal of the Authority.

PART IV DIGITAL LAND RECORDS INFRASTRUCTURE

CHAPTER V DIGITISATION AND MAINTENANCE

16. Digitisation of Land Records, Maps and Registers.- (1) The Authority shall undertake, in a phased and time-bound manner, the digitisation of all land-related records in the State, in coordination with the departments of Revenue, Survey and Settlement, Registration, Urban and Rural Development, and any other relevant agencies.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the term "land-related records" shall include, but not be limited to,—

- (a) textual records such as the Record of Rights (RoR), Pahani, RTC, mutation registers, tenancy records, landholding details, occupancy rights, and land revenue demand registers;
- (b) spatial and cartographic records including field measurement books (FMB), village maps, urban property layout maps, survey sketches, boundary demarcations, and khasra-khatauniregisters;
- (c) registration-related documents such as sale deeds, gift deeds, lease agreements, partition deeds, succession certificates, mortgage and hypothecation deeds, encumbrance certificates and related instruments;
- (d) planning and land-use records including zoning maps, urban land ceiling declarations, master plans, and environmental clearance maps or conditions;
- (e) any other register, report, extract, index, notification, gazette publication or document, whether in physical or scanned form, relevant to ownership, possession, tenancy, alienation, classification or valuation of land.

(3) The digitisation process shall include,—

- (a) scanning, indexing and converting physical records into high-resolution digital formats in accordance with prescribed standards;
- (b) extracting metadata including parcel number, survey number, khata number, owner name, location, extent, classification and encumbrances;
- (c) verification, triangulation and cross-referencing of digitised data with physical registers and departmental databases to eliminate duplication and resolve inconsistencies;
- (d) assigning a unique digital identifier to each record and linking it to the relevant land parcel through the Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) system.

(4) All digitised records shall be hosted on the centralised Digital Land Records Portal established and maintained by the Authority, with appropriate access control, audit trails, encryption, and metadata validation.

(5) The State Government may, by rules, prescribe timeframes, workflows, technical specifications and protocols for the completion of digitisation and validation processes under this section.

17. Maintenance and Periodic Updation of Digital Records.- (1) The Authority shall ensure that digital land records, once created, are subject to regular maintenance, validation, and update cycles to ensure continued legal accuracy, public trust, and administrative utility.

(2) The following types of updates shall be mandatorily recorded in the digital system within such time as may be prescribed,—

- (a) all registered transactions resulting in transfer of title or rights, including sales, gifts, mortgages, leases, exchanges, partitions and settlements;
- (b) succession-based mutations including inheritance, survivorship, will-based transfers, and court declarations;
- (c) administrative or quasi-judicial changes based on orders of competent authorities, land tribunals, or civil courts;
- (d) conversions of land use from agricultural to non-agricultural purposes, or vice versa, along with environmental or zoning clearances;
- (e) any other change in ownership, possession, classification, valuation, or jurisdictional boundaries.

(3) The Authority shall develop digital workflows for automatic or semi-automatic updation of digital records upon completion of transactions through,—

- (a) data exchange with the registration portal, mutation systems, revenue offices, and court databases;
- (b) mobile-based field verification tools for capturing physical changes, encroachments or corrections;
- (c) notification to affected parties and opportunity for objections in accordance with principles of natural justice.

(4) Each update in the digital records shall be time-stamped, version-controlled, and maintained in a retrievable audit trail for evidentiary and appellate purposes.

(5) Failure to update records in accordance with this section by any public authority, registrar, or designated officer shall be deemed to be a dereliction of statutory duty and attract such penalties or disciplinary actions as may be prescribed.

18. Integration with Cadastral, Revenue and Registry Records.- (1) The Authority shall integrate and interoperate the digital land records system with other departmental datasets and repositories, including but not limited to,—

- (a) cadastral maps maintained by the Department of Survey and Settlement;
- (b) revenue and landholding registers maintained by the Revenue Department;
- (c) deed and transaction records maintained by the Department of Stamps and Registration;

- (d) town planning data, zoning records, building permits and layout approvals from Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Planning Authorities;
 - (e) data maintained by Gram Panchayats under the Panchayati Raj Act and allied schemes;
 - (f) court orders, interim injunctions, and stay proceedings related to land disputes.
- (2) The integrated system shall be built upon interoperable architecture using open APIs, metadata standards, common identifiers (such as ULPIN, survey number, or GIS coordinates), and secure authentication protocols.
- (3) The Authority shall ensure that the integrated platform enables seamless,—
- (a) synchronisation of records to avoid data silos;
 - (b) cross-verification of land status and ownership by citizens, financial institutions, and authorities;
 - (c) automated alerts in case of duplicate transactions, disputed titles or boundary overlaps.
- (4) Every department or authority covered under this section shall be under a statutory obligation to cooperate with the Authority and make available such data, records and APIs as may be required for the integration exercise.

19. Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) Implementation.- (1) The Authority shall ensure that every land parcel in the State is assigned a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN), which shall serve as a single, permanent, and geo-referenced identifier for that parcel.

- (2) The ULPIN shall be,—
- (a) based on coordinates derived from validated survey data and spatial mapping;
 - (b) linked with the owner's details, land use, jurisdiction, extent, and property tax or registry details;
 - (c) used across all land-related systems including registration, mutation, tax collection, subsidy distribution, planning approvals, banking, and legal documentation.
- (3) The ULPIN shall be mandatory for,—
- (a) every land transaction or mutation entered in the land records database;
 - (b) issuance of certified extracts, khata certificates, landholding records and encumbrance certificates;
 - (c) mapping and visualisation on the public land information portal;
 - (d) dispute adjudication and identification in any civil or quasi-judicial land matter.
- (4) The Authority shall establish protocols for generation, verification, updating, and transfer of ULPIN in case of boundary modification, subdivision, or amalgamation.
- (5) No authority, department or public body shall use any alternative identifier for a land parcel in contradiction to the ULPIN assigned under this Act.
- (6) Any attempt to assign, manipulate, or duplicate a ULPIN with intent to defraud shall constitute an offence under this Act and be punishable under the provisions of Chapter X.

CHAPTER VI

SPATIAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

20. Use of GIS, Satellite Imagery and Drone Technology.- (1) The Authority shall adopt and institutionalise the use of spatial and geospatial technologies for the accurate, efficient, and transparent creation, maintenance and monitoring of digital land records.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the Authority may utilise the following technologies and methods for spatial data capture, verification and representation,—

- (a) Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for layering cadastral boundaries, land use, infrastructure, topography, and ownership overlays in both rural and urban areas;
- (b) High-resolution satellite imagery, including ortho-rectified maps, for conducting large-scale remote sensing-based land use classification, encroachment identification, and monitoring of agricultural or forested areas;
- (c) Drone-based aerial surveys for precision mapping, re-survey of disputed or inaccessible areas, detection of encroachments, and boundary validation at the field level;
- (d) LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging), Total Station, GNSS/RTK-based survey and other modern tools for accurate digital elevation models, terrain mapping and volumetric measurement of land parcels;
- (e) integration of spatial datasets with textual land records to enable comprehensive land parcel visualisation, traceability and record correlation.

(3) The spatial data collected under this section shall be,—

- (a) stored in a secure, standardised digital format compatible with the Authority's core system;
- (b) subject to validation by field officials or designated surveyors using ground-truthing methods;
- (c) used for layering additional information such as zoning, irrigation status, encroachments, infrastructure development, and disaster vulnerability;
- (d) made accessible to departments, institutions and public users subject to such terms, access protocols, and user permissions as may be prescribed.

(4) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Authority, issue operational guidelines for procurement, use, validation and application of spatial technologies in land records management, including empanelment of certified drone operators or spatial data agencies.

21. Blockchain-Based Record Authentication and Smart Contracts.- (1) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government and subject to technological feasibility, develop and implement a blockchain-enabled framework for the authentication, verification and immutable storage of land records.

(2) The blockchain framework under sub-section (1) shall ensure,—

- (a) tamper-evident and time-stamped digital records of every transaction or mutation related to a land parcel;
 - (b) decentralised record management architecture reducing the risk of manipulation or unauthorised alteration;
 - (c) version control and historical visibility of changes, enabling easy retrieval of prior status and ownership trails;
 - (d) generation of cryptographic hashes or keys to ensure secure sharing of land records between institutions.
- (3) The Authority may develop smart contract-based templates for,—
- (a) digital execution of lease, licence, rent and joint ownership agreements;
 - (b) auto-triggered compliance mechanisms based on predefined conditions;
 - (c) automated updating of land records upon fulfilment of conditions precedent or payment of stamp duty;
 - (d) land-use restriction enforcement or compliance with land ceiling norms through coded execution.
- (4) The records maintained or transactions executed on the blockchain system shall be deemed admissible under section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 and shall enjoy prima facie legal validity unless rebutted before a court of law.
- (5) The State Government may issue rules specifying the conditions, technological standards and processes for enabling blockchain-based authentication or smart contracts under this section.

22. Creation of Digital Twin and Geospatial Replication.- (1) The Authority may, with the approval of the State Government, develop a digital twin of the land ecosystem of the State, comprising an integrated virtual model that replicates the legal, spatial, administrative and environmental attributes of land parcels.

- (2) The digital twin shall be constructed using data from,—
- (a) cadastral maps, field measurements and satellite imagery;
 - (b) registered documents, encumbrance details and mutation history;
 - (c) land use, zoning, planning and environmental clearance datasets;
 - (d) real-time field-based inputs such as boundary corrections, encroachment alerts, or infrastructure developments.
- (3) The digital twin may be used for the following purposes,—
- (a) infrastructure planning, urban development and zoning simulations by town planning authorities;
 - (b) climate and disaster risk assessments, including flood plains and erosion-prone zones;
 - (c) monitoring land use change patterns, environmental degradation, and unauthorised constructions;

- (d) public visualisation and decision-support dashboards for transparency and citizen engagement.
- (2) The Authority may permit access to the digital twin environment to departments, planners, academic institutions and citizens, subject to prescribed access controls and data protection norms.

23. Real-time Title Chain, Timestamping and Version Control.- (1) The Authority shall maintain a real-time digital title chain for each land parcel in the State, showing the chronological flow of title, rights, encumbrances, mutation history, and transaction references.

(2) The digital title chain shall include,—

- (a) registered title documents and encumbrance certificates;
- (b) mutation orders, partition decrees, inheritance updates and possession entries;
- (c) timestamped metadata for each change, including date, time, officer credentials, and legal justification;
- (d) version control logs enabling rollback, conflict comparison or authentication of historical records.

(3) The title chain shall be continuously synchronised with records from the Registration Department, Courts, and Revenue Offices using API-based data integration mechanisms.

(4) The digital title chain maintained under this section shall be considered prima facie evidence of title and record of possession, unless proven otherwise by a competent authority or court.

(5) The Authority shall notify service standards, update frequencies, and mechanisms for citizen reporting of discrepancies, which shall be redressed within a prescribed period.

PART V

CITIZEN ACCESS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC INTERFACES AND CITIZEN SERVICES

24. Citizen Access to Digital Land Records and Public Portal.- (1) The Authority shall establish and maintain a secure, real-time, and citizen-centric Digital Land Records Public Portal accessible through the State's integrated service delivery platform.

(2) The public portal shall provide, inter alia,—

- (a) access to ownership details, title history, cadastral maps, classification of land, and encumbrance data;
- (b) downloadable copies of certified land records, including the Record of Rights, Khata extract, Field Measurement Book (FMB) map, and mutation status;

- (c) application facility for services including mutation, e-Khata generation, rectification, grievance submission, or land parcel validation;
 - (d) visual GIS interface allowing map-based search using ULPIN, survey number, address, or PIN code;
 - (e) real-time status tracking for service requests and applications.
- (3) The portal shall ensure secure access through user authentication, including Aadhaar-based login, e-KYC verification, mobile OTP or digital certificate authentication.
- (4) The Authority may also provide mobile app-based access or offline kiosk services at gram panchayats and urban wards for digitally underserved communities.

25. Provision for e-Khata, Digital Mutation and Auto-Updation.- (1) The Authority shall facilitate the generation and issuance of e-Khata, being a fully digital and authenticated Khata certificate, upon completion of registration, mutation, or verification processes.

(2) The digital mutation system shall,—

- (a) allow online application for mutation based on registered deeds, inheritance, court orders or other valid causes;
 - (b) support automatic workflow triggering post-registration via integration with the Department of Stamps and Registration;
 - (c) enable automated updation of ownership and occupancy records where no objections are received within the prescribed period;
 - (d) include generation of draft mutation entries, issuance of notices, objection hearing and final order upload on the portal.
- (3) The Authority shall notify categories of transactions eligible for auto-mutation without physical verification or hearing, subject to rules and safeguards to be prescribed.
- (4) Mutation entries made digitally under this section shall be considered valid and binding, and recorded in the real-time title chain under Section 23.

26. Digital Issuance of Record of Rights, Property Cards and Encumbrance

Certificates.- (1) The Authority shall facilitate online application and digital issuance of the following land-related documents through the public portal and authorised service channels,—

- (a) Record of Rights (RoR) or RTC in prescribed format containing details of ownership, possession, land use and revenue demand;
 - (b) Property Cards for urban and peri-urban properties with integration of planning and layout data, building permissions and tax records;
 - (c) Encumbrance Certificates (EC) showing registered encumbrances, liens, mortgages, and pending transactions as per the records of the Registration Department.
- (2) Every such document shall bear a system-generated unique ID, timestamp, QR code, and digital signature of the authorised officer to ensure authenticity and verifiability.

(3) The documents issued under this section shall have legal evidentiary value as per Section 29 and shall be admissible in any legal, administrative or financial proceedings.

(4) The Authority may prescribe user charges, exemption categories, delivery timelines and verification protocols for such digital services.

27. Service Delivery Standards and Grievance Turnaround Timeline.- (1) The Authority shall prescribe **citizen charter-based standards** for delivery of land-related services, including,—

- (a) mutation order within a specified number of working days;
- (b) issuance of certified RoR, e-Khata, or encumbrance certificate within specified hours or days;
- (c) digital title correction or boundary adjustment timeline;
- (d) maximum turnaround time for disposal of public grievances or data correction requests.

(2) A Grievance Redressal System shall be established within the Authority and linked with the State Public Grievance Portal, allowing—

- (a) digital submission and acknowledgment of grievances;
- (b) assignment of tracking numbers, escalation tiers, and officer accountability;
- (c) automated alerts to complainants upon action or closure.

(3) Failure to adhere to prescribed service delivery timelines shall be subject to performance audit and accountability measures, including penalties and disciplinary action against defaulting officers.

28. Multilingual and Inclusive Interfaces.- (1) The Authority shall ensure that all digital platforms, portals, mobile applications, kiosks, and other citizen-facing service delivery systems established under this Act are developed and maintained in a manner that is accessible, inclusive, and comprehensible to diverse sections of society.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the Authority shall provide—

- (a) multilingual access to all services and records through interfaces in Kannada, English, and such other languages as may be notified by the State Government, ensuring that the official language of the State is the default language of operation;
- (b) screen-reader compatibility and text-to-speech functionalities for visually impaired and illiterate users, in compliance with the accessibility standards laid down under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 and related Government of India notifications;
- (c) offline access points, including rural service centres, Gram Panchayat offices, common service centres (CSCs), and urban facilitation kiosks, equipped with internet access and trained personnel to assist users in accessing and printing land records;

- (d) mobile-based access, including Android and iOS applications, that allow real-time checking of land ownership, registration status, e-Khata generation, and filing of grievances;
 - (e) USSD or SMS-based interfaces for low-bandwidth and feature phone users, especially in remote, tribal, or underserved regions.
- (3) The Authority shall collaborate with relevant departments, NGOs, legal aid clinics, and digital literacy institutions to—
- (a) organise regular awareness and outreach programmes on citizen rights and digital access mechanisms under this Act;
 - (b) develop audio-visual and pictorial guides, handbooks, video tutorials, and interactive formats to aid understanding of land-related rights, processes and documents;
 - (c) offer multilingual helpdesk services and call centres operational during working hours for real-time grievance assistance, record clarification, and procedural support.
- (4) All service delivery points and portals shall include gender-sensitive, disability-friendly, and senior citizen-friendly design features to ensure universal usability, and no citizen shall be denied access to land records or services on grounds of language, literacy, disability, or technical incapacity.
- (5) The State Government may, in consultation with the Authority, notify minimum standards and periodic audit requirements for assessing compliance with multilingualism, accessibility, and inclusivity norms under this section.

PART VI

LEGAL VALIDITY AND JUDICIAL SANCTION

CHAPTER VIII

RECOGNITION OF DIGITAL LAND RECORDS

29. Legal Status of Digital Land Records as Primary Evidence.- (1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force, every record, register, entry, certificate, extract, or document maintained in a digitised format under this Act shall have the same legal effect, validity, and enforceability as a corresponding physical record maintained under any revenue, registration, or land laws.

(2) Subject to the provisions of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, any extract, certified copy, or electronically generated record authenticated in accordance with this Act shall be treated as primary evidence of the entries contained therein and shall be admissible in any court, tribunal, or authority as conclusive proof of,—

- (a) ownership, possession, or lawful occupation of a land parcel;
- (b) existence of encumbrances, tenancy, lease, or mortgage;
- (c) boundaries, classification, and survey data of a land parcel;
- (d) mutation status, registration trail, and title history.

(3) The digital land record shall be presumed to be true and correct unless proved otherwise by the person who alleges inaccuracy or falsification, in accordance with established rules of evidence.

(4) In case of discrepancy between physical and digital records, the record stored and maintained under the provisions of this Act shall prevail, unless adjudicated otherwise by a competent authority or court.

30. E-Registration and E-Stamping Integration.- (1) The Authority shall coordinate with the Department of Stamps and Registration and the Inspector General of Registration to ensure seamless integration of e-registration and e-stamping systems with the Digital Land Records Portal.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), such integration shall ensure,—

- (a) automatic mutation initiation in the land records database upon completion of e-registration of a transaction;
- (b) direct uploading and archival of registered sale deeds, agreements, and instruments in the land records management system with cross-referencing to the relevant ULPIN;
- (c) authentication of stamp duty payment through e-stamp certificate numbers issued by authorised service providers;
- (d) end-to-end digital workflows with minimal physical interface, supporting paperless conveyancing.

(3) The use of physical stamp papers, handwritten documents, or manual registers for registration of transactions involving land parcels may be phased out in such manner and within such time as may be prescribed by the State Government by notification.

(4) All departments, including the Sub-Registrar offices, shall mandatorily use the ULPIN in all registered instruments, mutation endorsements, and revenue records.

31. Admissibility in Courts and Tribunals.- (1) All digital land records, extracts, documents, and electronic entries generated, stored, accessed, or produced in accordance with the provisions of this Act shall be admissible in evidence under sections 65A and 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

(2) Any certified copy, digitally signed document, blockchain-authenticated record, or system-generated extract produced from the Digital Land Records Portal shall be deemed to be a valid public document within the meaning of section 74 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

(3) Every court, tribunal, quasi-judicial authority, or revenue authority in the State of Karnataka shall take judicial notice of such records and shall not require physical production of originals, unless specific allegations of tampering or fraud are raised and prima facie substantiated.

(4) The Authority shall, in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka and State Tribunals, develop protocols for online verification of digital records, production of electronic evidence, and issuance of court-certified digital extracts.

32. Digital Signature, Biometrics and e-KYC Authentication.- (1) All digital land records, transactions, and services offered under this Act shall be authenticated through legally recognised means, including—

- (a) digital signatures as defined under section 2(1)(p) of the Information Technology Act, 2000;
 - (b) electronic signatures compliant with section 3A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, including Aadhaar-based eSign and DSC (Digital Signature Certificate);
 - (c) biometric authentication using Aadhaar or other government-approved identifiers for parties executing land transactions;
 - (d) e-KYC authentication, through UIDAI or SEBI-authorised agencies, for identity verification of landowners, buyers, and tenants.
- (2) The Authority may prescribe additional identity verification mechanisms, including one-time passwords (OTP), video-based KYC, and facial recognition technologies, subject to compliance with applicable data protection laws and rules.
- (3) Every document authenticated using the methods under sub-section (1) shall be deemed to be validly executed and shall have the same evidentiary value as physical signatures under existing laws.
- (4) Any impersonation, false biometric, or fraudulent authentication undertaken for manipulation of land records shall be an offence under Chapter X of this Act and punishable accordingly.
- (5) The Authority shall establish a Digital Signature and Verification Audit Unit to periodically audit the integrity of digital signatures and e-authentications used in the land records system.

PART VII

DATA PROTECTION, PRIVACY AND CYBERSECURITY

CHAPTER IX

SAFEGUARDS AND COMPLIANCE

33. Data privacy obligations and lawful processing.- (1) The Authority shall ensure that all personal, transactional, biometric, and sensitive data collected, stored, processed, or shared under this Act is handled in compliance with the fundamental right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, and in accordance with applicable laws, including the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and the Information Technology Act, 2000.

(2) The processing of data under this Act shall be subject to the principles of,—

- (a) purpose limitation, ensuring data is processed only for specific, lawful, and pre-defined objectives;
- (b) data minimisation, whereby only such data as is necessary for identification, authentication or verification of land records shall be collected;
- (c) consent, with the free, informed, and revocable consent of individuals wherever applicable;

- (d) storage limitation, ensuring that personal data is retained only for as long as necessary to fulfil its lawful purpose;
 - (e) transparency and accountability, ensuring individuals are informed of how their data is used, shared or stored.
- (3) No biometric, demographic or financial data of a citizen shall be published, disclosed or disseminated through the public portal, except in anonymised or aggregated formats.
- (4) The Authority shall designate a Data Protection Officer who shall be responsible for ensuring data protection compliance, managing user requests, and coordinating with the Data Protection Board or such other authorities as may be notified under applicable law.
- (5) Every data principal shall have the right to access, correct, and seek erasure of their personal data in accordance with such manner and timelines as may be prescribed.

34. Cybersecurity protocols and end-to-end encryption.- (1) The Authority shall implement robust, state-of-the-art cybersecurity architecture to protect the digital land records system, databases, APIs, cloud storage, and public interfaces from cyber threats, breaches, and system compromises.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the following cybersecurity measures shall be mandatorily implemented,—

- (a) end-to-end encryption of data in transit and at rest, using AES-256 or such standards as may be specified by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In);
 - (b) deployment of firewalls, intrusion detection systems (IDS) and intrusion prevention systems (IPS) to monitor and block malicious traffic;
 - (c) multi-factor authentication protocols for access by authorised officials, service providers, and registrars;
 - (d) use of role-based access controls and least-privilege principles to restrict access to sensitive data modules;
 - (e) deployment of blockchain or cryptographic hashing for safeguarding against tampering of title entries and record changes.
- (3) The Authority shall periodically conduct vulnerability assessments, source-code audits, and penetration testing, either in-house or through empanelled cybersecurity experts.
- (4) All data centres and digital infrastructure handling land records shall be ISO 27001 certified or comply with such equivalent security standards as may be prescribed by the State Government or national agencies.

35. Protection against tampering, fraud and unauthorised access.- (1) Any unauthorised access to, tampering with, falsification of, or unauthorised use of land records, metadata, mutation logs or title chains stored under this Act shall be strictly prohibited and shall constitute an offence under this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the following activities shall be expressly prohibited,—

- (a) unauthorised editing, overwriting, or deletion of entries in the digital land records database;
- (b) impersonation, falsification of identity or credentials to gain access to or alter land records;
- (c) unauthorised export, scraping, or mass downloading of land data for commercial, political or fraudulent purposes;

- (d) use of malware, ransomware, or other malicious code to interfere with the integrity or availability of the land records system.
- (3) The Authority shall maintain strict logs and access trails of all modifications made to any land record, including the identity of the user, time of access, nature of change, and justification thereof.
- (4) Any official, licensee, or system administrator found complicit in wilful tampering, data suppression, or facilitation of unauthorised access shall be liable to disciplinary action and prosecution under Chapter X of this Act and under the relevant provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and Indian Penal Code, 1860.

36. Audit trails, breach reporting and incident management.- (1) The Authority shall maintain an immutable audit trail for every access, transaction, update, mutation, and service delivery performed through the Digital Land Records System.

(2) Such audit trail shall include,—

- (a) user credentials and IP addresses;
 - (b) time stamps and digital signatures;
 - (c) action logs, records accessed or modified, and system events;
 - (d) escalation notes and grievance resolution status, where applicable.
- (3) Any suspected or confirmed breach of cyber security, unauthorised access, data leakage, or tampering of land records shall be mandatorily reported by the Authority to,—
- (a) the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), within the time prescribed under applicable law;
 - (b) the State IT Security Cell and the State Government;
 - (c) the affected data principals, in case of compromise of personal data.
- (4) The Authority shall develop and periodically update a comprehensive Cybersecurity Incident Response and Mitigation Policy, including standard operating procedures for breach containment, forensic audit, recovery and regulatory reporting.
- (5) Periodic cybersecurity compliance audits shall be conducted by third-party empanelled agencies and their reports placed before the Governing Board of the Authority and the State Government.

37. Disaster recovery and data continuity planning.- (1) The Authority shall ensure that all land records and associated digital infrastructure are protected against loss, corruption, or unavailability due to natural disasters, cyberattacks, technical failures, or sabotage.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority shall establish and maintain,—

- (a) primary and secondary data centres with geo-redundancy located at distinct seismic and climatic zones;

- (b) real-time replication and backup protocols, including daily incremental and weekly full backups stored at off-site secure locations;
 - (c) automated failover systems that ensure continuity of services with minimal downtime in case of disruption;
 - (d) business continuity and disaster recovery plans, including periodic mock drills, contingency mapping, and emergency restoration protocols.
- (3) The Authority shall ensure that all digital land records remain available to the public, courts, and government agencies even during adverse events or infrastructure failures.
- (4) The State Government may notify minimum disaster resilience and data durability standards for public recordkeeping under this Act, in line with national cybersecurity and e-governance policies.

PART VIII RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT

CHAPTER X CAPACITY BUILDING AND AI INTEGRATION

38. Establishment of Digital Land Records Training Institute.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Authority, establish a dedicated Digital Land Records Training Institute, hereinafter referred to as “the Institute”, for the purpose of capacity building, upskilling and professional training of officers, technical staff, registrars, surveyors, and other stakeholders engaged in land administration.

- (2) The Institute shall function as a centre of excellence with the following objectives,—
- (a) to impart specialised training in digital recordkeeping, cadastral mapping, land law, GIS, blockchain, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity protocols;
 - (b) to develop and certify modular courses, online training modules, and blended learning programmes for continuous professional development;
 - (c) to serve as a repository of land governance case studies, national best practices, and international standards in land administration;
 - (d) to train trainers and empanel domain experts to support rural and urban capacity building;
 - (e) to collaborate with other State and Central training academies, including the Karnataka Administrative Training Institute, National e-Governance Division (NeGD), and Survey of India.
- (3) The Authority shall frame guidelines for the governance, faculty recruitment, curriculum development, certification, and functioning of the Institute.
- (4) The Institute may offer short-term and long-term courses, with the power to confer certificates, diplomas or credits as may be notified by the Authority or Government.

39. Capacity building for officers, stakeholders and Gram Panchayats.- (1) The Authority shall design and implement a continuous capacity building programme for,—

- (a) officers of the Revenue, Survey, Registration, Panchayati Raj, and Urban Development Departments;

- (b) Gram Panchayat secretaries, revenue inspectors, village accountants, and other rural functionaries;
 - (c) Sub-Registrars, notaries, empanelled surveyors and GIS operators;
 - (d) citizen service centre personnel and paralegal volunteers engaged in land services delivery.
- (2) Such training shall be focused on the use of,—
- (a) digital systems, e-Khata, blockchain tools, and online service platforms;
 - (b) new techniques of geotagging, drone-based land mapping, and field validation;
 - (c) user interface accessibility, grievance redressal, record authentication and public engagement protocols.
- (3) The Authority may partner with reputed NGOs, community-based organisations, SHGs, and local bar associations to deliver decentralised training workshops and awareness drives.
- (4) Adequate budgetary allocation shall be made annually for training and outreach at the State, district and taluka levels under this Act.

40. Collaboration with academic, research and tech institutions.- (1) The Authority shall promote interdisciplinary collaboration and institutional partnerships with universities, law schools, technical institutions, public policy centres, research think tanks, and technology incubators.

- (2) Such collaborations may include,—
- (a) joint research on spatial data governance, digital title systems, citizen-centric land reforms, and AI-driven land analytics;
 - (b) student internships, legal clinics, research fellowships, and field immersion programmes with the Authority;
 - (c) pilot projects on cadastral innovation, digital twin mapping, and automated mutation workflows;
 - (d) hackathons, design-thinking challenges, and innovation labs for building land-tech solutions.
- (3) The Authority may constitute an Academic and Innovation Advisory Council to recommend collaborative projects, review progress, and promote academic partnerships for evidence-based land governance.

41. Promotion of AI, machine learning and automation in records management.- (1) The Authority shall proactively adopt and promote the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and automation tools in the management, maintenance and improvement of digital land records.

- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the Authority may utilise AI/ML for,—
- (a) automated anomaly detection in title chains, boundary conflicts, or overlapping claims;
 - (b) natural language processing of historical documents for metadata extraction and indexing;
 - (c) predictive analytics for land use change, urban sprawl, and encroachment risks;
 - (d) intelligent routing of mutation applications and prioritisation of grievance redressals;
 - (e) chatbots and automated response systems for citizen queries.

- (3) The use of AI shall be subject to fairness, transparency, explainability, and data protection norms and shall not override statutory or quasi-judicial decisions unless validated through appropriate human oversight.
- (4) The Authority may publish annual reports on technological innovations implemented under this section, including case studies, impact assessments, and lessons learned.

CHAPTER XI

OPEN ACCESS AND INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

42. Open data policy and anonymised public access.- (1) The Authority shall formulate an Open Data Policy for the controlled sharing and publication of anonymised land data for public, academic, policy, and entrepreneurial use.

(2) The following categories of anonymised or aggregated data may be published periodically on the public platform or data portal,—

- (a) number and type of land parcels by taluka, ownership patterns, extent and usage category;
- (b) digital service uptake, title issuance trends, average turnaround times and grievance redressal statistics;
- (c) geospatial distribution of registration, mutation, or litigation;
- (d) map layers on land use, cadastral divisions, urbanisation and zoning.

(3) No personal identifiers, biometric data, contact details, or transactional values shall be included in datasets shared under this section unless explicitly permitted under applicable law.

(4) The Authority may provide data downloads, bulk APIs, and sandbox environments for researchers, developers, and journalists subject to a data-sharing agreement and terms of use.

43. API framework for banks, courts, and developers.- (1) The Authority shall establish a secure Application Programming Interface (API) framework to facilitate real-time, consent-based integration with,—

- (a) banks and financial institutions for loan processing, mortgage validation, and lien recording;
- (b) courts and quasi-judicial authorities for accessing RoR, encumbrance certificates, and mutation status in land dispute matters;
- (c) registered developers and town planning authorities for layout verifications, zoning conformity, and building plan approvals.

(2) APIs shall be granted through a tiered access protocol, based on authentication, digital consent, and role-based permissions, with audit logs and access restrictions.

(3) The Authority may charge such reasonable processing fees or subscription charges for API access as may be notified from time to time, provided public and pro bono legal access shall remain free or concessional.

(4) The State Government may notify standard formats and conditions for API licensing, usage, revocation, and security compliance.

44. Karnataka Land Data Innovation Fellowship Scheme.- (1) The State Government shall, on the recommendation of the Authority, institute a Karnataka Land Data Innovation Fellowship Scheme, aimed at attracting skilled professionals, researchers, and technologists to work on land governance innovations.

(2) The Fellowship shall be open to,—

- (a) graduates and postgraduates from disciplines such as law, engineering, public policy, GIS, urban planning, and computer science;
 - (b) individuals with demonstrated expertise in AI, geospatial analytics, blockchain, or legal informatics;
 - (c) practitioners or domain experts with experience in land administration, rural development, or e-governance.
- (3) Fellows shall be engaged for a term not exceeding one year, extendable by the Authority, and shall be placed with the State Authority, District Units, or allied departments to undertake—
- (a) diagnostic studies, pilot interventions, and system evaluations;
 - (b) technology adoption and citizen experience improvement projects;
 - (c) drafting of policy recommendations and technical guidelines.
- (4) Fellows shall be paid such stipend, allowances, and research grants as may be prescribed, and their reports shall be published by the Authority in the public domain.

PART IX

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL

CHAPTER XII

REDRESSAL AND APPEALS

- 45. Online dispute resolution mechanism.-** (1) The Authority shall establish and operationalise a citizen-centric, technology-enabled Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) Mechanism for addressing grievances, objections, and disputes relating to digital land records, ownership entries, mutation applications, encumbrance details, and service delivery.
- (2) The ODR mechanism shall consist of,—
- (a) a dedicated web-based platform integrated with the Digital Land Records Portal to receive, track, and manage complaints and disputes in real time;
 - (b) features for filing of complaints, uploading of supporting documents, e-notices to respondents, and video-based hearings or negotiations, where applicable;
 - (c) structured timelines for resolution based on the nature of the complaint, with automated status updates and escalation matrices.
- (3) The Authority shall, by regulation, specify,—
- (a) types and categories of disputes eligible for online resolution;
 - (b) admissibility requirements and filing formats;
 - (c) fee structure, if any, for filing and processing disputes;
 - (d) standards for resolution timelines and closure.
- (4) All decisions rendered through the ODR system shall be binding on the Authority, unless challenged before the appellate forums provided under this Act or under relevant land laws.
- (5) The ODR mechanism shall not preclude or bar any person from seeking recourse before a civil court, revenue court, or any other competent authority, as per applicable law.
- 46. District and State Grievance Redressal Committees.-** (1) The State Government shall constitute District Grievance Redressal Committees (DGRCs) and a State Land Records Grievance Redressal Committee (SLRGRC) to ensure decentralised, transparent, and time-bound redressal of grievances arising out of digital land records operations and services.
- (2) Each DGRC shall be constituted for every revenue district and shall consist of,—

- (a) the Deputy Commissioner or Additional Deputy Commissioner — Chairperson;
 - (b) the District Registrar — Member;
 - (c) the District Survey Officer — Member;
 - (d) one legal expert and one civil society representative — Members;
 - (e) a Senior Officer of the Authority — Member Secretary.
- (3) The SLRGRC shall be constituted at the State level and shall comprise,—
- (a) the Chief Commissioner of the Authority — Chairperson;
 - (b) a retired High Court judge nominated by the State Government — Member;
 - (c) representatives from the Revenue, Urban Development, and Panchayati Raj Departments — Members;
 - (d) one eminent technologist and one land governance expert — Members;
 - (e) the State Nodal Officer of the Authority — Member Secretary.
- (4) The functions of the DGRC and SLRGRC shall include,—
- (a) receiving escalated grievances not resolved through the online portal;
 - (b) holding periodic hearings, summoning relevant officers, and passing interim or final directions;
 - (c) ensuring uniformity and fairness in service delivery and record maintenance;
 - (d) issuing recommendations for systemic improvements based on trends in complaints.
- (5) The Committees shall meet at least once every quarter and shall maintain public records of proceedings, actions taken, and decisions rendered.

47. Appeal and review of Authority’s decisions.- (1) Any person aggrieved by an order, direction, or decision of the Authority under this Act, including mutation approvals, title recognition, or refusal of services, may file an appeal within thirty days from the date of such decision.

(2) Appeals against orders passed by subordinate officers or regional commissioners shall lie before the Chief Commissioner of the Authority, who may confirm, modify, or reverse the order after affording a reasonable opportunity of hearing.

(3) Appeals against final decisions or determinations made by the Authority shall lie before the Land Records Appellate Tribunal, or such appellate forum as may be designated by the State Government for this purpose.

(4) The appellate authority shall,—

- (a) endeavour to dispose of appeals within sixty days from the date of admission;
- (b) conduct proceedings through hybrid modes, including written submissions, video-conferencing, or physical hearings as necessary;
- (c) record reasons in writing for all decisions and communicate the same electronically to the parties.

(5) The Authority shall also have inherent powers to review its own decisions suo motu or upon application, in case of clerical mistakes, misrepresentation, or discovery of new and relevant facts.

48. Integration with e-Courts and smart triage mechanisms.- (1) The Authority shall collaborate with the High Court of Karnataka and the Department of Justice to integrate the digital land records system with the e-Courts platform, so as to facilitate,—

- (a) direct and certified access to RoR, title chains, property cards, and encumbrance records by courts;
 - (b) automated service of notices and record production upon requisition by judicial or quasi-judicial bodies;
 - (c) monitoring of land-related litigation trends for policy feedback and risk assessment.
- (2) The Authority shall also develop smart triage algorithms and decision-support systems to classify, prioritise, and route grievances or disputes based on,—
- (a) severity of land ownership conflicts;
 - (b) vulnerability of stakeholders (e.g., senior citizens, single women, farmers);
 - (c) statutory urgency or potential public interest;
 - (d) pendency and duplication history.
- (3) The Authority may, with prior approval of the State Government, create APIs and judicial dashboards for authorised access by district courts, tribunals, and revenue authorities to enable seamless land record verification and real-time record authenticity checks.
- (4) All integration shall be subject to data protection safeguards, encryption protocols, and judicial approval processes as may be laid down in applicable law or rules framed under this Act.

PART X

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL AND NATIONAL ALIGNMENT

CHAPTER XIII

COORDINATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES

49. Coordination with Revenue, Registration, Urban and Panchayat Departments.-

- (1) The Authority shall act as a central coordinating agency for all matters relating to land records across departments of the Government of Karnataka, including the Departments of Revenue, Stamps and Registration, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Urban Development, and Survey Settlement and Land Records.
- (2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority shall,—
- (a) issue binding protocols and integration standards to ensure interoperability between digital land records and departmental databases, portals, and workflows;
 - (b) facilitate real-time data exchange between the land records system and departments responsible for mutation, taxation, layout approvals, land acquisition, regularisation and registration;
 - (c) ensure that all property transactions processed through Sub-Registrar Offices, Municipalities, and Gram Panchayats are reflected in the digital land records in a time-bound manner;
 - (d) promote convergence of services through a Single Window Interface for land-related functions.
- (3) Each concerned department shall designate a Land Data Integration Officer at the district and state levels to coordinate with the Authority, assist in harmonisation of datasets, and resolve inter-departmental discrepancies.

(4) All departmental notifications, rules or orders affecting land ownership, classification, or usage shall be mandatorily shared with the Authority in a digital format for system updation and legal consistency.

50. Integration with NLRMP, DILRMP, PM Gati Shakti and State GIS.- (1) The Authority shall ensure seamless integration of its systems and datasets with national land record and geospatial infrastructure initiatives, including—

- (a) the National Land Records Modernization Programme (NLRMP) and Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP);
 - (b) the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan for multi-modal infrastructure;
 - (c) the Bhu-Aadhaar (ULPIN) initiative of the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development;
 - (d) the State GIS and Karnataka State Spatial Data Infrastructure (KSSDI).
- (2) For the purpose of sub-section (1), the Authority shall—
- (a) align its technical architecture and data models with prescribed national standards;
 - (b) submit periodic updates and performance data to the Ministry of Rural Development and other concerned nodal agencies;
 - (c) ensure ULPIN-based referencing of all land parcels, registration entries, and mutation logs;
 - (d) participate in joint working groups, pilot projects, and reviews convened under national missions on land reform or infrastructure planning.
- (3) All integrations shall ensure compliance with cybersecurity, privacy, and inter-governmental data-sharing standards, and shall not compromise the legal validity or state ownership of digital records.

51. Role in climate zoning, Smart Cities and land-use reforms.- (1) The Authority shall play a proactive and enabling role in supporting environmental planning, climate resilience, and sustainable land use governance across Karnataka by sharing reliable, updated, and spatially validated land data.

- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (1), the Authority shall—
- (a) provide cadastral and ownership overlays to assist in climate vulnerability zoning, water recharge mapping, and disaster-prone area identification;
 - (b) collaborate with State Urban Development and Smart Cities Mission offices to provide high-resolution, geo-tagged land data for real estate regulation, infrastructure development, and housing schemes;
 - (c) support the implementation of land pooling, urban densification, and slum redevelopment policies through integrated digital records and verified land titles;
 - (d) offer analytical support for agro-climatic zoning, carbon credit estimation, and biodiversity conservation projects, in consultation with the State Environment and Forest Departments.
- (3) The Authority shall maintain a geospatially tagged land-use inventory that is updated periodically and accessible to planning agencies and authorised stakeholders for research and regulatory purposes.

(4) The Authority shall assist in the formulation and review of District Development Plans, Master Plans, and Land Use Conversion Frameworks by providing authenticated spatial and legal data.

52. Advisory and policy-making functions.- (1) In addition to its operational responsibilities, the Authority shall function as a statutory advisory body to the State Government on matters related to digital land governance, legal reforms, and technology adoption.

(2) The Authority may from time to time,—

- (a) recommend policy measures for simplification of land-related services, reduction of litigation, and transparency in public land allocation;
- (b) propose amendments to existing rules, notifications, or Acts that affect the integrity or operability of the digital land records system;
- (c) advise on measures to eliminate fraudulent land transactions, benami holdings, and dual title practices;
- (d) submit white papers, research reports, and regulatory impact assessments on emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, satellite-based titling, and decentralised land markets.

(3) The Authority may constitute expert committees, advisory panels, and sector-specific working groups for such purposes as it may deem necessary, and may invite domain specialists, academicians, former officials, or technocrats to assist in policy formulation.

(4) All recommendations made by the Authority under this section shall be submitted to the State Government and may be tabled before the State Legislature, as and when required.

PART XI FINANCE, FUNDING AND ACCOUNTS

CHAPTER XIV FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE

53. Grants and financial assistance by State and Central Government.- (1) The State Government may, after due appropriation made by the State Legislature by law in this behalf, make to the Authority such grants, loans, or advances of sums of money as it may deem necessary for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Authority shall also be eligible to receive financial assistance or support from the Central Government under centrally sponsored schemes, including but not limited to the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) and other technology infrastructure development schemes of the Department of Land Resources or Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

(3) The Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, also receive—

- (a) grants from bilateral or multilateral institutions or development agencies for technological innovation or capacity building;
- (b) contributions or donations from public or private institutions, provided such contributions are non-repayable and do not affect the autonomy or neutrality of the Authority;

- (c) funding through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) for specified purposes as may be prescribed by regulation.
- (4) All funds received under this section shall be credited to the Karnataka Digital Land Records Fund established under this Act.

54. Establishment of Karnataka Digital Land Records Fund.- (1) There shall be established a Fund to be called the Karnataka Digital Land Records Fund, to be maintained and administered by the Authority in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) The Fund shall comprise—

- (a) all grants, loans, or advances made by the State Government or the Central Government;
- (b) all charges, fees, user payments, and receipts collected by the Authority for services rendered under this Act;
- (c) funds received from any other source including international cooperation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) support, or research grants;
- (d) any income or interest accrued on investments of the Fund.

(3) The Fund shall be applied towards,—

- (a) implementation of schemes, projects, and digital infrastructure under this Act;
- (b) operational and administrative expenses of the Authority and its subordinate offices;
- (c) capacity building, awareness generation, grievance redressal, and research;
- (d) innovation, pilot projects, AI integration and technological upgrades;
- (e) contingencies including cybersecurity response, data recovery, and disaster preparedness.

(4) The Fund shall be held in a nationalised or scheduled commercial bank and shall be operated jointly by the Chief Commissioner and the Financial Officer of the Authority, in accordance with such financial rules as may be notified by the State Government.

55. Appointment and Powers of Financial Officer.- (1) The Authority shall appoint a full-time officer to be designated as the Financial Officer, who shall be responsible for supervising and managing all financial matters of the Authority.

(2) The Financial Officer shall be a person of suitable qualification and experience in government accounting, finance, or public administration, and shall be appointed in consultation with the Finance Department of the State Government.

(3) The powers and responsibilities of the Financial Officer shall include,—

- (a) preparation and submission of the annual budget, performance-linked expenditure plans, and cash flow forecasts;
- (b) sanctioning routine expenditures and managing procurement in accordance with financial norms;
- (c) verifying and maintaining accounts, expenditure records, vouchers, ledgers and audit compliances;
- (d) preparing utilisation certificates for grants received from the State or Central Government;
- (e) ensuring compliance with public finance rules, fiscal responsibility norms, and directions issued by the State Government.

(4) The Financial Officer shall report directly to the Chief Commissioner of the Authority and may be assisted by such staff and experts as may be approved by the Governing Board.

56. Budget preparation and allocation norms.- (1) The Authority shall prepare, in such form and at such time each financial year as may be prescribed, a detailed Annual Budget Statement, showing the estimated receipts and expenditure for the forthcoming financial year.

(2) The Annual Budget shall include,—

- (a) estimated receipts from the Fund and other income sources;
- (b) estimated administrative, operational and project-related expenditure;
- (c) planned capital investments in technological infrastructure, training, and digital platforms;
- (d) provision for contingencies, cybersecurity, grievance redressal and innovation grants.

(3) The budget shall be prepared with due regard to,—

- (a) financial prudence and service efficiency;
- (b) prioritisation of underserved districts or vulnerable populations;
- (c) measurable outcomes and performance-based allocations.

(4) The budget shall be submitted for approval to the Governing Board of the Authority and thereafter to the State Government for vetting or modifications, if any.

(5) Upon approval, the budget shall be notified and placed in the public domain on the Authority's website.

57. Maintenance of accounts and statutory audits.- (1) The Authority shall maintain proper accounts and other relevant records, and prepare an annual statement of accounts including the balance sheet, income and expenditure account, and receipts and payments account, in such form as may be prescribed in consultation with the Accountant General of Karnataka.

(2) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or such other auditor as may be appointed by the State Government in consultation with the CAG.

(3) The audit report shall include,—

- (a) observations on the financial propriety, efficiency and compliance of the Authority's expenditures;
- (b) irregularities, if any, and action taken or recommended for rectification;
- (c) assessment of fund utilisation against statutory objectives and service delivery benchmarks.

(4) The Authority shall take all necessary steps to address the observations made in the audit report and submit a compliance report to the State Government within three months of receipt of the audit findings.

58. Laying of financial reports before the State Legislature.- (1) The Authority shall, after the close of each financial year, prepare and submit to the State Government—

- (a) the annual report on its activities during the previous year;
- (b) the audited statement of accounts and audit report under this Act;
- (c) the budget estimates and performance projections for the ensuing year.

(2) The State Government shall cause every such report, statement and document to be laid before each house of the State Legislature, as soon as may be, after their receipt.

- (3) The Legislature may discuss, comment upon, or refer such reports to the appropriate Standing Committee or Committee on Public Accounts for review and recommendations.
- (4) The Authority shall also ensure publication of the financial reports and audit summaries on its official website and make them available in accessible formats for public scrutiny.

PART XII
OFFENCES, PENALTIES AND ENFORCEMENT
CHAPTER XV
PENAL PROVISIONS

59. Offences relating to unauthorised access, tampering and cyber intrusion.- (1) Any person who, without lawful authority or permission, knowingly accesses or attempts to access the digital land records system, central database, cadastral mapping systems, GIS layers, or blockchain-based registry maintained under this Act shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) Any person who,—

- (a) tampers with, alters, destroys, or manipulates land records or metadata stored in digital form;
- (b) introduces or spreads malware, viruses, ransomware, spyware or any other malicious code;
- (c) attempts to hack into, disable, or corrupt the security mechanisms of the system; or
- (d) impersonates an authorised user or fraudulently accesses data using forged or stolen credentials,

shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years, or with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees, or with both.

(3) If such unauthorised access or tampering results in wrongful gain or wrongful loss, or adversely affects any legitimate title, record, or government action, the offender shall be liable for enhanced punishment which may extend to seven years of imprisonment and a fine not less than five lakh rupees.

(4) Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, offences involving critical infrastructure sabotage or systemic breach shall be deemed cognisable and non-bailable, and shall be investigated by officers not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police.

60. Penalties for false entries, forgery and data theft.- (1) Any person who,—

- (a) makes or causes to be made any false entry in any digital land record, Register of Rights, or map with an intent to cause harm, wrongful loss, or legal misrepresentation;
- (b) forges, alters, fabricates, or tampers with any digitally issued property card, RoR, mutation entry, encumbrance certificate, or any associated electronic document;
- (c) misuses or unlawfully discloses personal data, biometric information, or authentication credentials obtained from the land records database;

shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees, or with both.

(2) In the event of recurrence of such acts, or if the acts were committed by an individual acting in a professional or fiduciary capacity, the punishment may be extended to five years of imprisonment with a mandatory fine of not less than two lakh rupees.

(3) Any person found guilty under this section shall also be liable to pay compensatory damages to the person or entity who suffered harm due to the act of falsification or data theft, in such amount as may be determined by the adjudicating authority.

61. Liability of public servants and tech service providers.- (1) Any public servant or official, whether serving under the Authority or any other department interfacing with digital land records, who,—

- (a) wilfully suppresses, delays, or manipulates entries or updates in the digital records;
- (b) fails to prevent tampering, destruction, or unauthorised access due to gross negligence or wilful inaction;
- (c) colludes with private parties in forging, falsifying, or misrepresenting land titles or ownership details,

shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years, or with fine which may extend to three lakh rupees, or with both, without prejudice to departmental disciplinary action.

(2) Any technology service provider, agency, contractor or consultant engaged for maintaining, developing, hosting, securing or integrating the digital land records system, who,—

- (a) wilfully introduces errors, backdoors, or unauthorised modifications in the software or database;
- (b) compromises or discloses data security measures or proprietary data structures;
- (c) engages in misuse or resale of sensitive land data,

shall be liable to a penalty of not less than ten lakh rupees, extendable up to fifty lakh rupees, and may be blacklisted from future contracts.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a register of compliance audits, performance violations, and breach reports for all third-party vendors and may take legal action or file FIRs as required.

62. Investigation, prosecution and adjudication procedure.- (1) All offences under this Chapter shall be investigated by the local police, cybercrime cell, or such other specialised agency as may be designated by the State Government.

(2) Every such investigation shall be completed, as far as practicable, within a period of ninety days from the date of registration of the First Information Report.

(3) The Authority shall nominate an Enforcement and Legal Cell consisting of qualified legal officers and retired judicial personnel to,—

- (a) assist in preparing complaints and evidence dossiers;
- (b) coordinate with law enforcement agencies;
- (c) monitor prosecution progress and represent the Authority in courts or tribunals.

(4) The State Government may, by notification, designate one or more Special Courts for the purpose of speedy trial of offences punishable under this Act, in consultation with the High Court of Karnataka.

(5) The adjudicating authorities under this Act shall have the power to summon documents, issue warrants, attach property, and award compensation or restitution in accordance with the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

63. Compounding of offences and penalty settlements.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, any offence punishable under sections 59 and 60, not being an offence involving repeat offence, public servant collusion, or systemic breach, may be compounded by the Authority or such officer as may be authorised by it in this behalf.

(2) The conditions for compounding shall include,—

- (a) full disclosure of the nature and extent of the breach;
- (b) written apology and undertaking to not repeat the offence;
- (c) payment of such penalty as may be determined by the Authority, subject to a maximum of twice the amount of benefit gained or loss caused;
- (d) withdrawal of any challenge to the records or actions of the Authority, if relevant.

(3) Upon compounding of an offence, no further proceedings shall be instituted or continued against the offender in respect of the same facts.

(4) No offence shall be compounded where the accused has previously committed an offence under this Act that was compounded, or where the act caused irreversible harm to any landowner or public trust.

(5) The Authority shall maintain a publicly accessible Compounding Register and publish anonymised data on offences, penalties levied, and compliance actions taken under this Chapter.

PART XIII

MISCELLANEOUS AND TRANSITIONAL

CHAPTER XVI

MISCELLANEOUS AND ENABLING CLAUSES

64. Protection of action taken in good faith.-(1) No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Authority, any Member, officer, employee, consultant, or person authorised by the Authority for any act which is done or intended to be done in good faith in pursuance of the provisions of this Act or any rule, regulation, order, direction or notification made or issued thereunder.

(2) The protection under sub-section (1) shall extend to,—

- (a) actions undertaken in the process of digitisation of land records, cadastral mapping, system integration, or technology deployment;
- (b) services rendered in good faith for authentication, certification, or mutation of records;
- (c) any recommendation or decision taken in performance of duties in administrative, financial, or regulatory functions;
- (d) technical or advisory opinions expressed by committees or experts consulted under the Act.

(3) For the avoidance of doubt, it is hereby clarified that acts done with malice, gross negligence, or corruption shall not be protected under this section.

65. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for—

- (a) the manner of appointment, service conditions, emoluments, powers and removal of the Chief Commissioner, Members and officers of the Authority;

- (b) financial management procedures including budgeting, accounting, audit and fund disbursement protocols;
- (c) procedures for secure data storage, encryption, access controls and audit logs;
- (d) formats of digital certificates, extracts, notices, and mutation orders;
- (e) dispute resolution procedures, appellate formats, limitation periods and forum jurisdiction;
- (f) citizen service delivery timelines, penalties for delay, and incentive mechanisms;
- (g) standards for training, accreditation and deployment of technical or legal personnel;
- (h) other ancillary or incidental matters that are necessary for the efficient administration of this Act.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly as soon as it is made, and shall be subject to modification or annulment by the Legislature.

66. Power to make regulations.- (1) The Authority may, by notification in the Official Gazette and subject to the provisions of this Act and rules made thereunder, frame regulations to carry out its functions and responsibilities effectively.

(2) Such regulations may include but shall not be limited to,—

- (a) technical standards for digitisation of maps, registers, and mutation records;
- (b) formats for integration with blockchain ledgers, satellite imaging and drone-captured cadastral overlays;
- (c) authentication mechanisms for e-Khata, RoR, encumbrance certificates and digital titles using Aadhaar, e-KYC or biometrics;
- (d) audit trail procedures, role-based access mechanisms and logging architecture;
- (e) eligibility criteria and service levels for participating entities such as Gram Panchayats, Registration Sub-Offices and Municipal bodies;
- (f) operation of public portals, grievance dashboards, multilingual access and citizen support interfaces;
- (g) procedures for verification of legacy records, map disputes and spatial overlays.

(3) The Authority shall ensure all such regulations are accessible to the public and updated periodically.

67. Power to issue binding directions.- (1) The Authority may, in discharge of its mandate and for ensuring standardisation and legal uniformity, issue such binding directions, protocols or advisories to any officer, department, institution, or entity involved in the ecosystem of land records and governance in the State of Karnataka.

(2) Such directions shall relate to,—

- (a) timelines and protocols for digital mutation, record updation, and service delivery;
- (b) technology adoption, database synchronisation, encryption, and user authentication;
- (c) safeguards to prevent data tampering, delay, or revenue leakage;
- (d) resolution of conflicting records, pending surveys, and obsolete cadastral boundaries.

(3) It shall be the duty of every officer and department to comply with such directions issued under sub-section (1) unless stayed, modified, or quashed by a competent judicial authority.

68. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, as it may consider necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) No such order shall be made under this section after the expiry of three years from the date on which this Act comes into force.

(3) Every order made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be, before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.

69. Repeal and savings.- (1) On the commencement of this Act, any provision in the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964, or any other State enactment, rule, or notification inconsistent with this Act shall stand repealed or be deemed to be modified to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal,—

- (a) anything done or action taken under such enactment prior to the commencement of this Act shall, in so far as it is not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act;
- (b) all existing RoRs, mutation registers, landholding certificates, and other documents shall continue to be valid until digitised, validated, and updated in accordance with this Act.

(3) All suits, appeals, revisions, or proceedings pending before any competent authority relating to land title, mutation, classification or encumbrance prior to the commencement of this Act shall continue under the applicable law until disposal, and thereafter the digital outcome shall be integrated into the official record.

70. Transitional provisions for legacy record migration.- (1) The Authority shall prepare and implement a comprehensive Legacy Record Digitisation and Integration Programme to transition from physical or semi-digital records to fully digitised and legally recognised land records.

(2) For the purposes of sub-section (1), the Authority may,—

- (a) identify, scan, index, and tag historical land records, revenue maps, survey documents, and registration logs across districts;
- (b) standardise metadata, titles, and land parcel information to align with the Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN);
- (c) notify district-wise timelines and action plans for digitisation and public validation;
- (d) establish verification camps, community hearings, and appeals for resolving record inconsistencies or omissions.

- (3) Until such time the digitised records attain legal finality, the legacy records shall continue to have evidentiary value, subject to authentication by the competent authority.
- (4) The Authority may issue provisional digital RoRs or e-Khatas based on self-certification, affidavits, or pending litigation status, clearly marking them as “Provisional” until verification is completed.
- (5) The State Government may constitute District Legacy Records Committees, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, comprising land survey officials, revenue officers, legal advisors and technology experts to oversee implementation, certification, and monitoring of the migration process.
- (6) The entire transition programme shall be completed within a period of three years from the date of notification of this Act, or such extended period as the State Government may by notification allow.

THE KARNATAKA EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FEE REGULATION AND TRANSPARENCY BILL, 2025

A Bill to regulate the fee structures of private educational institutions in Karnataka; to prevent profiteering and commercialization in education; to ensure transparency, fairness, and accessibility; and to establish institutional mechanisms to monitor, adjudicate, and enforce standards for fee regulation in the State.

WHEREAS Article 21-A of the Constitution guarantees the right to education to every child between 6 -14 years old.

AND WHEREAS the State of Karnataka is committed to ensuring access to quality education without financial exploitation and to protecting the rights of students and parents;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for the regulation of fees charged by private educational institutions, the establishment of a Fee Regulatory Authority, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Educational Institutions Fee Regulation and Transparency Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- (a) "academic year" means the year of instruction in an educational institution as notified by the State Government, ordinarily commencing from June of a calendar year and ending in May of the following year;

(b) "aided institution" means a private educational institution that receives, in whole or in part, any financial aid, grant, or subsidy from the Government, directly or indirectly, for its functioning, infrastructure, staff salaries, or any other purpose;

(c) "Authority" means the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority constituted under section 15 of this Act, responsible for approval, regulation, and enforcement of fee structures in private educational institutions;

(d) "capitation fee" means any amount, by whatever name called, collected by an educational institution either directly or indirectly from a student or parent as a condition precedent for admission, retention, examination, or promotion, other than the fee notified or approved by the Authority under this Act;

(e) "educational institution" means any school, college, or educational establishment, including pre-primary, primary, secondary, higher secondary, pre-university, degree, professional, technical, and vocational institutions, whether aided or unaided, imparting education or training, and includes coaching centres or tutorial institutions charging fee for academic instruction or preparation for competitive or entrance examinations;

(f) "fee" means any amount, by whatever name called, collected from a student or parent, including but not limited to tuition fee, admission fee, term fee, laboratory fee, library fee,

development fee, caution deposit, activity fee, examination fee, maintenance fee, technology or digital learning charges, sports and cultural fee, and any other charge related to academics or co-curricular services, whether recurring or one-time, refundable or non-refundable;

(g) "Government" means the Government of Karnataka;

(h) "management" means the person or body of persons, trust, society, company, or governing body responsible for the management and administration of an educational institution, whether registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, the Indian Trusts Act, 1882, the Companies Act, 2013, or any other law for the time being in force;

(i) "parent" means the natural or legal guardian of a student, and includes a person having lawful custody of the student, whether biological, adoptive, foster, or otherwise;

(j) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made by the Government under this Act;

(k) "private educational institution" means any educational institution established, owned, managed, or maintained by any individual, group, society, trust, company, or non-governmental organization, whether for profit or not-for-profit, and not owned or fully managed by the Government;

(l) "student" means any person who is admitted to, enrolled with, or receiving instruction in any educational institution to which this Act applies;

(m) "unaided institution" means a private educational institution that does not receive any financial assistance, directly or indirectly, from the Government for its functioning, staff salaries, or infrastructure, and which is entirely self-financed through student fees or private contributions;

(n) "unauthorised fee" means any amount demanded or collected by an educational institution from students or parents without prior approval from the Authority or in contravention of the provisions of this Act or rules made thereunder;

(o) "vulnerable student" means any student belonging to a disadvantaged group or economically weaker section as defined under applicable education laws, or who suffers from disability, chronic illness, or social exclusion and requires special consideration in access to and affordability of education.

Explanation: Words and expressions used but not defined in this Act and defined in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 or the Karnataka Education Act, 1983 shall have the meanings respectively assigned to them in those Acts.

3. Applicability of the Act.- (1) This Act shall apply to all private educational institutions within the territory of Karnataka, whether aided or unaided, including,—

(a) pre-schools, kindergartens, and day-care centres;

(b) primary, upper primary, and high schools;

(c) pre-university colleges;

(d) degree colleges, including arts, science, commerce, and vocational institutions;

(e) professional and technical institutions; and

(f) coaching institutions providing preparation for entrance examinations.

(2) The Government may, by notification, exempt any institution or class of institutions from any provision of this Act subject to such terms and conditions as may be specified.

PART II
RIGHTS AND PROTECTIONS
CHAPTER II

RIGHTS OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS

4. Right to fair and transparent fee structure.- (1) Every student and parent shall have the right to be informed of the complete fee structure of an educational institution in a clear, unambiguous, and accessible manner.

(2) No educational institution shall demand, collect or receive any amount, by whatever name called, which has not been approved by the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority under this Act.

(3) The approved fee structure shall be prominently displayed,—

- (a) on the institution's notice board at a conspicuous place;
- (b) on its official website; and
- (c) in every prospectus, admission form, and parent communication.

(4) Institutions shall provide a printed copy of the approved fee structure to every parent or guardian at the time of admission.

5. Right to grievance redressal and legal protection.- (1) Every student or parent shall have the right to lodge a complaint with the District Fee Regulatory Committee or the Authority against—

- (a) charging of excess or unauthorised fee;
- (b) imposition of capitation fee or donation;
- (c) non-disclosure or misrepresentation of approved fees;
- (d) harassment or victimisation in connection with fee-related disputes.

(2) Upon receipt of a complaint, the Committee shall issue notice to the institution, conduct an inquiry in a summary manner, and pass an order within sixty days.

(3) No student shall be denied access to classes, examinations, records, or co-curricular activities pending such inquiry.

(4) Institutions found to be retaliating against students or parents for filing complaints shall be liable to penalties as prescribed under this Act, including suspension of recognition or withdrawal of affiliation.

6. Prohibition of capitation fee and donations.- (1) No educational institution or its management shall—

- (a) demand or accept, directly or indirectly, any capitation fee or donation in cash or kind; or
- (b) collect any amount for admission, seat reservation, preference allotment, or continued retention of a student, except the fee approved under this Act.

(2) Any such transaction, whether in writing, verbally agreed, or implied, shall be deemed illegal and void.

(3) Where an institution is found to have violated this provision, the Authority may, in addition to directing refund, impose,—

- (a) a fine not less than five times the amount so collected;
- (b) recommend disciplinary action by the affiliating authority or board;
- (c) initiate prosecution under the Indian Penal Code, 1860, or any other applicable law.

7. Right to access essential educational facilities.- (1) Every student admitted to an institution shall be entitled to equal access to academic, infrastructural, and co-curricular facilities, proportionate to the fee paid.

(2) Such facilities shall include, but not be limited to,—

- (a) classrooms and qualified faculty;
- (b) libraries, laboratories, and computer centres;
- (c) hygienic toilets, safe drinking water, and basic medical aid;
- (d) access to playgrounds, sports, arts, and extracurricular activities.

(3) Institutions shall not restrict or curtail access to any facility on the ground of delayed or partial payment of fees, especially for students from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds.

(4) Any failure to provide such facilities, or arbitrary denial thereof, shall constitute a violation of this Act and be actionable under its grievance redressal mechanism.

CHAPTER III

DUTIES OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

8. Duty to disclose approved fee structures.- (1) Every private educational institution shall publish and make available its fee structure approved by the Authority,—

- (a) on its website;
- (b) on the notice board at its administrative office;
- (c) in the prospectus or admission brochure; and
- (d) along with the admission application form.

Provided that where an institution offers multiple courses or streams, a separate fee schedule must be disclosed for each such course or stream.

(2) The disclosed structure shall include,—

- (a) component-wise fee details (tuition, development, library, sports, technology, examination, etc.);
- (b) a clear indication of refundable and non-refundable fees;
- (c) the schedule of payment, instalment options, and last dates.

(3) No institution shall demand or accept any amount in excess of the approved and disclosed fee.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “publication” shall include digital and printed mediums made accessible to parents at all material stages of admission and enrolment.

9. Duty to maintain audited accounts.- (1) Every private educational institution shall maintain detailed annual accounts showing—

- (a) income from all sources, including tuition and ancillary charges;
- (b) (b) expenditure on staff, facilities, infrastructure, and academic services;
- (c) the balance sheet and cash flow position;
- (d) surplus, if any, and its utilisation.

(2) The accounts shall be:

- (a) audited by a Chartered Accountant within the meaning of the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949; and
- (b) submitted to the District Committee and Authority by 30th June of the succeeding academic year.

(3) Failure to submit audited accounts for two consecutive years may attract penalties, and may render the institution liable for suspension of fee approval.

Explanation: Surplus shall not exceed the prescribed percentage of gross revenue as notified by the Authority, and shall be utilised strictly for institutional development and welfare of students.

10. Duty to prevent discriminatory fee practices.- (1) No educational institution shall discriminate in its fee policy on grounds of,—

- (a) caste, religion, gender, linguistic minority status, or disability;
- (b) mode of admission (management, NRI, merit);
- (c) family background, income, or occupation of parents.

(2) Every institution shall adopt a uniform fee policy for students in the same course and academic year, irrespective of category or quota.

(3) All students shall have equal access to facilities and support services funded by collected fees.

(4) Differential charging of fees for the same course within the same academic year shall be deemed a violation, unless otherwise permitted by rules made under this Act.

Provided that scholarships, fee concessions, or reservations granted under law shall not be considered discriminatory under this section.

Explanation: Discrimination shall include any indirect disadvantage or burden on a student owing to arbitrary or non-transparent fee classification.

11. Protection from mid-session fee hikes.- (1) No educational institution shall increase or alter the approved fee for any student during the course of the academic year in which the student was admitted.

(2) Any proposed revision of fee shall,—

- (a) be submitted to the Authority for approval at least six months before the next academic year begins;
- (b) not exceed the annual increase limit as may be notified by the Authority; and
- (c) be applicable only to new admissions and not to existing students mid-way.

(3) Institutions failing to comply shall be liable to,—

- (a) refund the excess amount collected, with interest;
- (b) penalties as prescribed under this Act; and
- (c) possible withdrawal of approval or affiliation for repeated violations.

Explanation: “Mid-session” refers to any time after the commencement of the academic year as per the calendar notified by the State Government.

PART III

FEE REGULATION FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER IV

KARNATAKA FEE REGULATORY AUTHORITY

12. Constitution of Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a body to be known as the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority to exercise the powers conferred on, and to perform the functions assigned to it under this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue and be sued.

13. Composition and appointment of members.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely,—

- (a) A retired High Court Judge or a retired Chief Secretary of the State – Chairperson;
- (b) One educationist of eminence having not less than twenty years of experience in the field of school or higher education – Member;
- (c) One Chartered Accountant of not less than fifteen years standing – Member;
- (d) One legal expert having at least fifteen years' experience in educational or regulatory laws – Member;
- (e) One representative from the Parent-Teachers' Association – Member;
- (f) Director of Public Instruction or Commissioner of Collegiate Education – Ex-officio Member;
- (g) Member-Secretary, to be appointed by the Government.

(2) The Chairperson and other members shall be appointed by the Government on the recommendation of a Search Committee constituted by the Government for the purpose.

(3) No person shall be eligible for appointment as Chairperson or Member if he has been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude or adjudged insolvent.

Explanation: For the purpose of this section, “educationist of eminence” means a person who has held the position of Vice-Chancellor, Principal, Head of Institution, or Professor in a reputed educational institution.

14. Term of office, conditions of service, and removal.-(1) The Chairperson and members, other than ex-officio members, shall hold office for a term of three years from the date on which they assume office and shall be eligible for reappointment for one more term.

(2) The salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the Chairperson and members shall be such as may be prescribed by rules.

(3) The Government may, by order and for reasons to be recorded in writing, remove the Chairperson or any member from office if such person—

- (a) has been adjudged an insolvent;
- (b) has been convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude;
- (c) has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as such member;
- (d) has acquired such financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially their functions;
- (e) has abused their position so as to render their continuance in office prejudicial to public interest.

Provided that no member shall be removed from office without being given an opportunity of being heard.

15. Functions and powers of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall be responsible for regulating, approving, and monitoring the fee structures of private educational institutions in the State in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Authority shall,—

- (a) approve the proposed fee structures submitted by institutions;
- (b) ensure that fees are not excessive, profiteering, or capitation-based;

- (c) prescribe norms and guidelines for rational fee fixation;
 - (d) inquire into complaints of unauthorised fees or violation of the Act;
 - (e) direct refund of excess or unauthorised fee collected, with interest;
 - (f) publish annual reports and comparative fee indices;
 - (g) issue advisories, circulars, and clarification on fee regulations.
- (3) The Authority shall have powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 in respect of,—

- (a) summoning and enforcing attendance of any person;
- (b) requiring the discovery and production of documents;
- (c) receiving evidence on affidavits;
- (d) issuing commissions for examination of witnesses or documents.

(4) Every order passed by the Authority shall be binding on the institutions, and non-compliance shall attract penalties under this Act.

Explanation.— For the purpose of this section, “profiteering” means any amount charged by the institution in excess of the amount required to cover the reasonable cost of provision of education.

16.Headquarters and regional offices.— (1) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located in Bengaluru.

(2) The Government may establish regional offices in each revenue division or as may be required for effective discharge of functions under this Act.

(3) Each regional office shall be headed by a Regional Fee Commissioner appointed by the Authority with approval of the Government.

17.Advisory Panels on Educational Equity and Finance.— (1) The Authority shall constitute two Advisory Panels to assist it in discharge of its functions,—

- (a) Educational Equity Panel; and
- (b) Financial Transparency Panel.

(2) Each Panel shall consist of not more than five members possessing special knowledge in relevant areas, to be nominated by the Authority.

(3) The Panels shall review institutional practices, recommend norms for fee structuring, and advise on promotion of equitable and inclusive education policies.

(4) The Authority may accept or reject the recommendations of the Panels with recorded reasons.

CHAPTER V

DISTRICT FEE REGULATION COMMITTEES

18.Constitution of Committees.— (1) The State Government shall, by notification, constitute a District Fee Regulation Committee (hereinafter referred to as the "District Committee") in each district for the purposes of enforcing this Act at the district level.

(2) Each District Committee shall consist of,—

- (a) Deputy Commissioner of the District – Chairperson;
- (b) Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Panchayat – Vice-Chairperson;
- (c) District Education Officer – Member;
- (d) One Chartered Accountant nominated by the Government – Member;
- (e) One parent representative from a recognised Parent-Teacher Association – Member;
- (f) District Legal Officer – Member;

- (g) One nominee of the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority – Member;
- (h) Deputy Director of Public Instruction (DDPI) – Member Secretary.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “Parent-Teacher Association” means a duly registered body representing the interests of parents and guardians in educational matters.

19. Powers and responsibilities.- (1) The District Committee shall,—

- (a) receive and examine annual fee submissions of educational institutions in the district;
 - (b) ensure that no school collects unauthorised, excessive, or unapproved fees;
 - (c) inspect accounts, facilities, and fee disclosures of institutions;
 - (d) inquire into complaints from students, parents, or citizens;
 - (e) forward recommendations and cases requiring action to the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority;
 - (f) enforce orders passed by the Authority within its territorial jurisdiction.
- (2) The Committee may summon any school administrator or staff, and require production of documents, accounts, or affidavits.
- (3) Any refusal to cooperate with or appear before the Committee shall attract penalties under this Act.

Provided that no institution shall be penalised without being given an opportunity of hearing.

21. Periodic reporting and public hearings.- (1) Each District Committee shall submit a quarterly compliance and activity report to the Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority.

- (2) The Committee shall conduct at least one public hearing every six months inviting representations from parents, teachers, and students.
- (3) Proceedings of public hearings and follow-up actions shall be recorded and made available on the district education website.

PART IV

FEE APPROVAL AND MONITORING MECHANISM

CHAPTER VI

APPROVAL OF FEE STRUCTURES

22. Annual submission of proposed fee by institutions.- (1) Every private educational institution shall submit its proposed fee structure for the upcoming academic year to the District Committee and the Authority on or before the 30th of November of the preceding year.

- (2) The proposal shall include,—
 - (a) audited accounts for the previous two financial years;
 - (b) detailed breakup of proposed fee heads;
 - (c) justification for any revision proposed; and
 - (d) expenditure forecast and budget allocation.

Explanation: The Authority may prescribe digital formats and software platforms for standardised submission.

22. Criteria for fee approval.- (1) The Authority or the District Committee, as the case may be, shall assess the proposed fee against the following parameters,-

- (a) reasonableness and affordability for different income groups;
- (b) necessity and proportionality of individual fee components;
- (c) compliance with infrastructure norms;
- (d) past trends in fee collection and surplus generation;

(e) quality of services delivered.

(2) Institutions shall not be permitted to add unexplained or arbitrary heads under the guise of voluntary contributions.

Provided that institutions operating in rural, tribal, or disadvantaged zones may be granted limited flexibility as notified.

23 . Cap on annual fee increase.- (1) The Authority shall prescribe a maximum percentage by which institutions may increase their fee annually, not exceeding ten percent, unless otherwise permitted under this Act.

(2) Any increase beyond the cap shall require express prior approval of the Authority based on documentary justification.

24. Fee fixation formula and cost norms.- (1) The Karnataka Fee Regulatory Authority notify a transparent and evidence-based formula for fee fixation. The parameters ensure objectivity, uniformity, and accountability:

(a) Student-Teacher Ratio: A lower ratio implies better academic delivery but higher recurring salary costs. The ratio affects per-student expenditure and must be factored into permissible fee limits.

(b) Salary Expenditure: Salaries constitute 60–80% of recurring institutional costs. Including this ensures that institutions do not justify inflated fees based on excessive administrative or luxury spending.

(c) Infrastructure Cost: Capital investments in classrooms, buildings, laboratories, ICT tools, etc., can be amortized over a fixed period. This component ensures that fees reflect actual long-term investment rather than sudden or exaggerated demands.

(d) Academic Investments: Expenditure on curriculum enrichment, teacher training, pedagogical materials, co-curricular activities, and examinations falls under this head.

(e) Operational Reserves: Reasonable margins to cover contingencies (typically 5–15%) may be permitted

Explanation: The Authority shall also take into account the cost per student per annum and socio-economic profile of the student body to ensure fairness in fee structuring.

(2) Institutions shall align their fee proposals to such notified formulae and norms. Any deviation without approval shall render the proposed fee structure invalid.

(3) The Authority may prescribe differentiated cost parameters for different types of institutions such as primary, secondary, pre-university, and higher education, and also take into consideration factors such as location, student strength, and type of curriculum offered (e.g., national, state, or international).

(4) The Authority may, from time to time, revise the formula or cost norms in consultation with stakeholders including education experts, parent associations, and school management bodies.

25. Review of infrastructure and services provided.- (1) The Authority or District Committee may direct inspection of an institution to verify that the level of services and infrastructure provided is commensurate with the fees charged.

(2) The cost-benefit analysis may include,-

(a) classroom quality including space, ventilation, lighting, and digital infrastructure;

(b) library and laboratory access with respect to size, quality, and utility;

(c) safety and sanitation facilities including clean toilets, CCTV coverage, and fire safety;

- (d) teacher qualifications, training, and retention measures;
 - (e) student outcome indicators including exam performance, co-curricular achievements, and dropout rates.
- (3) Institutions failing to match declared standards or making misrepresentations may be directed to reduce fees, refund excess collections with interest, or face other penalties under this Act.
- (4) The Authority may publish institutional performance ratings or compliance scores to promote transparency and informed parental choice.
- 26. Special provision for rural or special category schools.-** (1) The Authority may, by notification, declare certain categories of institutions as special category institutions based on location, socio-economic status of students, or nature of services rendered, including inclusive education or affordable schooling models.
- (2) The Government may extend financial support, incentives, or regulatory relaxations to such institutions, subject to conditions prescribed, including waiver of inspection fees, capacity-building grants, or exemption from certain reporting requirements.
- (3) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Chapter, such institutions shall still be required to disclose their fees and submit proposals for approval in a simplified format prescribed by the Authority.
- (4) The Authority shall ensure that any support granted does not compromise the minimum standards of education, safety, or equity guaranteed under this Act.

CHAPTER VII

DISCLOSURE AND PUBLICATION

- 27 .Mandatory display of fees and allied charges.-** (1) Every educational institution shall prominently display its approved fee structure for each academic year on,-
- (a) the institution's official website;
 - (b) the admission forms and brochures; and
 - (c) notice boards located at the administrative office, admission desk, and the main entrance of the institution.
- (2) The displayed fee shall clearly specify the heads under which charges are levied, including but not limited to,-
- (a) tuition fees;
 - (b) development or infrastructure charges;
 - (c) transportation charges, if applicable;
 - (d) hostel, mess, and other residential fees, if applicable; and
 - (e) optional or activity-based charges.
- (a) (3) The displayed information shall be:
- (a) updated annually prior to commencement of the admission process;
 - (b) authenticated by the head of the institution; and
 - (c) retained and archived for at least five academic years for public inspection.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "approved fee" shall mean the fee structure sanctioned by the Fee Regulatory Authority or other competent authority under this Act.

Provided that no institution shall levy any additional charges during the academic year, save with the prior written approval of the Authority.

28 . Website and notice board disclosures.- (1) Every educational institution shall maintain and update on its website a digital archive of the preceding five academic years, which shall contain:

- (a) approved fee structures;
 - (b) applicable refund and withdrawal policies;
 - (c) all orders, approvals, or directions issued by the Authority;
 - (d) name, designation, and contact details of the institution's Grievance Redressal Officer; and
 - (e) compliance rating or inspection status, if any, granted under this Act.
- (2) All disclosures shall be authenticated annually with a digital signature by the head of the institution and made available in a machine-readable format.
- (3) Notice board disclosures under this section shall be prominently displayed in at least two conspicuous places within the institution's premises and shall be published in English and Kannada.

29.Fee brochures and prospectus regulations.- (1) Every educational institution shall ensure that its prospectus or any fee brochure issued for the purposes of admission clearly specifies the following particulars,-

- (a) the total fees payable under each head for every academic year;
 - (b) the schedule of payment, including due dates;
 - (c) penalties for delayed payment, if any;
 - (d) terms and conditions for refund of fees in the event of withdrawal; and
 - (e) scholarships, concessions, or waivers available and eligibility criteria thereof.
- (2) Institutions shall not make any misleading representations or unsubstantiated claims regarding the availability of scholarships, concessions, or infrastructural facilities.
- (3) Copies of all brochures and prospectuses shall be submitted to the District Fee Committee before the commencement of each admission cycle.

Provided that in the event of any discrepancy between the information in the brochure and the fee structure approved by the Authority, the records of the Authority shall prevail.

30. Prohibition on hidden charges.- (1) No institution shall demand or collect any amount, directly or indirectly, under the guise of:

- (a) voluntary contributions;
 - (b) miscellaneous or activity-based charges not sanctioned by the Authority;
 - (c) compulsory purchase of uniforms, textbooks, learning materials, or accessories from specified vendors; or
 - (d) deposits, penalties, or fines not previously notified in the fee brochure.
- (2) Any violation of this section shall attract penalties as provided under Section 34 and may include directions for refund with interest to affected students or parents.
- (3) The Authority shall, from time to time, notify a list of permissible fee heads and ban the collection of any charges not expressly permitted under this Act.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "hidden charges" shall include any monetary or non-monetary demand not disclosed under Sections 28 to 30 but made a condition for access to academic or extracurricular facilities.

CHAPTER VIII

INSPECTIONS AND AUDITS

31. Power to inspect and audit institutions.- (1) The Fee Regulatory Authority or the District Fee Regulatory Committee, as the case may be, may, upon receipt of a written complaint or suo motu, cause to be conducted any or all of the following for the purpose of enforcing compliance with this Act,—

- (a) academic inspection to assess quality of education and adherence to prescribed standards;
 - (b) financial audit of institutional accounts and records;
 - (c) physical verification of infrastructure and facilities;
 - (d) interviews with students, parents, teaching and non-teaching staff for fact-finding.
- (2) Every educational institution shall extend full cooperation, furnish all documents and records as may be requisitioned, and grant unhindered access to its premises for the purpose of such inspection or audit.
- (3) The team conducting such inspection or audit shall submit its findings to the Authority within fifteen working days from the date of commencement of inspection.
- (4) A copy of the inspection report shall be provided to the institution, and the institution may file objections or representations within seven days of receipt thereof.

Provided that failure to comply with orders of inspection or obstructing the same shall render the institution liable to immediate suspension of fee approvals, imposition of penalties, and other disciplinary measures as may be prescribed.

32. Annual audit compliance certificate.- (1) Every private unaided educational institution shall, within ninety days from the end of each financial year, submit to the Authority an annual audit compliance certificate issued by a Chartered Accountant duly empanelled with the Authority.

- (2) The audit compliance certificate shall confirm the following,—
- (a) that the fees collected conform to the fee structure approved by the Authority;
 - (b) that no illegal capitation fee or hidden charges have been collected;
 - (c) that there is adherence to rules concerning refund, concessions, and scholarships;
 - (d) that proper financial systems, records, and audit trails are maintained;
 - (e) that all directions and compliance requirements issued by the Authority have been duly followed.
- (3) Non-submission of such audit certificate within the stipulated period shall result in suspension of approval of the fee structure and the institution's inclusion in the public defaulter registry.
- (4) The Authority may, where it suspects irregularities, direct a follow-up audit or special inspection by an independent empanelled auditor.

33. Action on false disclosures or manipulation.- (1) Where, upon audit, inspection or enquiry, it is found that an educational institution has,—

- (a) submitted false or misleading records;
- (b) fabricated or manipulated financial accounts; or
- (c) provided false disclosures in relation to fee structures or fund utilisation, the Authority may take any or all of the following actions:

- (i) direct refund of the excess fee collected with interest at such rate as may be prescribed;
 - (ii) impose a penalty not exceeding ten lakh rupees;
 - (iii) suspend or cancel the institution's registration or affiliation, after providing an opportunity of hearing;
 - (iv) initiate criminal prosecution under relevant laws, including the Indian Penal Code, 1860;
 - (v) prohibit the institution from advertising for new admissions for a period of one academic year.
- (2) In the event of a second or repeated instance of manipulation, the institution shall be disqualified from collecting fees for the next academic session and its name shall be included in a public blacklist.
- (3) The Authority may, in appropriate cases, direct payment of compensation to affected students or parents, which may be recovered as arrears of land revenue.
- 34. Compulsory financial disclosures by unaided institutions.-** (1) Every unaided private educational institution shall, at the time of submitting proposals for approval of fees, disclose in such form and manner as may be prescribed—
- (a) income from fees, donations, and all other sources;
 - (b) details of salary and non-salary expenditure;
 - (c) status of the reserve fund;
 - (d) capital and recurring expenditure on infrastructure and facilities;
 - (e) details of scholarships, fee waivers, and other financial aid disbursed;
 - (f) loans, advances, or endowments received and utilisation thereof.
- (2) Where there is discrepancy or lack of clarity in disclosures, the Authority may direct third-party verification through independent auditors or inspection teams.
- (3) Failure to make mandatory financial disclosures within the prescribed timeline shall result in,—
- (a) automatic deferment or rejection of fee approval; and
 - (b) blacklisting of the institution for future grants, recognitions, or participation in any scheme of the State Government.
- (4) Persistent or repeated defaults in disclosure shall make the institution liable for recommendation to the affiliating Board or University for suspension or withdrawal of affiliation or recognition, as the case may be.

PART V

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AND ENFORCEMENT

CHAPTER IX

GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL AUTHORITIES

- 35 .Establishment of Educational Fee Grievance Authority.-** (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an Educational Fee Grievance Authority at the State level and in each revenue district of the State to receive, inquire into, and adjudicate upon complaints and grievances relating to violations of the provisions of this Act, particularly those relating to fee fixation, excess charges, and lack of transparency by educational institutions.
- (2) The composition of the Grievance Authority at both levels shall be as follows,-

- (a) a retired District Judge, who shall be the Chairperson;
 - (b) an eminent educationist with not less than fifteen years of experience in the field of education;
 - (c) one representative nominated by a recognised parents' association of the State;
 - (d) an officer not below the rank of Deputy Director from the Department of Education, who shall act as the Member Secretary.
- (3) The Chairperson and Members of the Authority shall be appointed for a term of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term of three years.
- (4) The terms and conditions of service, salaries, allowances, and other facilities of the Members shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.
- (5) The Authority shall function independently and shall not be subject to the direction or control of any authority, except as otherwise provided under this Act.

36. Jurisdiction, powers, and procedure.- (1) The Authority shall have jurisdiction to,—

- (a) adjudicate complaints relating to collection of fees in excess of that permitted by the Fee Regulatory Authority;
 - (b) entertain complaints of non-compliance with mandatory disclosures, unjustified imposition of fees, and collection of hidden charges;
 - (c) issue directions for refund of fees, compliance with statutory obligations, and imposition of penalties under this Act;
 - (d) summon and examine institutional records, accounts, and other necessary documents;
 - (e) conduct personal hearings, inspections of institutional premises, and other forms of inquiry as may be necessary.
- (2) The Authority shall, for the purpose of discharging its functions under this Act, have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908) in respect of the following matters:
- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining them on oath;
 - (b) requiring the discovery and production of documents;
 - (c) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents;
 - (d) requisitioning any public record from any office or authority.
- (3) The proceedings before the Authority shall be summary in nature and guided by the principles of natural justice.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, the term "grievance" shall include any act or omission by an educational institution that contravenes the provisions of this Act or the rules, regulations, or notifications issued thereunder.

37 .Right of appeal.- (1) Any person aggrieved by any order or decision of the Educational Fee Grievance Authority may, within thirty days from the date of receipt of such order, prefer an appeal to the Appellate Fee Regulation Tribunal constituted under this Act.

(2) Every appeal shall be filed in such form, manner, and accompanied by such documents and fees as may be prescribed.

(3) The Appellate Tribunal may, if satisfied that there was sufficient cause for not preferring an appeal within the period specified in sub-section (1), condone such delay.

Provided that the filing of an appeal shall not operate as a stay of the impugned order unless so directed by the Tribunal.

38 .Time-bound disposal of grievances.- (1) The Grievance Authority shall dispose of every complaint or grievance application within a period of ninety days from the date of its filing.

(2) In cases where the matter involves detailed financial scrutiny, complex accounting, or requires site inspection, the Authority may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, extend the said period by a further period not exceeding sixty days.

(3) Priority shall be accorded to grievances affecting ongoing academic sessions, examinations, or impacting more than five students or their guardians

39 . Record-keeping and public access to decisions.- (1) The Authority shall maintain a digital grievance management system to record, process, and monitor all complaints and proceedings.

(2) All final orders passed by the Authority shall be published on its official website and shall be anonymised in cases involving minors or sensitive information.

(3) The Authority shall submit an Annual Grievance Report to the State Government containing,—

(a) number of complaints received, disposed of, and pending;

(b) nature and frequency of grievances by category;

(c) details of repeat violators;

(d) recommendations for improving institutional compliance.

(3) The said report shall be placed before the State Legislature and made available in the public domain.

CHAPTER X

APPEALS AND REVISION

40. Appellate Fee Regulation Tribunal.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish an Appellate Fee Regulation Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any order, direction, or decision of the Educational Fee Grievance Redressal Authority constituted under this Act.

(2) The Tribunal shall consist of the following members, to be appointed by the State Government on the recommendations of a Search-cum-Selection Committee, namely,-

(a) a person who is or has been a Judge of a High Court, who shall be the Chairperson;

(b) a chartered accountant with not less than fifteen years of professional experience in auditing, taxation, or financial regulation, who shall be a Member;

(c) an expert in education policy, economics, or public finance, having not less than ten years of experience in relevant fields, who shall be a Member.

(3) The headquarters of the Tribunal shall be at Bengaluru.

Provided that the Tribunal may hold circuit sittings at such other places within the State of Karnataka as may be notified by the State Government from time to time.

41. Composition and qualifications.- (1) The Members of the Tribunal shall be appointed for a term of five years or until they attain the age of sixty-five years, whichever is earlier:

Provided that a Member shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term, subject to the same age limit.

(2) No person shall be appointed as the Chairperson or Member of the Tribunal unless they possess proven integrity and a demonstrable track record in the fields of public service, education regulation, finance, law, or administration.

(3) The salaries, allowances, leave, pension, and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

(4) The Members shall not engage in any other employment or practice while serving on the Tribunal.

(5) The State Government may remove any Member of the Tribunal from office on the grounds of proved misbehaviour or incapacity after holding an inquiry in the manner prescribed.

42 . Procedure and powers.- (1) The Tribunal shall regulate its own procedure and, for that purpose, shall have the power to frame regulations consistent with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder.

(2) The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down in the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (5 of 1908), but shall be guided by the principles of natural justice and shall have the power to regulate its own proceedings.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Tribunal shall have the power to,—

(a) confirm, modify, vary, or set aside any order passed by the Fee Grievance Redressal Authority;

(b) remand any matter to the said Authority for fresh consideration;

(c) impose costs, penalty, or compensatory relief as may be deemed just and proper;

(d) grant interim relief or injunctions, including stay on fee collection, as may be necessary in the interest of justice.

(4) The Tribunal shall, for the purposes of discharging its functions under this Act, have the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 while trying a suit, in respect of the following matters, namely,-

(a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining them on oath;

(b) requiring the discovery and production of documents or electronic records;

(c) receiving evidence on affidavits;

(d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any office or authority;

(e) issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents;

(f) any other matter which may be prescribed.

(5) The Tribunal may call for quarterly compliance reports from the Fee Regulatory Authority regarding the implementation of its decisions.

(6) The proceedings of the Tribunal shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860).

43. Finality of decisions.- (1) Every order or decision passed by the Tribunal under this Act shall be final and binding on all parties and shall be enforceable as if it were a decree of a civil court.

(2) No appeal or revision shall lie against any order of the Tribunal except under Article 226 or Article 32 of the Constitution of India.

(3) The Tribunal may, on its own motion or on an application made by any party, correct any clerical or typographical mistake or error apparent on the face of the record within thirty days from the date of the order.

CHAPTER XI

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

44. Orders binding as decree of civil court.- (1) Every order passed by the Fee Regulatory Authority, the State Educational Grievance Redressal Authority, or the Appellate Tribunal constituted under this Act shall be deemed to be a decree of a civil court and shall be executable as such by the civil court having jurisdiction over the area in which the educational institution is situated.

(2) The concerned Authority or Tribunal may transmit a certified copy of the order to the jurisdictional civil court for execution, and the said court shall execute the order as if it were a decree passed by it.

(3) Failure on the part of any educational institution or person to comply with any such order shall amount to contempt, and the Authority or Tribunal may initiate proceedings under the provisions of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 (Central Act 70 of 1971), in accordance with law.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “order” shall include any interim or final order or direction relating to refund of fees, imposition of penalty, compliance with statutory obligations, or any other relief granted under this Act.

45 .Power to issue directions and injunctions.- (1) Where the Authority, Grievance Redressal Authority, or the Appellate Tribunal, as the case may be, is satisfied that any educational institution has committed or is likely to commit any act in contravention of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder, or that such act may cause grave or irreparable harm to the interests of students, parents or complainants, it may, by a reasoned order in writing, issue such interim or final directions as may be necessary in the circumstances of the case.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing powers, the Authority or Tribunal may

- (a) suspend or restrain the institution from collecting fees, either in whole or in part, for such period as may be specified;
- (b) direct withholding of admission processes, issuance of prospectus, or allotment of seats until compliance is ensured;
- (c) restrain the institution from denying issuance of transfer certificates or mark-sheets to students until the final decision of the Authority or Tribunal.

(3) The Authority or Tribunal may further direct the institution concerned to furnish a compliance report within such time as may be specified in the order, failing which further penal or remedial measures may be initiated in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

Provided that no injunction or interim order shall be passed without affording the educational institution a reasonable opportunity of being heard, unless the Authority or Tribunal is satisfied that any delay would cause manifest injustice or irreparable harm.

46 . Assistance from police or civil administration.- (1) The Fee Regulatory Authority, the Grievance Redressal Authority, or the Appellate Tribunal, as the case may be, may, for the purposes of enforcing its orders or securing compliance with the provisions of this Act, requisition the services of any police officer not below the rank of Sub-Inspector or of any officer of the civil administration not below the rank of Tahsildar.

(2) It shall be the duty of every such police officer or civil official, when so requisitioned, to render such assistance as may be necessary for enforcement action, including but not limited to the following,-

- (a) sealing or closure of unauthorised educational premises;
- (b) seizure and impounding of documents, including fee receipts, ledgers, registers or digital records;
- (c) providing protection to complainants, witnesses or whistle-blowers;
- (d) maintaining peace and ensuring security during hearings, inspections, or enforcement proceedings.

(3) Where any public official fails to comply with a lawful requisition under sub-section (1), the Authority or Tribunal may forward a report to the Government or the competent disciplinary authority for appropriate action under the applicable service rules.

47. Record of habitual defaulters and blacklisting.- (1) The Authority shall, by notification, maintain an online and publicly accessible digital register to be known as the “Register of Blacklisted Educational Institutions,” wherein the names of institutions found guilty of repeated, grave, or willful contraventions of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder shall be entered.

(2) The said Register shall contain,—

- (a) the name and address of the institution;
- (b) the nature and particulars of each violation;
- (c) the number of instances of such contravention recorded over a defined period, as may be prescribed;
- (d) any penalties or enforcement actions imposed and the compliance status thereof; and
- (e) such other details as may be specified by the Authority.

(3) An institution entered into the said Register and designated as a blacklisted institution shall, for the duration of such designation,—

- (a) be prohibited from collecting any advance fee beyond one academic term at a time;
- (b) be rendered ineligible for receiving any financial assistance, grant-in-aid, subsidy, affiliation, or recognition from the State Government or any of its instrumentalities;
- (c) be subjected to enhanced and periodic financial, administrative, and academic audits and inspections, to be conducted at intervals not exceeding six months, for a minimum period of five years or such longer period as may be prescribed.

(4) No institution shall be removed from the Register unless,—

- (a) it has complied with all directives issued by the Authority and has submitted proof of compliance to the satisfaction of the Authority;
- (b) it has remained free from further violations for a continuous period of three years; and
- (c) it has undergone a comprehensive institutional review, including a public hearing, and the Authority has passed a speaking order recording its satisfaction.

(5) The State Government may issue such guidelines as it deems necessary for the rehabilitation, monitoring, or conditional re-registration of institutions removed from the Register, subject to the compliance of such conditions as may be specified.

(6) The provisions of this section shall apply without prejudice to any other penalty, prosecution, or remedy provided under this Act or any other law for the time being in force.

PART VI
INSTITUTIONAL FEE CATEGORIES AND SPECIAL NORMS
CHAPTER XII
CLASSIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONS AND FEE CATEGORIES

48. Classification of Institutions.- (1) For the purposes of fee regulation under this Act, educational institutions shall be classified into the following categories,-

- (a) Primary Schools, imparting education from Classes I to V;
- (b) Secondary Schools, imparting education from Classes VI to X;
- (c) Higher Secondary Schools, imparting education for Classes XI and XII;
- (d) Degree Colleges, offering undergraduate or postgraduate courses affiliated to universities;
- (e) Professional Institutions, offering courses in engineering, medical, law, architecture, business administration, and such other disciplines as may be notified.

(2) The State Government may, by notification, revise, amend, or add to the categories specified under sub-section (1) based on the evolution of academic models or regulatory changes.

(3) The categorisation under this section shall be used to determine the fee regulatory norms and administrative requirements under this Act.

49. Norms for aided and unaided institutions.- (1) Aided educational institutions shall adhere strictly to fee structures approved by the State Government or Fee Regulatory Authority, based on the extent of grant-in-aid received and cost norms notified expenditure norms, and the socio-economic profile of students; not levy any charge beyond what is sanctioned by the competent authority.

(2) Unaided institutions shall submit a detailed annual fee proposal in the format prescribed, accompanied by,-

- (a) audited financial statements of the preceding financial year;
- (b) break-up of proposed fees under tuition, development, and optional components;
- (c) projected student strength and staffing costs.
- (d) disclose proposed student strength, staffing costs, and investment in infrastructure.

(3) All institutions, whether aided or unaided, shall prominently ensure transparency in fee structures, disclose their categorisation display on their website and notice boards and comply with Section 28.

50. Special schools, boarding institutions, and coaching centres.- (1) All educational institutions providing residential or ancillary services, including boarding schools, remedial institutions, or exam coaching centres, shall submit,-

- (a) itemised fee disclosure, separately showing academic fees, hostel/mess charges, transport fees, activity fees, and any optional/add-on services;
- (b) operational details of services offered and infrastructure used.

(2) The Authority shall prescribe guidelines and cap limits on such components to ensure reasonableness and prevent profiteering.

(3) Any institution conducting tutorial or preparatory classes in conjunction with formal education shall come under the purview of this Act and shall be required to seek registration and fee approval under rules framed for such centres.

51. Institutions with international curriculum or NRI-focused education.-(1) Educational institutions offering curricula such as International Baccalaureate (IB), IGCSE, or similar international syllabi, or specifically catering to Non-Resident Indian (NRI) students, shall obtain special fee category approval from the Fee Regulatory Authority.

(2) Such institutions shall,-

- (a) submit detailed curriculum recognition documents;
- (b) provide bifurcation of costs for curriculum licensing, affiliation, and faculty qualifications;
- (c) declare separate fee slabs for local and foreign/NRI students, if applicable.

(3) The Authority may prescribe a reasonable cap, indexing formula, or ratio-based limit to ensure that such institutions do not engage in profiteering or arbitrarily inflate fees.

(4) Any change in the international curriculum, tuition structure, or boarding charges shall require prior approval of the Authority.

CHAPTER XIII

SCHOLARSHIPS, SUBSIDIES, AND CROSS-SUBSIDIES

52. Scholarships and financial aid.- (1) Every educational institution shall allocate at least five percent of its gross annual revenue towards provision of,-

- (a) merit-based scholarships;
- (b) need-based fee concessions for economically weaker students;
- (c) academic performance awards, and support for children of armed forces or disaster victims.

(2) Institutions shall publish detailed scholarship criteria, application procedures, and names of beneficiaries annually on their websites and submit a certified copy to the Authority.

(3) The Authority shall issue model guidelines for transparent identification, selection, and disbursement of scholarships to prevent discrimination or misuse.

53. Fee waiver policy for marginalised groups.- (1) Educational institutions shall mandatorily extend full or partial fee waivers to students belonging to,-

- (a) Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST);
- (b) Other Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (OBC);
- (c) Persons with benchmark disabilities as defined under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016;
- (d) Children in need of care and protection, including orphans, child labourers, and children in conflict with law.

(2) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Authority, frame rules prescribing waiver quantum, eligibility norms, and documentation required.

(3) A separate register shall be maintained by each institution to record such waivers and shall be made available for inspection by the Authority or any officer authorised by it.

54. Cross-subsidisation in private institutions.- (1) Private unaided institutions collecting high fees from professional or international courses shall reserve a minimum of five percent of seats in general academic courses to be offered at subsidised rates.

(2) The proposal for such cross-subsidisation shall be part of the institution's annual fee submission and audited for implementation.

(3) The Authority may prescribe a formula-based ratio of subsidy per student, based on the average gross fee income of the institution, to ensure affordability.

55 . CSR and public funding eligibility.- (1) Any institution availing funding through,-

- (a) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives;
- (b) Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models; or
- (c) State or Central government schemes or grants,

Such Institutions shall,-

- (i) declare such receipts in their annual financial disclosure;
- (ii) maintain distinct financial records reflecting proper utilisation;
- (iii) ensure non-diversion of funds for profit-generating services.

(2) All such institutions shall,-

- (a) apply such funds strictly for enhancing infrastructure, educational access, teacher training, or reducing student fee burdens;
- (b) not use CSR or public funds for marketing, brand promotion, or staff bonuses beyond approved limits.

(3) A utilisation certificate in the format prescribed by the Authority shall be submitted within ninety days of the close of the financial year and shall be verified by a Chartered Accountant empanelled with the Authority.

(4) The Authority may conduct special audits, issue compliance directives, or initiate penal action in cases of misappropriation or failure to utilise funds in accordance with this section.

(5) Institutions found in breach of fund utilisation norms shall be debarred from receiving further CSR, PPP, or government financial support for a minimum period of three years and listed in the public compliance defaulter registry.

PART VII

PENALTIES AND LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

CHAPTER XIV

PENALTIES

56. Penalty for charging excess fees.- (1) Any educational institution which contravenes any provision of this Act, or the rules or regulations made thereunder, for which no specific penalty is provided elsewhere in this Act, shall be liable to a penalty which may extend to rupees five lakhs, as may be determined by the Fee Regulatory Authority after affording the institution an opportunity of being heard.

(2) Notwithstanding to (1), any institution found to have charged fees in excess of the approved structure shall be liable to refund the excess amount with interest at the rate of eighteen percent per annum from the date of collection.

(2) The Authority shall issue a show-cause notice to the institution, and pass a speaking order stating the nature of violation, evidence relied upon, and reasons for quantum of penalty imposed.

(3) The penalty so imposed shall be recoverable as arrears of land revenue.

(4) In case of repeated contraventions, the institution may be blacklisted or face suspension of recognition, subject to due process.

(4) The burden of proof shall lie on the institution to establish that the fees charged were in accordance with the approved structure.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, excess fees shall include hidden charges, mandatory donations, or disguised levies not disclosed as part of the approved fee structure.

57. Penalty for non-disclosure or misleading advertisement.- (1) Any institution failing to disclose fee structures, facilities, or other required information under this Act shall be liable to a penalty of not less than fifty thousand rupees and up to five lakh rupees for each instance of non-disclosure.

(2) Where any institution issues advertisements or publishes brochures, online content, or prospectuses with misleading, exaggerated, or false claims, the Authority may—

- (a) direct immediate rectification or retraction;
- (b) order a public notice of correction;
- (c) impose a penalty up to ten lakh rupees.

(3) In the case of deliberate or fraudulent misrepresentation, the Authority may suspend the institution's operations and initiate prosecution under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and other relevant laws.

Explanation: "Misleading advertisement" includes any omission, exaggeration, distortion, or manipulation of facts relating to fees, results, infrastructure, placement, or affiliation.

58. Penalty for non-compliance with Authority's order.- (1) Any institution that fails to comply with any lawful order or directive issued by the Authority or District Committee shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten lakh rupees.

(2) Continued non-compliance beyond thirty days from the date of notice shall attract a daily penalty of twenty-five thousand rupees per day.

(3) The Authority may also direct:

- (a) withholding of admission approvals;
- (b) derecognition of the institution;
- (c) notification to affiliating or examining bodies to take appropriate action.

59. Penalty for obstruction of inquiry or audit.- (1) Any institution, management personnel, or staff who obstruct, delay, or deny access to the Authority's designated audit or inspection officers shall be liable to a penalty of up to five lakh rupees.

(2) If such obstruction involves tampering of records, misrepresentation, or abuse, the person responsible shall be liable to imprisonment up to two years and a fine up to ten lakh rupees.

(3) The Authority may recommend further disciplinary action by the affiliating university or education department against such individual(s).

(4) The Authority shall maintain a public list of institutions found guilty of such acts.

60. Compounding of offences.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in this Chapter, the Authority may, by order and upon recording reasons in writing, permit compounding of first-time or procedural offences under this Act on payment of a prescribed compounding fee.

(2) The compounding fee shall not exceed fifty percent of the maximum penalty prescribed for the offence.

(3) Compounding shall not be allowed for:

- (a) second or subsequent offences within a period of three years;
- (b) offences involving harassment of complainants;
- (c) offences involving financial fraud or forged records.

(4) The Authority shall maintain a publicly accessible register of all compounded offences, including details of parties, nature of violation, and amount collected.

CHAPTER XV

OFFENCES AND PROSECUTION

61. Offences cognizable under this Act.- (1) The following acts shall constitute cognizable and non-bailable offences under this Act:

- (a) charging capitation fee, unauthorized donations, or levies contrary to Section 9;
- (b) submission of false, forged, or manipulated financial or institutional records;
- (c) obstructing officials or tampering with records during inspection, audit, or hearing;
- (d) threatening, retaliating against, or attempting to coerce complainants or whistle-blowers.

(2) Offenders shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to twenty lakh rupees, or with both.

(3) In case the offence is committed by a company or trust, every person who was in charge and responsible for the conduct of its affairs shall be deemed guilty unless they prove:

- (a) lack of knowledge; or
- (b) that due diligence was exercised to prevent the commission of such offence.

62. Power to prosecute.- (1) No court shall take cognizance of any offence punishable under this Act except upon a written complaint filed by,-

- (a) the Authority;
- (b) any officer specifically authorized by the Authority; or
- (c) a District Committee constituted under this Act.

(2) The Government may designate one or more special prosecutors for conducting cases under this Act.

(3) All offences under this Chapter shall be tried summarily by a Judicial Magistrate First Class as per Chapter XXI of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

(4) The court may direct recovery of unlawfully collected fees or benefits as part of sentencing or compensation.

63. Protection of whistle-blowers.- (1) No person who discloses information in good faith, including students, parents, staff, or any other stakeholder, shall be subjected to retaliation, dismissal, denial of service, harassment, or defamation by any institution.

(2) Any such retaliatory action shall be an offence punishable with fine up to five lakh rupees and may attract civil damages or mandatory reinstatement.

(3) The Authority shall,-

- (a) keep the identity of whistle-blowers confidential;
- (b) develop secure channels of reporting;
- (c) establish a Whistle-Blower Protection Cell.

(4) No action shall lie against a whistle-blower in respect of any disclosure made in good faith, even if the information is found to be incorrect, unless it is proved to be malicious or intentionally false.

64. Prohibition on victimisation of complainants.- (1) No student, parent, staff member, or any other person shall be subjected to retaliation or victimisation for filing a complaint or providing information under the provisions of this Act.

(2) Retaliatory actions shall include, but not be limited to,—

- (a) suspension, expulsion, or denial of admission;

- (b) arbitrary increase of fees or denial of facilities;
 - (c) intimidation, mental harassment, or threats;
 - (d) poor grading or academic penalty without basis;
 - (e) denial of certificates, mark sheets, or transfer requests.
- (3) Any institution found to have engaged in victimisation shall be liable to,-
- (a) pay compensation to the affected individual as may be determined by the Authority;
 - (b) face suspension of administrative privileges or issuance of warning or derecognition;
 - (c) face criminal prosecution in aggravated cases.
- (4) The burden of proof shall lie on the institution to show that no victimisation has occurred once a prima facie case is established.
- (5) The Authority may also direct reinstatement of expelled students or reinstatement of access to academic services as interim relief.

Explanation: For the purpose of this section, “victimisation” means any act, omission, or threat intended to harm, penalise, or disadvantage a person for having availed rights under this Act.

PART VIII

MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

CHAPTER XVI

RULE-MAKING AND OVERSIGHT

65. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for—
- (a) the procedure for submission, scrutiny, and approval of proposed fee structures, including timelines, documents, and data required;
 - (b) constitution, composition, qualifications, terms of service, and powers of the Fee Regulatory Authority, District Fee Committees, and Grievance Redressal Authorities;
 - (c) manner of conducting inspections, surprise audits, and verification of infrastructure and services by designated officers or third-party evaluators;
 - (d) detailed formats for institutional disclosures, fee prospectuses, audited accounts, and registers to be maintained by institutions;
 - (e) procedures for compounding offences, determination of penalty amounts, appeal formats, and standard operating procedures for enforcement;
 - (f) safeguards for data protection, confidentiality of whistle-blowers, and compliance mechanisms for digital submissions; and
 - (g) any other matter which is required to be or may be prescribed under this Act to give effect to its provisions.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the State Legislature for a total period of thirty days which may comprise one session or two or more successive sessions and shall be subject to such modification as the Legislature may make during the said period.

66. Power to issue directions, advisories, and circulars.- (1) The State Government, the Authority, or the Tribunal may, from time to time, issue such directions, circulars, guidelines,

or advisories as may be necessary for the proper implementation, clarification, or standardisation of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder.

(2) Every educational institution shall be bound to comply with such lawful directions issued under sub-section (1), and failure to do so shall be deemed to be a contravention under this Act.

(3) Such directions may include model fee structures, compliance checklists, and benchmarks for infrastructure or service quality in line with this Act.

CHAPTER XVII

TRANSITIONAL AND REPEAL PROVISIONS

67. Repeal and saving.- (1) Any law, notification, order, rule, or regulation in force in the State of Karnataka immediately before the commencement of this Act which is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be deemed to be repealed.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done, any action taken, or any fee approved under the law so repealed shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act, unless otherwise expressly provided.

(3) The repeal under sub-section (1) shall not affect,—

(a) the previous operation of the law so repealed or anything duly done or suffered thereunder;

(b) any right, privilege, obligation, or liability acquired, accrued, or incurred under the repealed law.

68 .Continuation of notifications and approvals.- (1) All notifications, approvals, exemptions, declarations, or actions issued by the Government or any competent authority under any law repealed by this Act shall, so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, be deemed to have been issued under the corresponding provisions of this Act and shall continue in force until amended, rescinded, or superseded.

(2) Any institution granted approval or recognition under such prior laws shall be deemed to be recognised under this Act, subject to compliance with the provisions hereof.

69. Protection of actions taken in good faith.- No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against the State Government, the Authority, the Appellate Tribunal, the District Committees, or any member, officer, or employee thereof for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or any rule, regulation, or order made thereunder.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, the expression “good faith” shall have the meaning assigned to it under section 52 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

70. Bar on jurisdiction of civil courts.- (1) No civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain or decide any suit, application, or proceeding in respect of any matter which the Authority, Committee, or Tribunal is empowered by or under this Act to determine.

(2) No injunction shall be granted by any court or other authority in respect of any action taken, proposed to be taken, or order passed under this Act or the rules made thereunder.

CHAPTER XVIII

DIGITAL GOVERNANCE AND TRANSPARENCY

71 .Online portal for fee approvals and grievances.- (1) The Authority shall establish and maintain a secure, user-friendly online portal for educational institutions to submit fee proposals, for students and parents to file grievances, and for tracking status of applications and complaints.

(2) The portal shall include,-

- (a) Institution-wise fee structures approved by the Authority;
- (b) Facility for uploading audited financial statements and institutional declarations;
- (c) Digital submission of grievances with tracking ID and resolution timeline;
- (d) Alerts, notifications, and reminders for compliance and deadlines;
- (e) Secure login and document authentication features to ensure data integrity;
- (f) Integration of chatbots and AI tools for frequently asked queries;
- (g) Facility for submission of public comments and suggestions on draft notifications.

(3) The portal shall be,-

- (a) available in English and Kannada;
- (b) compliant with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016;
- (c) optimised for mobile access and compatible with BharatNet connectivity initiatives;
- (d) equipped with an uptime guarantee of not less than 95% annually.

72. Integration with RTI and Digital Public Infrastructure.-(1) The Authority shall integrate the portal with,-

- (a) the State Right to Information (RTI) portal to facilitate proactive disclosure under Section 4 of the RTI Act, 2005;
- (b) State Digital Public Infrastructure such as Digilocker, e-KYC, Aadhaar authentication (subject to consent), and other service delivery platforms for seamless document verification;
- (c) the State Education MIS, Public Financial Management System (PFMS), and academic performance monitoring dashboards.

(2) Educational institutions shall,-

- (a) upload all fee-related documents, prospectuses, and declarations to the digital portal;
- (b) submit digital acknowledgements of accuracy of submitted data signed by the head of institution;
- (c) ensure updates within 7 days of any fee revision, policy change, or compliance update.

(3) The Government may notify data-sharing protocols with other departments such as Education, Finance, Women and Child Development, and Social Welfare for coordinated oversight.

(4) A periodic data quality audit shall be conducted by a certified third-party agency appointed by the Authority.

73. State-wide dashboard on fee approvals and complaints.- (1) The Authority shall maintain a real-time public dashboard reflecting,-

- (a) Total number of fee proposals submitted, pending, and approved;
- (b) Status of grievances filed, resolved, or escalated;

- (c) Summary reports by region, institution category, and financial range;
 - (d) Indicators on compliance, inspection, and institutional ratings;
 - (e) Sectoral heatmaps and risk alerts for regulatory follow-up.
- (2) The dashboard shall be,-
- (a) updated at least fortnightly;
 - (b) published in English and Kannada;
 - (c) downloadable in open data format to enable independent analysis;
 - (d) accessible through APIs for use by researchers and civil society.
- (3) The Authority may publish monthly and quarterly performance bulletins on trends, policy alerts, and sectoral compliance, which shall be archived online for a minimum period of ten years.

74. Annual reporting and legislative audit.- (1) The Authority shall prepare an Annual Report detailing,-

- (a) Institutional compliance and violations during the year;
 - (b) Fee structures approved, penal actions taken, and trends observed;
 - (c) Grievances received, resolved, and pending;
 - (d) Innovations or reforms introduced, including digital improvements;
 - (e) Feedback from stakeholders collected through surveys and consultations.
- (2) The Annual Report shall be,-
- (a) submitted to the State Government by 30th June each year;
 - (b) laid before both Houses of the State Legislature;
 - (c) published on the official website of the Authority;
 - (d) shared with relevant Standing Committees of the Legislative Assembly for review.
- (3) The Authority shall be subject to an independent legislative audit every three years, covering efficiency, equity, data integrity, technological robustness, and public trust.

Explanation: For the purposes of this Chapter, "portal" includes any website, mobile application, or unified digital interface approved by the Government for regulatory, grievance, or transparency functions under this Act.

SCHEDULE 1
TABLE OF OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

Sl No	Offence	Relevant Section(s)	Penalty / Punishment
1	Charging fees in excess of approved structure	Section 56(1), 56(2)	Refund with 18% interest; Penalty up to Rs. 5,00,000; Repeated violation may attract blacklisting
2	Failure to disclose approved fee structure	Section 57(1)	Penalty between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 5,00,000 per instance
3	Misleading advertisement or false claims in prospectus	Section 57(2), 57(3)	Rectification order; Public retraction; Penalty up to Rs. 10,00,000; Suspension or prosecution for fraud
4	Non-compliance with Authority orders	Section 58(1)-(3) Section 59(1), 59(2)	Penalty up to Rs. 10,00,000; Daily penalty of Rs. 25,000 for continuing breach; Derecognition possible Penalty up to Rs. 5,00,000; Imprisonment up to 2 years; Fine up to Rs. 10,00,000
5	Obstruction of inquiry or audit		
6	First-time procedural violations (compoundable)	Section 60	Compounding on payment of up to 50% of maximum penalty; Not allowed for repeated or fraud-related offences
7	Charging capitation fee, unauthorized donations, or hidden levies	Section 61(1)(a)	Cognizable offence; Imprisonment up to 3 years; Fine up to Rs. 20,00,000
8	Submission of forged or manipulated financial or institutional records	Section 61(1)(b)	Cognizable offence; Imprisonment up to 3 years; Fine up to Rs. 20,00,000
9	Threats or retaliation against complainants or whistle-blowers	Section 61(1)(d), 63, 64	Imprisonment up to 3 years; Fine up to Rs. 5,00,000; Compensation; Interim relief

10	Victimisation of students or parents for lodging grievances	Section 64(1)-(5)	Compensation; Derecognition; Criminal prosecution in aggravated cases

SCHEDULE: 2

FORM-A FEE STRUCTURE SUBMISSION

Item	Details
Name of Institution	
Address	
Type and Level (e.g., Primary, PU)	
Affiliation (Board/University)	
Academic Year	
Course/Stream	
Proposed Fee (component-wise)	
Previous 2 Years Audited Accounts	Attached / Not Attached
Justification for Fee Revision	
Declaration by Head of Institution	[Signature, Name, Designation, Date, Seal]

FORM B

ANNUAL AUDIT COMPLIANCE

Item	Details
Institution Name	
Academic Year	
Name of Auditor (CA)	
Fee Collected vs Approved	[Yes/No]
Any Capitation/Hidden Fees Detected	[Yes/No]
Concessions/Scholarships Disbursed	Attached / Not Attached
Audit Report Summary	
Certification	[Auditor Signature, Membership No., Institution Head Signature]

FORM C
FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

Item	Details
Institution Name	
Academic Year	
Revenue from Tuition Fees	
Revenue from Donations/Voluntary Contributions	
Revenue from CSR or Grants	
Total Expenditure	
Salaries and Wages	
Infrastructure	
Academic & Co-curricular	
Reserve Fund Details	
Loans/Endowments & Utilisation	
Certification by Head of Institution	[Signature, Date, Seal]

FORM D
COMPLAINT GRIEVANCE

Item	Details
Complainant Name (Optional)	
Contact Details (Optional)	
Institution Name	
Nature of Grievance	[] Excess Fee [] Denial of Services [] Non-disclosure
Date of Incident	
Brief Description	
Supporting Documents Attached	[Yes/No]
Relief/Remedy Sought	
Signature (Optional for anonymity)	

FORM E
WHISTLE BLOWER DISCLOSURE

Item	Details
Description of Violation	
Institution/Persons Involved	
Is retaliation/threat perceived?	[Yes/No]
Documents/Evidence (if any)	Attached / Not Attached
Protection Requested	[Yes/No]
Submitted by (optional)	
Mode of Submission	[Online / Post / In-person]

THE KARNATAKA FARMERS' CROP INSURANCE AND DISASTER COMPENSATION BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for a comprehensive and institutional framework for the implementation of crop insurance and disaster compensation for farmers in the State of Karnataka, to ensure timely financial assistance in the event of crop failure due to natural calamities or unforeseen events, to reduce agricultural distress, and to promote resilience and sustainability in the agrarian sector.

Whereas Article 39 of the Constitution of India mandates the State to ensure that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good, and that citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

And whereas agriculture in Karnataka is increasingly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, erratic monsoons, floods, droughts, pest infestations, and other natural calamities, threatening food security and the livelihood of millions of farmers;

And whereas it is expedient to enact a law to provide statutory backing to a Crop Insurance Scheme and a Disaster Compensation Mechanism for farmers, by establishing dedicated authorities, grievance redressal mechanisms, and funding arrangements to ensure timely and equitable relief;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

PART I PRELIMINARY CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

1. Short title, extent, and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Farmers' Crop Insurance and Disaster Compensation Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Agricultural Season” means the period during which crops are sown and harvested, and includes the Kharif and Rabi seasons as may be notified by the Department of Agriculture from time to time;

(b) “Authority” means the Karnataka State Crop Insurance and Disaster Compensation Authority constituted under Section 6 of this Act;

(c) “Beneficiary Farmer” means a farmer who is registered under the provisions of this Act and is eligible for benefits under the Crop Insurance Scheme or Disaster Compensation Scheme notified thereunder;

- (d) “Crop Insurance Scheme” means any scheme framed or adopted under this Act for the purpose of providing insurance cover to notified crops against specified risks including natural calamities, pest attacks, and weather-related events;
- (e) “Disaster” means any natural or man-made calamity, including but not limited to drought, flood, cyclone, hailstorm, heat wave, cold wave, unseasonal rains, pest infestation, or disease outbreak, which is notified as such by the State Government or the Central Government and adversely affects agricultural productivity;
- (f) “Farmer” means any person engaged in the cultivation of land, either by ownership, tenancy, lease, or sharecropping, and includes,-
- (i) marginal and small farmers;
 - (ii) tenant farmers;
 - (iii) oral lessees;
 - (iv) agricultural labourers cultivating land under informal arrangements; and
 - (v) members of registered farmer producer organisations or cooperatives;
- (g) “Government” means the State Government of Karnataka;
- (h) “Grievance Redressal Officer” means such officer appointed under Section [X] of this Act for resolution of disputes or complaints related to registration, claims, or compensation;
- (i) “Notified Crop” means such crop or group of crops as may be notified by the Government for coverage under the Crop Insurance Scheme or Disaster Relief Compensation Scheme under this Act;
- (j) “Notified Area” means such geographic unit including a revenue village, gram panchayat, hobli, taluk, or district, as may be notified by the Government for the purposes of coverage under this Act;
- (k) “Notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette of the State of Karnataka and includes any corrigendum or amendment issued thereto;
- (l) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules or regulations made under this Act;
- (m) “Relief Commissioner” means the officer appointed by the Government to coordinate disaster relief and compensation under this Act;
- (n) “Yield Loss” means the actual reduction in yield of a notified crop below the threshold yield level, as assessed and declared by the competent authority in the prescribed manner.

Explanation: For the purposes of this clause, “threshold yield” shall mean the benchmark yield as calculated based on historical yield data of the notified area or as otherwise prescribed.

3. Application of the Act to notified crops and areas.- (1) Subject to the provisions herein contained, the provisions of this Act shall apply to,—

- (a) every person engaged in the cultivation of notified crops within the territory of the State of Karnataka, whether as owner, tenant, lessee, sharecropper, or under any other lawful arrangement;
- (b) all agricultural lands situated in such villages, panchayats, taluks, or districts as may be notified from time to time by the State Government as “notified areas” for the purposes of this Act;

- (c) every agricultural crop, horticultural crop, or plantation crop notified by the State Government, whether seasonal or annual, for insurance coverage or disaster compensation under this Act; and
 - (d) all natural disasters, calamities, or pestilential outbreaks declared by the State Government or Central Government, or such other risks as may be notified under Chapter-8 of the Act.
- (2) The State Government may, having regard to the risk profile of the region, climatic conditions, cropping pattern, or administrative exigencies, by notification in the Official Gazette,—
- (a) extend or restrict the applicability of the provisions of this Act to any class of farmers or crops;
 - (b) exempt any class of farmers or crops from the operation of any provision of this Act subject to such conditions as may be specified in such notification.
- (3) The provisions of this Act shall be applicable in addition to, and not in derogation of, any benefits available to farmers under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 (53 of 2005), the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 (41 of 1999), or any other Central or State law for the time being in force, unless expressly provided otherwise.
- Explanation:** For the purposes of this section, “notified crop” and “notified area” shall mean and include any crop or area respectively declared by the Government through a notification for the purpose of coverage under the schemes envisaged under this Act.

PART II
INSURANCE FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER II
STATE CROP INSURANCE SCHEME

- 4. Establishment of Karnataka State Crop Insurance Scheme.-** (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a scheme to be called the Karnataka State Crop Insurance Scheme (hereinafter referred to as "the Scheme") for the purpose of insuring notified crops grown by eligible farmers against loss or damage arising from specified risks including natural calamities, pestilence, or weather-related events.
- (2) The Scheme shall be administered by the Authority established under this Act, in coordination with empanelled insurance providers, nationalised banks, cooperative credit institutions, and local bodies.
- (3) The Scheme shall operate in such manner and be subject to such terms and conditions as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.
- 5. Eligibility and enrolment of farmers.-** (1) Every farmer residing or cultivating in a notified area shall be eligible for enrolment under the Scheme, including landowners, tenants, lessees, sharecroppers, and cultivators holding pattas or other recognised occupancy rights.
- (2) Enrolment under the Scheme shall be,—

- (a) compulsory for all farmers availing crop loans from financial institutions; and
 - (b) voluntary for all other categories of farmers.
- (3) The enrolment process shall include biometric verification, Aadhaar linkage (subject to applicable laws), submission of crop and land details, and payment of the applicable premium.
- (4) The State Government shall establish facilitation centres at the Gram Panchayat or Taluk level for assisting in the enrolment and awareness activities

6. Notified crops and areas.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, declare from time to time the list of crops and geographical areas to which the Scheme shall apply, based on recommendations of the Authority.

- (2) While notifying crops and areas, the following factors shall be considered—
- (a) agro-climatic conditions and rainfall patterns;
 - (b) historical yield performance and vulnerability to disasters;
 - (c) area coverage and availability of actuarial data;
 - (d) feedback from farmers' organisations and district administrations.

7. Premium rates and subsidy structure.- (1) The maximum premium payable by the farmer shall be capped as follows—

- (a) Two percent of the sum insured for all food crops during Kharif season;
 - (b) One and a half percent for all food crops during Rabi season;
 - (c) Five percent for commercial and horticultural crops.
- (2) The remaining premium shall be subsidised equally by the Central and State Governments unless revised by mutual agreement.
- (3) The premium subsidy shall be transferred directly to the insurance providers through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism, in accordance with procedures prescribed under the relevant schemes.
- (4) The Authority may allow additional subsidies over and above the standard rates to the following categories—
- (a) small and marginal farmers as defined under relevant government guidelines;
 - (b) Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farmers;
 - (c) women farmers;
 - (d) farmers in disaster-prone, rain-fed, or ecologically sensitive regions, subject to availability of budgetary support.
- (5) All premium payments and subsidy transfers shall be duly recorded in a digital portal maintained by the Authority and made accessible to all enrolled farmers.

8. Government contribution and support measures.- (1) The State Government shall,—

- (a) provide for its share of the premium subsidy under the Scheme in the annual State Budget and ensure timely release of funds;
- (b) allocate dedicated funds for administrative support, IT infrastructure, capacity building of local functionaries, public awareness drives, and grievance redressal mechanisms;
- (c) establish a Risk Stabilisation Fund, to be administered by the Authority, for the purpose of providing interim relief to farmers in years where there is a delay in disbursement of

insurance claims or widespread agricultural damage beyond the threshold set under the Scheme.

(2) The State Government shall take the following additional measures to strengthen the implementation of the Scheme—

- (a) provide free-of-cost soil health testing, crop planning advice, and weather forecast systems in coordination with Krishi Vigyan Kendras and agricultural universities;
- (b) disseminate crop advisories and insurance information through SMS, mobile applications, and toll-free call centres in regional languages;
- (c) establish satellite-linked crop monitoring centres at the district level for real-time tracking of crop stages, yield estimation, and weather risk mapping;
- (d) promote formation and registration of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) for collective enrolment, premium payment, and grievance resolution under the Scheme;
- (e) incentivise participation of women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in crop insurance awareness and last-mile outreach in rural areas.

CHAPTER III

INSURANCE COVERAGE AND RISK TYPES

9. Coverage for drought, flood, pest attacks, and unseasonal rainfall.- (1) The Scheme shall provide coverage against the following risks causing yield loss or crop failure,-

- (a) Drought or prolonged dry spells;
- (b) Excess rainfall or flooding;
- (c) Hailstorms, cyclones, and high-velocity winds;
- (d) Pest attacks and diseases notified by the Agriculture Department;
- (e) Unseasonal rainfall causing damage during harvesting stage.

(2) Yield loss shall be assessed on the basis of crop-cutting experiments or remote sensing data, as prescribed by the Authority.

(3) The Authority may notify thresholds for rainfall or pest intensity for eligibility under this section and ensure standard operating procedures for local verification.

10. Additional coverage for climate change-induced events.- (1) The Scheme may provide extended coverage for emerging risks caused by climate change including,-

- (a) Heatwaves or sudden frost affecting crop physiology;
- (b) Untimely temperature fluctuations impacting flowering or fruiting;
- (c) Soil degradation or salinisation due to climate stress.

(2) The Authority shall frame guidelines, in consultation with expert bodies, for such dynamic risk coverage and notify the same annually.

(3) Pilot schemes and innovation grants may be introduced to study and insure climate risks unique to specific agro-zones in Karnataka.

11. Insurance for sowing failure and prevented sowing.- (1) Insurance benefits shall be available to farmers who face,-

- (a) Sowing failure due to inadequate rainfall or irrigation failure; or
- (b) Prevented sowing due to waterlogging, flood, or non-receipt of critical inputs.

(2) Claims under this section shall be processed within thirty days from the cut-off date for sowing, based on satellite imagery or field verification.

(3) Pre-sowing enrolment and geo-tagging of plots shall be made mandatory for eligibility under this section.

12. Coverage for perennial and horticulture crops.- (1) Perennial crops including orchards, plantations, and horticultural produce shall be insured under a separate module with,-

- (a) Tailored premium rates and sum insured;
- (b) Multi-year coverage option with annual renewal and inspection;
- (c) Compensation for partial yield loss, flowering failure, or plant mortality due to covered risks.

(2) The Authority shall maintain a distinct register of insured perennial plantations and issue detailed operating procedures for the same.

(3) Crop-specific hazard mapping shall be used to assess regional risk factors, and premium calculations shall be actuarially derived based on historical loss data.

13. Exclusions and limitation of liability.- (1) The following events shall ordinarily be excluded from coverage unless specifically notified,-

- (a) Loss due to negligence or wilful act of the farmer;
- (b) Loss arising from war, nuclear risk, or civil commotion;
- (c) Post-harvest losses, unless notified;
- (d) Crop loss due to non-agricultural land use, shifting cultivation, or encroachments.

(2) The liability of the insurer shall be limited to the sum insured as declared in the policy and shall not include consequential or indirect losses.

(3) Disputes regarding exclusions shall be adjudicated by the Authority, subject to appeal to the Appellate Board constituted under this Act.

PART III

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

CHAPTER IV

CROP INSURANCE AND COMPENSATION AUTHORITY

14. Establishment of the Karnataka Crop Insurance and Compensation Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a statutory body known as the Karnataka Crop Insurance and Compensation Authority (hereinafter referred to as "the Authority") for the purposes of formulating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating crop insurance schemes and disaster relief compensation mechanisms for farmers in the State.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall have power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, to enter into contracts, and to sue and be sued in its own name.

(3) The headquarters of the Authority shall be in Bengaluru. The State Government may, by notification, establish regional or divisional offices to ensure decentralised operations.

(4) The Authority shall operate under the overall supervision of the Department of Agriculture, but shall function with autonomy in decision-making pertaining to scheme administration and financial allocations.

(5) The Authority shall have legal capacity to coordinate with public and private insurance providers, banking institutions, farmer organisations, and central agencies for the purposes of implementing this Act.

15. Composition and tenure of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, to be appointed by the State Government,-

- (a) A retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka or a retired IAS officer of the rank of Additional Chief Secretary or above – Chairperson;
- (b) Principal Secretary to the Government, Department of Agriculture – Member (ex officio);
- (c) Commissioner for Revenue – Member (ex officio);
- (d) Director of Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre – Member (ex officio);
- (e) Two representatives from recognised Farmer Producer Organisations or Farmer Cooperatives – Members;
- (f) One expert in agricultural insurance, rural finance, or climate risk – Member;
- (g) An officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government – Member Secretary.

(2) The tenure of non-ex officio members shall be three years from the date of appointment, and they shall be eligible for reappointment for one additional term of three years.

(3) The State Government may remove any member on grounds of proven misconduct, conviction for an offence involving moral turpitude, or incapacity to discharge functions.

(4) The Authority shall maintain a balanced representation of expertise, government oversight, and farmer interests.

16. Powers and functions of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall have the following powers and perform the following functions:

- (a) To frame and notify guidelines for implementation of the Karnataka State Crop Insurance Scheme under this Act;
- (b) To design, review and revise compensation criteria based on cropping patterns, risk classification, and disaster intensity;
- (c) To manage the Karnataka Farmers' Disaster Relief Fund, ensuring adequate provisioning for insurance premium support and direct compensation;
- (d) To issue operational protocols for claim verification, assessment timelines, grievance redressal, and appeal mechanisms;
- (e) To authorise the release of compensation funds to district authorities and monitor their utilisation;

- (f) To collect and analyse data related to climate events, crop damage, insurance penetration, and disbursal efficacy;
 - (g) To maintain a publicly accessible portal for scheme information, claim status, and periodic reports;
 - (h) To undertake third-party audits, impact assessments, and evaluations of scheme performance;
 - (i) To promote digital applications for enrolment, crop tracking, and claim filing;
 - (j) To recommend to the State Government amendments in law, rules, or policy for better implementation.
- (2) In discharging its functions, the Authority may,-
- (a) Call for any record, report or data from any public or private institution involved in the scheme;
 - (b) Issue binding orders and instructions to subordinate officers, district and taluk-level committees;
 - (c) Delegate functions to officers, regional authorities, or any agency approved by the State Government;
 - (d) Frame regulations consistent with the Act and the rules made thereunder.

17.Meetings, quorum, and decision-making procedures.- (1) The Authority shall meet at least once every calendar quarter and as often as necessary.

(2) An extraordinary meeting may be convened by the Chairperson upon request of at least four members.

(3) A quorum shall consist of five members, including at least one farmer representative and one expert member.

(4) Each matter shall be decided by a majority of votes. In case of a tie, the Chairperson shall exercise a casting vote.

(5) Minutes shall be authenticated by the Chairperson and the Member Secretary and made available in the public domain within fifteen working days.

18. State Crop Insurance Coordination Committee.- (1) The State Government shall constitute a Committee to be known as the State Crop Insurance Coordination Committee (SCICC) to facilitate inter-departmental and inter-agency coordination.

(2) The composition of the Committee shall be as follows,-

- (a) Chief Secretary to the Government – Chairperson;
- (b) Principal Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Finance, Revenue, and Disaster Management – Members;
- (c) Chief Executive Officer of the Authority – Member Secretary;
- (d) Two representatives from empanelled public and private sector insurance companies – Members;
- (e) One expert in agrometeorology or crop modelling – Special Invitee.

(3) The Committee shall,-

- (a) Review and advise on policy modifications and premium rates;

- (b) Approve the list of notified crops and disaster events for each season;
 - (c) Recommend measures for expanding insurance coverage and claim settlement efficiency;
 - (d) Report annually to the State Cabinet on scheme impact and farmer outreach.
- (4) The Committee shall meet at least twice a year and shall have the power to constitute sub-committees for technical review.

CHAPTER V

DISTRICT AND TALUK-LEVEL IMPLEMENTATION

19. Constitution of District Crop Insurance Committees.- (1) The State Government shall direct every District Collector to, by order, constitute a District Crop Insurance Committee (hereinafter referred to as “District Committee”) for each revenue district within a period of thirty days from the commencement of this Act.

(2) The composition of the District Committee shall be as follows,—

- (a) District Collector – Chairperson;
- (b) Joint Director of Agriculture – Vice-Chairperson;
- (c) Lead District Manager (Public Sector Banks) – Member;
- (d) District Revenue Officer – Member;
- (e) Two farmer representatives nominated by the Zilla Panchayat – Members;
- (f) Assistant Director of Agriculture (Insurance) – Member Secretary.

(3) The District Committee shall meet at least once every month and shall perform the following functions,—

- (a) Oversee and supervise implementation of the State Crop Insurance Scheme and all relief compensation initiatives at the district level;
- (b) Approve, certify, and submit district-wide data on crop enrolment, crop loss assessment, and verified insurance claims to the Authority;
- (c) Facilitate coordination with empanelled insurance companies, district cooperative banks, local branches of commercial banks, farmer producer organisations, and civil society organisations;
- (d) Certify and submit district-level crop loss and weather anomaly assessment reports submitted by Taluk Agriculture Officers and Crop Verification Officers;
- (e) Monitor outreach initiatives, including information campaigns on scheme availability, enrolment deadlines, and claim protocols;
- (f) Establish and monitor a grievance redressal mechanism at the district level for complaints relating to delay, non-payment, or rejection of claims;
- (g) Submit monthly performance reports to the Authority and highlight systemic concerns or bottlenecks requiring intervention.

20. Responsibilities of District Collector and Agriculture Officers.- (1) The District Collector shall,—

- (a) Serve as the nodal authority responsible for the successful implementation of the Act in the district;

- (b) Ensure convergence and coordination among insurance companies, banking institutions, agricultural and revenue officers, and elected Panchayat Raj Institutions;
 - (c) Convene and chair monthly and seasonal review meetings, ensuring timely follow-up on field-level issues;
 - (d) Supervise the work of Taluk and Village-level functionaries and ensure their timely reporting of crop conditions;
 - (e) Maintain a district-level dashboard on key indicators such as farmer enrolment rate, claim pendency, average settlement time, and grievance resolution status.
- (2) The Joint Director of Agriculture shall,—
- (a) Maintain real-time records of notified crops, sowing periods, varietal coverage, and production estimates;
 - (b) Supervise and validate field inspections conducted by Taluk Agriculture Officers and Crop Verification Officers;
 - (c) Ensure regular uploading of rainfall, temperature, soil moisture, and pest outbreak data to the State Portal;
 - (d) Identify districts or taluks with low insurance penetration and take corrective awareness and training measures.
- (3) The District Revenue Officer shall,—
- (a) Ensure the availability and verification of land ownership, tenancy, and cropping pattern records;
 - (b) Provide certified records for use by field verifiers and claim assessors;
 - (c) Ensure mutation and land status records are integrated with the digital insurance claim processing system.
- (4) The Assistant Director of Agriculture (Insurance) shall,—
- (a) Act as the technical secretariat for the District Committee;
 - (b) Maintain records of crop insurance premiums, subsidies, and claims processed;
 - (c) Liaise with taluk-level functionaries for public dissemination and capacity building;
 - (d) Submit a quarterly audit-ready report of insurance activity to the Authority.

21. Farmer Facilitation Centres at Taluk Level.- (1) The State Government shall, within ninety days from the commencement of this Act, establish Farmer Facilitation Centres (FFCs) in each taluk headquarters to ensure accessible and transparent service delivery for farmers.

- (2) Each FFC shall perform the following functions,—
- (a) Serve as a single-window helpdesk for enrolment under crop insurance, submission of insurance and disaster relief claims, uploading of supporting documentation, and withdrawal of compensation amounts;
 - (b) Maintain digital and physical records of all insured farmers in the taluk, including Aadhaar-linked identities, bank account details, KYC compliance, crop and land particulars, and claim histories;
 - (c) Conduct awareness camps on crop insurance schemes before the onset of each cropping season;

- (d) Provide technical guidance on proper claim procedures, documentation requirements, claim tracking, and appeals;
 - (e) Forward grievances received to the Taluk Agriculture Officer and District Committee for necessary action.
- (3) Each FFC shall be staffed with,—
- (a) An Insurance Coordinator, preferably with experience in rural finance, crop science, or insurance literacy;
 - (b) A minimum of two Agricultural Assistants trained in handling digital records, native language communication, and field documentation support;
 - (c) A grievance redressal officer for sensitive handling of farmer complaints.
- (4) Every FFC shall be equipped with at least one digital service kiosk with biometric verification, internet access, and connection to the State Crop Insurance Portal.

22. Appointment and Powers of Crop Verification Officers.- (1) The Authority shall, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture, appoint qualified and trained officers as Crop Verification Officers (CVOs) for each taluk to verify reported claims of crop damage or loss.

- (2) Each CVO shall,—
- (a) Physically inspect and verify the reported crop damage within seventy-two hours from the date of receipt of intimation from the farmer or Taluk Agriculture Officer;
 - (b) Record field observations through standardised digital forms, incorporating photographs, GPS coordinates, soil and plant health indicators, and farmer testimony;
 - (c) Upload all documentation onto the State Crop Insurance Portal for real-time transparency and tracking;
 - (d) Submit a preliminary report to the Taluk Officer, and a verified final report to the District Committee within five working days.
- (3) CVOs shall have the following statutory powers,—
- (a) To enter any farmland, barn, irrigation plot, or affected field for the purpose of verifying crop condition and damage;
 - (b) To summon village officers, revenue staff, or Panchayat functionaries to provide corroborative field evidence;
 - (c) To recommend provisional compensation in cases of prima facie evidence of large-scale destruction, pending further validation by district or state-level authorities;
 - (d) To conduct random spot verification of claims to detect fraudulent claims or discrepancies.

23. Monthly monitoring and seasonal review meetings.- (1) The District Committee shall convene Monthly Monitoring Meetings (MMM) to review the implementation status of the crop insurance scheme across all taluks. Each meeting shall,—

- (a) Review and approve taluk-wise status reports on farmer enrolment, claim pendency, settlement turnaround, and insurance coverage ratio;
- (b) Identify and document delays or deficiencies in field verification, disbursement, or communication;

- (c) Recommend to the Authority mid-season course corrections and emergency relief interventions;
 - (d) Prepare and submit a monthly progress report and compliance certificate to the Authority.
- (2) The Authority shall convene biannual Seasonal Review Meetings (SRMs) following the closure of the kharif and rabi seasons, respectively, which shall,—
- (a) Evaluate aggregated data from all districts concerning scheme reach, grievance redressal, and fund utilisation;
 - (b) Examine meteorological, agricultural, and economic indicators to assess climate and disaster vulnerability;
 - (c) Recommend changes to the list of notified crops, risk zones, or premium sharing arrangements;
 - (d) Publish a State-level Season-end Performance Report containing key findings, success stories, bottlenecks, and policy recommendations, to be tabled before the State Legislature.
- (3) The findings of each SRM shall be used to recalibrate the scheme guidelines for the following season and inform the budgetary allocation of the Disaster Relief Fund.

PART IV

CLAIM SETTLEMENT AND COMPENSATION

CHAPTER VI

LOSS ASSESSMENT AND CLAIM PROCEDURE

24. Notification of crop damage by local authorities.- (1) Upon the occurrence of any natural calamity, pest infestation, drought, flood, or extreme weather event affecting any notified crop, the Gram Panchayat, Village Revenue Officer, or Taluk Agriculture Officer shall, within seventy-two hours, issue a written report and digital notification to the District Crop Insurance Committee and the Authority through the prescribed portal.

(2) The notification shall include the date and nature of the calamity, estimated area affected, names of affected villages, crop types damaged, and a preliminary assessment of the extent of loss.

(3) The State Government shall develop and notify a unified digital platform and mobile application for real-time submission of damage reports with photographic evidence and geo-tagging functionality.

(4) In exceptional cases, the Authority may designate any other public authority or certified private agency to notify crop damage where primary reporting is delayed.

25. Role of satellite, drone, and weather-based technology.- (1) The Authority shall institutionalise the use of advanced technologies for objective crop damage assessment including,-

- (a) Satellite-based remote sensing imagery;
- (b) Drone-enabled high-resolution field imaging;

- (c) Data from automatic weather stations (AWS), rainfall sensors, and soil moisture trackers.
- (2) The Authority shall empanel certified service providers for the acquisition, interpretation, and integration of such data.
- (3) The outputs from these technologies shall be triangulated with manual field inspections to determine verifiable yield loss.
- (4) Such technology-driven evidence shall be admissible for claim settlement under the insurance scheme and the Compensation Fund.

26. Time-bound verification of loss.- (1) All reports of crop damage submitted under section 24 shall be verified through a physical field inspection within five working days from the date of receipt.

(2) The Taluk Agriculture Officer and the Crop Verification Officer shall jointly conduct inspections, with the assistance of the Panchayat Secretary and at least one representative of a recognised Farmer Producer Organisation.

(3) The verification report shall be completed using a prescribed format, including,-

- (a) Geo-tagged photographs;
- (b) Area sown and damaged;
- (c) Stage of crop and expected yield loss;
- (d) Cause of damage, with corroborating weather or pest data.

(4) Verified reports shall be uploaded to the State Crop Insurance Portal and shared with the District Committee.

(5) In case of delay, the Taluk Agriculture Officer shall submit a written justification to the District Collector.

27. Submission and processing of insurance claims.- (1) Every insured farmer shall submit a claim within ten working days from the date of damage notification.

(2) Claim submission may be made,-

- (a) In person at the nearest Farmer Facilitation Centre;
- (b) Digitally via the official portal with Aadhaar-based login.

(3) The following documents shall accompany every claim,-

- (a) Insurance certificate and farmer ID;
- (b) Proof of land ownership or lease certificate;
- (c) Photographs of crop damage;
- (d) Field report issued by the Taluk Agriculture Officer.

(4) Insurance companies shall process and settle claims within fifteen days from receipt.

(5) Failure to adhere to the processing timeline shall result in penal interest at 12% per annum, automatically credited to the farmer's bank account.

(6) Final compensation shall be disbursed through Direct Benefit Transfer to the Aadhaar-seeded bank account of the farmer.

28. Grievance redressal in claim rejections.- (1) If a claim is rejected by the insurance company, the reasons shall be communicated in writing and in the Kannada language within five working days.

- (2) Aggrieved farmers may submit a review application to the Taluk Grievance Committee within fifteen days.
- (3) The Committee shall consist of,-
 - (a) Taluk Agriculture Officer – Chairperson;
 - (b) Nominee of the insurance company – Member;
 - (c) Panchayat Development Officer – Member;
 - (d) Farmer representative nominated by the Taluk Panchayat – Member;
 - (e) Assistant Agriculture Officer – Member Secretary.
- (4) The Committee shall consider all evidence afresh and issue a decision within ten working days.
- (5) If unsatisfied, the farmer may appeal to the District Committee within thirty days.
- (6) All decisions on grievances shall be uploaded to the digital portal and accessible to the farmer.

CHAPTER VII

COMPENSATION FOR NON-INSURED EVENTS

29. Establishment of Karnataka Agricultural Disaster Compensation Fund.- (1) The State Government shall establish a non-lapsable Karnataka Agricultural Disaster Compensation Fund (KADCF) to provide compensation to,-

- (a) Non-insured farmers;
 - (b) For non-crop agricultural losses.
- (2) The Fund shall be administered by the Authority and financed through,-
 - (a) Annual budgetary allocations;
 - (b) Contributions from State PSUs under CSR obligations;
 - (c) Grants from national or international donor agencies;
 - (d) Any other lawful means as notified.
- (3) The Fund shall be operated through a dedicated escrow account maintained by the Authority and subject to annual audit by the CAG.

30. Eligibility for compensation under calamity.- (1) Any farmer, including those not covered by crop insurance, shall be entitled to claim relief from the KADCF if,-

- (a) They have suffered crop loss due to a notified disaster;
 - (b) Their livestock, land, or equipment has been damaged.
- (2) The Authority shall notify disaster categories eligible for compensation including,-
 - (a) Flood, drought, cyclone, hailstorm, landslide, pest outbreak, heatwave, and coldwave;
 - (b) Any other event causing widespread crop damage.
- (3) Priority shall be given to,-
 - (a) Small and marginal farmers;
 - (b) Women-headed households;
 - (c) SC/ST farmers;
 - (d) Farmers with disabilities or loss of livelihood due to repeated calamities.

31. Assessment of loss for non-insured farmers.- (1) Non-insured farmer losses shall be assessed through,-

- (a) The same crop verification process used for insured claims;
- (b) Use of technology such as satellite and drone data;
- (c) Reports from the Gram Panchayat.

(2) The relief payable shall be calculated using,-

- (a) A benchmark yield as notified by the Authority;
- (b) A minimum support cost matrix developed in consultation with the Agricultural Price Commission.

(3) Compensation for non-insured farmers shall be equitable and shall not exceed the quantum payable to insured farmers under similar conditions.

32. Relief for damage to land, tools, and livestock.- (1) The following categories of loss shall be eligible for compensation under KADCF,-

- (a) Structural damage to borewells, pumps, fencing, or irrigation canals;
- (b) Death of livestock due to flood, disease, or storm;
- (c) Soil damage rendering land temporarily uncultivable.

(2) The Authority shall notify per-unit compensation standards for these categories.

(3) The Taluk Agriculture Officer shall verify each case and forward the claim with recommendation to the District Committee within five working days.

(4) Claims shall be processed and disbursed within fifteen working days.

33. Compensation for tenant farmers and sharecroppers.- (1) The Authority shall ensure specific provisions to protect tenant farmers, oral lessees, and sharecroppers.

(2) Compensation shall be payable upon submission of either:

- (a) A registered tenancy agreement;
- (b) A certificate from the Gram Sabha verifying actual cultivation;
- (c) Affidavit and input purchase proof.

(3) Landowners shall not be entitled to compensation for such land if the tenant has cultivated the crop.

(4) The Panchayat shall maintain an annual register of land under tenancy, duly signed by the landholder and tenant, and made available to the Authority.

PART V

DISASTER RESPONSE AND RELIEF

CHAPTER VIII

NATURAL DISASTER CATEGORISATION AND RESPONSE

34. Classification of natural disasters for agriculture.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Authority, the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), and subject matter experts in agrometeorology and disaster management, publish an annual notification classifying natural disasters specifically affecting agricultural production, infrastructure, and livelihoods.

(2) The classification shall be scientific, dynamic, and reviewed periodically based on severity, historical frequency, geographic incidence, seasonal impact, and vulnerability mapping. The categories shall include,-

- (a) Meteorological disasters: droughts, cyclones, hailstorms, heatwaves, coldwaves, windstorms;
- (b) Hydrological disasters: floods, water logging, flash floods, groundwater depletion;
- (c) Biological disasters: locust invasions, plant pathogens, invasive weed species, pest outbreaks;
- (d) Geological events: landslides, seismic shifts, or related effects impacting soil fertility or irrigation.

(3) Each notified event shall carry a standard impact severity grade (low, moderate, severe, catastrophic) to inform eligibility thresholds for relief.

(4) The classification shall be used by all government departments, financial institutions, and insurance entities to trigger relief, compensation, or exemption mechanisms under this Act.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “disaster” shall include both slow-onset and sudden-onset events that adversely affect at least 30% of the sown area in a notified region.

35. Weather and disaster alerts to farmers.-(1) The Authority shall establish an Integrated Weather Alert System (IWAS) in coordination with KSNDMC, IMD, ISRO, and private agri-tech partners for dissemination of timely and reliable weather and disaster warnings to farmers.

(2) The dissemination methods shall include:

- (a) SMS alerts in Kannada and applicable regional dialects with early warning messages;
- (b) Automated voice calls for illiterate farmers;
- (c) Offline-enabled mobile apps updated regularly with advisories;
- (d) Village-level dissemination through Gram Panchayats, community radio, krishimitras, wall posters, and gram sabhas.

(3) Weather alerts shall cover rainfall deviations, extreme temperature forecasts, pest and disease threats, and wind speed advisories.

(4) All enrolled farmers under insurance or compensation shall be mandatorily linked to IWAS services.

(5) The failure to issue alerts without reasonable justification shall be deemed a breach of statutory duty and reported to the District Committee.

Provided that all alerts shall be archived digitally and accessible to Gram Panchayats for local dissemination.

36. Immediate response teams at district level.-(1) Every District Collector shall constitute and notify Agricultural Disaster Response Teams (ADRTs) in each taluk and sub-taluk jurisdiction, to function as rapid response units during agricultural calamities.

(2) Each ADRT shall comprise,-

- (a) Taluk Agriculture Officer – Team Leader;
- (b) Veterinary Officer (or Livestock Inspector);
- (c) Horticulture Officer;

- (d) Panchayat Development Officer;
 - (e) Revenue Inspector;
 - (f) Field Assistant or Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) as nominated;
 - (g) One farmer nominated by the Gram Sabha.
- (3) The ADRT shall,-
- (a) Reach affected areas within 24 hours of first report;
 - (b) Use handheld GPS devices, tablets, and preloaded survey templates to collect real-time data;
 - (c) Coordinate with warehouse and logistic officers for relief disbursal;
 - (d) Submit a preliminary damage report to the District Crop Insurance Committee within 48 hours.

Explanation: For the removal of doubt, it is clarified that failure to constitute ADRTs within the stipulated time shall attract administrative action under the Karnataka Civil Services Rules.

37. Mobilisation of seeds, fertilizers, and emergency services.- (1) The Department of Agriculture shall formulate an annual contingency logistics plan, reviewed biannually, and pre-contract qualified vendors for rapid supply of the following materials:

- (a) Certified seeds of climate-resilient, early-maturing, or stress-tolerant varieties;
 - (b) Organic and inorganic fertilisers including micro-nutrients, soil conditioners, and biofertilisers;
 - (c) Pest and disease management kits, including bio-control agents and pheromone traps.
- Provided that any vendor failing to supply inputs within 48 hours of requisition during a disaster shall be blacklisted for a period of three years.
- (2) A minimum 25% buffer stock shall be maintained at the taluk level by the Agricultural Input Distribution Centre.
 - (3) Inputs shall be subsidised up to 90% in areas classified as severely affected.
 - (4) Beneficiary lists shall be maintained digitally and verified using Aadhaar-linked e-KYC.
 - (5) Monthly reconciliation reports shall be submitted to the Authority by the Taluk Agriculture Officer.

38. Establishment of agri-disaster warehouses and emergency stockpiles.- (1) The State Government shall, within 180 days of the commencement of this Act, establish climate-resilient Agri-Disaster Warehouses in every agricultural division of the State.

- (2) These warehouses shall,-
- (a) Stock seasonal and region-specific inputs as per local cropping calendars;
 - (b) Be equipped with cold storage, solar backup, pest-proof design, and digital inventory management systems;
 - (c) Function as nodal centres for agricultural input supply during declared disasters.
- (3) Each warehouse shall be managed by a certified Warehouse Logistics Officer with digital inventory and logistics experience.
- (4) The Authority shall conduct biannual audits and publish stock position reports on its public portal.

(5) The District Crop Insurance Committee shall monitor withdrawal and utilisation records during emergency response.

Explanation: Agri-disaster warehouses shall be considered essential infrastructure under the Karnataka State Infrastructure Policy.

CHAPTER IX

FINANCIAL RELIEF AND MORATORIUM

39. Loan moratoriums for affected farmers.- (1) In the event of a disaster declaration under this Act, the State Government shall, through notification in the Official Gazette, direct that agricultural loan moratoriums shall apply in affected areas.

(2) The moratorium shall include,-

- (a) Suspension of repayment of all outstanding principal and interest on crop loans, agricultural term loans, and Kisan Credit Card dues;
- (b) Non-imposition of penal interest or processing charges during the moratorium period;
- (c) Conversion of short-term loans into medium-term loans, repayable in suitable instalments as determined by the Reserve Bank of India.

(3) The relief shall be applicable to loans from public sector banks, cooperative banks, regional rural banks, and NBFCs registered with the Reserve Bank of India.

(4) The District Lead Bank Officer shall ensure that all eligible accounts are tagged and the relief measures are implemented within fifteen working days of the notification.

(5) No recovery proceedings shall be initiated against affected farmers during the moratorium period.

Provided that any delay in moratorium implementation shall render the responsible bank officer liable to penalty under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. Interest subvention on rescheduled loans.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “affected farmers” shall mean those residing or cultivating land in a revenue village notified as a disaster-affected area by the State Government.

Explanation: “Rescheduled loans” shall include only those loans certified by the District Lead Bank Committee as disaster-impacted.

40. Interest subvention on rescheduled loans.- (1) Where agricultural loans have been restructured or rescheduled as a result of a natural disaster declared under this Act, the State Government shall provide interest subvention to reduce the financial burden on the borrower.

(2) The interest subvention shall be provided at a rate not exceeding four percentage points per annum and shall apply to the restructured portion of the loan for a maximum period of twenty-four months from the date of restructuring.

(3) The interest subvention shall be credited directly to the lending institution by the Department of Cooperation or such other department as may be notified, upon verification of claim submissions made by the banks through the District Lead Bank Committee.

Provided that no interest subvention shall be admissible in respect of wilful defaulters or loan accounts classified as non-performing assets beyond ninety days prior to the date of the disaster declaration.

(4) Eligible institutions shall include,-

- (a) Public Sector Banks;
- (b) Regional Rural Banks;
- (c) State Cooperative Banks and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies;
- (d) Any other lending institution as may be notified by the State Government.

(5) The lending institutions shall reflect the reduced interest in the borrower's loan account and ensure that no additional charges are levied on account of restructuring.

(6) Non-compliance by a lending institution shall attract administrative penalties and disqualification from future government-linked schemes.

Explanation: "Rescheduled loans" shall include only those loans certified by the District Lead Bank Committee as disaster-impacted and eligible for moratorium under section 39.

Explanation: "Rescheduled loans" shall include only those loans certified by the District Lead Bank Committee as disaster-impacted

41. Waiver of electricity bills and water charges.- (1) Upon the declaration of a disaster-affected area under this Act, the State Government shall direct the Karnataka Power Transmission Corporation Limited (KPTCL), regional electricity supply companies, and the Department of Water Resources to implement a waiver of electricity bills and water charges for affected farmers.

(2) The waiver shall apply to,-

- (a) Electricity charges (fixed and variable) relating to agricultural pump sets, borewells, and irrigation facilities, for up to two billing cycles following the date of disaster notification;
- (b) Water usage charges, including cess and maintenance fees, under any canal, tank, or lift irrigation scheme notified under the Karnataka Irrigation Act, 1965, for the cropping season during which the disaster occurred.

(3) The waiver shall be granted to all farmers listed in the disaster-affected revenue villages as notified under this Act, and identified by the Agriculture Department or Panchayat authorities.

(4) No farmer shall be required to submit an application for the waiver; the eligible connections and water accounts shall be tagged and updated by the respective electricity and water supply agencies based on authenticated disaster records.

(5) Reimbursement of waived dues shall be effected from the State Disaster Response Fund upon submission of consolidated claims by the respective utility departments.

(6) The Departments concerned shall publish district-wise implementation reports and notify a grievance redressal mechanism for billing disputes.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "water charges" shall include volumetric tariffs, flat rates, cess, or maintenance levies applicable to any agricultural use of State-controlled water bodies or irrigation channels.

Provided further that any bill raised contrary to this waiver shall be void ab initio and recoverable with penalty from the issuing authority responsible for such erroneous billing.

42. Temporary income support in disaster-hit zones. (1) In the event of a natural disaster that results in verified crop loss exceeding fifty percent (50%) of the net sown area in any revenue

village, the State Government shall provide temporary income support to farmers adversely affected by such disaster.

Provided that disbursement shall be completed within twenty-one (21) days from the finalisation of beneficiary lists by the District Committee

(2) The income support shall be made available to:

- (a) Small and marginal farmers owning or cultivating not more than two hectares of land;
- (b) Tenant farmers and sharecroppers identified by the Panchayat and verified through the Facilitation Centre;
- (c) Women-headed agricultural households, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe farmers, and other socially vulnerable groups.

(3) The amount of income support shall be:

- (a) Not less than ₹5,000 (Rupees five thousand) per eligible household per month;
- (b) Provided for a maximum period of three (3) consecutive months from the date of disaster notification.

(4) The disbursement shall be made through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) into Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts of eligible farmers based on verified field reports submitted by the Agricultural Disaster Response Team (ADRT) and certified by the District Committee.

(5) In case of a prolonged or recurring disaster, the State Government may, by special order, extend the duration or enhance the amount of support in consultation with the Authority and Finance Department.

Explanation: Income support under this section shall not be treated as compensation under the insurance scheme for the same period or loss.

43. Exemption from land revenue and canal irrigation cess.- (1) In any revenue village declared as a disaster-affected area under this Act, the State Government shall grant exemption to all cultivators from the payment of:

- (a) Land revenue for the agricultural year in which the disaster occurred;
- (b) Canal irrigation cess and other irrigation charges levied under the Karnataka Irrigation Act, 1965.

(2) The exemption shall be applicable to both recorded owners and tenant cultivators, based on land records and agricultural registers maintained by the Village Accountant and verified by the Panchayat.

(3) No demand notices or revenue recovery actions shall be issued in respect of exempted dues for the notified period.

(4) The Revenue Department shall issue a circular to all Deputy Commissioners, Tahsildars, and Village Accountants to implement the exemption suo motu without requiring applications from farmers.

(5) The exemption orders shall be publicly displayed at Panchayat offices and uploaded to the digital revenue portal for transparency.

Provided that exemption shall be granted automatically upon notification without requiring separate application by the farmer.

PART VI
TECHNOLOGY, TRANSPARENCY, AND DATABASES
CHAPTER X
DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND TRANSPARENCY

44. Creation of Unified Farmer Insurance Portal.- (1) The Authority shall, within ninety days from the commencement of this Act, establish and operationalise a Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP) to serve as the single, centralised, technology-driven platform for all stakeholders under this Act.

(2) The UFIP shall be hosted on secure State Government infrastructure and shall offer end-to-end electronic services including,-

- (a) Farmer enrolment, identity verification, and e-KYC;
- (b) Real-time application and status tracking for insurance, compensation, and relief claims;
- (c) Data integration and interoperability with land records, Aadhaar, banks, insurance companies, and Panchayat records;
- (d) Generation of digital acknowledgments, certificates, receipts, and audit trails.

(3) The Portal shall be made accessible through,-

- (a) Common Service Centres (CSCs) and Farmer Facilitation Centres;
- (b) Mobile applications and SMS/IVRS interfaces;
- (c) Regional language interfaces and screen-reader support for differently abled farmers.

(1) The Authority shall ensure compliance with the IT Act, 2000, and data protection laws while maintaining cybersecurity standards notified by the State's IT Department.

45. E-KYC and biometric linking of insurance accounts.- (1) All farmer accounts maintained under the schemes of this Act shall be seeded with Aadhaar and undergo mandatory e-KYC using UIDAI-compliant platforms.

(2) The Department of Agriculture shall ensure the deployment of biometric enrolment units at every taluk-level centre and Facilitation Point.

(3) Biometric and demographic details shall be linked to each claim ID and farmer profile on the UFIP.

(4) No benefit shall be released unless Aadhaar-based verification or alternative e-KYC is completed.

Provided that in case of technical failure, or where a person is exempt under law, alternate offline or certificate-based verification shall be permitted under guidelines framed by the Authority.

Explanation: Nothing in this section shall preclude the payment of emergency compensation pending e-KYC in cases of declared natural disaster.

46. Real-time tracking of claims and settlements.- (1) The UFIP shall include a claim tracking dashboard for each claimant that shall display, at a minimum,-

- (a) Date and time of claim submission;
- (b) Status of field verification, crop inspection, and GIS imagery upload;
- (c) Remarks or queries raised by officials;
- (d) Final decision and payment disbursal log.

- (2) The Portal shall generate automated SMS/IVRS/email alerts at each stage of the claim cycle.
- (3) The Authority shall enforce Service Level Agreements (SLAs) mandating processing time limits of,-

- (a) Five working days for verification;
- (b) Ten working days for approval;
- (c) Three working days for disbursal.

- (2) SLA breaches shall attract internal accountability proceedings and public grievance mechanisms.

47. Farmer access to disaster advisories and satellite data.- (1) The Portal shall be equipped with a dedicated module displaying,-

- (a) Real-time weather updates and risk alerts from IMD and KSNDMC;
- (b) Calamity-specific advisories issued by the Department of Agriculture;
- (c) Agro-climatic zone-based alerts.

- (2) Satellite, drone, and sensor-generated data used for damage assessment shall be anonymised and geo-tagged and made viewable on open layers for farmer feedback.

- (3) Every disaster alert shall be archived and displayed for a minimum of ninety days.

- (4) Farmers may subscribe to customised alerts based on crop, district, or irrigation source.

48. Public dashboard for scheme performance.- (1) The Authority shall publish a live, public dashboard, updated on a fortnightly basis, displaying the following indicators:

- (a) Scheme enrolment rates disaggregated by taluk and farmer category;
- (b) Claim inflow, pending claims, and average settlement duration;
- (c) Grievance redressal timelines and feedback ratings;
- (d) Year-on-year comparison of insurance coverage, disbursal, and exclusion.

- (2) The dashboard shall permit data downloads in open formats and be indexed for use by media, legislators, researchers, and civil society groups.

Provided that no personally identifiable information shall be disclosed in the public domain except with consent or where mandated by law.

CHAPTER XI

FARMER DATABASE AND RECORDS

49. Maintenance of State Farmer Registry.- (1) The Authority shall, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Revenue Department, Rural Development Department, and other relevant agencies, establish and maintain an integrated State Farmer Registry (hereinafter referred to as “the Registry”) containing validated, periodically updated, and geo-referenced demographic, landholding, cropping, and financial data of farmers.

- (2) The Registry shall serve as the single source of truth for eligibility under all schemes provided under this Act and shall contain,-

- (a) Personal details including name, gender, age, and Aadhaar number;
- (b) Ownership or tenancy status with proof of landholding or leasehold rights;
- (c) Details of cultivated crops, irrigation source, and soil classification;
- (d) Bank account details, insurance enrolment status, and claim history.

- (3) The Registry shall be updated at least twice a year — once before the Kharif season and once before the Rabi season — based on physical verification, digital records, and satellite imagery.
- (4) Farmers shall be allowed to access, verify, and request corrections to their profile at the nearest Facilitation Centre or through the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP).
- (5) The Registry shall comply with the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and applicable data protection laws, with appropriate safeguards to prevent unauthorised access, misuse, or data manipulation.

Explanation: For the purposes of this Chapter, “farmer” includes landowners, recorded tenants, sharecroppers, and women cultivators recognised by the Panchayat.

50. Integration with land records and Aadhaar.- (1) Every entry in the State Farmer Registry shall be uniquely tagged to,-

- (a) A Unique Farmer Identification Number (UFIN) generated by the Authority;
 - (b) The Khata number or survey number of the land parcel, as recorded in the Bhoomi or e-Kshanasystems;
 - (c) Aadhaar number of the farmer or cultivator.
- (2) The Revenue Department shall ensure full digitisation, geo-tagging, and cadastral mapping of all agricultural plots in each village within a period of one year from the commencement of this Act.
- (3) Village Accountants shall conduct annual verification of,-
- (a) Land ownership and mutation records;
 - (b) Cultivation status and tenancy declarations;
 - (c) Irrigation source and boundary encroachments.
- (4) Any discrepancy between land records and crop declarations shall be flagged on the UFIP and resolved through a Taluk-level Verification Committee within fifteen working days.
- Provided that no farmer shall be denied access to benefits under this Act solely on account of minor or technical inconsistencies in land records, subject to self-declaration and panchayat verification.

51. Use of village maps and GIS layers for verification.- (1) The Authority shall deploy high-resolution GIS-based maps of each village integrated with satellite and drone imagery to facilitate accurate, tamper-proof crop loss verification and land mapping.

- (2) Each registered land parcel shall be overlaid with,-
- (a) Current season crop layers;
 - (b) Historical sowing, irrigation, and yield trends;
 - (c) Damage indicators linked to rainfall, pest, or calamity data.
- (3) All claims for insurance or disaster compensation shall be geospatially tagged and matched to the claimant’s parcel ID.
- (4) Gram Panchayats shall be provided handheld GPS devices and training for ground-truthing and field-level verification.

(5) The Authority may collaborate with national platforms such as Bhuvan (ISRO), FASAL (MoA), or the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) for technical support

52. Annual publication of enrolment and claim statistics.- (1) The Authority shall compile, verify, and publish an Annual Crop Insurance and Disaster Compensation Report for each financial year containing,-

- (a) Total number of farmers enrolled, by district, taluk, gender, and social category;
- (b) Crop-wise enrolment across kharif and rabi seasons;
- (c) Value and number of claims submitted, approved, pending, and rejected;
- (d) Status of disbursement, pending SLAs, and grievance redressals;
- (e) Comparison with previous years and identification of trends.

(2) The Report shall be,-

- (a) Tabled before each house of the State Legislature;
- (b) Made available on the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP) in Kannada and English;
- (c) Circulated to District Committees, insurance companies, and Farmer Producer Organisations.

(3) Summary versions shall be released in the form of infographics and press notes for mass awareness.

53. Periodic audit of beneficiaries and exclusion errors.- (1) The Authority shall, once every financial year, commission an independent audit through a Government-recognised agency to evaluate,-

- (a) Accuracy of beneficiary inclusion and exclusion;
- (b) Rate of claim rejection and reasons thereof;
- (c) Timeliness and quality of field verifications;
- (d) Duplicate, fraudulent, or ghost entries in the system.

(2) The audit shall be evidence-based, geo-tagged, and triangulated with panchayat records, satellite data, and random sampling.

(3) Upon detection of material irregularities, the Authority shall,-

- (a) Initiate recovery proceedings against ineligible claimants;
- (b) Suspend officers found guilty of collusion or negligence;
- (c) Rectify systemic flaws and ensure re-enrolment of omitted beneficiaries.

(4) A compliance report detailing actions taken shall be published within sixty days of the audit's completion.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “exclusion error” shall include:

- (a) Omission of eligible farmers due to technical mismatch, data entry error, or procedural lapse;
- (b) Denial of benefit despite valid application due to delay or negligence of authorities.

PART VII
PARTICIPATION, AWARENESS, AND CAPACITY BUILDING
CHAPTER XII
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND FARMER AWARENESS

54. Farmer training and insurance literacy camps.-(1) The Authority shall, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, conduct quarterly training and awareness camps in every taluk for promoting insurance literacy and disaster preparedness among farmers.

(2) Such programmes shall focus on,-

- (a) Awareness about crop insurance eligibility, enrolment timelines, premiums, and claim process;
- (b) Education on disaster compensation schemes, verification protocols, and documentation;
- (c) Understanding of farmers' rights, grievance procedures, and support mechanisms.

(3) The Authority shall ensure,-

- (a) Inclusion of local languages and dialects;
- (b) Participation of women, tenant farmers, and vulnerable groups;
- (c) Use of audio-visual tools and field demonstrations.

(4) Each Gram Panchayat shall host at least one insurance literacy event per cropping season, certified by the Panchayat Secretary and recorded digitally.

Explanation: “Insurance literacy” under this section includes both awareness of legal entitlements and practical know-how for accessing the scheme.

55. Involvement of Panchayats and FPOs in awareness.-(1) Gram Panchayats shall function as nodal outreach agencies and be responsible for,-

- (a) Display of scheme materials on notice boards and digital displays;
- (b) Publicising crop enrolment deadlines and advisory alerts;
- (c) Disseminating compensation notifications and emergency contact points.

(2) Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), self-help groups, and cooperative societies shall be formally involved by the Taluk Agriculture Office to mobilise farmer participation.

(3) Panchayats shall coordinate awareness drives during village meetings, gram sabhas, market days, and other local gatherings.

(4) Panchayat Development Officers shall upload quarterly reports on outreach to the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP).

56. Toll-free helpline and online complaint portal.-(1) The Authority shall operate a dedicated 24x7 toll-free number with trained agents to provide multilingual assistance on,-

- (a) Insurance enrolment and crop notification;
- (b) Status of submitted claims and grievance redressal queries;
- (c) Compensation eligibility and application errors.

(2) An online complaint portal shall be established on the UFIP with features for,-

- (a) Auto-ticket generation, date-stamped tracking, and escalation to district officials;
- (b) Categorised resolution timelines (urgent, regular, appeal);

- (c) Feedback ratings and analytics dashboard.
- (3) The District Grievance Redressal Committee shall receive weekly reports on unresolved complaints and initiate suo motu resolution as needed.
- 57. Incentives for Gram Panchayats for higher enrolment.-** (1) The Authority shall implement a Panchayat Incentive Scheme (PIS) to reward Gram Panchayats that demonstrate,-
 - (a) Above 90% registration of eligible farmers within the notified period;
 - (b) Zero pendency in grievance redressals;
 - (c) Active participation in literacy and enrolment campaigns.
- (2) Recognised Panchayats shall receive,-
 - (a) Infrastructure grants for agricultural resource centres;
 - (b) Capacity-building funds for elected members;
 - (c) Certificates of excellence awarded at the district and state levels.
- (3) The Authority shall publish an annual Panchayat Performance Index based on data from UFIP.
- 58. Engagement with NGOs and Agri-extension services.-** (1) The Authority may, by notification, empanel qualified non-governmental organisations, Agri-tech startups, and extension service providers to support awareness, training, and last-mile support functions.
- (2) Selection shall be based on transparent criteria including,-
 - (a) Field experience in farmer engagement or insurance facilitation;
 - (b) Multilingual training capacity and digital access tools;
 - (c) Non-partisanship and coverage of excluded groups.
- (3) The empanelled entities shall,-
 - (a) Submit quarterly performance reports and impact assessments;
 - (b) Participate in planning and review sessions at the district level;
 - (c) Be subject to audit and removal for non-performance.
- Explanation.**—“Agri-extension services” under this Chapter include digital advisories, mobile-based education, and deployment of field agents.

CHAPTER XIII

PARTICIPATION OF INSURERS AND PRIVATE SECTOR

- 59. Accreditation of insurance companies under the Act.-**(1) No insurance company shall operate or offer any crop insurance products under this Act unless it is duly accredited by the Authority in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (2) To be eligible for accreditation, a company must,-
 - (a) Be registered with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) as a general insurer or specialised agricultural insurer;
 - (b) Demonstrate a minimum of five years of operational experience in crop or weather-based insurance in India;
 - (c) Maintain a solvency ratio as prescribed under IRDAI guidelines;
 - (d) Provide documentary proof of past claim settlement records, especially in rural or agricultural areas;

(e) Demonstrate readiness for digital integration with the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP).

(3) The Authority shall publish detailed criteria, application procedures, and timelines for accreditation and shall review accreditations every three years.

(4) Accredited insurers shall enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Authority specifying,-

(a) Service Level Agreements (SLAs);

(b) Grievance redressal mechanisms;

(c) Audit and data disclosure obligations;

(d) Compliance with rural outreach and performance obligations under this Act.

(5) The Authority reserves the right to suspend, revoke, or refuse renewal of accreditation based on non-performance, regulatory breaches, or farmer complaints substantiated through inquiry.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “accreditation” refers to official authorisation granted by the State Authority for the insurer to participate in government-supported insurance schemes under this Act.

60. Code of conduct for insurers and agents.- (1) Every insurer and insurance intermediary, including field officers, agents, brokers, or facilitators engaged under this Act, shall adhere to the Code of Conduct prescribed by the Authority.

(2) The Code of Conduct shall include the following obligations,-

(a) Clear and accurate disclosure of policy features, coverage exclusions, timelines, and premium structures in Kannada and relevant local dialects;

(b) Prohibition of bundling crop insurance with unrelated products or coercive sales practices;

(c) Maintenance of a dignified and non-discriminatory approach towards all farmers regardless of caste, gender, landholding, or income;

(d) Ensuring all farmers receive physical or digital policy documents and claim instructions at the time of enrolment;

(e) Timely intimation of claim status and appeal options;

(f) Immediate referral of unresolved grievances to higher levels of redressal as per prescribed protocols.

(3) Each insurer shall appoint a District Nodal Officer responsible for monitoring compliance with this Code and facilitating corrective action when required.

(4) Breach of the Code by an agent or intermediary shall be deemed a breach by the insurer, and appropriate proceedings under Section 63 may be initiated.

(5) The Authority shall update the Code periodically in consultation with farmer organisations, insurance companies, and regulatory bodies.

Provided that any violation of the Code resulting in harm, denial, or exploitation of a farmer shall attract penalties under this Act in addition to regulatory action by IRDAI.

61. Mandatory rural outreach programmes by insurers.- (1) Every empanelled insurance company operating under this Act shall conduct structured and verifiable rural outreach

programmes in every block during each cropping cycle, with the objective of improving awareness, capacity, and access among farmers.

(2) Each outreach programme shall consist of,-

- (a) Pre-sowing sensitisation sessions covering eligibility, enrolment procedures, deadlines, and premium payment;
- (b) Mid-season information drives on reporting of crop damage, use of satellite verification, and documentation support;
- (c) Post-harvest awareness campaigns on claim filing, grievance escalation, and settlement timelines.

(3) Such programmes shall be conducted in collaboration with local Panchayats, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and agricultural extension officers.

(4) All outreach sessions shall be documented with audio-visual records, farmer attendance sheets, and a brief report uploaded to the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP) within 72 hours of completion.

(5) The Authority shall audit a random sample of sessions each season for content quality, inclusivity, and farmer satisfaction.

Provided that outreach activities shall be conducted in Kannada and local dialects and include materials accessible to illiterate and differently abled farmers.

62. Performance grading of insurance partners.- (1) The Authority shall evaluate and publish biannual performance grades for each empanelled insurance company based on objectively measurable indicators.

(2) The grading shall be conducted using a transparent framework covering,-

- (a) Timeliness of claim settlement against SLA benchmarks (40% weightage);
- (b) Claim settlement ratio (20%);
- (c) Quality and quantity of rural outreach programmes (15%);
- (d) Volume and resolution time of grievances lodged by farmers (15%);
- (e) Compliance with disclosure and ethical marketing norms under the Code of Conduct (10%).

(3) Based on the cumulative score, insurers shall be classified as,-

- (a) Grade A – Excellent (score above 85);
- (b) Grade B – Satisfactory (score between 70 and 85);
- (c) Grade C – Needs Improvement (score between 50 and 69);
- (d) Grade D – Unsatisfactory (score below 50).

(4) The results shall be published on the Authority's website and UFIP and updated on a rolling six-month basis.

(5) Insurance companies receiving a Grade D in two consecutive evaluations shall be,-

- (a) Issued a formal warning and corrective action mandate;
- (b) Subject to restricted participation in new enrolments for the next cropping season;
- (c) Considered for disempanelment if no improvement is achieved within the stipulated corrective period.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “timeliness” means the average time from claim submission to final settlement and “claim ratio” means the total approved claims versus total claims received.

63. Penalties for delay or misconduct by insurers.- (1) Where an insurer or its authorised representative, including agents and field officers, is found to have engaged in any of the following acts, it shall be deemed to constitute a breach of duty under this Act,-

- (a) Unjustified delay beyond the prescribed Service Level Agreement (SLA) in the processing of valid claims;
- (b) Rejection of claims without providing adequate reasoning, documentation, or an opportunity for hearing;
- (c) Provision of misleading, false, or incomplete information to farmers regarding policy terms or claim eligibility;
- (d) Coercion or misrepresentation to sell ineligible or non-agricultural insurance products under the guise of this scheme;
- (e) Harassment, intimidation, or discriminatory treatment of farmers, especially vulnerable groups;
- (f) Tampering with, or falsifying claim documents or assessment data;
- (g) Non-cooperation with audits, inspections, or grievance redress proceedings conducted under this Act.

(2) Upon identification of any act under sub-section (1), the Authority shall initiate a summary inquiry and may, after providing the insurer or agent an opportunity of being heard, impose any one or more of the following penalties,-

- (a) Monetary fine not exceeding ₹10 lakh per instance of default;
- (b) Suspension of claim settlement authority or new enrolments in one or more districts for up to two cropping seasons;
- (c) Disempanelment from the list of accredited insurers for up to three years;
- (d) Blacklisting and publication of the name of the insurer or agent on the public dashboard of the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP);
- (e) Referral of the case to the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for further regulatory action under applicable insurance laws.

(3) In cases of repeated default or where misconduct results in widespread financial or reputational harm to farmers, the Authority shall,-

- (a) Initiate prosecution for fraud or negligence as per the Indian Penal Code, 1860, if applicable;
- (b) Recommend criminal proceedings for misappropriation of public funds where involved.

(4) Where a claim has been unjustly delayed or denied, the affected farmer shall be eligible for,-

- (a) Interim compensation from the State Compensation Fund, to be disbursed within fifteen working days of determination;
- (b) Interest on delayed claim amounts at the rate of twelve percent (12%) per annum from the date of default till the date of disbursement;

- (c) Damages, if any, determined by the District Compensation Committee after due inquiry.
- (5) The Authority shall frame detailed rules under this section prescribing,-
 - (a) Procedure for inquiry and evidence collection;
 - (b) Timelines for enforcement of penalties;
 - (c) Standardised formats for notices, responses, and final orders.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “misconduct” shall include willful negligence, deliberate denial of entitlements, non-disclosure of grievance rights, or any violation of the Code of Conduct notified under section 60 of this Act.

Provided that no penalty under this section shall be imposed without affording a reasonable opportunity of hearing to the insurer or authorised agent concerned.

PART VIII

LEGAL, RULE-MAKING AND MISCELLANEOUS

CHAPTER XIV

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPELLATE MECHANISM

64. State Crop Insurance Appellate Tribunal.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, constitute a State Crop Insurance Appellate Tribunal (hereinafter referred to as “the Tribunal”) for the purpose of hearing and deciding appeals under this Act.

- (2) The Tribunal shall be a quasi-judicial body and shall consist of,-
 - (a) A Chairperson, who is or has been a Judge of the High Court;
 - (b) One technical member having not less than fifteen years’ experience in agricultural finance, insurance, or allied sectors;
 - (c) One administrative member who has served in the Indian Administrative Service or Karnataka Administrative Service not below the rank of Joint Secretary.
- (3) The Tribunal shall sit at Bengaluru and may hold circuit sittings at regional headquarters in each revenue division.
- (4) The State Government shall provide staff, secretarial assistance, infrastructure, and other facilities necessary for the efficient functioning of the Tribunal.
- (5) The Tribunal shall regulate its own procedure in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

65. Jurisdiction and powers of the Tribunal.- (1) The Tribunal shall have exclusive jurisdiction to entertain and adjudicate,-

- (a) Appeals against decisions of the Authority, including rejection, delay, or partial settlement of insurance claims;
- (b) Disputes relating to compensation arising from natural disasters under the provisions of this Act;
- (c) Appeals arising from penalties or blacklisting imposed by the Authority.
- (2) The Tribunal shall have all powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, including the powers to,-
 - (a) Summon and enforce attendance of witnesses;

- (b) Requisition public records and documents;
- (c) Receive evidence on affidavit;
- (d) Issue interim orders, injunctions, or stay directions.

66. Appeal procedures and time limits.- (1) Any aggrieved person may file an appeal before the Tribunal within sixty days from the date of receipt of the impugned decision.

(2) The Tribunal may condone delay up to an additional ninety days if sufficient cause is shown in writing.

(3) Appeals may be filed in prescribed form along with supporting evidence and affidavit.

(4) The Tribunal shall endeavour to dispose of appeals within ninety days of admission and may conduct hearings through physical or electronic means.

(5) A copy of every order passed by the Tribunal shall be communicated to the parties and published on the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal.

67. Binding nature of decisions.- (1) The orders passed by the Tribunal shall be final and binding on the parties and enforceable as a decree of a civil court.

(2) The Tribunal's decisions shall prevail over any conflicting decision or instruction issued by the Authority or insurer, subject to the appeal process.

(3) No civil court shall have jurisdiction over matters covered under the exclusive purview of the Tribunal.

68. Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism.- (1) The State Government shall establish, in each district, a Farmer Mediation and Reconciliation Panel (FMRP) to facilitate resolution of minor disputes through conciliation.

(2) The Panel shall consist of,-

- (a) A retired judicial officer as Chairperson;
- (b) An expert in crop insurance or agricultural economics nominated by the Authority;
- (c) A representative from the local Panchayat or Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO).

(3) The Panel shall follow a summary, participatory, and informal procedure with the aim to reach a settlement within thirty days.

(4) A written memorandum of settlement signed by both parties shall be binding and enforceable.

(5) In case conciliation fails, the matter shall be referred to the Tribunal.

CHAPTER XV OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

69. Penalty for false claim or fraud.- (1) Any person who,-

- (a) Submits a false or fabricated document;
- (b) Suppresses material facts;
- (c) Induces or colludes with officials or agents to claim compensation or insurance dishonestly;

shall be punishable with a fine not exceeding ₹2,00,000 or imprisonment up to six months, or both.

(2) In addition, such person shall be debarred from all benefits under this Act for a period of three years.

(3) If the offence is committed by a public servant or an authorised agent, they shall be liable to departmental action and criminal prosecution under relevant laws including the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

70. Penalty for obstruction of officials or non-compliance.- (1) Any person who,-

(a) Wilfully obstructs any officer authorised under this Act in discharge of official functions;

(b) Refuses to furnish information or produce records when legally required;

shall be liable to a penalty of ₹50,000 for the first offence and an additional penalty of ₹1,000 per day for continuing contravention.

(2) In case of second or repeated violation, imprisonment up to three months may also be imposed by a Magistrate on conviction.

71. Blacklisting of institutions for misconduct.- (1) The Authority may blacklist any insurance company, service provider, NGO, or intermediary if it,-

(a) Repeatedly fails to honour claim obligations;

(b) Is found guilty of fraud, misrepresentation, or data manipulation;

(c) Violates terms of accreditation or Code of Conduct under this Act.

(2) Blacklisting shall be in force for a minimum of three years and may extend up to five years depending on the gravity of misconduct.

(3) Affected institutions shall be served a show cause notice and granted an opportunity to be heard before final orders are passed.

(4) The updated list of blacklisted entities shall be maintained publicly on the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal.

72. Protection of whistle-blowers and informants.- (1) Any person who, in good faith, reports to the Authority or to a designated official any information relating to misconduct, corruption, fraud, or maladministration under this Act shall be entitled to protection.

(2) Such protection shall include,-

(a) Non-disclosure of identity without explicit consent;

(b) Immunity from civil, administrative, or employment retaliation;

(c) Assistance in relocation, legal aid, or safety if the situation warrants.

(3) The Authority shall notify detailed guidelines for protection mechanisms consistent with the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014.

73. Recovery of wrongful payments and interest.- (1) If any person receives any amount under this Act to which they are not entitled due to fraud, error, misrepresentation, or omission, such amount shall be recoverable as arrears of land revenue.

(2) In addition to principal recovery, simple interest at the rate of 12% per annum shall be levied from the date of disbursement till realisation.

(3) Recovery proceedings shall be initiated without prejudice to the initiation of criminal proceedings or disciplinary action, wherever applicable.

(4) The Collector of the district or any designated recovery officer shall have powers to attach movable or immovable property of the defaulter in accordance with the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964.

PART IX
RULE-MAKING AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

CHAPTER XVI
RULE-MAKING AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

74. Power to make rules and amend Schedules.

(1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for,—

- (a) The forms and procedures for application, registration, verification, and claim submission under this Act;
- (b) The composition, powers, and functioning of the Authority, District Committees, and Facilitation Centres;
- (c) The modalities of crop loss assessment, including the use of satellite, drone, and sensor technologies;
- (d) The timeline, eligibility, and quantum of compensation and income support;
- (e) The standards and timelines for grievance redressal and claim settlement by insurers;
- (f) The process for empanelment, accreditation, monitoring, and debarment of service providers;
- (g) The structure and powers of the Tribunal and the Farmer Mediation and Reconciliation Panels;
- (h) The design and operation of the Unified Farmer Insurance Portal (UFIP), and data privacy safeguards;
- (i) Any other matter which is required to be, or may be, prescribed under this Act.

(3) Every rule made under this section shall be laid before each house of the State Legislative, as soon as may be, after it is made, for a total period of thirty days.

(4) The State Government may, by notification, amend the Schedules to this Act as may be necessary for the proper implementation of its provisions.

Explanation.—Such amendments may include modification of penalties, procedures, forms, or inclusion of new technical parameters subject to stakeholder consultation.

75. Delegation of powers.— (1) The State Government may, by notification and subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, delegate any of its powers or functions under this Act to,—

- (a) The Authority constituted under this Act;
- (b) Any officer not below the rank of Deputy Secretary in the Department of Agriculture or Revenue;
- (c) Any agency or institution authorised for implementing any scheme under this Act.

(2) The Authority may, with prior approval of the State Government, sub-delegate its functions to,—

- (a) District Committees constituted under this Act;
 - (b) Facilitation Centres, Panchayats, or accredited NGOs;
 - (c) Insurance companies, surveyors, or third-party administrators, for specific functions under a written agreement.
- (3) All delegations shall be made in writing and shall be subject to audit, oversight, and compliance mechanisms prescribed by rules.

THE KARNATAKA REGULATION OF GAMBLING, BETTING, AND LOTTERIES BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for the regulation of gambling, betting, and lotteries in the State of Karnataka, to prevent addiction and illegal gambling networks, to establish a Gambling Regulatory Authority, to protect consumers, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

WHEREAS Article 47 of the Constitution of India obligates the State to endeavour to improve public health and prevent intoxicating or harmful activities detrimental to the people;

AND WHEREAS Entry 34 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution empowers the State Legislature to make laws with respect to betting and gambling;

AND WHEREAS unregulated gambling, betting, and lotteries pose significant risks to public order, morality, financial security, and consumer welfare, especially through online and illicit means;

AND WHEREAS the State of Karnataka recognises the need to regulate and control both online and offline forms of gambling and betting, to protect individuals from gambling addiction, prevent criminal and fraudulent networks, ensure responsible gaming practices, and uphold the integrity of lawful operations;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to establish a State Gambling Regulatory Authority, to provide for the licensing of operators, the imposition of penalties for unauthorised and illegal gambling, and to ensure transparency, accountability, and fairness in all gambling-related activities;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

PART I

PRELIMINARY

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

1. Short title, extent and commencement.— (a) This Act may be called the Karnataka Regulation of Gambling, Betting and Lotteries Act, 2025.

(b) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(c) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.— In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “Advertisement” means any communication, public or private, in any medium including digital, print, electronic, or verbal form, which promotes gambling, betting or lottery activities, whether directly or indirectly;

(b) “Authority” means the Karnataka State Gambling Regulatory Authority constituted under section 6 of this Act;

- (c) “Betting” means the act of wagering money or any valuable consideration on the outcome of a future event or contingency, including but not limited to games, contests, or sports;
- (d) “Data protection laws” means the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and the Information Technology Act, 2000, including the rules and regulations made thereunder;
- (e) “Digital platform” includes websites, applications, or any electronic interface through which gambling or betting services are provided or accessed;
- (f) “Game of skill” means any game where the outcome is predominantly determined by the player’s skill, knowledge, judgment, or experience rather than chance, and includes such games recognised by judicial interpretation;
- (g) “Gambling” means staking or risking of money or any item of value on an uncertain event, with the intent of winning a larger amount or prize, including lotteries and betting, but excluding games of skill not played for stakes;
- (h) “Illegal gambling” means any gambling or betting activity conducted without a valid licence under this Act or in violation of any condition imposed thereunder;
- (i) “licence” means a licence granted under section 13 of this Act to conduct gambling, betting, or lottery activities;
- (j) “Licensee” means a person or entity to whom a licence has been granted under this Act;
- (k) “Lottery” shall have the same meaning as assigned in the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998;
- (l) “Minor” means a person who has not completed the age of twenty-one years;
- (m) “Online gambling” or “online betting” means gambling or betting services accessed or offered through any digital or electronic medium;
- (n) “Operator” means any individual, company, firm, association, or other entity engaged in the provision, promotion, management, or facilitation of gambling, betting, or lottery activities;
- (o) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (p) “Responsible gaming” means a set of policies and practices implemented to reduce the risk of addiction, financial loss, and social harm associated with gambling or betting;
- (q) “Stake” includes any money, prize, token, digital asset, or item of value wagered in the course of gambling or betting;
- (r) “State Government” means the Government of Karnataka;
- (s) “Virtual digital asset” shall have the same meaning as assigned under section 2(47A) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

3. Application of the Act.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall apply to,—

- (a) All forms of gambling, betting, or lottery activities carried out within the territory of Karnataka, whether in physical or digital form;
 - (b) All persons or entities, whether located within or outside the State, who offer, promote, manage, or provide gambling or betting services to any person located in Karnataka;
 - (c) All intermediaries, platforms, agents, or facilitators who enable or assist in the conduct of gambling, betting, or lottery activities in Karnataka.
- (2) This Act shall not apply to,—

- (a) Lotteries organised by the Government of Karnataka or the Central Government under the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998;
 - (b) Games of skill not played for monetary stakes or prizes, subject to conditions as may be prescribed;
 - (c) Charitable games, raffles or activities conducted purely for non-profit or educational purposes, in accordance with rules made under this Act.
- (3) The Authority may, from time to time, issue clarifications or directions regarding the applicability of the Act to specific games or technologies, which shall be binding unless modified by the State Government.

4. Act to override other laws.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other State law for the time being in force.

(2) Notwithstanding anything in sub-section (1), the provisions of this Act shall be read harmoniously with any Central enactment relating to gambling, data protection, financial regulation, or cyber security, including the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998, and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

(3) In case of a conflict between this Act and a Central law in a concurrent field, the provisions of the Central law shall prevail to the extent of such conflict.

5. Guiding principles for regulation of gambling and betting.- In implementing the provisions of this Act, the State Government, the Authority, and every officer empowered under this Act shall be guided by the following principles,—

- (a) **Public Interest:** All forms of gambling and betting shall be regulated with a view to protecting public order, morality, and the welfare of individuals, particularly minors and vulnerable persons;
- (b) **Transparency and Accountability:** Licensing and regulatory mechanisms shall be transparent, technology-driven, and accountable to ensure compliance and prevent misuse;
- (c) **Consumer Protection:** The rights and interests of players and consumers, including protection from fraud, addiction, unfair practices, and data breaches, shall be given paramount importance;
- (d) **Technological Integration:** Regulation and enforcement shall make active use of modern technologies, including AI, blockchain, and geofencing, to detect and deter unlawful activities;
- (e) **Revenue Integrity:** The economic benefits arising from regulated gambling and betting shall be used to promote public health, responsible gaming, and addiction recovery programmes;
- (f) **Interagency Cooperation:** Effective coordination shall be maintained with Central authorities, law enforcement agencies, financial regulators, and data protection authorities to ensure seamless regulation and enforcement;

- (g) Deterrent Sanctions: Violations of this Act shall attract stringent civil, criminal, and financial penalties to ensure deterrence, particularly in cases involving organised crime, money laundering, or exploitation of users.

PART II
REGULATORY AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE
CHAPTER II
KARNATAKA STATE GAMBLING REGULATORY AUTHORITY

6. Establishment of the Authority.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, establish a statutory authority to be known as the Karnataka State Gambling Regulatory Authority (hereinafter referred to as "the Authority") for the purposes of regulating gambling, betting, and lottery activities under this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall have power to acquire, hold, and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue or be sued.

(3) The Authority shall be an autonomous body and shall perform its functions without being subject to the direction or control of any other authority, except as otherwise provided by or under this Act.

(4) The headquarters of the Authority shall be located at Bengaluru, and the Authority may, with the prior approval of the State Government, establish regional or zonal offices at such other places within the State as may be necessary.

7. Composition and appointment.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely,-

- (a) A Chairperson, who shall be a retired Judge of the High Court of Karnataka, appointed by the State Government in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court;
- (b) One Member with not less than fifteen years of professional experience in information technology, digital governance, or cybersecurity;
- (c) One Member with not less than fifteen years of experience in the field of public health, behavioural science, or addiction studies;
- (d) One Member with not less than fifteen years of experience in finance, accountancy, law, or regulatory compliance;
- (e) The Member Secretary, who shall be an officer not below the rank of Secretary to the State Government, nominated by the State Government.

(2) The Chairperson and Members, other than the Member Secretary, shall hold office for a term of five years from the date on which they enter upon their office and shall be eligible for reappointment for a further term of three years.

(3) The terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Members shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government.

(4) A person shall be disqualified from being appointed as or continuing as a Member if,-

- (a) he has been convicted and sentenced for an offence involving moral turpitude;
- (b) he is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court;
- (c) he is an undischarged insolvent;
- (d) he has directly or indirectly any financial or other interest in any gambling, betting, or lottery operation;
- (e) he has been removed or dismissed from the service of the Government or a public sector undertaking.

8. Powers and functions of the Authority.- (1) The Authority shall be responsible for the regulation, supervision, and control of all gambling, betting, and lottery activities within the State.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the Authority shall,-

- (a) issue, renew, modify, suspend, or cancel licences under this Act;
- (b) prescribe conditions for the conduct of licensed activities;
- (c) monitor compliance by licensees with the provisions of this Act, rules, and regulations;
- (d) ensure the protection of players, especially minors and vulnerable persons, through mandatory responsible gaming standards;
- (e) undertake enforcement action, including imposition of penalties, sanctions, or initiation of prosecution in accordance with this Act;
- (f) promote consumer awareness, education, and conduct of public health research related to gambling;
- (g) maintain public registers and databases for transparency and accountability;
- (h) publish compliance reports, advisories, and policy guidance documents;
- (i) advise the State Government on policy, law, and taxation matters relating to gambling, betting, and lotteries;
- (j) perform such other functions as may be prescribed or assigned by the State Government.

9. Secretariat, expert advisors, and digital infrastructure.- (1) The Authority shall be supported by a Secretariat, consisting of officers, employees, and technical personnel as may be appointed or deputed by the State Government.

(2) The Authority may, subject to such conditions and limitations as may be prescribed, appoint or engage such number of experts, consultants, or advisers in the fields of gaming regulation, digital technology, psychology, legal compliance, and public finance as may be necessary for the discharge of its functions.

(3) The Authority shall establish and maintain a secure digital platform to,-

- (a) receive and process licence applications, renewals, and reports;
- (b) publish compliance and enforcement notices;
- (c) provide access to grievance redressal and self-exclusion portals;
- (d) monitor real-time operations of licensees and verify geofencing or KYC compliance.

(4) The Authority may require licensees to integrate their technical infrastructure with designated supervisory systems, including automated reporting and data analytics tools, to ensure real-time oversight and transparency.

10. Regulatory powers, inspections, and adjudication.- (1) The Authority may, by notification, make regulations consistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder for the effective discharge of its functions.

(2) The Authority shall have the power to,-

- (a) inspect any premises, digital systems, or platforms used for gambling or betting;
- (b) summon persons, request information, and demand production of documents;
- (c) issue show cause notices, levy fines, or suspend licences pending inquiry;
- (d) initiate proceedings before the Special Court or any competent authority under this Act;
- (e) refer matters to appropriate State or Central agencies for further investigation, including cases involving financial fraud, organised crime, or money laundering.

(3) Every proceeding before the Authority shall be deemed to be a judicial proceeding within the meaning of sections 193 and 228 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Authority shall be deemed to be a civil court for the purposes of sections 345 and 346 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

CHAPTER III LICENSING OF OPERATORS

11. Prohibition on gambling without licence.- (1) No person shall operate, facilitate, manage, or promote any gambling, betting, or lottery activity within the State, whether physically or through digital or remote means, except under the authority of a licence issued under this Act.

(2) Any person who contravenes sub-section (1) shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to five years and shall also be liable to a fine which may extend to one crore rupees: Provided that where the gambling activity is conducted online or involves cross-border participation, the imprisonment shall not be less than three years and the fine shall not be less than twenty-five lakh rupees.

12. Categories of gambling and betting licences.- (1) The Authority may grant the following categories of licences,-

- (a) Online gambling or betting operator licence;
- (b) Physical (offline) gambling establishment licence;
- (c) State-authorised lottery distributor and reseller licence;
- (d) Platform service provider licence, including RNG technology, cybersecurity or payment gateway providers;
- (e) Temporary or event-based gambling licence;
- (f) Regulatory sandbox licence for innovative gambling technology or models.

(2) The Authority may prescribe different eligibility conditions, fee structures, compliance requirements, and reporting obligations for each category of licence.

13. Application procedure, KYC, and beneficial ownership disclosures.- (1) Every application for a licence shall be submitted to the Authority in such form and accompanied by such fee and documentation as may be prescribed.

(2) The application shall include,-

- (a) identity and legal status of the applicant;

- (b) beneficial ownership structure and key managerial personnel;
 - (c) financial records and sources of funding;
 - (d) detailed description of services, technology stack, and operational model;
 - (e) responsible gaming, KYC, data protection and anti-money laundering protocols.
- (3) The Authority shall conduct due diligence, including background verification through designated agencies, before granting a licence.

14. Grant, conditions, and validity of licence.- (1) The Authority shall, on being satisfied that the applicant complies with the provisions of this Act and the rules made thereunder, grant a licence within a period of ninety days from the date of application.

(2) Every licence shall be valid for a period of five years, unless suspended or cancelled earlier.

(3) The licence shall be subject to conditions including but not limited to,-

- (a) adherence to KYC and user verification protocols;
- (b) submission of periodic returns and audited accounts;
- (c) prohibition on targeting minors or vulnerable persons;
- (d) compliance with responsible gaming measures;
- (e) use of certified random number generators, geofencing, and data localisation.

15. Suspension, cancellation, and appellate remedy.- (1) The Authority may, after providing an opportunity of being heard, suspend or cancel a licence if the licensee,-

- (a) violates any provision of this Act or rules made thereunder;
- (b) fails to comply with licence conditions;
- (c) furnishes false or misleading information;
- (d) is convicted of an offence under this Act or any allied law;
- (e) ceases to carry on the business for which the licence was granted.

(2) The licensee may prefer an appeal to the Appellate Gambling Tribunal within sixty days of receipt of the order of suspension or cancellation.

(3) The Tribunal may, after hearing the parties, confirm, modify, or set aside the order appealed against and its decision shall be final and binding.

PART IV

ONLINE GAMING, TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL COMPLIANCE

CHAPTER IV

ONLINE GAMBLING AND TECHNOLOGY REGULATIONS

16. Mandatory real-time KYC and geolocation-based access.- (1) Every licensee operating online gambling or betting services shall ensure mandatory real-time Know Your Customer (KYC) verification before granting access to any user. Such verification shall include Aadhaar-based e-KYC or any other legally recognised and secure method as may be notified by the Authority.

(2) Licensees shall deny access to any user who has not successfully completed KYC verification, and shall retain KYC records in an encrypted and tamper-proof format for a minimum of seven years.

(3) Licensees shall implement geofencing technologies to restrict access to users located outside the territory of Karnataka, using GPS triangulation, IP tracking, device-based location data, and telecom network identifiers.

(4) Any violation of sub-section (1) or (3) shall attract a penalty of not less than ten lakh rupees and may extend to one crore rupees, along with suspension of access until rectification.

Provided that in the case of repeated non-compliance, the Authority may order temporary suspension of the license for a period not exceeding ninety days.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, geofencing means the technological enforcement of location restrictions using hardware or software-based systems.

17. Use of certified RNGs, provably fair systems and blockchain ledgers.- (1) Any game or gambling mechanism that involves outcomes based on randomness or probability shall utilise only certified Random Number Generators (RNGs) approved by the Authority or an internationally accredited certifying body.

(2) All certified RNGs must meet verifiability, reproducibility, unpredictability, and fairness standards.

(3) Each gambling operator shall integrate a provably fair mechanism, visible and accessible to users, which details house edge, expected return-to-player, volatility index, and risk profiles for each game.

(4) All critical operations—such as wagers, wins, losses, cash-outs, and player actions—shall be recorded using a distributed ledger or blockchain-based audit trail to ensure immutability and transparency.

(5) The Authority shall, by regulations, specify periodic auditing protocols, hash recording intervals, and secure public inspection standards.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "provably fair" means a verifiable method through which the fairness of each game round can be demonstrated using cryptographic hash functions and publicly available inputs.

18. Mandatory use of Indian servers and data localization.- (1) Every licensee shall host all infrastructure involved in storing, processing, and transmitting gambling-related data—including databases, servers, logs, and wallet systems—on physical servers located within the territory of India.

(2) No licensee shall transmit or mirror any sensitive user data, betting records, transaction details, or AI-generated user profiles outside India, unless with prior written approval of the Authority, and in compliance with the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

(3) Cloud service providers, technology vendors, and software integrators contracted by the licensee shall also be bound by localisation requirements and shall execute standard contractual clauses ensuring accountability.

(4) Violation of this section shall render the licensee liable to,-

- (a) suspension of the licence for a period not exceeding six months;
- (b) a monetary penalty not less than ₹25 lakh and extendable to ₹5 crore;

(c) compulsory audit and compliance certification within sixty days.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "data localisation" includes all steps required to ensure that personal and sensitive data remains within the jurisdiction of Indian law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

19. Compliance with Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.- (1) Every licensee shall act as a data fiduciary and shall comply with all obligations under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act), including obtaining free, informed, specific, and unambiguous consent for data processing.

(2) Every licensee shall designate a Data Protection Officer (DPO), who shall be responsible for data governance, privacy incident reporting, data fiduciary filings, and resolution of user grievances.

(3) The licensee shall provide,-

- (a) a concise and comprehensible privacy policy;
- (b) mechanisms for users to withdraw consent and request data erasure;
- (c) layered disclosures regarding profiling, behavioural tracking, and third-party sharing.

(4) A data breach, whether through cyberattack or negligent handling, must be reported to the Authority and the Data Protection Board within seventy-two hours of discovery.

(5) Any unauthorised profiling or monetisation of behavioural data shall invite penalties under both this Act and the DPDP Act.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "unauthorised profiling" includes behavioural prediction used for advertising, dynamic pricing, or game manipulation without explicit user consent.

20. Use of AI for anti-fraud and addiction detection; periodic algorithm audits.- (1) Every licensee shall deploy Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and behavioural analytics engines to identify and mitigate,-

- (a) abnormal gameplay or cheating patterns;
- (b) identity spoofing, location spoofing or collusive betting;
- (c) indicators of addiction, high-risk gambling, and financial duress.

(2) Such systems shall flag risk thresholds (daily losses, time spent, frequency of play) and auto-intervene through user alerts, forced breaks, account freezes, or referral to counselling.

(3) All AI systems that affect user access, ranking, personalisation or gameplay outcomes must,-

- (a) be explainable, auditable, and transparent;
- (b) avoid discriminatory impact;
- (c) undergo annual third-party algorithmic audits and fairness testing.

Provided that the Authority may exempt small-scale operators with annual turnover less than ₹10 lakh from sub-section (3)(c), subject to compliance with alternative lightweight risk assessment frameworks.

(4) The Authority shall publish an annual AI Governance Framework and maintain a central registry of approved AI vendors for gambling compliance.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "explainable AI" refers to algorithms whose operation and outputs can be clearly interpreted and justified to regulators and end-users.

CHAPTER V

RESPONSIBLE GAMING AND PUBLIC HEALTH

21. Code of Conduct for responsible gaming.- (1) Every licensee shall adopt and strictly adhere to a Responsible Gaming Code of Conduct, as may be notified by the Authority, to ensure player protection, promote fair play, and minimise harm associated with gambling.

(2) The Code shall include, but not be limited to, the following obligations,-

- (a) providing tools to limit deposits, losses, and session durations;
- (b) requiring periodic user confirmations to continue gameplay beyond pre-set intervals;
- (c) displaying real-time expenditure and activity dashboards to users;
- (d) prohibiting game mechanics designed to exploit cognitive biases or promote addiction;
- (e) making responsible gaming information easily accessible at all stages of gameplay.

(3) The Authority shall regularly revise the Code in consultation with experts from public health, behavioural science, and digital design disciplines.

Explanation: "Responsible gaming" means a proactive and ethically guided framework to ensure that gambling is conducted within safe, controlled, and socially acceptable boundaries, with mechanisms for prevention, intervention, and recovery.

22. Self-exclusion portals and de-addiction support.- (1) Every licensee shall provide an easily accessible self-exclusion portal, available in multiple languages and accessible via mobile and desktop interfaces, allowing users to restrict themselves from accessing gambling services for a minimum of seven days and up to five years.

(2) A self-excluded user shall,-

- (a) not receive promotional messages or advertisements;
- (b) have all wagering functionalities locked;
- (c) be ineligible to register new accounts until the exclusion period ends or is extended by consent.

(3) The Unified Self-Exclusion Register (USER) shall be securely maintained by the Authority and shared in real-time with all licensees to ensure enforcement across platforms.

(4) Licensees shall provide direct links to free de-addiction content, helpline chatbots, and a searchable directory of certified mental health professionals and institutions.

Provided that thereversal of permanent exclusion shall require a cooling-off period of six months and a certified clinical recommendation by a registered mental health professional.

23. Mandatory public health funding by operators.- (1) Every licensee shall remit annually an amount equivalent to not less than two percent of its Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) to the State Responsible Gaming Fund (SRGF), established and maintained by the Authority.

(2) The SRGF shall be used exclusively for,-

- (a) establishing and operating public addiction helplines;
- (b) designing and delivering public education and prevention campaigns;

- (c) funding university-based research into gambling psychology and harm mitigation;
 - (d) training enforcement officials, psychologists, and platform moderators in responsible gaming practices;
 - (e) creating digital outreach tools for adolescents and high-risk groups.
- (3) The Fund shall be subject to third-party performance audits and financial audits under the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements Act, 1999.

Explanation: “Gross Gaming Revenue” means the total amount of money wagered by players minus the winnings paid out, before deduction of any costs, commissions, or taxes.

24. Counselling, rehabilitation and helpline services.- (1) The Authority shall collaborate with the Department of Health and Family Welfare and licensed mental health institutions to operate 24x7 multilingual helpline services accessible by,-

- (a) toll-free phone numbers;
 - (b) chat-enabled mobile apps;
 - (c) live video counselling and support groups.
- (2) Regional counselling and de-addiction centres shall be established in each revenue division, staffed by clinical psychologists, addiction specialists, and peer-support volunteers.
- (3) All licensees shall,-
- (a) embed helpline banners on all user interfaces;
 - (b) provide session-end pop-ups with de-addiction resources;
 - (c) refer users showing compulsive gambling patterns to these centres, based on AI-powered detection flags or self-reports.

Provided that the confidentiality of all communications between users and counselling services shall be protected under the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 and any breach thereof shall be punishable under the applicable law.

25. Prohibition on targeting minors and vulnerable users.- (1) No individual who has not attained the age of twenty-one years shall be permitted to,-

- (a) register or access any gambling platform;
 - (b) participate in or be exposed to gambling-related advertisements;
 - (c) claim any winnings or prizes from licensed operators.
- (2) Every licensee shall implement real-time age verification protocols at the time of user registration, using Aadhaar e-KYC, facial recognition technology linked to government IDs, or such methods as may be approved by the Authority.
- (3) No gambling or betting operator shall,-
- (a) use promotional characters, imagery or slogans that appeal to children;
 - (b) offer discounts or referral bonuses to school or college students;
 - (c) feature endorsements by celebrities associated with youth programming;
 - (d) place advertisements on platforms primarily used by minors.
- (4) A violation of this section shall be deemed a serious offence, punishable with,-
- (a) a monetary penalty of not less than ₹50 lakh and up to ₹5 crore;
 - (b) temporary suspension of the licence for up to 90 days for a first offence;

- (c) permanent revocation of licence and initiation of criminal proceedings for repeat offences.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “vulnerable users” shall include, but not be limited to,—

- (a) persons declared to be of unsound mind or with a known diagnosis of gambling disorder;
- (b) undischarged insolvents;
- (c) individuals listed in the Unified Self-Exclusion Register;
- (d) users under institutional care, as determined under any other applicable law.

PART VI
AUDIT, REPORTING, AND SURVEILLANCE
CHAPTER VI
COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

26. Financial audits and forensic accounting.- (1) Every licensee shall maintain accurate, complete, and up-to-date books of account, ledgers, financial records, and electronic data logs pertaining to its gambling or betting operations.

(2) The licensee shall submit annual audited financial statements, certified by a Chartered Accountant in accordance with applicable accounting standards, to the Authority within six months of the end of each financial year.

(3) The Authority may, suo motu or upon receipt of credible information, order a special audit or forensic accounting exercise of any licensee in the event of,-

- (a) material misstatement or non-disclosure in financial returns;
- (b) suspected diversion of player funds or revenue;
- (c) links with money laundering or tax evasion;
- (d) systemic failure in accounting or internal controls.

(4) The cost of such audit shall be borne by the licensee, and the Authority shall be empowered to appoint forensic experts from a pre-approved panel.

Explanation: “Forensic accounting” includes the examination of books, financial records, transaction trails, payment gateways, and digital assets to detect fraud, misappropriation, or manipulation.

27. Real-time data reporting to Regulatory Authority.- (1) All licensees shall integrate their systems with the Authority’s central compliance interface for real-time submission of data, including but not limited to,-

- (a) user registration, verification status, and account balances;
- (b) all wagers placed, winnings disbursed, and gaming activity;
- (c) internal risk triggers, complaints raised, and resolution logs;
- (d) systemic incidents, operational downtimes, or data breaches.

(2) The Authority may prescribe the data architecture, security protocol, reporting frequency, encryption standards, and audit format through regulations.

(3) Failure to provide timely, accurate, and complete data shall render the licensee liable to,-

- (a) monetary penalty not exceeding ₹1 crore;
- (b) temporary suspension of operations;
- (c) Initiation of proceedings for licence cancellation in case of repeated default.

Provided that in case of willful suppression or falsification of data, such violation shall be deemed a major offence under this Act.

28. Cybersecurity and third-party risk audit.- (1) Every licensee shall undergo an annual cybersecurity and third-party risk audit conducted by a CERT-IN empanelled agency or any auditor approved by the Authority.

(2) The audit shall assess the robustness of,-

- (a) user authentication and access control systems;
- (b) AI and machine learning models used in fraud detection;
- (c) firewalls, network segmentation, and intrusion prevention systems;
- (d) disaster recovery and business continuity mechanisms;
- (e) incident response readiness.

(3) The audit shall include review of risks posed by external vendors, plugins, gaming engines, and any outsourced data processors.

(4) Audit reports shall be submitted within sixty days and non-submission shall be a contravention punishable with fine up to ₹50 lakh.

Explanation: “Third-party risk” includes any security or compliance risk emanating from a contractor, vendor, or software partner associated with the licensee’s digital infrastructure.

29. Physical inspections and surprise digital compliance checks.- (1) The Authority or any officer authorised by it may conduct inspections of,-

- (a) the physical premises of licensees;
- (b) operational data centres and cloud-hosted servers;
- (c) systems used for payment processing, KYC, and gameplay;
- (d) digital backend and software interfaces.

(2) Surprise inspections may be undertaken without prior notice in case of,-

- (a) complaints of data breach or cheating;
- (b) failure to submit mandatory reports;
- (c) suspected violation of responsible gaming obligations.

(3) During inspection, the authorised officer may,-

- (a) seize or mirror digital records;
- (b) examine access logs and tamper-proof transaction histories;
- (c) record statements of key personnel;
- (d) temporarily freeze suspicious accounts or gaming operations.

(4) Wilful obstruction, refusal to cooperate, or destruction of evidence shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years and fine up to ₹1 crore.

30. Penalty for tampering, manipulation or concealment.- (1) Any person who directly or indirectly tampers with, conceals, or erases any digital record, gameplay transaction, audit trail, or user log with an intent to,-

- (a) defraud the public;
- (b) obstruct inspection, audit, or enforcement proceedings;
- (c) suppress regulatory violations or complaints;

shall be punished with imprisonment of not less than one year and which may extend to five years, and with fine not less than ₹25 lakh.

(2) Where such tampering is committed using deepfake technologies, AI-generated logs, or illicit modifications to blockchain-based records, the offence shall be deemed aggravated and shall attract,-

- (a) imprisonment of up to ten years;
- (b) seizure of digital infrastructure;
- (c) disqualification of beneficial owners from holding future licences.

Explanation: “Manipulation” includes but is not limited to falsification of game outcomes, deletion of digital evidence, masking of user identity or location, and algorithmic rigging of results.

PART VII

OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

CHAPTER VII

MAJOR OFFENCES AND ENHANCED PENALTIES

31. Illegal gambling and betting.- (1) Any person who promotes, organises, facilitates, or finances any gambling or betting operation without a licence under this Act shall be punished with,-

- (a) imprisonment for a term not less than three years and which may extend to ten years; and
- (b) fine not less than ₹50 lakh and which may extend to ₹5 crore.

(2) Aggravating circumstances shall include,-

- (a) targeting minors or vulnerable populations;
- (b) operating across state or national borders;
- (c) use of digital currencies or anonymous wallets.

(3) In addition to criminal penalties, all proceeds derived from such illegal activities shall be liable for confiscation.

32. Unauthorized operation of online gambling.- (1) Any person or entity who hosts, manages, advertises, or makes available any online gambling platform without authorisation shall be liable to,-

- (a) fine not less than ₹1 crore and up to ₹5 crore;
- (b) seizure of all digital domains, IP addresses, server assets, and funds;
- (c) blocking of the platform by State cyber authorities.

(2) Repeat violations shall attract,-

- (a) imprisonment up to seven years;
- (b) ban on registration of any new platform by the violator or its associates.

Provided that where foreign-based operators are involved, the State Government may coordinate with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for invocation of Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000.

33. Laundering of gambling proceeds.- (1) Any licensee, operator, or person who directly or indirectly launders, conceals, or converts funds earned through illegal gambling shall be guilty of an offence under this Act and shall also be subject to prosecution under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

(2) The Authority shall promptly report all such cases to the Enforcement Directorate and cooperate in investigation and prosecution.

(3) Upon framing of charges, the licence of the accused shall be suspended, and on conviction, the licence shall stand revoked with retrospective effect.

34. Use of fake identities or spoofed locations – imprisonment and seizure.- (1) Any person who creates, facilitates, or uses,-

- (a) fake or forged identity credentials;
- (b) IP-masking tools, VPNs, or anonymizers to bypass geographic restrictions;
- (c) cloned devices or sim-boxing for unauthorised access;

for the purpose of participating in or enabling gambling activity shall be punished with:

- (a) imprisonment of not less than two years and up to seven years; and
- (b) fine not less than ₹10 lakh.

(2) All devices, credentials, software, and financial instruments involved shall be liable to confiscation.

Explanation: “Spoofed location” includes the use of any technology to misrepresent one’s physical or jurisdictional location.

35. Repeat offenders and syndicate operations – enhanced penalties.- (1) Any individual or entity convicted more than once under this Act shall be deemed a habitual offender and shall be liable to,-

- (a) imprisonment of not less than five years and which may extend to life imprisonment;
- (b) fine of not less than ₹1 crore;
- (c) permanent bar from holding any licence or financial interest in gambling operations.

(2) Where the offence involves,-

- (a) a syndicate of five or more persons;
- (b) structured financial layering or cross-border operations;
- (c) linkage with narcotics, terror financing, or trafficking networks;

then provisions of the Karnataka Control of Organised Crimes Act, 2000 shall apply.

Explanation: For the purpose of this section, “syndicate operations” include systematic planning, layering of transactions, creation of dummy entities, and coordinated digital or financial infrastructure for large-scale gambling frauds.

PART VIII
CORPORATE LIABILITY AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
CHAPTER VIII

LIABILITY OF COMPANIES AND GOVERNMENT SERVANTS

36. Liability of directors, shareholders and key managerial personnel (KMPs).- (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company, every person who, at the time of the commission of the offence, was in charge of, and was responsible to the company for the conduct of its business, including the managing director, chief executive officer, chief financial officer, compliance officer, and any person exercising control or significant influence over the management, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(2) If the offence is committed with the consent, connivance, or due to the gross negligence of any director, partner, shareholder, promoter, or officer, such person shall be deemed guilty irrespective of their formal designation or direct involvement.

(3) A beneficial owner who has a controlling interest or exerts influence over operations through indirect shareholding or proxy arrangements shall also be deemed responsible under this section.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, "company" includes a body corporate, firm, partnership, LLP, trust, or any incorporated or unincorporated entity carrying on gambling, betting, or lottery activities.

37. Public servant disqualification and prosecution.- (1) Any public servant who, directly or indirectly, aids, abets, facilitates, or conceals the commission of any offence under this Act, or who wilfully fails to report such activity, shall be liable for prosecution under this Act and under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

(2) In such cases,-

- (a) the public servant shall be immediately suspended pending departmental inquiry;
- (b) disciplinary proceedings shall be initiated in accordance with applicable service rules;
- (c) criminal prosecution shall be instituted before the Special Gambling Court.

Provided that the sanction under section 197 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 shall not be a precondition for initiating prosecution under this section.

38. Whistleblower protection.- (1) Any person, whether an employee, contractor, associate, or user, who provides credible information on violations of this Act to the Authority or any law enforcement agency shall be granted full whistleblower protection.

(2) Such protection shall include,-

- (a) confidentiality of identity;
- (b) protection against retaliation or adverse action by employer or affiliates;
- (c) exemption from liability under any non-disclosure agreement or employment clause;
- (d) financial reward or legal aid where the information leads to successful enforcement.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a confidential whistleblower mechanism and may collaborate with the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority for additional support.

Explanation: Information provided in good faith and without malice shall not render the whistleblower liable to civil, criminal, or administrative action.

39. Mandatory disclosure of political donations by gaming companies.- (1) Every licensee, and its holding or subsidiary company, shall disclose annually to the Authority,-

- (a) political contributions made under section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013;
- (b) indirect or in-kind contributions to political parties, leaders, or electoral trusts;
- (c) donations to affiliated foundations or third parties acting on behalf of political entities;
- (d) lobbying expenses, including those paid to advocacy groups or consultants.

(2) The Authority shall publish this information on its website in a searchable, public database.

(3) Failure to disclose, or misrepresentation of disclosures, shall be punishable with:

- (a) fine not less than ₹25 lakh and up to ₹2 crore;
- (b) blacklisting from making political contributions for five years;
- (c) suspension of licence for serious violations involving concealment.

40. Vicarious liability and criminal conspiracy.- (1) Where an offence under this Act is committed by an entity, and such commission can be traced to common intent, coordinated execution, or a collective business strategy, every person contributing to the decision-making or facilitation of such act shall be held vicariously liable.

(2) Any group or syndicate that plans, agrees, or conspires to commit or conceal an offence under this Act shall be liable for criminal conspiracy under section 120B of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.

(3) In such cases,-

- (a) all tangible and digital assets of the conspirators may be provisionally attached;
- (b) all regulatory approvals, licences, and financial accounts may be frozen pending trial;
- (c) convicted persons shall be debarred from holding directorships or key positions in gaming, financial, or digital service sectors for a period of ten years.

Explanation: Vicarious liability under this section extends to promoters, shadow directors, and beneficial owners acting through nominee entities or layered structures.

PART IX

INVESTIGATION, ENFORCEMENT, AND SPECIAL COURTS

CHAPTER IX

ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

41. Search, seizure, and freezing of assets.- (1) Any officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, or an Enforcement Officer specially authorised by the Authority, shall have the power to,-

- (a) enter, search, and inspect any premises, conveyance, or cloud-based infrastructure used for gambling activities in contravention of this Act;
- (b) seize documents, servers, crypto wallets, mobile devices, or any instrumentality used in the commission of an offence;
- (c) freeze any bank account, e-wallet, payment gateway, or cryptocurrency linked to such offence, subject to judicial confirmation.

(2) All seizures and freezing actions shall be reported within twenty-four hours to the Special Gambling Court for ratification and further directions.

Explanation: The term “freezing” includes any restraining order that prevents movement, withdrawal, disposal, or concealment of an asset suspected to be proceeds of crime.

42. Designated Gambling Enforcement Officers.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the Authority, designate and empower such number of Gambling Enforcement Officers (GEOs) as may be required for effective and specialised enforcement under this Act.

(2) GEOs shall be officers with experience or training in financial crimes, cybercrime, or gaming law and shall possess powers of,-

- (a) investigation and search under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973;
- (b) imposing penalties and issuing compliance notices under this Act;
- (c) recommending prosecution before the Special Gambling Court.

(3) The Authority shall conduct periodic capacity-building and advanced certification for all such designated officers.

43. Establishment of Special Gambling Courts.- (1) The State Government shall, in consultation with the High Court, notify one or more Special Gambling Courts in each division of the State to ensure time-bound disposal of offences under this Act.

(2) Every Special Gambling Court shall be presided over by a Sessions Judge or Additional Sessions Judge and shall have exclusive jurisdiction over,-

- (a) offences punishable under this Act;
- (b) adjudication of seizure, attachment, and forfeiture applications;
- (c) appeals against orders of the Authority, where specified.

(3) The Court may conduct in-camera proceedings or use virtual hearing mechanisms to protect the identity of whistleblowers and vulnerable witnesses.

44. Presumption of illegality in absence of licence.- (1) Where any individual or entity is found to be operating, promoting, or advertising gambling services and fails to produce a valid licence under this Act within seven working days, it shall be presumed, unless proven otherwise, that the gambling activity is illegal.

(2) The burden of proof to establish the lawfulness, exemption, or exclusion shall lie upon the person claiming such defence.

Provided that this presumption shall not apply to traditional or culturally exempt games expressly notified by the State Government or covered by Central legislation.

45. Time-bound trial and protection of evidence.- (1) The Special Gambling Court shall endeavour to dispose of every case under this Act within a period of one year from the date of filing of the chargesheet or complaint.

(2) In all such proceedings, the Court shall,-

- (a) ensure preservation of digital evidence through certified mirror imaging, digital hashing, and custody logs;
- (b) maintain confidentiality of complainants, whistleblowers, and vulnerable users;

(c) permit admissibility of electronic evidence under section 65B of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

(3) The Authority shall develop and maintain an integrated digital Case Management System linked to courts, enforcement officers, and regulators for real-time monitoring of investigations and proceedings.

Explanation: “Vulnerable witness” includes any person below the age of twenty-one years, a whistleblower, a person under threat, or any victim of financial or psychological exploitation due to gambling-related offences.

PART X
FINANCIAL ARCHITECTURE AND REVENUE MOBILISATION
CHAPTER X
FEEs, TAXATION AND PUBLIC INTEREST CONTRIBUTIONS

46. Licence fees, renewals and security deposits.- (1) Every applicant for a gambling or betting licence under this Act shall, at the time of application, pay a non-refundable application fee and such initial licence fee as may be prescribed by the Authority, based on the nature, scale, and scope of operations.

(2) The Authority shall determine and publish a risk-weighted licence fee framework based on:

- (a) the category of gambling or betting services (skill-based, chance-based, hybrid);
- (b) volume of projected monthly Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR);
- (c) degree of technological sophistication and systemic risk;
- (d) user base, outreach, and demographic targeting.

(3) Every licensee shall, in addition to licence fees, furnish a security deposit or irrevocable bank guarantee, equivalent to such percentage of projected annual turnover as may be prescribed, to cover liabilities, penalties, and enforcement costs.

(4) The licence shall remain valid for a period not exceeding three years, and may be renewed upon,-

- (a) submission of a renewal application at least sixty days prior to expiry;
- (b) payment of renewal fee and updated compliance certificates;
- (c) updated Know Your Promoter (KYP) filings, beneficial ownership structure, and fit-and-proper declarations.

Explanation: The Authority may, by regulations, provide differentiated regimes and concessional fee structures for start-ups, innovation sandbox participants, charitable pools, and socially beneficial gaming platforms.

47. Gaming revenue tax and revenue-sharing mechanism.- (1) Every licensee shall be liable to pay a gaming revenue tax to the State Government on a monthly basis at such rate not less than ten percent and not exceeding twenty percent of the Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR), as may be notified by the Authority in consultation with the State Finance Department.

(2) The Authority shall establish a dynamic tax banding mechanism that considers,-

- (a) the addictive potential and social risk score of the game type;
- (b) market concentration and operator dominance;

- (c) annual turnover and player retention ratios;
 - (d) volume of microtransactions and payout frequency.
- (3) The Authority may mandate a revenue-sharing arrangement for certain formats, including but not limited to,-
- (a) state-sponsored or licensed lottery operations;
 - (b) prize-pool tournaments and fantasy leagues with pooled entry fees;
 - (c) advertising-based gaming monetisation.
- (4) All collections under this section shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of the State, and a portion earmarked for regulatory strengthening, de-addiction initiatives, digital public goods, and rehabilitation programmes.

Explanation: “Gross Gaming Revenue” means the total amount received from players as bets or stakes, minus winnings paid to players, and exclusive of bonuses, credits, and promotional payouts.

48. Responsible Gaming Fund.- (1) Every licensee shall, within ninety days of the close of each financial year, contribute not less than two percent of its gross annual turnover to the State Responsible Gaming Fund (SRGF), to be administered and audited by the Authority.

- (2) The SRGF shall be utilised exclusively for,-
- (a) State-wide awareness programmes on gambling risks;
 - (b) gamification of de-addiction and harm-reduction tools;
 - (c) development of public-facing risk assessment portals and self-exclusion platforms;
 - (d) grants to academic research and evidence-based policy projects;
 - (e) operational support to district mental health outreach and rehabilitation clinics.
- (3) The Authority shall publish an annual fund utilisation report, with audited financials and outcome-based indicators.
- (4) Non-compliance shall result in,-
- (a) interest at the rate of eighteen percent per annum on the unpaid amount;
 - (b) disqualification from applying for renewal or expansion;
 - (c) automatic downgrade of compliance status and disclosure thereof in the public registry.

Provided that contributions to the SRGF shall be in addition to, and not in lieu of, any tax, cess, or levy payable under this Act or any other law.

49. Penalty recovery.- (1) Any sum due from a licensee under this Act, including penalties, compliance costs, adjudicated damages, licence fees, or fund contributions, which remains unpaid beyond the prescribed date, shall be deemed to be arrears recoverable under the Karnataka Land Revenue Act, 1964.

- (2) Upon such default, the Authority may issue a Recovery Certificate to the jurisdictional District Collector or Recovery Officer, who shall take such measures as:
- (a) attachment and auction of movable or immovable assets;
 - (b) garnishee proceedings against bank accounts, digital wallets, or escrow accounts;
 - (c) distress warrant or recovery under public demand recovery mechanisms.
- (3) Simultaneously, the Authority may initiate,-

- (a) blacklisting of digital assets, domains, or IPs;
- (b) suspension or cancellation of the licence;
- (c) insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, if applicable.

Explanation: Recovery under this section shall have priority over all unsecured liabilities of the licensee and shall survive changes in ownership or corporate restructuring.

50. Incentives for compliance and social contributions.- (1) The Authority may prescribe by regulations, an incentive framework for licensees who voluntarily exceed statutory compliance, adopt global best practices, or contribute demonstrably to public good, especially in the areas of responsible gaming, education, or digital ethics.

(2) Qualifying incentives may include,-

- (a) fast-track renewal or expansion approval;
- (b) access to regulatory sandbox and pilot testing opportunities;
- (c) certification of ‘Responsible Gaming Champion’ with public branding benefits;
- (d) eligibility for compliance-linked tax deductions, subject to State Government policy.

(3) The Authority shall maintain a transparent and periodically updated leaderboard of high-performing, socially compliant licensees, based on weighted metrics, and publish the same annually in its performance report.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “social contribution” includes donation of AI tools, helpline technology, support for rehabilitation infrastructure, open data for research, and institutional partnerships with public or non-profit agencies.

PART XI

DIGITAL SURVEILLANCE, BIG DATA AND AI

CHAPTER XI

ADVANCED COMPLIANCE TOOLS AND AI OVERSIGHT

51. Use of Reg-Tech and Sup-Tech systems for supervision.- (1) The Authority shall develop, implement, and maintain advanced Regulatory Technology (RegTech) and Supervisory Technology (SupTech) platforms to enable continuous compliance monitoring, dynamic reporting, and proactive supervision of all licensed entities.

(2) These platforms shall incorporate,-

- (a) automated compliance dashboards for regulators and licensees;
- (b) predictive alerts based on deviation from operational norms;
- (c) real-time red-flag indicators on user risk, transaction anomalies, or regulatory breaches;
- (d) machine-readable compliance codes and legal tagging systems.

(3) Every licensee shall ensure technical integration with the Authority's RegTech/SupTech infrastructure within ninety days of the grant of licence and shall update system configurations as notified.

(4) Failure to maintain active integration shall attract,-

- (a) monetary penalties up to ₹50 lakh per instance;
- (b) temporary suspension of operations;

(c)downgrading in the Predictive Risk Scoring Framework.

Explanation: “RegTech” refers to technology-driven tools for automated, intelligent, and dynamic regulatory compliance. “SupTech” denotes supervisory technologies that enhance the regulator’s capacity for real-time oversight and enforcement.

52. AI-powered surveillance, fraud detection and audit trail.- (1) All licensees shall deploy certified AI and ML-driven surveillance tools to,-

- (a) monitor for bot-driven collusion, arbitrage rings, and gameplay automation;
- (b) detect payment frauds, geolocation spoofing, and user impersonation;
- (c) identify behavioural markers of addiction, duress, or vulnerability.

(2) The Authority shall publish annually a list of approved AI service providers, surveillance algorithms, audit specifications, and model accuracy thresholds.

(3) Licensees shall maintain a cryptographically secure, immutable audit trail of all gameplay sessions, payouts, user actions, and administrative overrides, using blockchain or comparable technologies approved by the Authority.

(4) All algorithms used must be subject to,-

- (a) annual fairness and bias audits;
- (b) model transparency disclosures;
- (c) review by independent third-party auditors empanelled by the Authority.

Provided that AI systems that result in automated decision-making must offer users an appeal mechanism and a human review layer.

53. Predictive risk scoring of operators.- (1) The Authority shall maintain a Predictive Risk Scoring Framework (PRSF) using AI and Big Data analytics to classify all licensees based on their historical, operational, and behavioural risk footprint.

(2) The PRSF shall include,-

- (a) regulatory infraction history and enforcement actions;
- (b) volume of self-excluded or at-risk users;
- (c) complaint patterns, customer resolution times, and data breach reports;
- (d) internal fraud triggers and audit results.

(3) Operators shall be classified as,-

- (a) Tier I – Compliant and low-risk;
- (b) Tier II – Moderate compliance and medium-risk;
- (c) Tier III – High-risk and enhanced surveillance subject.

(4) Tier III licensees shall,-

- (a) undergo quarterly audits;
- (b) furnish additional disclosures;
- (c) be placed on a public watchlist maintained by the Authority.

Explanation: Risk scores are predictive in nature and shall be reviewed quarterly. A low score shall not be deemed immunity, and a high score shall not constitute a presumption of guilt.

54. Centralised gaming incident reporting platform.- (1) The Authority shall operate a Centralised Gaming Incident Reporting Platform (CGIRP) for streamlined, secure, and real-time reporting of,-

- (a) technical system failures and data breaches;
 - (b) frauds, payment gateway anomalies, or illegal inducements;
 - (c) user grievances and whistleblower disclosures.
- (2) All incidents reported shall,-
- (a) be auto-assigned unique tracking IDs;
 - (b) follow a structured ticketing and escalation mechanism;
 - (c) be time-stamped, verified, and available for audit.
- (3) The CGIRP shall be publicly accessible for consumers and linked to,-
- (a) the Unified Self-Exclusion Register;
 - (b) Responsible Gaming Fund disclosures;
 - (c) compliance performance ratings of operators.

Provided that licensees failing to report incidents within twenty-four hours shall face graded penalties, reputational downgrades, and risk-based scrutiny.

55. National interoperability with central and other state regulators.- (1) The Authority shall collaborate with,-

- (a) the Ministry of Information Technology;
 - (b) the Reserve Bank of India, Financial Intelligence Unit, and National Crime Records Bureau;
 - (c) State Anti-Gambling regulatory authorities;
- as to create interoperable, federated compliance and enforcement infrastructure.

- (2) Interoperability standards shall cover,-
- (a) KYC and Self-Exclusion Registers;
 - (b) blacklists of banned operators and individuals;
 - (c) AI-generated risk profiles, fraud signals, and regulatory alerts.
- (3) The Authority shall constitute a Regulatory Interoperability Council with representation from participating states and central agencies to standardize,-
- (a) risk categorisation,
 - (b) enforcement triggers,
 - (c) data exchange protocols.

Explanation:For the purpose of this section, “interoperability” shall include bidirectional, secure, and real-time sharing of compliance-critical data to enable seamless regulatory action and consumer protection across jurisdictions.

PART XII
APPEALS, REVIEW, AND LEGAL REMEDIES

CHAPTER XII
APPEALS AND LEGAL OVERSIGHT

56. Appeal to Appellate Gambling Tribunal.- (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish an Appellate Gambling Tribunal to adjudicate appeals against any order, direction, penalty, suspension, cancellation, or regulatory action issued by the Authority under this Act.

(2) The Tribunal shall consist of,-

- (a) a Chairperson who is or has been a Judge of the High Court;
- (b) one expert member possessing at least ten years of experience in digital regulation, data privacy, or compliance law;
- (c) one technical member from the field of information technology, cyber law, or digital infrastructure governance.

(3) The Tribunal shall be a quasi-judicial body with powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, for the purpose of summoning, discovery, enforcement of orders, and awarding interim relief.

(4) An appeal to the Tribunal must be preferred within sixty days from the date of communication of the impugned order, in such form and accompanied by such fee as may be prescribed. The Tribunal may condone delay up to an additional thirty days for sufficient cause.

(5) The Tribunal shall endeavour to dispose of each appeal within six months and may, in appropriate cases, award costs, stay proceedings, or provide interim redress.

Explanation: Appeals related to offences already under judicial review by the High Court or any superior forum shall not be maintainable before the Tribunal.

57. Appeal to the High Court.- (1) Any person aggrieved by an order or decision of the Appellate Gambling Tribunal may prefer an appeal to the High Court of Karnataka within sixty days of receipt of such order.

(2) The High Court shall primarily examine questions of law, jurisdictional overreach, principles of natural justice, or gross errors in interpretation or procedure.

(3) Appeals filed under this section shall be disposed of expeditiously, and the High Court may direct interim protection or expedited listing for urgent matters involving consumer interest or public harm.

Provided that nothing contained herein shall be construed to bar the exercise of writ jurisdiction under Articles 226 and 227 of the Constitution of India.

58. Review by the Authority.- (1) The Authority may review its own orders, directions, or penalties suo motu or on application by an aggrieved party, if it is satisfied that,-

- (a) new and material evidence has emerged that could not be presented earlier despite due diligence;
- (b) a clerical, factual, or procedural error has occurred on the face of the record;

- (c) enforcement of the order is likely to cause manifest injustice or public inconvenience.
- (2) A review petition must be filed within forty-five days from the date of the order and shall be accompanied by a statement of grounds and relevant supporting documents.
- (3) The Authority shall dispose of such petitions within ninety days and issue a reasoned order, with the option of personal hearing where deemed necessary.

Explanation: Review shall not be used as a substitute for an appeal, nor shall it be invoked to revisit issues already considered on merits.

59. Fast-track dispute resolution for consumer complaints.- (1) The Authority shall establish a digital Fast-Track Dispute Resolution Mechanism (FTDRM) to enable rapid and cost-effective redressal of complaints by consumers, registered players, or platform users against licensed entities.

- (2) The FTDRM shall include,-
 - (a) an end-to-end encrypted online portal with language-accessible complaint filing;
 - (b) algorithmic triaging based on severity and type of complaint;
 - (c) sector-specific dispute officers with domain knowledge in gambling compliance;
 - (d) mandatory disposal of non-complex complaints within fifteen working days and complex matters within thirty days.
- (3) The Authority shall periodically publish performance metrics of all licensees on complaint volumes, grievance redress rates, escalations, and penalties imposed due to inaction.
- (4) Failure of a licensee to comply with FTDRM orders shall invite,-
 - (a) penalty up to ₹10 lakh per instance;
 - (b) risk tier escalation under the Predictive Risk Scoring Framework;
 - (c) suspension of promotional activities for a period not exceeding ninety days.

Provided that Unresolved or escalated grievances may be referred to appropriate Consumer Commissions under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

60. Power to award costs and compensation.- (1) The Authority, Appellate Gambling Tribunal, or Special Gambling Court may, in the course of adjudication, award compensation or costs to any person who suffers loss, distress, or harm due to,-

- (a) false, misleading, or manipulative conduct by the licensee;
- (b) non-payment of winnings or unauthorised debits from player accounts;
- (c) failure of platform to adhere to mandatory safeguards under this Act;
- (d) unauthorised access, data breaches, or identity theft attributable to negligence.
- (2) Compensation shall be quantified having regard to,-
 - (a) extent of financial or reputational injury caused;
 - (b) nature of negligence, fraud, or recklessness;
 - (c) degree of regulatory non-compliance;
 - (d) duration and impact of the harm on the complainant.
- (3) The adjudicating authority may also direct,-
 - (a) public apology or corrective communication by the operator;
 - (b) reimbursement of legal and incidental expenses incurred;

(c) punitive damages where mala fides or wilful default is established.

Explanation: Orders awarding compensation under this section shall be executable as decrees of civil courts and shall not affect any parallel remedies available under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 or Information Technology Act, 2000.

PART XIII
MISCELLANEOUS OFFENCES AND PENALTIES
CHAPTER XIII
ANCILLARY AND CONTINUING OFFENCES

61. Failure to disclose material changes in operation.- (1) Every licensee shall notify the Authority in writing within fifteen days of any material change in:

- (a) ownership, control, or shareholding structure, including acquisition by foreign or unregulated entities;
- (b) key managerial personnel, compliance officers, or persons exercising significant influence;
- (c) technology architecture, server location, data storage jurisdiction, or digital interface design;
- (d) nature, risk profile, or financial structure of gambling, betting, or lottery services.

(2) Failure to disclose such material changes shall attract,-

- (a) penalty not less than ₹25 lakh and up to ₹2 crore;
- (b) suspension of operations for a period not exceeding six months;
- (c) disqualification from renewal of licence or initiation of cancellation proceedings where non-disclosure is found to be deliberate.

Explanation: "Material change" includes any modification that affects the integrity, transparency, consumer protection safeguards, or regulatory obligations under this Act.

62. Obstruction of officers and refusal to comply.- (1) No person shall obstruct, delay, mislead, or refuse cooperation to any authorised officer discharging duties under this Act, including but not limited to,-

- (a) denial of access to digital platforms, premises, or servers;
- (b) failure to furnish relevant records, transaction data, or compliance documents;
- (c) physical, verbal, or technological interference in inspections, seizures, or digital mirroring.

(2) The offender shall be punishable with,-

- (a) imprisonment up to three years;
- (b) fine not less than ₹25 lakh;
- (c) blacklisting from all future engagements within the regulated sector.

(3) If the obstruction is caused by or on behalf of a licensee or its officers, the entity shall be jointly liable unless it demonstrates good faith compliance protocols and absence of willful default.

63. False documents, tampering of digital records.- (1) Any person who,-

- (a) furnishes false, forged, or misleading declarations to the Authority;
- (b) tampers with digital audit trails, RNG logs, geolocation data, or encryption credentials;
- (c) alters, deletes, or masks records to mislead enforcement or compliance actions,

shall be liable for prosecution.

(2) Such acts shall be punishable with,-

- (a) imprisonment of not less than two years, which may extend to seven years;
- (b) fine not less than ₹50 lakh and up to ₹5 crore;
- (c) seizure of affected digital infrastructure or code base.

Explanation: This offence is considered aggravated when committed using deepfake technologies, AI-based obfuscation, or in concert with financial fraud or transnational operations, and shall trigger proceedings under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

64. Misleading advertisements and celebrity endorsements.- (1) No licensee shall promote, sponsor, or disseminate any advertisement that,—

- (a) misrepresents the odds or payouts;
- (b) promotes gambling as a guaranteed source of income or social prestige;
- (c) omits mandatory risk warnings or age restrictions;
- (d) targets minors, vulnerable groups, or economically weaker sections.

(2) No public figure, celebrity, athlete, or digital influencer shall endorse any gambling or betting platform unless,-

- (a) the platform is licensed and compliant under this Act;
- (b) material risks, disclaimers, and KYC obligations are clearly displayed;
- (c) there is no direct inducement implying assured rewards.

(3) Contravention shall attract,—

- (a) for licensees – fine not less than ₹50 lakh and up to ₹2 crore and mandatory withdrawal of the content;
- (b) for endorsers – fine up to ₹1 crore and a ban on promotional activity for up to three years;
- (c) for digital platforms – takedown directive within twenty-four hours and compliance report.

Provided that all advertisements shall require pre-clearance certification from the Authority in consultation with ASCI or any other designated body.

65. Continuing offences and compounding.- (1) Any continuing offence under this Act, where non-compliance persists beyond the stipulated compliance period, shall attract a daily fine not exceeding ₹2 lakh per day until rectified.

(2) The Authority may compound any offence punishable with fine only, on such terms and subject to such guidelines as may be prescribed, provided that,—

- (a) the contravention does not involve public harm, misrepresentation, or breach of fiduciary obligation;
- (b) it is the first such instance for the offender;

- (c) the offender accepts liability in writing and takes corrective steps.
- (3) Compounding shall not be permitted,—
 - (a) for offences involving material fraud, data concealment, or coordinated syndicate behaviour;
 - (b) where prosecution has been initiated or is under active investigation;
 - (c) in cases where compounding would defeat the purpose of deterrence or public trust in the regulatory system.

Explanation: Compounding of offences shall not preclude the right of victims or complainants to initiate independent civil, criminal, or consumer proceedings.

PART XIV TRANSITION AND REPEAL

CHAPTER XIV REPEAL, SAVINGS AND CONTINUITY

66. Repeal of Karnataka Betting and Taxation laws.- (1) On and from the date of commencement of this Act, the following enactments shall stand repealed to the extent of their application to gambling, betting, lotteries, or any ancillary matter regulated under this Act,-

- (a) The Karnataka Police Act, 1963, in so far as it relates to betting, gambling, or common gaming houses;
- (b) The Karnataka Betting Tax Act, 1932;
- (c) Any rule, regulation, notification, or administrative direction made thereunder which is inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal,-

- (a) any action taken, decision made, or licence granted under the repealed laws shall, to the extent consistent with this Act, be deemed to have been made under the corresponding provisions of this Act;
- (b) all investigations, prosecutions, or proceedings initiated under the repealed enactments shall continue and be deemed valid as if commenced under this Act;
- (c) liabilities or penalties already incurred shall not be affected by such repeal.

67. Saving clause.- (1) Nothing contained in this Act shall affect the operation of lotteries organised, conducted, or regulated by the Central Government or any State Government under the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998.

(2) Sellers, distributors, or agents duly authorised under the Lotteries (Regulation) Act, 1998 and the rules framed thereunder shall not be required to obtain a separate licence under this Act, provided they comply strictly with the terms of such authorisation.

Explanation: For the removal of doubt, any lottery activity conducted in contravention of the Central Act, or without valid governmental sanction, shall be deemed an offence under this Act and punishable accordingly.

68. Transfer of pending cases.- (1) All cases, appeals, or complaints pending before any authority, tribunal, or court under any repealed law relating to gambling, betting, or lottery operations shall stand transferred as follows,-

- (a) to the Special Gambling Court, where the matter involves offences or penal consequences;
- (b) to the Appellate Gambling Tribunal, in matters concerning appeals or statutory grievances;
- (c) to the Authority, for issues of administrative, compliance, or licensing nature.

(2) Such transferred matters shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions of this Act and disposed of from the stage at which they were pending prior to transfer, without the requirement of de novo proceedings, except as necessary for fairness.

(3) All interim orders, directions, or injunctions issued under the repealed laws shall continue to remain in force until modified or vacated by the appropriate forum under this Act.

69. Continuation of licences under interim registration.- (1) Every person or entity lawfully engaged in gambling, betting, or lottery-related activities prior to the commencement of this Act under any licence, permit, or authorisation issued under a repealed law shall be deemed to be an interim licensee under this Act for a period not exceeding one hundred and eighty days from the date of commencement.

(2) Such interim licensees shall, within this transition period,-

- (a) file an application for regular licence under this Act;
- (b) provide updated disclosures, digital compliance certifications, and proof of financial capability;
- (c) demonstrate adherence to responsible gaming norms and data protection protocols.

(3) Failure to comply within the transition period shall result in automatic expiry of interim status, and continued operation thereafter shall be deemed illegal and punishable under section 31 of this Act.

Provided that the Authority may, on application and for recorded reasons, extend the interim period by up to ninety days, particularly for small-scale operators, government-authorised lottery vendors, or entities facing technical barriers to compliance.

70. Absorption of staff from previous authorities.- (1) All officers, inspectors, and staff serving under any authority, board, or department responsible for the administration or enforcement of the repealed enactments shall, upon enforcement of this Act, be eligible for absorption into the Karnataka State Gambling Regulatory Authority, subject to the following conditions,-

- (a) fulfilment of minimum qualification and fitness standards as notified;
- (b) successful completion of induction and training in regulatory compliance, responsible gaming, cybercrime prevention, and digital auditsystems;
- (c) no pending disciplinary or criminal proceedings at the time of absorption.

(2) Officers and staff absorbed under sub-section (1) shall not suffer diminution in pay, service benefits, or retirement entitlements solely on account of such transfer.

(3) The Authority shall also be empowered to appoint additional experts in technology, data science, behavioural addiction, finance, and law to fulfil the broader regulatory and enforcement objectives of this Act.

Explanation: Absorption of prior staff shall not affect the Authority's power to restructure cadres, revise job responsibilities, or introduce modern supervisory mechanisms necessary for fulfilling the mandate of ensuring a secure and transparent gaming environment in Karnataka.

PART XV REPORTING, PUBLICATION AND TRANSPARENCY

CHAPTER XV TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

71. Annual regulatory report to Legislature.- (1) The Authority shall prepare and submit to the State Legislature an Annual Report within six months from the end of each financial year, detailing the performance, regulatory actions, and strategic objectives of the Authority during the preceding financial year.

(2) The Annual Report shall include, but not be limited to,-

- (a) the number and categories of licences issued, renewed, suspended, revoked, or pending;
- (b) key compliance indicators including audit observations, enforcement actions taken, and status of adjudications;
- (c) financial statistics such as licence fee collections, penalties recovered, tax remittances, and allocations from the Responsible Gaming Fund;
- (d) statistical summary of consumer complaints, grievance redress timelines, whistleblower disclosures, and outcomes of fast-track resolution mechanisms;
- (e) surveillance metrics on fraud detection, illegal operations interdicted, AI-based risk profiling summaries;
- (f) regulatory reforms proposed or undertaken, draft rules framed or amended, and their corresponding public consultations;
- (g) staffing, infrastructure, budget utilisation, technology development and institutional partnerships;
- (h) forward-looking assessments on challenges, innovations, and policy gaps requiring legislative attention.

(3) The Annual Report shall be laid before both Houses of the State Legislature, placed in the public domain, translated into Kannada and English, and digitally archived for public access.

72. Public registry of licensed operators and compliance status.- (1) The Authority shall maintain and make publicly available a continuously updated, machine-readable, and digitally verifiable Public Registry of all active, suspended, or debarred gambling, betting, and lottery operators under this Act.

(2) The Public Registry shall contain the following details,-

- (a) full legal name, registration number, and jurisdiction of incorporation;
- (b) nature of games or formats approved, including technological platforms and access methods (web-based, app-based, kiosk, etc.);

- (c) compliance status including history of inspections, ongoing investigations, and status of enforcement notices issued;
- (d) beneficial ownership details including ultimate natural persons exercising control;
- (e) disclosures of political contributions, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, and financial contributions to the Responsible Gaming Fund;
- (f) Predictive Risk Score Tier assigned and rationale thereof.

(3) The Authority shall update the registry at least once every month and provide downloadable datasets to ensure compliance with open data principles.

Explanation: No entry in the registry shall be construed as legal immunity or government endorsement. A consumer advisory disclaimer must accompany each listing.

73. Publishing of audit summaries and penalty lists.- (1) The Authority shall, at regular intervals not exceeding every ninety days, publish consolidated audit summaries and regulatory breach disclosures including,-

- (a) summary reports of internal audits, third-party technology audits, and cyber risk assessments;
- (b) list of operators penalised for non-compliance, along with the nature of default, penalty imposed, and status of appeal or recovery;
- (c) analytics on repeated violations, thematic risk trends, and jurisdiction-wise compliance comparisons.

(2) Such publication shall redact all personally identifiable information (PII), commercially sensitive data, and data protected under confidentiality provisions of this Act or any applicable law.

(3) Operators who deliberately submit falsified audit data, obstruct audit access, or tamper with compliance documentation shall face,-

- (a) minimum fine of ₹50 lakh;
- (b) forfeiture of security deposits;
- (c) suspension of licence for not less than six months;

(d) public tagging on the Authority's registry as "Non-Compliant Operator" for up to two years.

74. Stakeholder consultations and public comments on rules.- (1) The Authority shall mandatorily conduct stakeholder consultations and publish draft rules for public comment prior to final notification of any rule, regulation, code of conduct, or compliance guideline under this Act.

(2) Each consultation process shall ensure,-

- (a) publication of the proposed rule text, objectives, legal basis, and draft impact assessment;
- (b) a minimum thirty-day public notice and comment period;
- (c) receipt and publication of stakeholder feedback via online, offline, and hybrid modes;
- (d) publication of a consultation report summarising responses received, responses accepted or rejected with reasons, and modifications proposed based on such consultation.

(3) In cases of urgency involving public safety or security, the Authority may notify temporary rules with retrospective ratification through an expedited consultation to be held within sixty days.

(4) The Authority shall annually review the efficacy of stakeholder consultations and publish a transparency index measuring participation, responsiveness, and influence on final decisions.

75. Real-time dashboard on betting volumes, fraud and complaints.- (1) The Authority shall design, host, and regularly update a public-facing, interactive real-time digital dashboard to provide aggregated data and trends concerning the gambling and betting ecosystem in the State.

(2) The dashboard shall include,-

- (a) real-time metrics of transaction volumes, total stakes placed, payout ratios, number of unique users per operator, and market concentration levels;
- (b) automated alerts on suspected fraud, syndicate behaviour, server migration patterns, and downtime logs;
- (c) live complaints dashboard showing total complaints received by category, resolved and unresolved counts, and average redress time per operator;
- (d) behavioural data indicators such as spikes in self-exclusion requests, financial distress markers, or regional addiction risks;
- (e) visual analytics on demographics, operator-wise performance, and regulatory interventions undertaken.

(3) The Authority may collaborate with public institutions, civic technology firms, media bodies, and academic research centres to expand access, improve interpretation, and strengthen public engagement with this dashboard.

Explanation: All dashboard data shall be anonymised, de-aggregated from any personal identifiers, and compliant with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and relevant cyber law standards.

PART XVI

INNOVATION, SANDBOX AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

CHAPTER XVI

FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATION REGULATION

76. Creation of Regulatory Sandbox for innovation pilots.- (1) The Authority shall establish and administer a Regulatory Sandbox mechanism to permit controlled experimentation of emerging gambling and betting technologies, products, or business models under a temporary, risk-mitigated, and closely supervised environment.

(2) The objectives of the Sandbox shall be to,-

- (a) promote responsible innovation within a regulated framework;
- (b) support testing of digital products or protocols involving AI, blockchain, behavioural analytics, or smart contracts;
- (c) safeguard users while allowing flexible regulatory exemptions on a trial basis;
- (d) generate evidence for progressive policy-making and risk classification.

(3) Each sandbox programme shall have,-

- (e) defined entry and exit criteria;
 - (f) eligibility thresholds based on technical, financial, and compliance readiness;
 - (g) strict data protection, ethical testing, and transparency requirements;
 - (h) third-party evaluation and real-time supervision by the Authority.
- (4) Innovations admitted into the Sandbox shall not be commercialised beyond the pilot group until final clearance is issued by the Authority.

Explanation: The Regulatory Sandbox shall not be construed as waiver from core obligations under this Act, and any user harm shall attract vicarious liability as applicable to licensed operators.

77. Sandbox for Web, NFTs, fantasy sports, and skill games.- (1) The Authority shall create specialised sandbox tracks for,-

- (a) blockchain-based gambling applications including decentralised betting protocols;
 - (b) tokenised gaming formats including NFTs, digital collectibles, and game-linked assets;
 - (c) fantasy sports platforms, prediction markets, and skill-based gaming ventures;
 - (d) mixed formats combining elements of chance and skill requiring regulatory classification.
- (2) All such platforms seeking sandbox entry must,-
- (a) provide whitepaper or technical disclosure describing use case, algorithms, and player protection;
 - (b) declare compliance with Indian laws on digital assets, money laundering, and taxation;
 - (c) incorporate self-exclusion tools, usage limits, and transparent prize algorithms.
- (3) Fantasy sports or skill games shall not be exempt from regulation solely on nomenclature and must submit proof of predominant skill component, based on statistically validated scoring and independent expert analysis.

Provided that where there exists ambiguity on whether an activity is predominantly skill-based or chance-based, the Authority shall conduct an evidentiary classification process with right of hearing to the concerned party.

78. Interoperability with CBDC and token-based payments.- (1) The Authority, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and relevant financial regulators, shall frame rules for,-

- (a) the use of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) for regulated gambling and betting transactions;
 - (b) interoperability between gaming platforms, wallets, and digital payment interfaces including UPI, e-wallets, and blockchain-based tokens;
 - (c) reporting and auditing of digital payment flows in real-time through APIs integrated with the Authority's RegTech infrastructure.
- (2) All token-based reward or loyalty systems offered by gambling operators shall,-
- (a) disclose token issuance, transferability, and redemption logic;
 - (b) comply with Indian taxation and financial reporting standards;
 - (c) be prohibited from use for speculative resale, crypto-to-crypto trades, or unauthorised inter-user transfer.

(3) The Authority may require sandbox clearance or additional risk disclosures prior to onboarding CBDC or token systems with volatility, anonymity, or cross-border features.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section, “token” includes any digital unit of value issued or accepted by an operator as part of gameplay, loyalty, or rewards system.

79. Rules for metaverse gambling and AR/VR interfaces.- (1) The Authority shall frame specific regulatory protocols for gambling and betting services offered within immersive virtual environments including,-

- (a) metaverse-based casinos or games of chance;
- (b) augmented or virtual reality (AR/VR) formats involving digital avatars, simulations, or physical interaction proxies;
- (c) cross-border accessibility via decentralised virtual worlds.

(2) Such formats shall be subject to,-

- (a) mandatory geofencing, identity verification, and jurisdictional licensing checks;
- (b) immersive content moderation including addiction warnings, reality cues, and parental controls;
- (c) regulation of virtual assets used for in-game betting or avatar wagering.

(3) No operator shall host or promote gambling in any virtual environment accessible to minors, unverified users, or persons residing in jurisdictions where such activity is illegal.

Provided that operators must embed opt-out triggers, time limits, and perceptual reality disclaimers in immersive formats to prevent excessive dissociation or compulsive behaviour.

80. Periodic revision of law based on emerging technologies.- (1) The Authority shall constitute a Standing Committee on Emerging Technologies and Legal Reform to,-

- (a) monitor trends in online gambling, Web3, AI-based gameplay, and digital fraud;
- (b) undertake stakeholder consultations and horizon scanning;
- (c) recommend updates to this Act or its subordinate legislation every two years or earlier as may be warranted.

(2) The Committee shall comprise legal experts, technologists, addiction psychologists, consumer rights bodies, and public representatives.

(3) Based on Committee findings, the Authority may,-

- (a) issue updated rules, notifications, or circulars;
- (b) recommend statutory amendments to the State Government;
- (c) issue advisory whitepapers, technical handbooks, or public warnings.

Explanation: This section ensures that the regulatory framework under this Act remains adaptive, evidence-based, and technologically current to address the dynamic nature of the gambling and betting ecosystem.

THE KARNATAKA DIGITAL ESTATE, INHERITANCE AND SUCCESSION BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide for the legal recognition, succession, administration, and regulation of digital estates and digital assets in the State of Karnataka; to ensure lawful inheritance and access by legal heirs, fiduciaries, and nominees; to safeguard the rights of individuals in relation to their digital presence and data after death; to provide for the use of technology in the execution, preservation and verification of digital wills and succession documents; to regulate digital service providers in matters of succession and access; to address multi-jurisdictional succession involving digital assets; and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Whereas digital assets form an integral part of modern individual identity, communication, wealth, and legacy;

And whereas there is a growing need for legal certainty and enforceable rights in the succession and management of digital estates, including social media accounts, digital wallets, cloud storage, encrypted files, non-fungible tokens, and other such assets of both monetary and sentimental value;

And whereas the existing legal framework does not adequately address the succession of digital assets, resulting in barriers for heirs, fiduciaries, and nominees;

And whereas it is expedient to provide a statutory framework for testamentary and intestate succession of digital property, establish procedures for the recognition of digital wills, and ensure compliance by digital service providers and custodians;

And whereas technological advancements, including artificial intelligence, blockchain, and biometric verification, offer secure, verifiable, and traceable means for succession planning, subject to safeguards for privacy, consent, and data protection;

And whereas international digital service providers, cross-border accounts, and assets located across jurisdictions necessitate a harmonised approach aligned with international law, treaties, and digital sovereignty considerations;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-Sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

PART I PRELIMINARY AND DEFINITIONS CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Digital Estate, Inheritance and Succession Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint; and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

- (a) “Act” means the Karnataka Digital Estate, Inheritance and Succession Act, 2025;
- (b) “Authority” means the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority constituted under section 3 of this Act;
- (c) “Digital asset” includes, but is not limited to, cryptocurrencies, digital wallets, online accounts, digital financial holdings, domain names, cloud storage, non-fungible tokens (NFTs), digital content, subscription accounts, digital intellectual property, and such other electronically stored property as may be notified by the Government;
- (d) “Digital estate” means the aggregate of all digital assets, digital liabilities, and online rights held by a person at the time of their death or legal incapacity;
- (e) “Digital will” means a testamentary instrument created for the disposition of digital estate in accordance with the provisions of this Act or any rules made thereunder;
- (f) “Executor” means a person appointed to administer the digital estate of a deceased person in accordance with the provisions of this Act or a will;
- (g) “Government” means the Government of Karnataka;
- (h) “Legal heir” means a person entitled to succeed to the estate of a deceased person under the applicable personal law or testamentary disposition;
- (i) “Notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette;
- (j) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (k) “Registrar of Digital Estates” means the officer appointed by the Authority to manage digital estate registrations under this Act;
- (l) “Rules” mean the rules made by the State Government under this Act;
- (m) “Succession certificate” means a certificate granted by the competent authority or court for the purpose of establishing the right to a digital estate or asset;
- (n) “User credentials” means the authentication information, including usernames, passwords, security keys, access codes, or biometric data, required to access digital assets.

PART II

ESTABLISHMENT OF DIGITAL SUCCESSION INFRASTRUCTURE

CHAPTER II

CONSTITUTION OF THE KARNATAKA DIGITAL ESTATE AND SUCCESSION AUTHORITY

3. Establishment of the Authority.- (1) The Government shall, by notification, establish a statutory body to be known as the *Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority* for the purposes of this Act.

(2) The Authority shall be responsible for the overall administration, regulation, and oversight of matters relating to digital estates, digital succession, and inheritance in the State.

(3) The Authority shall be a body corporate having perpetual succession and a common seal, with power to acquire, hold and dispose of property, both movable and immovable, and to contract, and shall by the said name sue and be sued.

4. Incorporation, Legal Status and Common Seal.- (1) The Authority shall be a juristic person and shall have all powers necessary or incidental for the discharge of its functions under this Act.

(2) The common seal of the Authority shall be kept in such custody, and used in such manner, as may be prescribed.

(3) All acts done under the common seal shall be deemed to be acts of the Authority.

5. Headquarters, Zonal and Regional Offices.- (1) The headquarters of the Authority shall be at such place as the Government may notify.

(2) The Authority may, with the previous approval of the Government, establish Zonal or Regional Offices in such districts or areas of the State as it deems necessary for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

(3) The Zonal or Regional Offices shall perform such functions and exercise such powers of the Authority as may be delegated under section 8.

6. Composition, Appointment and Tenure of Members.- (1) The Authority shall consist of the following members, namely:—

- (a) A Chairperson, who shall be a retired Judge of the High Court or an eminent expert in law and digital governance, appointed by the Government;
- (b) Two Members with expertise in digital technologies, cybersecurity, or data governance;
- (c) One Member with knowledge and experience in personal laws and succession;
- (d) One Member nominated by the State Bar Council from among its members;
- (e) The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Authority, who shall be the ex officio Member Secretary.

(2) The Chairperson and Members, other than ex officio members, shall be appointed by the Government for a term not exceeding three years and shall be eligible for reappointment.

(3) The conditions of service, including salaries, allowances, and other benefits, shall be such as may be prescribed.

(4) The Government may remove any Member from office on grounds of proven misconduct, incapacity, or conflict of interest, after giving an opportunity of being heard.

7. Powers and Functions of the Authority.- The Authority shall perform the following functions, namely:—

- (a) to develop and maintain a secure Digital Estate Registry for registering digital wills and inventories of digital assets;
- (b) to prescribe guidelines for the formulation, execution, and authentication of digital wills;
- (c) to issue certificates of succession and access rights for digital estates, subject to verification and procedures prescribed;
- (d) to coordinate with national and international digital service providers to facilitate lawful access to digital assets by legal heirs or executors;
- (e) to recommend amendments to laws and policies for effective digital succession management;
- (f) to conduct public awareness and training programmes on digital estate planning and succession;
- (g) to advise the Government on data privacy, digital legacy, and inheritance matters relating to digital assets;

- (h) to establish an online platform with secure login for citizens to declare, update, or revoke digital wills;
- (i) to frame standard operating procedures (SOPs) for district and taluka-level implementation officers;
- (j) to hear and adjudicate, through such officers or appellate forums as may be prescribed, disputes relating to digital estate access and administration.

8. Administrative Control and Delegation of Powers.- (1) The Authority may, by general or special order, delegate to the Chairperson, any Member, or any officer of the Authority, subject to such conditions and limitations as it may specify, such of its powers and functions under this Act as it may deem necessary.

(2) The Government may, by notification, appoint Digital Estate Officers at the district level for the purposes of carrying out the functions assigned to the Authority under this Act.

(3) The Digital Estate Officers shall exercise powers of verification, local inquiry, interim protection of digital assets, and enforcement of succession orders as may be prescribed.

PART III

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR DIGITAL ESTATE AND SUCCESSION

CHAPTER III

RECOGNITION AND SCOPE OF DIGITAL ESTATE

9. Scope of digital estate, virtual assets, and digital property.- The digital estate of a person shall comprise all digital assets, rights, licences, obligations, and digital identities held, controlled, or owned by the person at the time of death or incapacity, including but not limited to cryptocurrencies, online accounts, e-wallets, cloud-stored data, intellectual property in digital form, and digital artefacts.

10. Categories of digital assets: personal, financial, social, intellectual.- For the purpose of administration and succession, digital assets shall be categorised into,—

- (a) personal assets such as email, photo albums, and personal communications;
- (b) financial assets including online banking, cryptocurrency holdings, investment platforms, and e-commerce accounts;
- (c) social assets comprising social media profiles, gaming avatars, and forums;
- (d) intellectual assets such as digital books, blogs, courses, videos, music, and NFTs;
- (e) any other asset as may be notified by the Authority.

11. Determination of ownership and control at time of death.- (1) Ownership of a digital asset shall be deemed to vest in the person whose identity is linked to the user credentials, registration, or declared rights thereof.

(2) Where a digital asset is jointly held, the principles of joint tenancy or tenancy-in-common under the applicable personal law shall apply mutatis mutandis.

(3) In the absence of contrary evidence, contractual records with digital service providers shall be deemed prima facie proof of ownership and control.

12. Digital fiduciaries and custodianship.- (1) A digital fiduciary shall be any person, executor, nominee, or authority who holds or is authorised to hold or administer digital assets on behalf of another.

(2) A digital custodian may be appointed by will, declaration, or court order to maintain the digital estate in accordance with such terms as may be prescribed.

(3) All fiduciaries shall maintain records of access, retrieval, modification, or deletion of digital assets and submit reports to the Registrar as may be directed.

CHAPTER IV RIGHTS OF SUCCESSORS, NOMINEES AND LEGAL HEIRS

13. Rights of legal heirs, successors and nominees.- (1) Every legal heir shall have the right to succeed to the digital estate of the deceased as per the applicable succession law, or will.

(2) A nominee duly declared for a digital asset shall act as trustee for the legal heirs unless otherwise specified in a valid will.

(3) Access to digital assets shall be granted to such heirs or nominees upon production of a succession certificate or order under this Act.

14. Priority of testamentary instruments over contractual terms.- In the event of any conflict between the terms of a digital service provider's agreement and a valid digital will, the provisions of the will shall prevail, unless otherwise prohibited by law or contract entered into expressly contrary to such disposition.

15. Legal recognition of digital wills and digital succession instruments.- (1) A digital will shall be legally recognised if,—

(a) it is executed in electronic form with digital signature or biometric authentication;

(b) it is registered with the Digital Estate Authority;

(c) it complies with the requirements prescribed under this Act.

(2) Such a digital will shall have the same effect as a written will under the Indian Succession Act, 1925.

16. Custody, revocation, and authentication of digital wills.- (1) A testator may appoint a custodian or upload the digital will to the secure registry maintained by the Authority.

(2) A digital will may be revoked by the testator at any time before death, subject to authentication and re-registration.

(3) The Authority shall authenticate and issue a certificate of validity upon verification, and such certificate shall be deemed conclusive.

17. Legal standing of digital executors.- (1) A person appointed as a digital executor shall have the power to access, manage, and distribute digital assets as per the directions in the digital will.

(2) Digital executors shall be under a fiduciary duty to act in good faith, maintain confidentiality, and account for all actions taken.

(3) The Authority may issue guidelines prescribing duties, conduct, and removal of digital executors in the event of breach or incapacity.

CHAPTER V

NOMINATION AND TESTAMENTARY PROVISIONS IN DIGITAL FORMAT

18. Facility for digital nomination across platforms.- (1) Every individual shall have the right to make a digital nomination in respect of any digital asset held on any platform, including financial, social, intellectual, or personal domains, through a centralised or platform-specific interface integrated with the Authority.

(2) The digital nomination shall be made,—

(a) through secure login and biometric or multi-factor authentication;

(b) in a format prescribed by the Authority and duly registered in the Digital Estate Registry.

(3) All digital platforms, service providers, intermediaries, and custodians operating in Karnataka shall ensure the technical capability to receive, store, and act upon such digital nominations.

(4) A digital nomination once registered shall override any prior paper-based nomination in respect of the same digital asset, unless expressly revoked.

(5) The nominee shall be entitled to act as trustee for the digital asset upon the death of the nominator, subject to the provisions of this Act or applicable personal law.

19. Validity of digital succession directives.- (1) Any instruction, directive, declaration, or succession preference submitted in digital form by the account holder regarding the disposition of their digital estate shall be valid if,—

(a) it is executed in accordance with prescribed authentication protocols;

(b) it is registered with or acknowledged by the Authority or designated platform.

(2) Such digital succession directives may include, but are not limited to, instructions for deletion, memorialisation, restricted access, or transfer of rights to designated individuals.

(3) No service provider shall disregard such directive unless,—

(a) contrary to an order of a competent court; or

(b) inconsistent with a later validly executed digital will or nomination.

(4) In the event of ambiguity between multiple instruments, the most recent authenticated directive shall prevail.

20. Consent management, pre-death access, and digital legacy planning.- (1) Every digital asset holder shall have the right to manage their digital legacy, including advance consent for access, data erasure, or transfer of digital accounts, by,—

(a) designating pre-death access rights to one or more trusted individuals;

(b) setting legacy preferences through the Authority's registry or integrated digital platform;

(c) appointing a digital legacy custodian to manage their estate in the event of incapacity or death.

(2) Pre-death access rights shall include authority to view, download, archive, or preserve digital content without the power to transfer ownership, unless specifically authorised.

(3) All such consent and legacy planning records shall be stored securely and encrypted within the Digital Estate Registry.

- (4) The Authority may, in consultation with relevant regulators, frame guidelines on consent interoperability across platforms to ensure implementation of user preferences post-death.
- (5) Nothing in this section shall prejudice the rights of legal heirs or executors under this Act or any other prevailing law.

PART IV
ACCESS, CLAIMS, AND DISPUTE MECHANISM

CHAPTER VI
ACCESS TO DIGITAL ASSETS OF DECEASED PERSONS

21. Application for access by successors.- (1) Any person claiming succession, inheritance, or custodianship of a deceased person's digital estate may submit an application in such form and manner as may be prescribed to the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority or to a designated service provider.

(2) The application shall be accompanied by,—

- (a) a certified copy of the death certificate of the deceased;
- (b) documentary proof of legal heirship, succession certificate, or probate of will, if available;
- (c) particulars of the digital assets or accounts sought to be accessed; and
- (d) any other documents or declarations as may be prescribed.

(3) In cases where multiple successors apply, the Authority may require a joint affidavit, indemnity bond, or succession agreement to regulate access rights and prevent inter se disputes.

(4) No access shall be granted to encrypted or confidential communications unless specifically provided for in the digital will, succession directive, or court order.

22. Procedure for authentication and compliance by service providers.- (1) Every service provider hosting or managing digital assets of users shall be bound to comply with a lawful request made under Section 21, subject to the procedure laid down under this Chapter and applicable data protection laws.

(2) Upon receipt of a valid request, the service provider shall,—

- (a) verify the identity and authority of the applicant;
- (b) authenticate the status of the account and existence of relevant digital assets; and
- (c) furnish the data or permit access in the format and within the time limit specified.

(3) In case of any technical constraints or account deletion policies, the service provider shall inform the Authority and applicant in writing with reasons and suggested alternative mechanisms for retrieval.

(4) Non-compliance or unjustified delay by service providers shall attract penalties as prescribed under this Act or the rules framed thereunder.

23. Time limits and service obligations for disclosure.- (1) The Authority shall notify standard timelines for the grant of access to digital assets by successors or fiduciaries, which shall not ordinarily exceed,—

- (a) fifteen working days from receipt of complete application and verification, for standard requests;
 - (b) thirty working days for complex or multi-jurisdictional accounts;
 - (c) such extended time as may be permitted by the Authority on sufficient cause being shown.
- (2) Every service provider shall maintain a nodal grievance officer and compliance unit to deal with digital succession and access claims in coordination with the Authority.
- (3) Failure to adhere to prescribed service obligations may result in monetary penalties, blacklisting, or referral to the appropriate regulatory agency.
- 24. Conditions for partial access and exclusion rights.-** (1) Where a deceased person has made partial nominations or imposed specific exclusions through a digital succession instrument, the Authority shall ensure that access is granted only to the extent permitted.
- (2) In the absence of any express testamentary exclusion, all legal heirs shall be presumed to have equal rights of access, subject to the nature of the asset.
- (3) Access to sensitive categories such as personal messages, social media archives, or medical records may be withheld or redacted if,—
- (a) the deceased has expressly opted out of disclosure;
 - (b) disclosure violates privacy laws or rights of third parties; or
 - (c) it is adjudicated by the Authority or a court that such access is not in public interest.
- (8) In case of disagreement among successors, access shall be frozen until adjudication under Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VII

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND ADJUDICATION

- 25. Jurisdiction and scope of disputes.-** (1) All disputes arising out of or in connection with digital estate succession, including claims to access, validity of digital wills, nomination conflicts, or exclusion from inheritance, shall be adjudicated in accordance with this Chapter.
- (2) Jurisdiction shall lie with the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority established under Section 26 and, where required, appellate bodies as notified by the State Government.
- (3) Nothing in this section shall derogate from the powers of the civil courts under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, in respect of questions of title or inheritance, unless expressly barred.
- 26. Digital Estate Adjudication Authority and online dispute system.-** (1) The State Government shall, by notification, establish the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority (DEAA) to adjudicate disputes and claims under this Act.
- (2) The DEAA shall comprise such number of Judicial and Technical Members as may be prescribed, and shall function as a quasi-judicial body with powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, for the purposes of,—
- (a) summoning witnesses and documents;
 - (b) recording affidavits and evidence;
 - (c) passing interim orders and enforcement directions.

(3) The Authority shall establish a dedicated digital platform for e-filing, virtual hearings, and time-bound dispute resolution.

(4) Proceedings before the DEAA shall be summary in nature, and guided by the principles of natural justice, equity, and good conscience.

27. Time-bound adjudication and appeal process.- (1) Every application before the DEAA shall be disposed of within a period of ninety days from the date of filing, extendable by a further period of thirty days for reasons to be recorded in writing.

(2) An appeal against an order of the DEAA may lie to the Karnataka Appellate Tribunal or such body as the State Government may notify, to be filed within thirty days from the date of receipt of the order.

(3) The appellate body shall endeavour to dispose of appeals within sixty days.

(4) No appeal shall lie against a consent order or an order passed with the agreement of all parties.

28. Enforcement of decisions and orders.- (1) Every final decision or order of the DEAA shall be binding on all parties to the proceeding, and shall be executable as a decree of civil court.

(2) The Authority may, in consultation with the State Government, notify digital platforms or intermediaries for enforcement of specific orders relating to access, disclosure, or account deletion.

(3) In case of non-compliance by any service provider or party, the Authority may initiate proceedings for contempt, levy penalties, or recommend criminal prosecution as per applicable laws.

29. Bar on civil court jurisdiction and finality of decisions.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no civil court shall have jurisdiction in respect of any matter which the DEAA or Appellate Tribunal is empowered to adjudicate under this Act.

(2) No injunction shall be granted by any court or authority in respect of any action taken or to be taken under the powers conferred by this Act.

(3) All decisions rendered by the DEAA, unless challenged before the Appellate Tribunal, shall be final and binding on the parties.

PART V

DUTIES AND LIABILITIES OF DIGITAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

CHAPTER VIII

COMPLIANCE AND OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

30. Duty to comply with lawful access requests.- (1) Every digital service provider, whether operating in the capacity of a custodian, platform, intermediary, or data fiduciary, shall be under a legal obligation to comply with valid and lawful access requests made under the provisions of this Act by,—

(a) the legal heir, nominee, executor, or successor as recognised under this Act;

(b) the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority or any designated Adjudicating Officer; or

- (c) any other statutory authority or court having jurisdiction.
- (2) The compliance shall include, but not be limited to,-
 - (a) disclosure of metadata and activity logs;
 - (b) access to personal and financial digital assets;
 - (c) authentication of digital will or testamentary directives stored with or linked to the platform.
- (3) Refusal to comply without reasonable cause shall attract penalties under this Act.
- (4) Nothing in this section shall compel the service provider to disclose content protected under other lawful exemptions unless directed by a competent authority.

31. Digital asset inventory maintenance by service providers.- (1) Every digital service provider holding or managing user accounts with potential economic, social, or sentimental value shall maintain an inventory mechanism for identifying,-

- (a) active, inactive, and dormant accounts;
- (b) associated metadata such as IP logins, last activity, and account value estimates;
- (c) any linked nomination or succession declaration.
- (2) Such inventory shall be regularly updated, verified, and made accessible to the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority on request.
- (3) The Central Government may prescribe the minimum threshold of user accounts or asset value for applicability of this obligation.

32. Retention of activity logs for posthumous audits.- (1) Every digital service provider shall retain all user activity logs, authentication histories, and access trails for a minimum period of seven years from the date of,-

- (a) termination of the account upon confirmed death of the user, or
- (b) completion of succession transmission and closure process, whichever is later.
- (2) The purpose of such retention shall be,-
 - (a) to enable digital audit trails in cases of disputed succession;
 - (b) to verify claims of forgery, hacking, or data manipulation;
 - (c) to facilitate lawful investigation by statutory authorities.
- (3) The Central Government may prescribe exemptions or extended retention norms based on category of assets or platform type.

33. Data trusteeship and non-disclosure obligations.- (1) All service providers shall act as data trustees in respect of the digital estate of deceased users and shall,-

- (a) safeguard digital content from unauthorised access, deletion, or transfer;
- (b) refrain from sharing or monetising any such content during the interim period;
- (c) permit only verified heirs, executors, or nominees to access the data post-authentication.
- (2) No digital estate shall be used for commercial profiling, behavioural analytics, or targeted advertisement after the date of death of the account holder.
- (3) Violation of this provision shall invite penalties including compensation to heirs, cancellation of data fiduciary registration, and criminal prosecution, where applicable.

34. Time-bound compliance and penalties for delay.- (1) Every service provider shall respond to lawful access or succession requests within,-

- (a) Fifteen days for disclosure of account metadata and access credentials;
- (b) Thirty days for release or transfer of control of digital assets;
- (c) Seven days for blocking access to accounts upon receipt of death confirmation.

(2) In case of technical difficulties, the service provider may seek a written extension from the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority, not exceeding another fifteen days.

(3) Unjustified delay or non-compliance shall result in,-

- (a) A fine of up to ₹5 lakh per instance;
- (b) Compensatory costs to affected heirs or nominees;
- (c) Initiation of suspension proceedings for persistent violations.

(4) The Authority shall maintain a compliance rating for digital service providers, to be published annually.

PART VI

DIGITAL ESTATE REGISTRY AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER IX

KARNATAKA DIGITAL ESTATE REGISTRY

35. Establishment of Secure Digital Estate Registry.- (1) The State Government shall, within six months from the date of commencement of this Act, establish a centralized, secure, and technology-enabled platform to be known as the Karnataka Digital Estate Registry (hereinafter referred to as "the Registry") for the purposes of cataloguing, managing, and authenticating records of digital estates, digital succession instruments, and related nominations.

(2) The Registry shall be maintained and operated under the supervision of the Karnataka Digital Estate and Succession Authority established under Section 3 of this Act, and shall function as a secure repository for,-

- (a) digitally executed wills;
- (b) digital succession directives;
- (c) digital nominations made across financial, social, and technological platforms;
- (d) executor or fiduciary designations;
- (e) inventory of declared digital assets, including personal, financial, social, and intellectual categories;
- (f) any updates, revocations, or amendments to the above instruments.

(3) The Registry shall ensure compliance with all applicable data protection norms, including the provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and rules made thereunder.

(4) Access to the Registry shall be,-

- (a) restricted to the registered digital testator, nominated executors, authorised legal heirs, and the designated adjudication authority;
- (b) permitted to law enforcement or judicial authorities subject to lawful authorisation;
- (c) provided in a tamper-evident, digitally signed, and traceable format to ensure integrity and auditability of records.

- (5) The Authority may notify subordinate regulations prescribing,-
- (a) security standards for encryption, access control, and key management;
 - (b) eligibility criteria for registering digital estate documents;
 - (c) procedures for deactivation, revocation, or replacement of documents in the Registry.

36. E-Registration of Digital Wills and Legacy Directives.- (1) Every testator who opts to create a will in digital form under this Act shall be entitled to register the same with the Karnataka Digital Estate Registry through an e-registration process as prescribed by regulations.

- (2) The process for e-registration shall include,-
- (a) submission of the digital will in a format prescribed by the Authority, digitally signed using a valid electronic signature as defined under the Information Technology Act, 2000;
 - (b) authentication using Aadhaar-based e-KYC or any other prescribed identity verification mechanism;
 - (c) declaration of executors, digital fiduciaries, or legal custodians, if any;
 - (d) submission of accompanying digital evidence including video testimony or electronic consent, where applicable;
 - (e) payment of prescribed registration fees, if any.
- (3) The Registrar shall, after verification and validation of the submitted instruments, issue an electronic Certificate of Registration along with a Unique Registration Number (URN), which shall serve as conclusive evidence of authenticity and existence of such digital will or directive.
- (4) Any modification, revocation, or supplement to a digitally registered will shall also be registered in the same manner and be assigned a revision record traceable to the original URN.
- (5) The State Government shall facilitate public access to the procedural manual, forms, and timelines for e-registration through the official digital portal of the Registry.

37. Blockchain-backed Immutability and Traceability.- (1) The Karnataka Digital Estate Registry shall employ blockchain or any equivalent distributed ledger technology (DLT) to ensure,-

- (a) immutability of digital wills, succession directives, and fiduciary appointments once registered;
 - (b) traceability of all transactions, changes, access events, and audit logs;
 - (c) time-stamping and hash verification to prevent tampering, unauthorised access, or retrospective manipulation.
- (2) The Authority shall design the blockchain infrastructure in a manner that,-
- (a) ensures compliance with Indian IT laws and cybersecurity standards;
 - (b) provides permissioned access only to registered stakeholders;
 - (c) incorporates consensus protocols for document verification;
 - (d) supports interoperability with public and private sector verification systems.
- (3) Any document recorded on the blockchain-backed Registry shall carry a blockchain hash and timestamp, which shall be admissible as prima facie evidence of its integrity and origin under the provisions of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, as amended.

(4) The Authority may empanel certified blockchain service providers to manage and maintain the infrastructure in accordance with government-prescribed norms, subject to regular audits.

38. Interoperability with National and International Registries.- (1) The Karnataka Digital Estate Registry shall be designed to interface with other government databases, registries, and financial custodial platforms, including but not limited to,-

- (a) DigiLocker under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology;
- (b) National Digital Health Mission (NDHM) records;
- (c) Central KYC (CKYC) Registry;
- (d) depositories registered under the Depositories Act, 1996;
- (e) public records managed by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and Reserve Bank of India.

(2) The Registry may, with the prior approval of the Central Government, enter into protocols or mutual access arrangements with registries or digital estate platforms functioning under foreign jurisdictions, provided such arrangements,-

- (a) comply with international data transfer norms;
- (b) protect the sovereignty of Indian digital data;
- (c) are based on principles of reciprocity and legality;
- (d) facilitate inheritance and asset recovery in cases involving Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) or Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).

(3) The Authority shall issue guidelines, from time to time, to ensure compatibility with national APIs, open standards, and evolving international best practices for digital estate governance.

(4) In cases of cross-jurisdictional succession disputes involving foreign-registered digital assets, the adjudication authority under this Act may seek cooperation under applicable mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs) or international conventions.

PART VII

PRIVACY, SECURITY, AND DATA PROTECTION IN SUCCESSION

CHAPTER X

SAFEGUARDS AND COMPLIANCE

39. Right to privacy of deceased persons and beneficiaries.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, every deceased person shall be deemed to retain a posthumous right to informational privacy with respect to their digital estate, including data, communications, and personal digital records.

(2) No part of a deceased person's digital data shall be disclosed, processed, transmitted, or published, except,—

- (a) in accordance with the provisions of this Act or rules made thereunder;
- (b) with the prior consent of the nominated digital executor, legal heir, or such person as authorised by a competent adjudicatory authority under this Act; or
- (c) where disclosure is necessitated by an order of a competent court or statutory authority under applicable law.

(3) All digital service providers shall adopt and implement posthumous privacy protection protocols in the event of a user's death and ensure that personal content is not arbitrarily accessed or misused.

(4) The Authority shall have the power to issue binding directions, circulars, and data protection codes governing the treatment of deceased persons' data.

40. Consent and disclosure norms for sensitive personal data.- (1) No sensitive personal data or information of the deceased, including biometric identifiers, medical records, financial details, personal communications, or digital credentials, shall be disclosed or transferred to any person without,—

(a) the explicit prior consent recorded in a valid digital will, succession directive, or nomination document registered under this Act; or

(b) an order from the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority or competent judicial forum.

(2) Any person claiming access to such information shall submit a duly notarised application specifying,—

(a) the nature of the relationship with the deceased;

(b) the category and purpose of data requested; and

(c) evidence of authorization as per provisions of this Act.

(3) Digital service providers shall verify the authenticity of such applications through electronic consent management systems and multi-factor authentication, including biometric and Aadhaar-based verification where legally permissible.

41. Protection of biometric, financial and communication records.- (1) Every custodian, repository, or service provider hosting or managing biometric, financial, or communication-related digital assets of a deceased person shall,—

(a) store such records using end-to-end encryption and in a non-indexable, access-controlled digital vault;

(b) prevent any unauthorized extraction, transmission, or duplication of such data; and

(c) ensure segregation of records pertaining to the deceased from general archival databases.

(2) The Authority shall prescribe through rules the minimum security standards, periodic auditing mechanisms, and technological safeguards to be adopted by digital custodians for the posthumous protection of sensitive digital data.

(3) Any breach or unauthorized access of such records shall constitute a punishable offence under this Act, without prejudice to penalties under the Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

42. Encryption, anonymization and secure custody of records.- (1) All records pertaining to digital wills, nominations, legacy directives, and posthumous succession instructions shall be,—

(a) encrypted using industry-grade cryptographic algorithms approved by the Authority;

(b) stored in decentralized or cloud-based secure servers subject to real-time surveillance and audit trails; and

(c) anonymized where necessary to ensure that unnecessary exposure of personal identities is avoided in public registries.

(2) The Authority shall maintain a whitelist of approved encryption technologies and service providers certified for handling succession-related digital data.

(3) The Central Repository of Digital Estates maintained under this Act shall be equipped with redundant backup protocols and geo-fenced data isolation mechanisms to prevent breach, leakage, or data loss.

43. Compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and IT Act, 2000.-

(1) All obligations, duties, and standards prescribed under this Act shall be interpreted in harmony with the provisions of,—

(a) the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (Central Act 22 of 2023);

(b) the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Central Act 21 of 2000), including Rules made thereunder relating to sensitive personal data or information, and reasonable security practices; and

(c) any other applicable laws relating to data protection, cyber security, or privacy.

(2) Nothing in this Act shall exempt a digital fiduciary, service provider, or nominee from their legal obligations arising under the said Acts.

(3) In case of any conflict between the provisions of this Act and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, the latter shall prevail to the extent of inconsistency.

PART VIII

CROSS-BORDER AND MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL DIGITAL ESTATES

CHAPTER XI

INTERNATIONAL HARMONISATION AND JURISDICTION

44. Recognition of Foreign Digital Wills and Succession Orders.- (1) A digital will, testamentary disposition, or succession directive executed outside India shall be recognised for the purposes of succession to digital assets located in the State of Karnataka, provided that,—

(a) such instrument has been duly executed in accordance with the law of the jurisdiction in which it was made or where the testator had legal residence at the time of execution;

(b) the authenticity and integrity of such digital instrument is verifiable through cryptographic hash, electronic signature, or notarisation standards applicable in the country of origin;

(c) the contents of the digital will are not contrary to the public policy or data protection laws in force in India.

(2) A foreign succession order, probate, or equivalent grant from a court or competent authority of another country may be enforced in Karnataka, subject to,—

(a) the absence of any pending challenge or bar to execution in the country of origin;

(b) reciprocity or treaty arrangements for mutual recognition of succession orders;

(c) prior approval from the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority as constituted under this Act.

(3) Nothing in this section shall prevent the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority from refusing to enforce a foreign succession instrument if it is found to be fraudulent, forged, or violative of the fundamental rights of Indian beneficiaries.

45. Procedure for Access to Assets with Foreign Digital Service Providers.- (1) Where the digital assets of a deceased person are hosted or managed by a foreign digital service provider, any successor, nominee, executor, or court-appointed administrator may apply for access by submitting,—

- (a) an authenticated succession certificate, probate, or order issued under this Act or other applicable laws;
- (b) proof of identity and status of the applicant;
- (c) a certified English translation of all documents, where applicable.

(2) The Authority may issue a formal request or letter rogatory to the competent authority of the foreign jurisdiction for facilitation of access, in accordance with mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs), bilateral agreements, or international conventions to which India is a party.

(3) Where a foreign service provider has established a representative or nodal office in India, such representative shall be under a statutory obligation to comply with access requests within the timelines specified under the Rules framed under this Act.

(4) Any refusal by a foreign service provider to comply with legitimate access requests shall be reported to the Central Government and escalated through diplomatic or legal channels for appropriate action.

46. Conflict of Laws and Jurisdiction in Multi-Residence or Cross-Border Digital Succession.- (1) In matters involving multi-jurisdictional claims over digital assets, the applicable law shall be determined in accordance with the following principles,—

- (a) the law of the country where the deceased was habitually resident at the time of death, unless a choice of law has been explicitly stated in a valid digital will;
- (b) the lex situs of the asset, where such determination is technologically feasible;
- (c) Indian law, where the asset is accessible or administered through servers located in India or impacts beneficiaries residing in Karnataka.

(2) In the event of a jurisdictional conflict between Indian and foreign claimants, the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority shall have primary jurisdiction over all digital assets whose access, control, or management is based within the territorial limits of Karnataka.

(3) The Authority shall be empowered to reject, modify, or harmonise foreign succession directives where the application thereof would result in discrimination, inequitable outcomes, or violation of Indian public policy.

47. Role of Central Government and International Treaties.- (1) The Central Government shall, in consultation with the State Government and relevant authorities, facilitate international coordination for the recognition, access, and enforcement of digital succession rights through,—

- (a) negotiation and conclusion of treaties or bilateral arrangements on digital succession and data access;

- (b) issuance of standard protocols for communication between domestic authorities and foreign digital service providers;
 - (c) establishment of liaison mechanisms with consular and legal departments of foreign missions in India.
- (2) The State Government may recommend to the Central Government suitable amendments, ratifications, or engagements in international forums concerning digital inheritance, succession law reform, and cross-border data governance.
- (3) The Central Government shall periodically issue notifications, model guidelines, or harmonisation frameworks to ensure uniform application of digital succession laws across States and in alignment with global practices.
- (4) Any treaty or international agreement ratified by India concerning succession, data access, or digital estate management shall be deemed to have force within the State of Karnataka, to the extent consistent with this Act.

PART IX

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITAL INNOVATION IN SUCCESSION

CHAPTER XII

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION AND EMERGING RISKS

48. Recognition of AI-generated wills and machine-executed succession instruments.- (1) A will or succession instrument that is generated in whole or in part using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools or automated content systems shall be legally recognised, provided that—

- (a) the testator has exercised final human affirmation, verification, and intent confirmation at the time of execution;
 - (b) the AI-generated content does not override any existing testamentary intention previously authenticated under law; and
 - (c) the instrument meets all statutory conditions prescribed under this Act and relevant succession laws.
- (2) The State Government may notify, by rules, a framework for verification, admissibility, and challenge of AI-generated testamentary documents.
- (3) A machine-executed succession instrument, including automated digital distribution or token-based asset transfer mechanisms, shall be deemed valid only when embedded within a pre-verified and secure digital succession platform notified under this Act.
- (4) The burden of proof of intent and validity shall rest with the executor or beneficiary relying upon the AI-generated or machine-executed instrument.

49. Regulatory sandbox for digital succession innovations.- (1) The State Government shall establish a Regulatory Sandbox Scheme for controlled testing and evaluation of new technologies, platforms, and models relating to digital succession, estate planning, and posthumous asset transfer mechanisms.

(2) Entities seeking entry into the sandbox may include,—

- (a) technology startups offering blockchain, AI, or quantum-enabled digital estate services;

- (b) legal-tech service providers engaged in succession automation tools;
 - (c) financial institutions offering posthumous claims integration with digital identity layers.
- (3) The objectives of the sandbox shall include,—
- (a) encouraging innovation in estate and succession management technologies;
 - (b) enabling policy experimentation within safe regulatory boundaries;
 - (c) developing privacy-preserving technologies for posthumous data handling.
- (4) Participants shall be required to submit periodic disclosures, risk assessments, and audit reports during the sandbox term, and shall exit the sandbox upon evaluation and certification by the designated authority.

50. Use of blockchain, quantum encryption and biometric AI for verification.—(1)Blockchain technology may be used for,—

- (a) ensuring timestamped, immutable recording of digital wills and legacy directives;
 - (b) creating tamper-proof records of digital nominations, pre-death asset declarations, and execution logs.
- (2) Quantum encryption and post-quantum cryptography protocols may be authorised for securing sensitive succession-related digital communications, particularly involving financial and identity-linked data.
- (3) Biometric AI systems, including facial, iris, or voice verification engines, may be deployed for:
- (a) confirming identity of testators during will execution or modification;
 - (b) secure authentication of access requests by legal heirs or executors post-death.
- (4) All technologies referenced herein shall conform to standards of security, interoperability, and data protection as may be prescribed under this Act or any applicable law.
- (5) The Digital Estate Authority shall maintain a list of approved cryptographic and biometric technologies, and may issue protocols for their integration across recognised platforms.

51. Risk mitigation against deepfakes, impersonation, and digital fraud in succession

- (1) Any digital succession platform, service provider, or custodian handling testamentary instruments or posthumous asset access shall adopt proactive mechanisms for detection and prevention of—
- (a) deepfake-generated wills or fraudulent testator imitations;
 - (b) digital impersonation or identity fraud by non-beneficiaries or third parties;
 - (c) tampering or alteration of digital succession directives.
- (2) Risk mitigation protocols shall include—
- (a) multi-factor and biometric authentication;
 - (b) AI-based fraud detection algorithms and behavioral analysis tools;
 - (c) audit trails and digital forensics capabilities for post-access verification.
- (3) In the event of detected fraud or attempted impersonation, the service provider shall be under a statutory duty to—
- (a) suspend access immediately;
 - (b) notify the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority;

- (c) preserve logs and evidence for investigative purposes.
- (4) Any will or succession instrument that is found to have been executed through impersonation, coercion, or digital fraud shall be declared void ab initio, and the perpetrators may be subject to prosecution under the provisions of this Act, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the IT Act, 2000, or any other relevant law.
- (5) The State Government may prescribe compliance certifications and vulnerability disclosure norms for platforms offering digital succession services.

PART X

OFFENCES, VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES

CHAPTER XIII

CYBERCRIMES RELATED TO DIGITAL INHERITANCE

- 52. Unauthorized Access or Tampering of Digital Estate.-** (1) No person shall, without lawful authority, access, retrieve, alter, delete, destroy, conceal, or tamper with any component of a deceased person's digital estate, including but not limited to, digital assets, online accounts, encrypted data, cloud storage, or virtual property, whether stored locally or with any digital service provider.
- (2) Any act of unauthorized access or tampering, whether before or after the initiation of succession proceedings, shall constitute a cybercrime under this Act and shall be dealt with accordingly.
- (3) The following acts shall be deemed to constitute unauthorized access or tampering,-
- (a) accessing a digital account of the deceased without the consent of the legal representative or digital executor;
 - (b) deleting, modifying, or fabricating digital records or metadata associated with the deceased's digital estate;
 - (c) circumventing digital security measures, including encryption, multi-factor authentication, or biometric locks;
 - (d) using malicious software or digital exploits to extract, erase, or distort any element of the digital estate.
- (4) Where such unauthorized acts are committed with fraudulent intent or cause significant harm, the offender shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees.
- (5) Where any digital service provider fails to prevent such unauthorized access after being duly notified or becomes complicit by omission or negligence, such entity shall be jointly liable under Section 55.
- (6) All offences under this section shall be cognizable and non-bailable.
- (7) Specialized cybercrime cells shall be designated for investigating complaints under this section, with mandatory preliminary inquiry to be concluded within thirty days of filing.

53. Falsification or Impersonation in Claim or Succession.- (1) Any person who,—

- (a) falsely represents themselves as a legal heir, nominee, executor, or authorized person for the purpose of claiming digital assets or accounts of the deceased;
 - (b) forges, fabricates, or manipulates any digital testamentary instrument, succession order, or authorisation letter; or
 - (c) impersonates another individual in digital or physical form, including use of artificial intelligence, deepfakes, or identity theft techniques to gain control of a digital estate, shall be guilty of an offence under this section.
- (2) The offence of falsification or impersonation shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees.
- (3) Where the act of falsification involves public authorities or registered digital service providers, such person shall also be debarred from succession-related proceedings for a period of ten years.
- (4) If any person causes wrongful loss or unlawful gain through such falsification or impersonation, the court may direct restitution or recovery under this Act, without prejudice to other civil or criminal remedies.
- (5) All offences under this section shall be cognizable and triable by a court not inferior to that of a Chief Judicial Magistrate.
- 54. Non-compliance by Digital Service Providers.-** (1) Every digital service provider, custodian of data, or fiduciary entity engaged in storing, managing, or transferring digital assets of deceased persons shall be under a statutory obligation to comply with the provisions of this Act, including directions issued by any competent authority under it.
- (2) Non-compliance by such service providers in the following cases shall attract penalties and sanctions under this section,-
- (a) failure to provide timely access to digital records to legal heirs, executors, or adjudication authorities;
 - (b) refusal to implement succession directives despite valid documentation;
 - (c) delay, destruction, or manipulation of data after death of a registered user;
 - (d) breach of confidentiality obligations regarding deceased users' private communications, files, or legacy records.
- (3) Upon such contravention, the competent authority may,—
- (a) impose a monetary penalty which may extend to fifty lakh rupees;
 - (b) recommend suspension or blacklisting of such service provider for succession-related operations within the State;
 - (c) direct compensation to the affected heirs or legal representatives for any harm caused.
- (4) If the non-compliance is wilful or results in unauthorized transfer or exposure of sensitive personal data, the offence shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, in addition to civil penalties.
- (5) Service providers shall not be liable if they act in good faith and in compliance with an order from a competent authority or a court having jurisdiction.

55. Offences by Companies and Vicarious Liability.- (1) Where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company, body corporate, or digital platform, every person who, at the time of the commission of the offence, was in charge of and responsible for the conduct of its business, as well as the company itself, shall be deemed to be guilty and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where it is proved that the offence was committed with the consent or connivance of, or is attributable to any neglect on the part of, any director, manager, officer, or employee of the company, such person shall also be deemed guilty and shall be proceeded against.

(3) For the purposes of this section,—

(a) "company" includes a body corporate, partnership firm, limited liability partnership, or association of persons;

(b) "director" in relation to a firm means a partner, and in relation to a trust means a trustee.

(4) Any person found liable under this section shall be subject to the same punishment as prescribed for the offence committed by the company.

56. Penalties, Prosecution and Compounding of Offences.- (1) All offences under this Part shall be punishable with penalties as specified in this Act, and shall also attract prosecution under the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, or any other law in force, where applicable.

(2) Where an offence under this Part is compoundable under law, the competent authority may permit compounding upon such conditions, including payment of compensation, apology, restitution or compliance, as it deems fit in the interest of justice.

(3) The compounding of an offence under this Act shall not be permitted in the following cases,-

(a) repeat offences by the same person or company;

(b) offences involving impersonation, falsification, or fraud;

(c) acts resulting in financial loss exceeding five lakh rupees.

(4) In addition to the penalties under this Act, the adjudicating authority may impose continuing penalties for each day the non-compliance continues, which shall not exceed one lakh rupees per day.

(5) All fines and penalties recovered under this Chapter shall be credited to the Digital Succession Redressal Fund, which shall be maintained by the State Government for providing assistance to affected legal heirs and beneficiaries.

PART XI
FINANCE, BUDGET AND AUDIT
CHAPTER XIV

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

57. Grants and Allocations by the State Government.- The State Government shall allocate financial grants on an annual basis for the effective implementation of the provisions of this Act, including establishment of the Digital Estate Authority, capacity building, technology infrastructure, and public awareness programmes.

(1) Such grants shall be non-lapsable and shall be provided through budgetary allocation under a distinct head of account in the Annual Financial Statement.

(2) The Government may also provide additional contingency funding during emergencies or technological overhauls that directly impact the functioning of digital succession systems.

(3) The grants shall be monitored and disbursed as per the financial rules prescribed under this Act and related general financial regulations applicable to State institutions.

58. Establishment of the Karnataka Digital Succession Fund.- (1) There shall be constituted a fund to be known as the Karnataka Digital Succession Fund (KDSF), to be administered by the Karnataka Digital Estate Authority.

(2) The Fund shall comprise,—

- (d) all grants, loans, or allocations made by the State Government;
- (e) contributions from Central Government schemes, if any;
- (f) fees and charges collected under this Act;
- (g) income from investments made out of the Fund;
- (h) any donations or endowments received from legal sources.

(3) The Fund shall be utilised exclusively for,—

- (a) strengthening the Digital Estate Registry;
- (b) capacity-building and training of adjudication officers and officers of the Authority;
- (c) technological upgrades, cybersecurity, and blockchain auditing systems;
- (d) promoting public legal literacy around digital succession.

59. Budgeting, Audit, and Utilisation Norms.- (1) The Karnataka Digital Estate Authority shall prepare an annual budget, maintain proper accounts, and prepare an annual statement of accounts in such form as may be prescribed.

(2) The accounts of the Authority shall be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India or by an auditor appointed by the State Government.

(3) The audit report shall be submitted annually to the State Government along with a response report detailing compliance, remedial actions, and systemic reforms undertaken.

(4) Utilisation of funds shall be linked to defined performance indicators, efficiency metrics, and outputs as notified under the rules.

60. Annual Reporting to the State Legislature.- (1) The Karnataka Digital Estate Authority shall prepare and submit to the State Government, within six months of the close of each financial year, an Annual Report containing,—

- (a) details of the activities undertaken;
 - (b) progress made on enforcement and adjudication;
 - (c) financial statements and audit findings;
 - (d) stakeholder feedback and public grievances redressal statistics;
 - (e) any challenges faced and proposals for statutory or operational reforms.
- (2) The State Government shall lay the report before both Houses of the State Legislature, along with an action taken report, ensuring legislative oversight and public accountability.

PART XII

RULE-MAKING, TRANSITION AND MISCELLANEOUS

CHAPTER XV

POWERS AND MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

- 61. Power to Make Rules and Regulations.-** (1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act.
- (2) Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for,—
- (a) the manner of accessing digital estates by nominees or legal heirs;
 - (b) the format and verification of e-wills and succession directives;
 - (c) the security protocols to be maintained by service providers;
 - (d) functioning and structure of the Digital Estate Adjudication Authority;
 - (e) procedures for filing disputes and online hearings.
- (3) The Karnataka Digital Estate Authority may issue subordinate regulations consistent with the rules to standardise formats, operational protocols, and compliance requirements across platforms and services.
- 62. Power to Issue Guidelines, Clarifications and Directions.-** (1) The State Government may, from time to time, issue such directions, guidelines, and clarifications to the Karnataka Digital Estate Authority and other stakeholders as it may deem necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.
- (2) The Authority may similarly issue circulars or advisories to digital service providers, adjudication officers, and the public to promote uniformity and clarity in practice.
- (3) All directions issued under this section shall be binding unless otherwise provided by judicial pronouncement or specific exemption granted by the State Government.
- 63. Power to Remove Difficulties.-** (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, by order published in the Official Gazette, make such provisions not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act as may appear necessary for removing the difficulty.
- (2) No such order shall be made under this section after the expiry of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.
- (3) Every such order shall be laid before the State Legislature for ratification.

64. Repeal and Savings.- (1) Any provisions of State laws, rules, notifications, or executive orders in force immediately before the commencement of this Act that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall stand repealed to the extent of such inconsistency.

(2) Notwithstanding such repeal, anything done or any action taken under the said laws shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act, if not inconsistent with its objectives and scope.

65. Transitional Provisions for Legacy and Hybrid Digital Estates.- (1) All digital estates and virtual assets that predate the commencement of this Act and lack formal succession directives shall be governed by transitional rules notified by the State Government.

(2) The Authority shall set up a Special Transition Facilitation Unit to handle legacy cases, including,—

(a) recovery of access credentials and decryption support;

(b) voluntary disclosure and declaration by next-of-kin;

(c) guidance for hybrid estates with both physical and digital components.

(3) The transitional mechanism shall remain in operation for a minimum of three years from the commencement of this Act, extendable by notification in public interest.

THE KARNATAKA STATE PUBLIC PASSENGERS AND TRANSPORT RIGHTS BILL, 2025

A Bill aimed at recognizing, protecting, and promoting the rights of public passengers while establishing clear guidelines for the responsibilities of public transport providers within the State of Karnataka. This legislation seeks to ensure safe, reliable, and accessible transportation services for all citizens. It will outline specific passenger rights, including non-discrimination, timely services, transparency in pricing, and the provision of assistance for persons with disabilities. Additionally, the Bill mandates public transport providers to adhere to safety standards, maintain vehicles in good condition, and offer efficient customer service. It also includes provisions for accountability, allowing passengers to report grievances and seek redress through established complaint mechanisms. The Bill ultimately aspires to foster a public transport system that prioritizes the welfare of its users and upholds their dignity.

Whereas it is essential to ensure safe, reliable, accessible, and efficient public transport services and to protect the rights and interests of passengers in Karnataka;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-Sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short Title, Extent, and Commencement.- (a) This Act may be called the Karnataka State Public Passengers and Transport Rights Act, 2025.

(b) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(c) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(a) "Public transport" means all government or private transport vehicles and services plying or operating for the carriage of passengers for hire or reward.

(b) "Passenger" means any person using a public transport service.

(c) "Transport provider" refers to any entity operating public transport services, including government corporations, municipal agencies, cooperatives, and private operators.

(d) "Prescribed Authority" means the authority designated by the State Government to enforce this Act.

CHAPTER II RIGHTS OF PUBLIC PASSENGERS

3. Fundamental Transport Rights.- All passengers shall have the following rights,—

(a) The right to safe, secure, and hygienic travel.

(b) The right to reliable and timely transport services.

(c) The right to transparent fare information and duly issued tickets.

(d) The right to information regarding schedules, routes, expected service disruptions, and facilities.

(e) The right to accessible transport for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and children.

- (f) The right to dignity and respect, without discrimination on grounds of gender, caste, creed, or disability.
- (g) The right to grievance redressal and compensation for deficiencies in service.

CHAPTER III

DUTIES OF TRANSPORT PROVIDERS

4. Service Standards.- (a) Transport providers shall ensure that all vehicles undergo regular maintenance checks as per industry standards, including thorough inspections of brakes, lights, and tires, to guarantee their reliability and adherence to established safety regulations. This includes keeping detailed maintenance records for each vehicle to track service history and ensure compliance with safety protocols.

(b) Regular training sessions and sensitization workshops must be conducted for all transport staff and conductors, focusing on passenger rights, service standards, and emergency response procedures. This training should encompass topics such as effective communication, conflict resolution, and the importance of accessibility for passengers with disabilities, ensuring that all employees are well-equipped to provide a safe and respectful travel experience.

5. Transparency and Communication.- (a) Comprehensive and precise timetables, fare information, and route details should be prominently displayed at terminals, within vehicles, and across online platforms to ensure that passengers are well-informed at all times.

(b) Timely and clear announcements regarding any delays, route diversions, or mechanical breakdowns must be promptly communicated to keep passengers updated and minimize inconvenience.

6. Accessibility.- (a) A minimum of 10% of the fleet must be outfitted with features specifically designed to ensure accessibility for individuals with disabilities within three years of the enactment of this Act. Furthermore, all new additions to the fleet must adhere to universally recognized accessibility standards, guaranteeing that every passenger can travel with dignity and ease.

(b) Special attention must be given to creating inclusive environments, including designated priority seating, streamlined boarding processes, and accessible shelter options for vulnerable passengers. These provisions aim to enhance the overall travel experience, ensuring safety and comfort for those who may need additional support.

CHAPTER IV

PASSENGER CHARTER AND GRIEVANCES

7. Passenger Charter.- a) Every transport provider is required to affix a passenger charter that clearly outlines the rights of passengers, the standards they can expect during their journey, and the procedures for filing complaints. This charter must be prominently displayed in all vehicles and terminals, ensuring that passengers are well-informed and empowered to advocate for their needs and expectations.

8. Grievance Redressal Mechanism.- Every transport provider is required to implement a robust and accessible grievance redressal mechanism that operates within a clearly defined timeframe. This mechanism should include the establishment of dedicated helplines and

user-friendly mobile applications to facilitate easy communication for passengers seeking assistance or lodging complaints.

(b) The designated authority shall take the initiative to create a comprehensive helpline and an informative website specifically designed for addressing passenger complaints. This platform will serve as a vital resource for travelers to voice their concerns and receive timely support.

9. Compensation.- The State Government is empowered to establish comprehensive guidelines for compensation in cases of service deficiencies, unwarranted delays, or the failure to uphold the rights enshrined in this Act. These guidelines aim to ensure accountability and provide just remedies for those affected, fostering a fair and responsive system for addressing grievances.

CHAPTER V

MONITORING, ENFORCEMENT, AND PENALTIES

10. Inspection and Monitoring.- The designated authority shall rigorously monitor compliance with the provisions of this Act to ensure adherence to its guidelines and objectives. To facilitate this oversight, the authority has the power to appoint qualified inspectors who will conduct regular audits and evaluations. Additionally, independent auditors may be engaged to provide an objective assessment of compliance levels, identifying any discrepancies or areas for improvement. This multifaceted approach aims to uphold the integrity of the Act and promote transparency and accountability within the relevant operations.

11. Penalties.- In the event of any violation of the obligations established under this Act, the designated authority holds the power to impose monetary penalties. For a first-time offense, fines may reach as high as ₹50,000, while repeat offenses can incur significantly steeper penalties, with fines escalating to a maximum of ₹2,00,000. This structured approach aims to underscore the seriousness of compliance and deter individuals or organizations from engaging in further breaches.

CHAPTER VI

MISCELLANEOUS

12. Awareness and Education.- The State Government will implement comprehensive public awareness and educational initiatives aimed at informing citizens about their rights as passengers and the various public transport facilities available. These programs will strive to empower individuals with knowledge, ensuring they understand the services at their disposal and how to effectively utilize them for their commuting needs.

13. Appeals.- An aggrieved person may appeal against any order passed under this Act to such authority preferably consumer forums and within 60 days from the date of the order.

14. Power to Make Rules.- The State Government may frame rules to carry out the provisions of this Act.

15. Overriding Effect.- The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent contained in any other law for the time being in force.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

This legislation is designed to enshrine and protect the rights of public transport passengers in Karnataka, ensuring that every citizen has access to reliable and affordable transportation options. It aims to establish and promote universal service standards that all public transport providers must adhere to, thereby enhancing the overall quality of service. Additionally, the Bill seeks to modernize the regulatory framework governing public transport services in the state, incorporating contemporary practices and technologies to improve efficiency, safety, and user experience. By addressing these critical areas, the Bill aspires to create a more equitable and efficient public transportation system that meets the diverse needs of its users.

**KARNATAKA HINDU RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND CHARITABLE
ENDOWMENTS BILL, 2025**

A Bill to amend the Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act, 1997, to address shortcomings and modernize the administration, transparency, protection, and governance of Hindu religious institutions and charitable endowments in Karnataka.

1. INSERTION OF SECTION 21-G: DIGITALIZATION AND DISCLOSURE.- (1)

All accounts, comprehensive inventories, and significant administrative decisions of the Rajya Dharmika Parishad and Zilla Dharmika Parishad must undergo digitization to enhance transparency. These resources should be made readily accessible to the public through a user-friendly dedicated portal or website.

(2) Monthly financial statements, along with detailed annual asset inventories, are to be published consistently, ensuring that stakeholders have clear visibility into the fiscal health and resource management of these organizations on portals or websites.

2. INSERTION OF SECTION 21-H: HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.- (i) Rajya Dharmika Parishad and Zilla Dharmika Parishad to maintain heritage sites and traditions as per guidelines notified by the Authority and Heritage Conservation Department.

3. INSERTION OF SECTION 21-I: Protection of Customary Practices.- The Rajya Dharmika Parishad has a vital responsibility to safeguard the diverse customs, rituals, and festivals that are unique to each institution. These rich traditions should be preserved and celebrated, provided they do not infringe upon the law or public policy

4. AMENDMENT OF SECTION 19;- (Administration of common pool fund)

INSERTION OF ADDITIONAL PURPOSE

19 (o)for the purpose of restoration of any notified institution or special grants cultural promotion.

5. INSERTION OF SECTION 19 (3) Administration of common pool fund.

Utilization and Management of Endowments.-

19 (3) (i)The State Government may require the establishment of a permanent statutory endowment fund for certain institutions exceeding an income of 1 crore rupees annually, with the fund held in the institution's own name or under the state-authorized authority.

19 (3) (ii) The common pool fund must be invested in secure, approved assets to safeguard capital and generate income for the institution/s.

Provided that the investment shall be for government securities, fixed deposits with scheduled banks, or other instruments prescribed by the state government.

Provided that the investment shall not be speculative or high-risk investments.

6. INSERTION OF SECTION 34-A.-

34-A (1) DEVOTEE PARTICIPATION & GRIEVANCES.-

(i) All institutions above a notified size/categories must establish Devotee Councils for advisory and oversight roles.

(ii) Institutions must periodically invite feedback and conduct public consultations.

34- B Grievance Redressal System

- (i) The “Authority” shall maintain a digital/physical mechanism for filing grievances, mandatory timelines (within 60 days) for disposal
- (ii) Legal/financial aid for vulnerable devotees to pursue complaints or disputes.
- (iii) Fast-track mediation and dedicated panels for resolution of disputes relating to management, financial decisions, access, or religious practices.

7. INSERTION OF SECTION 68-A .-

68-A. ENFORCEMENT, PENALTIES AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION.-

- (i) Regularly scheduled and unexpected inspections conducted by the Authority to ensure compliance and operational integrity.
- (ii) Harsh penalties—including substantial fines, suspension of operations, and potential prosecution—for any acts of mismanagement, embezzlement, or jeopardization of assets.
- (iii) Individuals reporting mismanagement or corruption shall be protected from retaliation through statutory safeguards.

MISCELLANEOUS

8. Rule-making Powers.-The State Government may frame rules for administration, audits, asset protection, public disclosure, dispute mechanisms, and penalties.

9. Annual Reporting and Legislative Oversight.- Annual consolidated reports on the functioning, finances, and performance of all institutions shall be tabled before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.

10. Removal of Difficulties.- The State Government may issue orders necessary to remove difficulties in giving effect to this Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Karnataka Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act, 1997 gave a framework for managing temples and charitable assets. However, issues such as financial mismanagement, lack of transparency, limited community involvement, weak heritage conservation, and insufficient checks on trusteeship and oversight remain unresolved. This Bill addresses those gaps through robust governance, digitization, empowering devotees and stakeholders, and ensuring accountability through professional management and oversight.

**KARNATAKA PRIVATE MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENTS (AMENDMENT)
BILL, 2025**

A Bill further to amend the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act, 2007 (as amended by Act 01 of 2018) to address identified shortcomings and strengthen the regulation, transparency, patient protection, and quality standards of private medical establishments in Karnataka.

**CHAPTER-I
PRELIMINARY**

1. Short Title and Commencement.- (1) This Act shall be called the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendment) Act, 2025.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification, appoint.

**CHAPTER II
KEY AMENDMENTS**

2. Mandatory Online Registration and Renewal.-

(Amendment to Section 3)

Addition

3 (1) All “private medical establishments” must register and renew registration online, publishing compliance certificates and inspection reports on an official portal maintained by the Authority.

3. Schedule of charges and establishment details to be notified. (Amendment to Section 10).-

(v) Establishments are required to prominently display the rates for all procedures and consultations, ensuring that this information is readily accessible on their websites in both Kannada and English. This transparency is essential for building trust with clients and facilitating informed decisions.

(vi) The imposition of hidden charges or unannounced costs is strictly prohibited; any breaches of this mandate will result in severe penalties, including the possibility of double fines. This regulation underscores the commitment to fairness and honesty in all financial transactions.

4. Amendments to Sec. Section 12.- (3) Every person or his family member shall be entitled to obtain a copy of the clinical records pertaining to himself on payment of appropriate charges within 48 hours from the date and time of requisition made in writing.

(4) All establishments must constitute and publicise an internal grievance committee whose details are published online.

6. Insertion of Section 21-A.- 21 A Every private medical establishment will undergo an annual audit conducted by auditors who are officially recognized and empaneled by the government of Karnataka. In addition to scheduled evaluations, the authority are empowered to carry out surprise inspections to ensure compliance and maintain standards. The inspection results and compliance status must be published.

7. (Amendment to Section 9)-Minimum Standards and Infrastructure Upgrade.-

Section 9 (3) Standards for staffing, equipment, sanitation, and safety must be updated every three years based on current medical best practice and the Private medical establishments must comply with technology upgrades such as digital records management and infection control.

8. Insertion of New Section 11-C (Data Protection and Confidentiality).- Patient records must be meticulously secured in a digital format, ensuring that access is restricted to authorized individuals only. Any unauthorized breaches of this sensitive information will result in severe penalties. Access to these records is strictly limited to the patient and individuals who possess legal authorization, with the exception of legitimate requests from governmental authorities or public health entities. Safeguarding patient privacy is paramount in maintaining trust and compliance with regulatory standards.

9.Amendment of Section 8 (Protection for Whistleblowers and Medical Staff)(New Section).-Section 8 (3) The registration and grievance redress authority shall implement comprehensive regulations to ensure robust protection for staff members and patients who come forward to report any instances of malpractices, harassment, fraud, or ethical violations. These rules will establish a safe and supportive environment, encouraging individuals to voice their concerns without fear of retaliation or negative consequences.

10. Rule-Making, Annual Reports, and Continuous Review (Amendment to Section 26).-

Section 26 (2) (i) State Government to update rules on registration fees, audit procedures, clinical standards, digital infrastructure, penalties, and patient rights at least every three years.

(j)Annual report of registrations, complaints, inspections, and enforcement actions to be tabled before the Legislative Assembly.

CHAPTER III

MISCELLANEOUS

11. Savings and Overriding Effect.- Any provision in previous contracts, rules, or actions contrary to this Act stands modified to the extent of inconsistency.

12. Removal of Difficulties

State Government may issue orders to remove difficulties in implementing this Amendment Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act, 2007 (as amended in 2018) provided a legal framework for registration, regulation, and grievance redressal in private medical sectors. However, issues including inconsistent adherence to minimum standards, lack of transparency in charges, insufficient grievance mechanisms, delayed emergency responses, and weak regulation of clinical laboratories and nursing homes persist. This Bill seeks to cure these deficiencies through robust oversight, enhanced patient protections, digital transparency, and stronger penalties for violations.

THE KARNATAKA PREVENTION OF CUSTODIAL TORTURE BILL, 2025

A Bill to provide a legal framework for the prevention of custodial torture inflicted by public servants, punishment and compensation for custodial crimes, rehabilitation of victims, protection of victims, complainants and witnesses, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto

Be it enacted by Government of Karnataka in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Prevention of Custodial Torture Act, 2025.
(2) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.
2. (1) In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—
 - (a) "appropriate Government" means relation to a State, the Government of that State.
 - (b) "public servant" without prejudice to section 2(28) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhitha, 2023, refers to any person acting in his/her official capacity under the Central Government or the State Government or employed in any Government Company as defined in clause 45 of section 2 of the Companies Act, 2013, or in any other institution under the control of the Central Government or the State Government.
 - (c) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act.
- (2) The words and expressions used herein and not defined in this Act shall have the same meanings respectively as assigned to them in the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhitha, 2023.
- (3) Any reference in this Act to a law which is not in force in any area shall, in relation to that area, be construed as a reference to the corresponding law, if any, in force in that area.

3. Custodial torture.- Whoever, being a public servant or being abetted by a public servant or with the consent or acquiescence of a public servant, intentionally inflicts physical or mental suffering on a person detained, held in custody or held in administrative detention or imprisoned as a result of conviction for an offence, for the purpose of:—

- (a) obtaining information or a confession from him/her or a third person; or
- (b) punishment for an act he/she or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed; or
- (c) intimidating or coercing him/her or a third person for any reason based on discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, gender, race, place of residence, language or sexual orientation, is said to inflict custodial torture:

Provided that nothing contained in this section shall apply to any pain, hurt or danger caused by any act which is inflicted in accordance with any procedure established by law or justified by law.

Explanation.—For the purpose of this section, “custodial torture”, apart from physical and mental suffering, includes, but is not limited to, food deprivation, submersion of the head in water, asphyxiation, use of psychoactive drugs, maltreatment of family members, and inflicting shame upon the victim.

4. Burden of Proof.—Where custodial torture referred to in section 3 is inflicted on a person, the burden of proof that the torture was not intentionally caused or abetted by, or was not with the consent or acquiescence, of a public servant, shall shift to such public servant.

5. Punishment for custodial torture.— (1) Where the public servant referred to in section 3 or any person abetted by or with the consent or acquiescence of such public servant, tortures or attempts to torture any person, such public servant or person shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three years but which can extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh rupees.

(2) Where the death of any person is caused due to custodial torture, the person committing the offence shall be punishable with imprisonment for life and shall also be liable to a fine.

6. Compensation to victims of custodial torture.— (1) Any public servant or other person committing custodial torture or attempting to commit such torture shall also be liable to a fine which shall be payable as compensation to the affected person.

(2) Notwithstanding the fine imposed under this Act, the appropriate Government may award such amount of compensation, including interim compensation, to the victim of custodial torture as may be considered necessary for the rehabilitation of the victim, as may be prescribed.

(3) Compensation by the appropriate Government to the victim of custodial torture for his rehabilitation shall be awarded,` taking into consideration, amongst others, the following factors, namely:—

(a) the gravity of the physical and mental harm and suffering inflicted, including death if caused as a result of custodial torture;

(b) lost opportunities, including employment, education and social benefits;

(c) material damages and loss of earnings, including loss of earning potential;

(d) cost required for legal or expert assistance, medicine and medical services, and psychological and social services; and

(e) the age, family responsibilities and material condition of the dependents of the victim.

(4) In case of death due to custodial torture, the dependents of the deceased person shall be entitled to such amount of compensation, including interim compensation under this Act, as may be prescribed.

7. Abetment to torture.— A public servant who abets, consents, acquiesces, or conspires to commit custodial torture shall be liable to the same punishment and compensation referred to in sections 5 and 6.

8. Custodial sexual abuse.— (1) Whoever, being a public servant or with the consent or acquiescence of a public servant, sexually abuses a person detained, held in custody or held in administrative detention or imprisoned as a result of conviction for an offence, shall be

punished with rigorous imprisonment of either description for a term which shall not be less than ten years, but which may extend to imprisonment for life, and shall also be liable to fine.

(2) A public servant who consents, acquiesces, or conspires to commit custodial sexual abuse referred to in the sub-section (1) shall also be liable to the same punishment referred to in sub-section (1).

9. Cognisance of the offence-Notwithstanding anything contained in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhitha 2023, no court shall take cognisance of an offence under this Act unless the complaint is made within a period of two years from the date on which the offence is alleged to have been committed.

10. Protection of victims, complainants and witnesses.- It shall be the duty and responsibility of the State Government to make arrangements for the protection of victims of custodial torture and custodial sexual abuse, complainants and witnesses against all kinds of ill-treatment, violence, threats of violence, or physical harm or mental trauma, from the time of submission of the complaint till such time the State Government is satisfied that such protection is no longer required.

11. Effect of provisions of this Act.- (1) The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force.

(2) The provisions of this Act shall have effect, notwithstanding anything inconsistent therewith contained in any other law for the time being in force.

12. Power to make rules.-(1) The State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

1. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the right to life and personal liberty to every person in the country. Custodial violence not only deprives individuals of their fundamental right to life but also severely violates human dignity. Unfortunately, the existing laws in India do not sufficiently address custodial crimes.
2. India is a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment since 14th October, 1997, however, India has yet to ratify the same. Therefore, enabling legislation against torture is necessary for the ratification of the Convention. Legislation against custodial torture in consonance with the definition of torture provided under the Convention and related Indian legal provisions will ensure a right against custodial torture for all persons in India.
3. The Supreme Court in the case of D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997) held that the expression “life or personal liberty” in Article 21 of the Constitution of India includes a guarantee against torture and assault even by the State and its functionaries to a person who is taken into custody. The Law Commission of India has also recommended ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and tougher laws for custodial torture.
4. In 2010, the Lok Sabha passed the Prevention of Torture Bill, 2010 which subsequently lapsed in Rajya Sabha. However, the Select Committee of Rajya Sabha in its report on the 2010 Bill flagged certain gaps in the Bill and suggested stricter provisions of prevent custodial torture. Taking a cue from the Committee Report, the current Bill criminalises custodial torture, death and sexual abuse, and prescribes punishments for these offences.
5. This legal framework aims to ensure accountability of the state for acts of custodial violence committed by its officials, strengthen procedural safeguards such as mandatory medical examinations and judicial oversight of arrested persons to prevent abuse, promote transparency, accountability, and victim-cantered approaches in handling custodial violence cases, and facilitate rehabilitation and support for victims, taking into account the nature and severity of the harm inflicted.

**THE KARNATAKA TRANSPLANTATION OF HUMAN ORGANS TISSUE
BILL, 2025**

**CHAPTER – I
PRELIMINARY**

1. Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This bill may be called the Karnataka Transplantation of Human Organs Bill, 2025

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of "Karnataka.

(3) It shall be deemed to have come into force on the

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(a) "advertisement" includes any form of advertising whether to the public generally or to any section of the public or individually to selected persons;

(b) "Appropriate Authority" means the Appropriate Authority appointed under section 13;

(c) "Authorisation Committee" means the Committee constituted under sub-section (4) of section 9;

(d) "brain-stem death" means the stage at which all functions of the brain-stem have permanently and irreversibly ceased and is so certified under sub-section (6) of section 3:

(e) "deceased person" means a person in whom permanent disappearance of all evidence of life occurs by reason of brain-stem death or in a cardio pulmonary sense, at any time after live birth has taken place:

(f) "donor" means any person, not less than eighteen years of age, who voluntarily authorises in full consciousness after being explained the full consequences of removing the organ by the Doctor who would be removing the organ, the removal of any of his human organs for therapeutic purposes under sub-section (1) or sub-section (2) of section 3;

(g) "Government" means the State Government;

(h) "hospital" includes a nursing home, clinic, medical Centre, medical or teaching institution for therapeutic purposes and other like institution;

(i) "human organ" means any part of a human body consisting or a structured arrangement of tissues which, if wholly removed, cannot be replicated by the body;

(j) "near relative" means spouse, son, daughter, father mother, brother or sister;

(k) "notification" means a notification published in the Karnataka Gazette;

(l) "payment" means payment in money or money's worth but does not include any payment for defraying or reimbursing.-

(i) the cost of removing, transporting or preserving the human organ to be supplied;

or

(ii) any expenses or loss of earnings incurred by a person so far as reasonably and directly attributable to his supplying any human organ from his body:

(m) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(n) "recipient" means a person into whom any human organ is, or is proposed to be, transplanted;

(o) "registered medical practitioner" means a medical practitioner who possesses any recognised medical qualification as defined in clause (h) of section 2 of the Indian Medical

Council Act, 1956, and who is enrolled on a State Medical Register as defined in clause (k) of that section;

(p) "therapeutic purposes" means systematic treatment of any disease or the measures to improve health according to any particular method or modality; and

(q) "transplantation" means the grafting of any human organ from any living person or deceased person to some other living person for therapeutic purposes.

CHAPTER – II

3. AUTHORITY FOR THE REMOVAL OF HUMAN ORGANS.- (1) Any donor may, in such manner and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, authorise the removal, in full consciousness and after being explained the full consequences of removing the organ by the doctor who would be removing the organ in presence of his spouse, if living, and in the presence of daughter or son or sister or brother in the same order and in the presence of mother or father in case of un-married persons before his death, of any human organ of his body for therapeutic purposes.

(2) If any donor had, in writing and in presence of two or more witnesses spouse if living, and in the presence of daughter or son or sister or brother in that order and in the presence of mother or father or sister or brother in the case of un-married persons unequivocally authorised at any time before his death, the removal of any human organ of his body, after his death, for therapeutic purposes, the person lawfully in possession of the dead body of the donor shall unless he has any reason to believe that the donor had subsequently revoked the authority aforesaid grant to a registered medical practitioner all reasonable facilities for the removal, for therapeutic purposes, of that human organ from the dead body of the donor.

(3) Where no such authority as is referred to in sub-section (2), was made by any person before his death but no objection was also expressed by such person to any of his human organs being used after his death for therapeutic purposes the person lawfully in possession of the dead body of such person may, unless he has reason to believe that any near relative of the deceased person has objection to any of the deceased person human organs being used for therapeutic purposes, authorise the removal of any human organ of the deceased person for its use for therapeutic purposes.

(4) The authority given under sub-section (1) or sub-section (2) or, as the case may be, sub-section (3) shall be sufficient warrant for the removal, for the therapeutic purposes, of the human organ; but no such removal shall be made by any person other than the registered medical practitioner.

(5) Where any human organ is to be removed from the body of a deceased person, the registered medical practitioner shall satisfy himself, before such removal, by a personal examination of the body from which any human organ is to be removed, that life is extinct in such body, or where it appears to be case of brain-stem death that such death has been certified under sub-section (6).

(6) Where any human organ, to be removed from the body of a person in the event of his brain-stem death, no such removal shall be undertaken unless such death is certified unanimoously in such form and in such manner and on satisfaction of such conditions and requirements as may be prescribed, by a Board of medical experts consisting of the following, namely:-

(i) the registered medical practitioner in charge of the hospital in which brain-stem death has occurred;

(ii) an independent registered medical practitioner, being a specialist to be nominated by the registered medical practitioner specified in clause (i) from the panel of names approved by the Appropriate Authority;

(iii) a neurologist or a neurosurgeon to be nominated by the registered medical practitioner specified in clause (i), from the panel of names approved by the Appropriate Authority; and

(iv) the registered medical practitioner treating the person whose brain-stem death has occurred.

(7). Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (3), where brain-stem death of any person less than eighteen years of age, occurs and is certified under sub-section (6), any of the parents of the deceased person may give authority, in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed, for the removal of any human organ from the body of the deceased person.

4. Removal of human organs not to be authorized in certain cases.- (1) No facilities shall be granted under sub-section (2) of section 3 and no authority shall be given under sub-section (3) of that section for the removal of any human organ from the body of a deceased person if the person required to grant such facilities, or empowered to give such authority, has reason to believe that an inquest may be required to be held in relation to such body in pursuance of the provisions of any law for time being in force.

(2) No authority for the removal of any human organ from the body of a deceased person shall be given by a person to whom such body has been entrusted solely for the purpose of internment cremation or other disposal.

5. Authority for removal of human organs in case of unclaimed bodies in hospital or prison.-

(1) In the case of a dead body lying in hospital or prison and not claimed by any of the near relatives of the deceased person within forty-eight hours from the time of the death of the concerned person, the authority for the removal of any human organ from the dead body which so remained unclaimed may be given, in the prescribed form by the person incharge, for the time being, of the management or control of the hospital or prison, or by an employee of such hospital or prison authorised in this behalf by the person incharge of the management or control thereof.

(2) No authority shall be given under sub-section (1) if the person so empowered to give such authority has reason to believe that any near relative of the deceased person is likely to claim the dead body even though such near relative has not come forward to claim the body of the deceased person within the time specified in sub-section (1).

6. Authority for removal of human organs from bodies sent for post –mortem examination for medico-legal or pathological purpose.- Where the body of a person has been sent for postmortem examination,-

(a) for medico-legal purposes by reason of the death of such person having been caused by accident or any other un-natural cause; or

(b) for pathological purposes, the person competent under this Act to give authority for the removal of any human organ from such dead body may, if he has reason to believe

that such human organ will not be required for the purpose for which such body has been sent for postmortem examination, authorise the removal, for therapeutic purposes, of that human organ of the deceased person provided that he is satisfied that the deceased person had not expressed, before his death, any objection to any of his human organs being used, for therapeutic purposes after his death or, where he had granted an authority for the use of any of his human organs for therapeutic purposes after his death, such authority had not been revoked by him before his death.

7. Preservation of human organs.- After the removal of any human organ from the body of any person, the registered medical practitioner shall take such steps for the preservation of the human organ so removed as may be prescribed.

8. Savings .- (1) Nothing, in the foregoing provisions of this Act shall be construed as rendering unlawful any dealing with the body or with any part of the body of a deceased person, if such dealing would have been lawful if this Act had not been passed.

(2) Neither the grant of any facility of authority for the removal of any human organ from the body of a deceased person in accordance with the provisions of this Act nor the removal of any human organ from the body of a deceased person in pursuance of such authority shall be deemed to be an offence punishable, under section 277 of the Indian Penal Code.

9. Restrictions on removal and transplantation of human organs.- (1) Save as otherwise provided in sub-section (3), no human organ removed from the body of a donor before his death shall be transplanted into a recipient unless the donor is a near relative of the recipient.

(2) Where any donor authorises the removal of any of his human organs after his death under sub-section (2) of section 3 or any person competent or empowered to give authority for the removal of any human organ from the body of any deceased person authorises such removal, the human organ may be removed and transplanted into the body of any recipient who may be in need of such human organ.

(3) If any donor authorises the removal of any of his human organs before his death under sub-section (1) of section 3 for transplantation into the body of such recipient, not being a near relative, as is specified by the donor by reason of affection or attachment towards the recipient or for any other special reasons such human organ shall not be removed and transplanted without the prior approval of the Authorisation Committee.

4) The Government shall constitute by notification, one or more Authorisation Committees consisting of such members as may be nominated by the Government on such terms and conditions as may be specified in the notification for the purposes of this section.

(5) On an application jointly made in such form and in such manner as may be prescribed by the donor and the recipient the Authorisation Committee shall after holding an inquiry and after satisfying itself that the applicants have complied with all the requirements of this Act and the rules made thereunder, grant to the applicants approval for the removal and transplantation of the human organ.

(6) If after the inquiry and after giving an opportunity to the applicants of being heard the Authorisation Committee is satisfied that the applicants have not complied with the requirements of this Act and the rules made thereunder it shall for reasons to be recorded in writing reject the application for approval.

CHAPTER III REGULATION OF HOSPITALS

10. Regulation of hospitals conducting the removal, storage or transplantation of human organs.- (1) On and from the commencement of this Act:-

(a) no hospital unless registered under this Act shall conduct or associate with or help in the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ;

(b) no medical practitioner or any other person shall conduct or cause to be conducted, or aid in conducting by himself or through any other person any activity relating to the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ at a place other than a place registered under this Act, and

(c) no place including a hospital registered under sub-section (1) of section 15 shall be used or caused to be used by any person for the removal storage of transplantation of any human organ except for therapeutic purposes.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) the eyes or the ears may be removed at any place from the dead body of any donor, for therapeutic purposes, by a registered, medical practitioner.

Explanation. For the purposes of this sub-section "ears" include ear drums and ear bones.

11. Prohibition of removal or transplantation of human organs for any purpose other than therapeutic purposes.- No donor and no person empowered to give authority for the removal of any human organ shall authorise the removal of any human organ for any purpose other than therapeutic purposes.

12. Explaining effects, etc., to donor and recipient.- No registered medical practitioner shall undertake the removal or transplantation of any human organ, unless he had explained in such manner as may be prescribed, all possible effects, complications and hazards connected with the removal and transplantation to the donor and the recipient respectively.

CHAPTER-IV

13. APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY.- (1) The Government shall appoint, by notification, one or more officers as Appropriate Authorities including the State organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation” which is currently known as “ JEEVANA SARTHAKATHE”

(2) The Appropriate Authority shall perform the following functions, namely:-

(i) to grant registration under sub-section (1) of section 15 or renew registration under sub-section (3) of that section;

(ii) to suspend or cancel registration under sub-section (2) of section 16;

(iii) to enforce such standards, as may be prescribed for hospitals engaged in the removal, storage transplantation of any human organ; or

(iv) to investigate any complaint or breach of any of the provisions of this Act or any of the rules made thereunder and take the appropriate action;

(v) to inspect hospitals periodically for examination of the quality of transplantation and the follow-up medical care to persons who have undergone transplantation and persons from whom organs are removed; and

(vi) to undertake such other measures as may be prescribed.

CHAPTER V

REGISTRATION OF HOSPITALS

14.Registrations of hospitals engaged in removal, storage or transplantation of human organs.- (1) No hospital shall commence any activity relating to the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ for therapeutic purposes after the commencement of this Act unless such hospital is duly registered under this Act:

Provided that every hospital engaged either partly or exclusively, in any activity relating to the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ for therapeutic purposes immediately before the commencement of this Act, shall apply for registration within sixty days from the date of such commencement:

Provided further that every hospital engaged in any activity relating to the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ shall cease to engage in any such activity on the expiry of three months from the date of commencement of this Act unless such hospital has applied for registration and is so registered or till such application is disposed of, whichever is earlier.

(2) Every application for registration under sub-section (1) shall be made to the Appropriate Authority in such form and in such manner and shall be accompanied by such fees as may be prescribed.

(3) No hospital shall be registered under this Act unless the Appropriate Authority is satisfied that such hospital is in a position to provide such specialised services and facilities, possess such skilled man power and equipments and maintain such standards as may be prescribed.

15. Certificate of Registration.- (1) The Appropriate Authority shall, after holding an enquiry and after satisfying itself that the applicant has complied with all the requirements of this Act and the rules made thereunder grant to the hospital a certificate of registration in such form for such period and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed.

(2) If, after the inquiry and after giving an opportunity to the applicant of being heard, the Appropriate Authority is satisfied that the applicant has not complied with the requirements of this Act and the rules made thereunder, it shall, for reasons to be recorded in writing, reject the application for registration.

(3) Every certificate of registration shall be renewed in such manner and on payment of such fees as may be prescribed.

16. Suspension or cancellation of registration.- (1) The Appropriate Authority may, suo motu or on complaint issue a notice to any hospital to show cause why its registration under this Act should not be suspended or cancelled for the reasons mentioned in the notice.

(2) If, after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard to the hospital the appropriate authority is satisfied that there has been a breach of any of the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder it may, without prejudice to any criminal action that it may take against such hospital, suspend its registration for such period as it may think fit or cancel its registration:

Provided that where the Appropriate Authority is of the opinion that it is necessary or expedient so to do in the public interest, it may, for reasons to be recorded in writing suspend the registration of any hospital without issuing any notice.

17. Appeals.- Any person aggrieved by an order of the Authorisation Committee rejecting an application for approval under sub-section (6) of section 9, or any hospital aggrieved by

an order of the Appropriate Authority rejecting an application for registration under sub-section (2) of section 15 or an order of suspension or cancellation of registration under sub-section (2) of section 16, may within thirty days from the date of the receipt of the order, prefer an appeal, in such manner as may be prescribed, against, such order to the Government.

CHAPTER - VI

OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

18. Punishment for removal of human organ without authority.- (1) Any person who renders his services to or at any hospital and who, for purposes of transplantation, conducts, associates with or helps in any manner in, the removal of any human organ without authority, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years and with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees.

(2) Where any person convicted under sub-section (1) is registered medical practitioner, his name shall be reported by the Appropriate Authority to the State Medical Council for taking necessary action including the removal of his name from the register of the Council for a period of two years for the first offence and permanently for the subsequent offence.

19. Punishment for commercial dealings in human organs.- Whoever,- (i)- (a) makes or receives any payment for the supply of, or for an offer to supply, any human organ;

(b) seeks to find a person willing to supply for payment any human organ;

(c) offers to supply any human organ for payment;

(d) initiates or negotiates any involving the making of any payment for the supply of, or for an offer to supply, any human organ;

(e) takes part in the management or control of a body of persons, whether a society, firm or company, whose activities consist of or include the initiation or negotiation of any arrangement referred to in clause (d); or

(f) publishes or distributes or causes to be published or distributed any advertisement,-

(i) inviting persons to supply for payment of any human organ;

(ii) offering to supply any human organ for payment,

or

(iii) indicating that the advertiser is willing to initiate or negotiate any arrangement referred to in clause (d) shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than two years but which may extend to seven years and shall be liable to fine which shall not be less than ten thousand rupees; but may extend to twenty thousand rupees:

Provided that the court may, for any adequate and special reason to be mentioned in the judgement, impose a sentence of imprisonment for a term of less than two years and a fine less than ten thousand rupees.

20. Punishment for contravention of any other provision of this Act.- Whoever contravenes any provision of this Act or any rule made, or any condition of the registration granted there-under for which no punishment is separately provided in this Act shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to five thousand rupees.

21. Offences by companies .- (1) Where any offence, punishable under this Act, has been committed by a company, every person who at the time the offence was committed was in

charge of, and was responsible to the company for the conduct of the business of the company, as well as the company, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly:

Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to any punishment, if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he had exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) where any offence punishable under this Act has been committed by a company and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent or connivance of, or is attributable to any neglect on the part of any director, manager, secretary or other officer of the company such director, manager, secretary or other officer shall also be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

Explanation:- For the purposes of this section,-

(a) "company" means any body corporate and includes a firm or other association of individuals; and

(b) "director" in relation to a firm, means a partner in the firm.

22. cognizance of offences.- (1) No Court shall take cognizance of an offence under this Act except on a complaint made by.-

(a) the Appropriate Authority concerned, or any officer authorised in this behalf by the Government or, as the case may be, the Appropriate Authority; or

(b) a person who has given notice of not less than thirty days, in such manner, as may be prescribed, to the Appropriate Authority concerned, of the alleged offence and of his intention to make a complaint to the court.

(2) No court other than of a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of the First Class shall try any offence punishable under this Act.

(3) Where a complaint has been made under clause (b) of sub-section (1), the court may, on demand by such person, direct the Appropriate Authority to make available copies of the relevant records in its possession to such person.

CHAPTER-VII MISCELLANEOUS

23. Protection of action taken in good faith.- (1) No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of the provisions of this Act.

(2) No suit or other legal proceedings shall lie against the Government for any damage caused or likely to be caused for anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done in pursuance of the provisions of this Act.

24. Power to make rules.- (1) The Government may, by notification, make rules for carrying out all or any of the purposes of this Act.

(2) In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:-

(a) the manner in which and the conditions subject to which any donor may authorise removal, before his death of any human organ of his body under sub-section (1) of section 3;

(b) the form and the manner in which a brain-stem death is to be certified and the conditions and requirements which are to be satisfied for that purpose under sub-section (6) of section 3;

(c) the form and the manner in which any of the parents may give authority, in the case of brain-stem death of a minor, or the removal of any human organ under sub-section (7) of section 3;

(d) the form in which authority for the removal of any human organ from an unclaimed dead body may be given by the person incharge of the management or control of the hospital or prison, under sub-section (1) of section 5;

(e) the steps to be taken for the preservation of the human organ removed from the body of any person, under section 7;

(f) the form and the manner in which an application may be jointly made by the donor and the recipient under sub-section (5) of section 9;

(g) the manner in which all possible effects, complications and hazards connected with the removal and transplantation is to be explained by the registered medical practitioner to the donor and the recipient under section 12;

(h) the standards as are to be enforced by the Appropriate Authority for hospitals engaged in the removal, storage or transplantation of any human organ under clause (iii) of sub-section (2) of section 13;

(i) the other measures as the Appropriate Authority shall undertake in performing its functions under clause (vi) of sub-section (2) of section 13;

(j) the form and the manner in which an application for registration shall be made and the fees shall be accompanied, under sub-section (2) of section 14;

(k) the specialised services and the facilities to be provided, skilled manpower and the equipments to be possessed and the standards to be maintained by a hospital for registration under sub-section (3) of section 14;

(l) the form in which, the period for which and the conditions subject to which certificates of registration is to be granted to a hospital under sub-section (1) of section 15:

(m) the manner in which and the fees on payment of which certificate of registration is to be renewed under sub-section (3) of section 15;

(n) the manner in which an appeal may be preferred under section 17;

(o) the manner in which a person is required to give notice to the Appropriate Authority of the alleged offence and of his intention to make a complaint to the court, under clause (b) of sub-section (1) of section 22; and

(p) to provide for a registry to document all the organ transplants to evaluate the performance of each transplants centre and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto; and

(q) any other matter which is required to be, or may be prescribed.

(3) Every rule made under this Act shall immediately after it is made, be laid before the both house of Legislature of the State, if it is in session and if it is not in session, in the session immediately following for a total period of fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two successive sessions and if, before the expiration of the session in which it is so laid or the session immediately following, the Legislature agrees in making any modification in the rule or in the annulment of the rule, the rule shall, from the date on which the modification or annulment is notified, have effect only in such modified form or shall stand and annulled as the case may be, so however, that any such modification, annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

**KARNATAKA REAL ESTATE (REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT)
(AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025**

A Bill aimed at amending the Karnataka Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016. This bill seeks to rectify identified shortcomings within the existing framework, bolster consumer protection, and enhance the accountability of promoters and agents in the real estate sector. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of transparency in transactions and aims to promote a more efficient and effective regulatory environment for real estate practices in Karnataka.

Be it enacted by Government of Karnataka in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

**CHAPTER I
PRELIMINARY**

1. Short Title and Commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act, 2025.

(2) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification, appoint.

**CHAPTER II
KEY AMENDMENTS**

2. Amendment of Section 3.- Insertion in Section 3(2): Prior registration of real estate project with Real Estate Regulatory Authority .- (a) No real estate project, both ongoing and completed developments, shall be advertised, marketed, booked, sold, or otherwise transferred without the explicit registration mandated by this Act. This requirement applies to the promoter as well as any individual or entity acting on behalf of the promoter, builder, or developer.

(b) Sub-registrars are required to withhold the registration of any document related to the conveyance, transfer, or sale of a real estate project until they have thoroughly verified the details and registration number associated with RERA compliance.

3. Insertion of Section 4A :Disclosure and Digital Transparency.- (i) Promoters are required to diligently update the project status, financial progress, regulatory approvals, and current photographs on the RERA portal on a quarterly basis. This regular update not only ensures transparency but also keeps stakeholders informed about the project's ongoing developments.

(ii) All essential project documents, including registered sale agreements and outcomes of any complaints, shall be prominently accessible on the Authority's website. These documents will be available in both English and Kannada, ensuring that they are comprehensible and accessible to a diverse audience.

4. Amendment of Section 4 (2) (l) (d) Application for registration of real estate projects.-

Section 4 2(l) (d): Escrow and Fund Utilization.- (i) Provided that the 70% project escrow account will be subject to a thorough audit conducted on a quarterly basis by an independent

Chartered Accountant, whose credentials and professional standing have been approved by the Authority to ensure transparency and accountability, safeguarding the integrity of the funds involved in the project.

(ii) Diversion of funds from escrow accounts to other projects or unrelated purposes is expressly prohibited and a cognizable offence.

5. Amendment of Section 14 (2).-

(Adherence to sanctioned plans and project specifications by the promoter)

Provided that no major alteration in to the sanctioned plans, layouts, or project specifications shall be undertaken without the prior written consent of at least two-thirds of the total allottees. Any breach of this stipulation will entitle the affected allottees to seek damages and may serve as grounds for the cancellation of agreements.

6. Amendment of Section 18 (Defect Liability).-

Section 18 (4)

(a) The promoter shall be liable for structural and major construction defects for a period of ten years from the date of possession.

7. Insertion of Section 20A (Time-bound Grievance Redressal).- (a) The Authority and Appellate Tribunal are required to adjudicate and resolve all complaints and appeals within a strict timeframe of 90 days from the date of filing, ensuring timely justice and efficiency in the process.

(b) It shall be mandatory to implement a robust system that facilitates online filing of documents, real-time tracking of case status, and the conduct of video hearings, thereby enhancing accessibility and user experience for all parties involved.

9. Insertion of Section 9A (Real Estate Agents Regulation).- 9A(i) It is mandatory for all licensed real estate agents to renew their registration every two years. In addition to this renewal, they are required to participate in ongoing training programs designed to enhance their knowledge and skills. Furthermore, adherence to established professional standards is essential to maintain the integrity and quality of the real estate profession.

9A(ii) An annual publication by the Authority must contain a comprehensive list of real estate agents who have been blacklisted or penalized. This list aims to promote transparency and accountability within the sector, ensuring that consumers are informed about the standing of agents in the marketplace.

10. Insertion of Section 17A (RWA/Association Handover).- 17 A(i) Promoters are responsible for ensuring a seamless and timely statutory handover of maintenance responsibilities, essential documents, and common area facilities to the Resident Welfare Association. This transition must occur within a three-month period following the majority occupancy, or in accordance with the stipulated regulations outlined in the applicable rules.

12. Insertion of Section 4 B :Adherence to Green and Resilience Standards for all new projects.-

Section 4B (1) All new projects must comply with green infrastructure and disaster resilience measures as notified by the Authority.

13. Amendment of Section 85 (Power to Make Rules).- (a) The State Government may make rules to carry out the purposes of this Act including digitization, sustainable construction, escrow monitoring, and agent regulation.

**CHAPTER III
SAVINGS AND REPEALS**

14. Savings.- Actions and proceedings under the principal Act as amended herein shall continue as if carried on under the provisions of the Act as amended.

15. Repeal and Overriding Effect.- Any provision of law, bye-law, or contract inconsistent with these amendments shall stand modified to the extent of the inconsistency.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Karnataka Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2016 (Karnataka Act 16 of 2016) has brought transparency and accountability to the real estate sector. However, practical experience and stakeholder feedback reveal continuing challenges and loopholes with respect to project registration, consumer protection, agent regulation, and effective dispute resolution.

This Bill seeks to amend and strengthen the Act in line with best practices and sector needs for 2025.

PROTECTION OF THE CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL OFFENCES (KARNATAKA AMENDMENT) BILL, 2025

A Bill further to amend the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, as applicable in the State of Karnataka, to address identified shortcomings, strengthen child protection mechanisms, and ensure timely justice.

Be it enacted by Government of Karnataka in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

- 1. Short Title and Commencement.-** (1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2025.
(2) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may notify.

CHAPTER II KEY AMENDMENTS

1. INSERTION OF SECTION 9 A- Establishment of child/ victim support centres.

- (1) All educational institutions must set-up a “**child/victim support centre**” within a period of six months. The centre to constitute a committee of five members out of which three members to be from the school management committee (Preferably two women members) and 1 representative from the parents/ custodian of the children in such institution and 1 advocate or a competent person from any NGO.
- (2) The child/victim support centre should provide sensitisation to all staff, management and students every 6 months and the report to be submitted to the Department of Women and Child welfare development Department without fail.
- (3) The educational institution management and the Child/ victim support centre must report any incident within such educational institutions premises within 24 hours to the jurisdictional police station. Failure to report incidents shall be a ground to cancellation of the licence to the educational institution under the Karnataka Education (Second Amendment) Act, 2017.
- (4) In case of offence by staff or the management of the educational institutions, the child must be shifted to another school immediately with the assistance of the jurisdictional police and the cost of such transfer and other fees should be borne by the educational institution.

2. Timely Investigation and Trial.-

Insertion of Section 35-A

The investigation must be mandatorily completed within sixty days from the date the First Information Report (FIR) is filed. This timeframe ensures that all necessary evidence is collected, witness statements are recorded, and any relevant inquiries are conducted promptly to maintain the integrity of the judicial process and to uphold the rights of all parties involved. If additional time is needed beyond this period, a formal request must be

submitted, detailing the reasons for the extension and approved by the appropriate legal authorities.

3. Insertion of Section 39-A Establishment of Child protection units.- State and district governments should establish dedicated Child Protection Units that are staffed with trained counselors, compassionate social workers, and accessible legal aid professionals in every district of the State under the Department of Women and Child Welfare Development. These units must be equipped to provide comprehensive support to victims at every stage of their journey, ensuring that they receive the emotional, social, and legal assistance necessary for healing and justice.

4. Amendment of Section 24 (Child-Friendly Reporting and Recording Procedures).- In Section 24 of the Principal Act, after sub-section (5), the following shall be Inserted, namely:-

(6) All police stations to have child-friendly spaces and officers trained in handling child victims. Gender sensitization shall be mandatory for all police officials and sensitisation trainings shall be provided by the police department every six months.

(7) Recorded statements (u/s 24 POCSO) to be audio-visual, with option for presence of parent or trusted person.

24 (8) Anonymous reporting procedures and digital complaint portals for children and guardians must be established.

24 (9) Special provisions for children with disabilities, including a support person for statement and evidence.

5. Insertion of Section 38 A Victim Compensation.-

38 A (i) Courts are mandated to evaluate and grant both interim compensation to child victims within a strict timeline of thirty days following their initial hearing and final compensation at the time of disposal of the trial not exceeding 6 months from the date of filing of the FIR.

(ii) The State Government shall establish and maintain a dedicated fund specifically designed to cover victim compensation, as well as provide support for essential counseling and medical expenses.

6. Insertion of New Section 43-A: Capacity-building and Monitoring.-

43 A: The State government shall establish the State Child Protection Committee, functioning under the the Karnataka Directorate of Child Protection. This committee shall oversee compliance with child protection policies, disseminating key statistics, and conducting thorough annual reviews of outcomes and sensitization programmes . Additionally, a comprehensive report detailing its findings and recommendations will be presented before the Legislative Assembly, ensuring transparency and accountability in the protection of vulnerable children across the state.

7. Amendment of Section 20.- In section 20 of the Principal Act, after Sub-Section(1), the following shall be Inserted, namely:-

Addition to Section 20

Section 20 (1) —Any personnel of the media or hotel or lodge or hospital or club or studio or photographic facilities, by whatever name called, irrespective of the number of persons employed therein, shall, on coming across any material or object which is sexually

exploitative of the child (including pornographic, sexually-related or making obscene representation of a child or children) through the use of any medium, shall provide such information to the Special Juvenile Police Unit, or to the local police, as the case may be.

Section 20 (2) Any individual or entity belonging to either print, television or social media is strictly prohibited from disclosing the identity of the victim. This prohibition is in place to protect the victim's privacy and dignity.

Any infringement of this section will result in penalty, which may include fine not exceeding 1 lakh rupees and imprisonment for a period of 6 months.

8. Removal of Difficulties and Power to Make Rules.- State Government may issue orders and frame rules to implement the provisions of this Amendment Act, including protocols, forms, training modules, and victim support guidelines.

CHAPTER III

MISCELLANEOUS

9. Savings and Overriding Effect.- Provisions under this Amendment Act supersede any contrary practice, rule, or outdated local arrangement.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The POCSO Act, 2012, was a major step toward protecting children against sexual offences. However, practical experience, legal analysis, and stakeholder feedback have revealed gaps—including delays in investigation and trial, lack of victim support, reporting barriers, low conviction rates, and insufficient capacity-building for officials. This Bill seeks to address these drawbacks, introduce new safeguards, and make the law more robust and sensitive for effective child protection in Karnataka.

THE KARNATAKA MILK PROCUREMENT (PROTECTION OF FARMERS) AND ENFORCEMENT OF SAFETY OF MILK STANDARDS BILL, 2025

A Bill to regulate the Transactions during procurement of milk and to enforce safety standards in respect of milk and for the protection of the interest of the dairy farmers and for the protection of the consumers of the consumers of milk and the matters connected there with are incidental there to.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Karnataka in the Seventy sixth year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER - I PRELIMINARY

1. Short title, Extent and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called The Karnataka Milk Procurement (protection of farmers) and Enforcement of Safety of Milk Standards Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government of Karnataka may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint and different dates may be appointed for different provisions of this Act.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(1)“Adulterant” means any material which is or could be employed for making the milk unsafe or sub-standard or mis-branded or containing extraneous matter.

(2) “Authorized Officer” means any officer appointed by the Milk Commissioner and delegated with the specified powers of the Milk Commissioner;

(3)“Bulk Milk Cooling Unit or Milk Chilling Centre” means a premises where milk collected from different sources is cooled/chilling, storage.

(4) “Buyer” means a person who purchases milk for cash or deferred payment or any other valuable consideration;

(5)“Calibration” means the process of evaluating and adjusting the precision and accuracy of measuring equipment;

(6)“Company” means Company as defined in the Companies Act, 2013; (Central Act No.18 of 2013.)

(7)“Dealer”, in relation to any Milk Analyzer, means a person, who carries on, directly or otherwise, the business of buying, selling, supplying or distributing any such Milk Analyzer, whether for cash or for deferred payment or for commission, remuneration or other valuable consideration, and includes a commission agent, an importer, a manufacturer, who sells, supplies, distributes or otherwise delivers any Milk analyzer manufactured by him to any person other than a dealer;

- (8) “Government” means the State Government;
- (9) “Licence” means licence granted under section 14
- (10) “Manufacturer” in relation to milk analyzer, means a person who –
- (i) manufactures milk analyzer,
 - (ii) manufactures one or more parts, and acquires other parts, of such milk analyzer and, after assembling those parts, claims the end product to be a milk analyzer manufactured by himself or itself, as the case may be,
 - (iii) does not manufacture any part of such milk analyzer but assembles parts thereof manufactured by others and claims the end product to be a milk analyzer manufactured by himself or itself, as the case may be,
 - (iv) puts, or causes to be put, his own mark on any complete milk analyzer made or manufactured by any other person and claims such product to be a milk analyzer made or manufactured by himself or itself, as the case may be;
- (11) “MILK” milk means lacteal secretion from cow or Buffalo. (derived from complete milking of healthy milch animal, without either addition there to or extraction there from, unless otherwise provided & it shall be free from colostrum)
- (12) “Milk Analyzer” means an instrument which is used for determining the quality parameters specified by or under the ACT and includes Electronic Milko tester/ Gerber tester/ Lactoscan analyzer/ Ultrasonic Milk Analyzer/FTRI Analyzer;
- (13) “Milk Commissioner” means the Milk Commissioner appointed under section 6;
- (14) “Milk Processing Plant or Dairy Plant” means a premises where milk is received, chilling of Milk, storage of Milk, Processing of milk, standardization of milk and marketing of milk and milk products.
- (15) “Milk Procurement” means collection of milk from the milk producers/Milk centres.
- (16) “Notification” means a notification published in the Official Gazette;
- (17) “Non-Standard Milk Analyzer” means a milk analyzer which does not comply with the standards prescribed in the Act and the rules made there under;
- (18) “Person” includes,—
- (i) Any individual,
 - (ii) Every department or office,
 - (iii) Every organization established or constituted by Government,
 - (iv) Every local authority within the territory of India,
 - (v) a company, firm and association of individuals,
 - (vi) trust constituted under an Act,
 - (vii) every co-operative society, constituted under an Act,
 - (viii) every other society registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (Central Act No. 21 of 1860);
- (19) “Premises” includes—
- (i) A place where any business, industry, production or transaction is carried on by a person, whether by himself or through an agent, by whatever name called, including the person who carries on the business in such premises,
 - (ii) a ware house, godown or other place where any milk analyzer is stored or exhibited,

- (iii) a place where any books of account or other documents pertaining to any trade or transaction are kept,
- (iv) a dwelling house, if any part thereof is used for the purpose of carrying on any business, industry, production or trade,
- (v) a vehicle or vessel or any other mobile device, with the help of which any transaction or business is carried on;
- (20) “Prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;
- (21) “Purchase” with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, means transfer of cash or deferred payment or any other valuable consideration for milk;
- (22) “Sale” with its grammatical variations and cognate expressions, means transfer of milk by one person to another for cash or for deferred payment or for any other valuable consideration;
- (23) “Sample” means a sample of milk taken under the provisions of this Act or any rules made there under;
- (24) “Seal” means a device or process by which a stamp is made, and includes any wire or digital password or other accessories which is used for ensuring the integrity of any stamp;
- (25) “Seller” means a person who sells milk for cash or deferred payment or any other valuable consideration;
- (26) “Stamp” means a mark, made by impressing, casting, engraving, etching, branding, affixing pre-stressed paper seal or any other process in relation to any milk analyzer with a view to –
 - (i) Certifying such milk analyzers conforms to the standard specified by or under this ACT, or
 - (ii) Indicating that any mark which was previously made there are certifying that milk analyzer conforms to the standards specified by or under this Act, have been obliterated.
- (27) “Standard Milk Analyzer” means a milk analyzer that complies with the standards prescribed in the Act and the rules made there under;
- (28) “Sub-standard”: milk shall be deemed sub standard if it does not meet the specified standards but not so as to render the milk unsafe;
- (29) “Transaction” means any contract, whether for sale, purchase, exchange or any other purpose;
- (30) “User” means the person who uses the milk analyzer in a premises for the purpose of milk procurement, testing of milk quality at the milk chilling centre, Bulk Milk Cooling Units, Processing Plant, Dairy Plant;
- (31) “Unsafe milk” means milk whose nature, substance or quality is so affected as to render it injurious to human health;
- (32) “Verification” with its grammatical variations and cognate expression, includes, in relation to any milk analyzer, the process of comparing, checking, testing or adjusting such milk analyzer with a view to ensuring such milk analyzer conforms to the standards prescribed by the ACT and the rules made there under.
 - (i) By milk itself, or its package thereof, which is composed, whether wholly or in part, of poisonous or deleterious substance; or
 - (ii) By the article consisting wholly or in part, of any filthy, putrid, decomposed or diseased animal substance or vegetable substance; or

- (iii) By virtue of its unhygienic processing or the processing or presence in that milk of any harmful substance of; or
- (iv) By addition of a substance directly or as an ingredient which is not permitted; or
- (v) By the abstraction, wholly or in part, of any of its constituents; or
- (vi) By the presence of any coloring matter or preservatives other than the specified in respect thereof; or
- (vii) By the milk being infected or infested with worms, weevils, or insects; or
- (viii) By the virtue of its being packed or kept under insanitary conditions; or
- (ix) virtue of its being misbranded or sub-standard or food containing extraneous matter; or
- (x) By virtue of its containing pesticides and other contaminants in excess quantities specified by regulations.

3. Provisions of this Act to override provisions of any other Law.- The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything inconsistent there with contained in any enactment other than this Act or in any instrument having effect by virtue of any enactment other than this Act.

CHAPTER II: STANDARD MILK ANALYZER

4. Standard Milk Analyzer.- The physical characteristics, configuration, constructional details, materials, working principle, performance, tolerances of a standard milk analyzer shall be as may be prescribed.

5. Calibration Verification and Sealing of Milk Analyzers.- Every person having any Milk Analyzer in his possession, custody or control in circumstances indicating that such Milk Analyzer is being, or is intended, or is likely to be used by him in Milk procurement, shall, before putting such Milk analyzer into such use, have such Milk Analyzer calibrated, verified and sealed at such place and during such hours as a Milk Commissioner may, by general or special order, specify in this behalf, on payment of such fee as may be prescribed.

6. Standards for Milk and Milk Products.- (a) The State Government may, by notification, specify the minimum standards for the composition, purity, and safety of milk and milk products, including, but not limited to:

- (i) Fat content
 - (ii) Solid-Not-Fat (SNF) content
 - (iii) Microbial limits
 - (iv) Residue limits for pesticides, antibiotics, and veterinary drugs
 - (v) Permissible additives, preservatives, and processing aids
- (b) No person shall sell, supply, or distribute milk or milk products which do not conform to the prescribed standards.

7. Prohibition of Adulteration and Misbranding.- (a) No person shall, directly or indirectly:

- (i) Add any adulterant to milk or milk products
- (ii) Misrepresent, misbrand, or falsely advertise milk or milk products
 - (b) Packaging and labelling must clearly display the fat and SNF content and date of packaging.

CHAPTER III

APPOINTMENT OF MILK COMMISSIONER, OTHER AUTHORIZED OFFICERS AND MILK INSPECTOR.

8. Appointment of Milk Commissioner other authorized officers and Milk Inspector.-

(1) Government of Karnataka may, by notification, appoint Director of Animal Husbandry Department as Milk Commissioner or any other eligible person as the milk commissioner.

(2) Milk Commissioner may appoint District Animal Husbandry Officer as the authorized officer and delegate such powers as deem fit and such authorized officer will exercise such powers and discharge duties as conferred or imposed on him by or under this Act.

(3) The Milk Commissioner may, by notification, appoint Veterinary Assistant Surgeon as Milk inspectors for such local areas as he may assign to them for the purpose of performing functions, discharging duties and exercise powers under this Act and the rules made there under.

(4) Every authorized officer and the Milk Inspector appointed under sub- section (ii) & (iii) shall exercise powers and discharge duties under the general superintendence, direction and control of the Milk Commissioner.

(5) The Milk Commissioner, other authorized officers and Milk inspector are authorized to perform any duty by or under this Act shall be deemed to be a public servant within the meaning of section 2 (29) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.

(6) No suit, prosecution or other legal proceeding shall lie against the Milk Commissioner, other authorized officers and the Milk Inspector authorized to perform any duty by or under this Act in respect of anything which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act or any rule or order made there under.

(7) The authorized officers and the Milk Inspector shall exercise those powers vested or conferred on him by the Milk Commissioner in the same manner and with the same effect, as if they had been conferred on him directly by this Act and not by way of delegation.

9. Powers and duties of the Milk Commissioner.- The Milk Commissioner shall perform all or any of the following functions namely:-

(i) Carry out the survey of the Milk procurement centres/ BMCUs/Dairies engaged in the usage of Milk analyzers in the state to find out compliance by such units of the standards notified by this Act.

(ii) Conduct or organize training programmes to the personnel of the office of the commissioner or any other personnel fit to conduct such programmes.

(iii) Ensure an efficient and uniform implementation of the standards and other requirements as specified and also ensure a high standard of objectivity, accountability, practicability, transparency and credibility;

(iv) Sanction prosecution for offenses punishable with imprisonment under this Act.

(v) Such other functions as the State Government may deem fit for effective implementation of the provisions of the Act and Rules.

10. Functions, Duties and Powers of the Authorized officer.- The powers and duties of the Authorized Officer shall be as follows, namely,-

(i) to issue or suspend or cancel licence of Milk procurement Centres, and Dairies;

- (ii) to prohibit the procurement of milk which is in contravention of the provisions of this Act and rules made there under;
- (iii) to make recommendations to the Milk Commissioner for sanction to launch prosecutions in case of contraventions punishable with imprisonment;
- (iv) to sanction or launch prosecutions in cases of contraventions of non-compoundable offenses;
- (v) to supervise the functioning of Milk inspector and action taken by them in the performance of their duties;
- (vi) to investigate or get investigated any complaint which may be made in writing in respect of any contravention of the provisions of this Act and the rules made there under;
- (vii) to investigate any complaint which may be made in writing against the Milk inspector; and
- (viii) to perform such other duties as may be entrusted by the Milk Commissioner.

11. Functions, Duties and Powers of the Milk Inspector.- (i) The Milk Inspector shall calibrate, verify and seal any milk analyzer presented by the user if it conforms to the standards prescribed by the Rules.

(ii) The Milk Inspector shall issue verification certificate to the user in the form as prescribed by the Rules and the validity of the verification certificate shall be as prescribed.

(iii) The Milk Inspector may, if he has any reason to believe, whether from any information given to him by any person and taken down in writing or from personal knowledge or otherwise, that any violation of provisions in relation to procurement of milk has taken place or is intended to take place and in respect of which an offence punishable under this Act appears to have been, or is likely to be, committed in the course of milk procurement.

(a) Enter at any reasonable time into any such premises and search for and inspect any milk analyzer used in the milk procurement centres/Automatic Milk Collection Unit/ Dairies in relation to which purchase/ sale has taken place, or is intended to take place and any record, register or other document relating thereto.

(b) Seize any milk analyzer, other equipment and any record, register or other document or article which he has reason to believe may furnish evidence indicating that an offence punishable under this Act has been, or is likely to be, committed in the course of, or in relation to, procurement of milk.

(iv) The Milk Inspector may also require the production of every document or other record relating to the procurement of milk referred to in sub-section (i) and the person having the custody of such transaction shall comply with such requisition.

(v) Every search made under this section shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (2 of 1974), relating to searches and seizures.

(vi) The Milk inspector may also inspect the milk analyzer to check whether such milk analyzer prescribes to the standards laid by the Act and the rules made there under.

(vii) The Milk inspector may also check the quality parameters like fat, SNF and added water of the milk procured from the pourer with the help of calibrated analyzer carried by him with a view to compare the results obtained by the person in charge of the milk procurement centre as per the procedure prescribed.

(viii) The milk inspector may also check the weighing instrument and the weights used by the milk procurement centre for the purpose of milk procurement.

(ix) If the Milk Inspector suspects the quality of Milk either to be substandard or unsafe, he shall inform the Food Safety Officer of that local area in the prescribed manner and the Food Safety Officer shall act on the information provided by the Milk Inspector in accordance with the Food Safety & Standards Act 2006, Rules and Regulations made there under.

(x) Where any books of account or other documents are seized under sub-section iii(b), the milk inspector shall, within a period not exceeding thirty days from the date of seizure, return the same to the person from whom they were seized after copies thereof or extracts there from as certified by that person in such manner as may be prescribed by the Government have been taken:

12. Forfeiture.- (1) Every non-standard milk analyzer and other equipment used for procurement of milk which is seized during inspection under section 9 shall be liable to be forfeited to the State Government,-

Provided that non-standard milk analyzer shall not be forfeited to the State Government if the person from whom such milk analyzer was seized gets the same calibrated and verified within such time as may be prescribed.

(2) Every milk analyzer seized under section 9 but not forfeited under sub-section (i), shall be disposed of by such authority and in such manner as may be prescribed.

13. Liability of Milk Inspector in Certain cases.- Any milk inspector exercising powers under this Act or the rules made there under who, –

(i) Vexatiously and without any reasonable ground seizes Milk analyzer and other equipment;

(ii) commits any other act to the injury of any person without having reason to believe that such act is necessary for the execution of his duty shall be guilty of an offence under this Act and shall be liable to pay a fine which may extend to five thousand rupees;

Provided that in case any false complaint is made against milk inspector and it is proved so, the complainant shall be guilty of an offence under this Act and shall be punishable with fine which shall not be less than fifty thousand rupees but may extend to one lakh rupees.

14. Licence for the use of Milk Analyzer.- No person shall use milk analyzer for procurement of milk unless he obtains a licence with the Authorized officer in such manner and on payment of such fees, as may be prescribed. An online platform will be made available for issue of license and other procedures of this Act through software application.

15. Licensing and regulation of Milk Procurement Centers.- (1) No person shall commence or carry on any milk procurement except under a license obtained for milk analyzer.

(2) Any person desirous to commence or carry on any milk procurement shall make an application or grant of a license to the authorized officer in such manner containing such particulars and fees as may be specified in rules.

(3) The Authorized officer on receipt of application under sub- section (ii) may either grant the license or after giving the applicant the opportunity of being heard and for reasons to be recorded in writing, refuse to grant a license to any applicant, if he is satisfied that it is necessary so to do in the interest of public.

(4) Every licence shall be in such form and subject to such conditions as may be specified by rules.

(5) An appeal against the order of rejection for the grant of license shall lie to the Milk Commissioner.

(6) A licence unless suspended or cancelled earlier shall be in force for such period as may be specified by rules: Provided that if an application for a renewal of licence is made before the expiry of the period of validity of the license, the licence shall continue to be in force until orders are passed on the application.

(7) The licence shall subsist for the benefit of the deceased's personal representative or any other member of his family, until the expiry of –

(a) The period of three months beginning with his death; or (b) such longer period as the authorized officer may allow.

16. License for the Manufacturer dealer and other Service Personnel of Milk Analyzer.- (1) Whoever manufactures or deals or attends to the servicing of any Milk analyzer used in the Milk Procurement Centre shall obtain Licence as prescribed in the Rules.

(2) Any person desires to manufacture and deal or deal or carry out the servicing of Milk Analyzer used in Milk Procurement Centres shall make an application for grant of licence to the Authorized Officer in such manner containing such particulars and fee as may specified in the Rules.

(3) The authorized Officer on receipt of Application under sub-section (2) may either grant the licence or after giving application reasonable opportunity of being heard and for the reasons recorded in writing refuse to grant licence to the applicant, in the interest of public.

(4) Every licence shall be in such form and subject to such conditions as may be specified by rules.

(5) An appeal against the order of rejection for the grant of license shall lie to the Milk Commissioner.

(6) A licence unless suspended or cancelled earlier shall be in force for such period as may be specified by rules;

Provided that if an application for a renewal of licence is made before the expiry of the period of validity of the licence, the licence shall continue to be in force until orders are passed on the application.

(7) The licence shall subsist for the benefit of the deceased's personal representative or any other member of his family, until the expiry of –

(a) the period of three months beginning with his death; or

(b) such longer period of not more than 6 months as the authorized officer may allow.

17. Payment to the Milk Pourers.- The pourer shall be paid in accordance with the fat content or SNF or Fat content & SNF indicated by the Milk analyzer at the milk procurement centre and the receipt to that effect indicating the price to be paid shall also be given to the pourer with reference to rate chart announced by the Union/Dairy.

CHAPTE R-IV OFFENCES AND PENALTIES

18. Penalty for use of non-standard Milk Analyzer at the Milk Procurement Centre.- Whoever uses or keeps for use any Milk Analyzer otherwise than in accordance with the standards prescribed by or under this Act at the Milk Procurement Centre shall be punished with fine which may extend up to fifty thousand rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months and also with fine.

19. Penalty for use of non-standard Milk Analyzer at Milk Chilling Unit or Bulk milk cooling unit.- Whoever uses or keeps for use any Milk Analyzer otherwise than in accordance with the standards prescribed by or under this Act at the Milk Chilling Unit or at the Bulk Milk Cooling Unit shall be punished with fine which may extend to one Lakh rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to twelve months and also with fine.

20. Penalty for use of non-standard Milk Analyzer at the Milk Processing plant or Dairy Plant.- Whoever uses or keeps for use any Milk Analyzer otherwise than in accordance with the standards prescribed by or under this Act at the Milk Processing Plant or Dairy Plant shall be punished with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years and also with fine.

21. Penalty for alteration of Milk Analyzer.- Whoever tampers with, or alters in anyway willfully to give wrong indications in the milk analyzer with a view to deceiving any person or knowing or having reason to believe that any person is likely to be deceived thereby, shall be punished with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees and with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to five years.

22. Penalty for procuring milk without license.- Whoever being required to obtain license under this Act and the rules made there under procures milk without being in possession of valid license shall be punished with fine up to rupees fifty thousand and for the second and subsequent offence shall be punished with a fine up to one lakh rupees or imprisonment up to six months or both.

23. Penalty for manufacturing or Dealing or attending to service of Milk Analyzer without license.- Whoever is required to obtain licence to Manufacture and deal or deal or attends to the servicing of Milk Analyzer used in the Milk Procurement under section 13 of this Act, fails to obtain the licence shall be punished with a fine upto Rs.25,000/- and, for second or subsequent offence with a fine up to Rs.50,000/- or imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine or with both.

24. Penalty for manipulation of fat content or solid not fat.- Whoever during milk procurement pays less price to the dairy farmer showing less values of fat content or solids not fat or fat content and SNF, than the results indicated by the standard milk analyzer shall be punished with a fine up to rupees fifty thousand and for the second and subsequent offence shall be punished fine up to one lakh or imprisonment up to six months or both.

25. Penalty for transactions in contravention of standard weight or measure.- Whoever in buying any article or thing by weight, measure or number, fraudulently receives, or causes to be received any quantity or number of that article or thing in excess of the quantity or number contracted for, or paid for; shall be punished with fine which may extend to ten thousand rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both;

26. Penalty for non-production of documents, etc.- Whoever, being required by or under this Act or the rules made there under, to produce any document or register before him for inspection any document or register or other record relating there to, omits or fails without any reasonable excuse, so to do, shall be punished with fine which may extend to five

thousand rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and also with fine not be less than two thousand rupees but which may extend to fifty thousand rupees and, for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than three months but which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

27. Penalty for obstructing Milk Commissioner or Authorized Officer or Milk Inspector.- Whoever obstructs the Milk Commissioner or authorized officer or Milk Inspector with an intention to prevent or deter the Milk Commissioner or authorized officer or Milk Inspector from exercising his powers or discharging his duties, or in consequence of anything done or attempted to be done by the officer in the lawful exercise of his powers or discharge of his functions as such, or whoever obstructs the entry of the Milk Commissioner or authorized officer or Milk Inspector into any premises for inspection of any milk analyzer or any document or record relating thereto or for any other purpose shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years.

28. Penalty for giving false information.- (1) Whoever gives any information to the, Milk Commissioner or authorized officer which he may require or ask for in the course of his duty, and which such person either knows or has reason to believe to be false, shall be punished with fine which may extend to Fifty thousand rupees and for the second or subsequent offence with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months and also with fine.

(2) However, being required by or under this Act so to do, submits a return or maintains any record or register which is false in material particulars, shall be punished with fine which may extend to fifty thousand rupees and for the second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and also with fine.

29. Penalty for use of Un-verified Milk Analyzer.- Whoever, uses or keeps for use any unverified Milk Analyzer shall be punished with fine which shall not be less than Rs.10,000/- but which may extend to Rs.50,000/- and, for second or subsequent offence with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and also with fine.

30. Penalty for use of Un-verified Weight or Measure.- Whoever, uses or keeps for use any unverified Weight or Measure for Milk Procurement shall be punished with fine which shall not be less than Rs.2,000/- but which may extend to Rs.10,000/- and, for second or subsequent offence with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and also with fine.

31. Cognizance of offences.- (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023, no court shall take cognizance of an offence punishable under the Act and the Rules made there under, except upon a complaint, in writing, made by

(i) The Milk Commissioner;

(ii) Any other Officer authorized in his or her behalf by the Milk Commissioner by General or Special order;

(iii) Any person aggrieved;

(2) No court inferior to that of a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of the first Class shall try any offence punishable under the Act and the Rules made there under.

32. Offences by companies and power of Court to publish name, place of business, etc., of companies convicted.-

(1) If an offence under this Act is committed by a company, every person who, at the time the offence was committed was in charge of, and was responsible to the company for the conduct of the business of the company as well as the company, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly:

Provided that nothing contained in this sub-section shall render any such person liable to punishment if he proves that the offence was committed without his knowledge or that he had exercised all due diligence to prevent the commission of such offence.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), where an offence under this Act has been committed by a company and it is proved that the offence has been committed with the consent or connivance of, or is attributable to the neglect on the part of, any director, manager, secretary or other officer, such director, manager, secretary or other officer shall also be deemed to be guilty of that offence and shall be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

(3) Where any company is convicted under this Act for contravention of any of the provisions thereof, it shall be competent for the Court convicting the company to cause the name and place of business of the company, nature of the contravention, the fact that the company has been so convicted and such other particulars as the Court may consider to be appropriate in the circumstances of the case, to be published at the expense of the company in such newspapers or in such other manner as the Court may direct.

(4) No publication under sub-section (3) shall be made until the period for preferring an appeal against the orders of the Court has expired without any appeal having been preferred, or such an appeal having been preferred, has been disposed of.

(5) The expenses of any publication under sub-section (3) shall be recoverable from the company as if it were a fine imposed by the Court.

Explanation: For the purposes of this section

(i) Company means anybody corporate and includes a firm/society/union/Dairy or other association of individuals; and (ii) Director, in relation to a firm, means a partner in the firm.

33. Compounding of offences.- (1) Any offence punishable under Section 16 to 24, Section 27 and Section 28 or any rule made there under may, either before or after the institution of the prosecution, be compounded, on payment to the Government of such sums maybe prescribed.

(2) The Milk Commissioner or the authorized officer as may be specially authorized by him in this behalf, may compound offences punishable under section 16 to 24, Section 27 and Section 28 or any rule made there under:

Provided that such sum shall not, in any case, exceed the maximum amount of the fine, which may be imposed under this Act for the offence so compounded.

(3) Nothing in sub-section (1) shall apply to person who commits the same or similar offence, within a period of three years from the date on which the first offence, committed by him, was compounded.

Explanation:(i) For the purposes of this sub-section, any second or subsequent offence committed after the expiry of a period of three years from the date on which the offence was previously compounded, shall be deemed to be a first offence.

(ii) Where an offence has been compounded under sub-section (1), no proceeding or further proceeding, as the case maybe, shall be taken against the offender in respect of the offence so compounded.

(iii) No offence under this Act shall be compounded except as provided by this section.

34. Appeals.- (1) Subject to the provisions of sub-section(2), an appeal shall lie,—

(a) from every decision or order made under the sections of the Act and Rules made there under by Milk Inspector to the Authorised officer of the concerned district;

(b) from every decision or order made by the Authorized officer to the Milk Commissioner;

(c) From every decision given by the Milk Commissioner to the Secretary/Principal Secretary/ Special Chief Secretary, AHDD&F Department.

2) Every such appeal shall be preferred within sixty days from the date on which the impugned order was made: Provided that the appellate authority may, if it is satisfied that the appellant was prevented by sufficient cause from preferring the appeal within the said period of sixty days, permit the appellant to prefer the appeal within a further period of sixty day.

(3) On receipt of any such appeal, the appellate authority shall, after giving the parties to appeal, a reasonable opportunity of being heard and after making such inquiry as it deems proper, make such order, as it may think fit, confirming, modifying or reversing the decision or order appealed against or may send back the case with such direction as it may think fit for a fresh decision or order after taking additional evidence, if necessary.

(4)Every appeal shall be preferred on payment of such fees, as may be prescribed.

(5)The Secretary/Principal Secretary/ Special Chief Secretary, may on its own motion or otherwise, call for and examine the record of any proceeding including a proceeding in appealing which any decision or order has been made, for the purpose of satisfying itself as to the correctness, legality or propriety of such decision or order and may pass such orders there on as it may think fit: Provided that no decision or order shall be varied under this sub-section so as to prejudicially affect any person unless such person has been given reasonable opportunity of showing cause against the proposed action.

35. Power of State Government to make rules.- (1) The State Government may, by notification make rules to carry out the provisions of the bill.

(2)I n particular and without prejudice to the generality of forgoing power such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters namely:-

a) Licensing of Milk analyzers used in Milk procurement Centres and Dairies.

b) Calibration or verification procedures of Milk Analyzers.

c) Registers and records to be maintained by the Milk procurement Centres/ and Dairies.

d) Physical characteristics, construction details, equipment performances, tolerances, methods or procedure of test for the Milk Analyzers.

e) The manner of disposal of Milk, Milk Analyzer and allied equipment.

f) Any other matter/matters which is/ are required to be, or may be, prescribed or in respect of which provision is to be made by rules by the State Government.

3) In making any rules under this section, the Government may provide that a breach there of shall be punishable with fine which may be extend up to One Lakh rupees.

(4) Every Rule made under this Act, shall, immediately after it is made, be laid down before the Legislature of the State, if it is in session, and if it is not in session, in the session immediately following for a total period of fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two successive sessions, and if, before the expiration of the session in which it is so laid or the session immediately following the Legislature of the State agrees in making any modification in the Rule or in the annulment of the Rule, the Rule shall, from the date on which the modification or annulment is notified, have effect only in such modified form or shall stand annulled as the case may be so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that Rule.

CHAPTER -V

MISCELLANEOUS

36. Protection for action taken in good faith.- No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall be instituted against any person for any act done in good faith or purported to have been done under this Act or any rules made there under.

37. Persons acting under this Act to be public servants:- Any person acting under this Act shall be deemed to be a public servant within the meaning of section 2 (29) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita, 2023.

38. Maintenance of registers and records.- The authorized officer may, by order in writing direct any Milk Procurement centre / BMCU/ Dairies to maintain such books, accounts and records relating to his business and in such form as may be prescribed in the provisions of rules of this Act.

37. Submission of returns.- Every holder of valid license shall submit yearly returns as prescribed in duplicate in respect of any Milk Procurement centre/ Dairies.

38. Power to remove difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may, as occasion requires, by order published in The Gazette of Karnataka government, make such provision not in consistent with the provisions of this bill , as appear to be necessary or expedient for removing the difficulty.

(2) Every order made under this section shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the State Legislature.

STATEMENT OF OBJECT AND REASONS

This Bill aspires to create a robust and comprehensive regulatory framework that ensures the quality and standardization of milk and milk products in Karnataka. Its primary objective is to protect public health and uphold consumer interests by setting stringent guidelines and standards for the industry. Through these measures, the Bill seeks to foster trust and confidence among consumers, ensuring that they receive safe and high-quality milk products.

THE KARNATAKA STATE ABOLISHING OF ILLEGAL REHABILITATION, DE-ADDICTION AND DETENTION CENTRES BILL, 2025

A Bill to abolish illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction and detention centers in Karnataka, provide for regulation and oversight, empower district health authorities for inspection, and prescribe punishments for violations thereof.

Whereas it is expedient to safeguard human rights and dignity by abolishing illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction and detention centers operating in the State of Karnataka; And whereas it is necessary to establish mechanisms for regular inspection and ensure strict punishment for violation of these provisions;

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-Sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:-

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short Title, Extent, and Commencement.- (a) This Act may be called the Karnataka State Abolishment of Illegal Rehabilitation and Detention Centres Act, 2025.

(b) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(c) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may notify in the Official Gazette.

2. Definitions.-(a) "Illegal rehabilitation centre" means any facility purporting to provide rehabilitation, addiction treatment, or housing for vulnerable groups, which operates without required statutory registration under Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act, 2017 or violates applicable laws, standards, or human rights norms.

(b) "Illegal detention centre" means any facility where persons are unlawfully detained, confined, or deprived of liberty without due process of law.

(c) "District Health Officer" means an officer appointed by the State Government responsible for overseeing health services at the district level.

(d) "Prescribed authority" means any authority designated by the State Government for enforcement of this Act.

CHAPTER II PROHIBITION AND REGULATION

3. Prohibition of Illegal Centres.- (a) No person, institution, or entity shall operate or maintain any illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction or detention centre in Karnataka without licensing under the Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act, 2017 and the Mental health Care Act, 2017.

(b) All rehabilitation, de-addiction and detention centres must have valid registration, meet prescribed standards, and comply with all statutory regulations prescribed under the Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act, 2017.

- 4. Closure and Seizure.-** (a) The prescribed authority (District health Officer) may order immediate closure of any centre found to be in violation of this Act or any violation of the Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act, 2017.
- (b) All movable and immovable property associated with such illegal centres may be seized as per procedure.

CHAPTER III INSPECTION AND OVERSIGHT

- 5. Powers and Duties of District Health Officers.-** (a) District Health Officers are mandated to conduct thorough and systematic inspections of all registered rehabilitation and detention centres within their jurisdiction, ensuring that each facility is visited at least once every three months.
- (b) These inspections will encompass a wide range of critical areas, including the overall health and hygiene standards, the integrity of infrastructure, the safety measures in place, the quality of care provided to inmates, and strict adherence to legal requirements.
- (c) Following each inspection, District Health Officers are required to compile comprehensive and detailed reports, which will be submitted to the designated authority. In these reports, they must not only highlight any violations or deficiencies found but also recommend appropriate corrective actions or, if necessary, advocate for the closure of facilities that fail to meet required standards.
- (d) The District Health Officer possesses the authority to access and review relevant records, engage directly with both staff members and inmates, and demand the production of any documents pertinent to the inspection process. This access ensures a thorough and transparent evaluation of each facility's operations and compliance.
- 6. Reporting and Monitoring.-** (a) It is essential that all inspection reports, complaints, and actions taken are meticulously documented and preserved by the designated authority to ensure transparency and accountability.
- (b) The designated authority, specifically the Commissionerate of Health and Family Welfare, is obligated to produce and disseminate comprehensive annual reports detailing compliance levels, identified violations, and the remedial actions undertaken.

CHAPTER IV OFFENCES AND PUNISHMENTS

- 7. Punishments for Violation.-** (a) Any individual or entity identified as operating an unlawful rehabilitation or detention centre shall be subject to strict penalties, which include:
For a first offence: a term of imprisonment of up to one year, a monetary fine not exceeding ₹10,00,000, or a combination of both;
For subsequent offences: a more severe penalty, encompassing a prison sentence of up to three years, a fine reaching up to ₹15,00,000, along with the confiscation of any property connected to the illegal activities.
- (b) Any officer or authority found complicit in such operations—whether through active abetment, assistance, or willful neglect in reporting the existence of an illegal center—shall face punitive measures, including imprisonment for up to one year and a fine not exceeding ₹1,00,000

8. Sealing premises of un-registered Illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction or detention centre.-(1) Without prejudice to the provisions in this Act, if on a report made by the authorized officer under Section 3 or otherwise he has reason to believe that any Illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction or detention centre is run or maintained without registration under KPME Act, 2017 or has a number of human rights violations or any other procedural lapses, it may order immediate closure of such Illegal rehabilitation, de-addiction or detention centre and also seal the premises:

Provided that no order under this sub-section shall be made without giving an opportunity of being heard to the person likely to be affected thereby.

(2) Every order made under sub-section (1) shall contain a direction that the inpatients of such un-registered Private Medical Establishment shall be transferred to such other Private Medical Establishment as may be specified in that order and it shall also contain such provisions as to the care and custody of such inpatients pending such transfer.

9. Rights, Liability and Compensation.-(1) Individuals who have been detained have the rights of a patient as enumerated in the schedule of Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act, 2017.

(2) Individuals who have been unlawfully detained or have suffered harm within these illicit centers shall have the right to seek redress and are entitled to compensation. This compensation shall be determined and adjudicated by the designated authority (Health and Family Welfare Services Department), ensuring that victims receive the justice and restitution they deserve.

CHAPTER V

MISCELLANEOUS

10. Power to Make Rules.-The State Government may frame rules to carry out the provisions of this Act, including inspection protocols, standards for rehabilitation centres, and formats for reports.

11. Protection of Action Taken in Good Faith.- No suit, prosecution, or legal proceeding shall lie against any officer for anything done in good faith under this Act or rules made thereunder.

12. Appeal.-Any person aggrieved by an action under this Act may appeal to the appellate authority designated by the State Government within thirty days.

There shall be an Appellate Authority over the Registration and Grievance Redressal Authority] consisting of the following members, namely:-

- (a) The Commissioner for Health and Family Welfare, Karnataka- Chairman
- (b) The Director of Health Services, Karnataka-Mem

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The intent of this Bill is to secure human rights and dignity by abolishing illegal rehabilitation and detention centres in Karnataka, establish robust inspection and oversight mechanisms through District Health Officers, and prescribe stringent punishments for violators to protect vulnerable individuals.

THE KARNATAKA GOOD CONDUCT PRISONERS (TEMPORARY RELEASE) BILL, 2025

A Bill To provide for the temporary release of prisoners for good conduct on certain conditions.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Karnataka in the Seventy-Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. Short title and commencement. -(1) This Act may be called the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 2025.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Karnataka.

(3) It shall apply to all such convicted prisoners who have been confined by the orders of Courts having jurisdiction in Karnataka.

(4) It shall come into force on such date as the State Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint in this behalf.

2. Definitions.-(1) In this Act, unless the context other wise requires, -

(a) “Competent authority” means the competent authority as notified by the State Government for the purposes of this bill;

(b) “Convicted prisoner” means a person confined in a jail or other institution of like nature under a sentence of imprisonment for life or imprisonment by any Court in India or the Court-martial or any other authority exercising the powers of a Criminal Court.

(c) “Deputy Commissioner of Police” means the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the district within whose jurisdiction the convicted prisoner, after his temporary release under this Act, is likely to reside during the period of his temporary release.

(d) “District Magistrate” means the District Magistrate of the district within whose jurisdiction the convicted prisoner, after his temporary release under this Act is likely to reside during the period of his temporary.

(e) “Form” means form appended to this bill;

(f) “Furlough” means temporary release from custody of a convicted prisoner as an incentive on account of his good behavior and conduct over a period as specified under this Act. The period of furlough may count towards the awarded sentence, subject to the conditions as defined in this Act or rules made thereunder.

(g) “Hardcore convicted prisoner” means any prisoner-

(i) Who has been convicted for any of the following offences:-

(1) robbery under section 309(4) or voluntarily causing hurt in committing robbery under section 309(6) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or

(2) dacoity under section 310(2) or dacoity with murder under section 310(3) or robbery or dacoity with attempt to cause

- death or grievous hurt under section 311 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
- (3) kidnapping for ransom under section 140
 - (4) (2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023);
 - (5) or murder or attempt to murder for extortion under section 308(4) read with section 103(2) or section 308(4) read with section 109 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (6) rape or penetrative sexual assault or aggravated penetrative sexual assault with murder under section 64 read with section 103(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (7) rape or penetrative sexual assault or aggravated penetrative sexual assault with a child below sixteen years of age under section 65(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (8) gang rape or rape as covered under section 66 or section 68 or section 70(1) or section 71 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (9) serial killing, i.e. murder under section 103(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023) in two or more cases in different First Information Reports (FIRs); or
 - (10) murder under section 103(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023), if the offender is involved in contract killing as apparent from the facts mentioned in the judgment of the case; or
 - (11) lurking house trespass and convicted under section 331(6) or section 331(7) or section 331(8) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (12) offence under section 147 or section 148 or section 149 or section 150 or section 151 or section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (13) immoral trafficking under sections 3, 4 or 5 of the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (Central Act 104 of 1956) involving minors or under sections 96, 98, 99 or section 141 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023); or
 - (14) offence under section 15(c) or section 17(c) or section 18(b) or section 19 or section 20(c) or section 21(c) or section 22(c) or section 23(c) or section 24 or section 27-A of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

Substances Act, 1985 (Central Act 61 of 1985);or

(15) resistance or obstruction by a person to his lawful apprehension under section 262 or resistance or obstruction to lawful apprehension of another person under section 263 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023);

(ii) who, during a period of five years immediately before his conviction, has earlier been convicted and sentenced for the commission of one or more offences mentioned in Chapter X or XVII of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 45 of 2023), except the offences covered under clause

(i) above, committed on different occasions, not constituting part of the same transaction, and because of such conviction has undergone imprisonment at least for a period of twelve months:

Provided that if a conviction which has been set aside in appeal or revision, then any imprisonment undergone in connection therewith shall not be taken into account for the above purpose; or

(iii) who has been sentenced to the death penalty or imprisonment till natural life; or

(iv) who has been found in possession of or detected using wireless communication device or its components or any unauthorised electronic device inside the jail premises; or who fails or fails to surrender himself within ten days from the date on which he should have so surrendered on the expiry of the period of parole or furlough for which he was released: or

(v) who commits a cognizable offence punishable with imprisonment for a period of seven years or above during confinement in the jail or during his temporary release under this bill; or

(vi) who has been punished more than two times with a major punishment by the Superintendent Jail concerned for committing any jail offence or convicted in judicial proceedings by the concerned Court; or

(vii) who has been detained or convicted under the National Security Act, 1980 (Central Act 65 of 1980), the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 (Central Act 28 of 1987), the Official Secrets Act, 1923 (Central Act 19 of 1923), the Foreigners

Act, 1946 (Central Act 31 of 1946) or any Act (Central or State) for control of organised crime;

- (h) “Member of convicted prisoner’s family” means the spouse, children, siblings, parents, grandparent and grandchildren of the convicted prisoner.
- (i) “parole” means temporary release of a convicted prisoner from custody and is categorized as under: -
 - (i) ‘Custody parole’ means escorting of a convicted prisoner under armed police custody to the place of visit (within the territory of Republic of India) and return therefrom for a specific period and for specific reasons as provided under this Act;
 - (ii) ‘Emergency parole’ means parole granted to a convicted prisoner by the Superintendent Jail when a member of the convicted prisoner’s family has died or is in serious condition or the convicted prisoner himself is in serious condition under section 5;
 - (iii) ‘Regular parole’ means parole granted to a convicted prisoner by the competent authority under section 3;
- (j) “Superintendent of Police” means the Superintendent of Police of the district within whose jurisdiction the convicted prisoner, after his temporary release under this Act, is likely to reside during the period of his temporary release.
- (k) “sentence” means sentence of imprisonment finally delivered in appeal or revision or otherwise and includes an aggregate of one or more sentences.
- (l) “Superintendent Jail” means the officer-in-charge of jail or other institution of like nature in which the convicted prisoner is confined;
- (m) “State Government” means the Government of the State of Karnataka in the administrative department.
- (n) “temporary release” means temporary release of a convicted prisoner on custody parole or emergency parole or regular parole or furlough.

(2) Words and expressions used herein but not defined shall have the same meaning as assigned to them under the Prisons Act, 1894 (Central Act 9 of 1894), rules made thereunder and as contained in the Punjab Jail Manual.

3. Temporary release of a convicted prisoner on regular parole on certain conditions.-

- (1) The competent authority shall grant regular parole to a convicted prisoner subject to
 - such conditions and procedure as specified under sections 11 and 12.
- (2) The period for which a convicted prisoner may be released under this section shall be ten weeks in a calendar year cumulatively and the convicted prisoner may avail it in two parts:

Provided that in case of delivery of a female convicted prisoner, the period of release under this section shall be six months, beginning from one month prior to the expected date of delivery as certified by the Medical Officer of the jail.

- (3) Convicted prisoner who has not completed one year of sentence after conviction shall not be eligible for regular parole

Provided that the restriction shall not be imposed on old aged convicted prisoner of seventy years or above in case of male and sixty-five years or above in case of female.

- (4) The report of the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police, as the case may be and recommendations by the District Magistrate shall be submitted to the competent authority within time limit as specified under this Act, for temporary release of a convicted prisoner on regular parole.
- (5) The period of release under this section shall not count towards the actual sentence of a prisoner. No ordinary remission shall be granted for this period.

4. Temporary release of a convicted prisoner on furlough on certain conditions.-

- (1) The competent authority shall grant furlough to a convicted prisoner subject to such conditions and procedure as specified under sections 11 and 12.

- (2) The period for which a convicted prisoner may be released under this section shall be three weeks and this period shall not be availed in parts:

Provided that the convicted prisoner who has completed his three-fourth of the total sentence in case of term sentence and ten years in case of life imprisonment, the period of release under this section shall be four weeks and this period shall not be availed in parts.

- (3) Convicted prisoner who has not completed three years sentence after conviction shall not be eligible for furlough:

Provided that the convicted prisoner who has been punished for any jail offence or for violation of conditions of temporary release during the last three years shall not be eligible for furlough:

Provided further that the convicted prisoners sentenced under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (Central Act 61 of 1985) or sedition or rape with murder or robbery or dacoity with murder or murder with intention of collecting ransom or extortion or sexual offences against a child below twelve years of age or sentenced to undergo imprisonment till natural life shall not be eligible for furlough.

- (4) The report of the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police, as the case may be and recommendation by the District Magistrate shall be submitted to the competent authority within time limit as specified under this Act, for temporary release of a convicted prisoner on furlough.

- (5) Subject to the provisions of clause (d) of sub-section (3) of section 9, the period of release under this section shall count towards the actual sentence undergone by a prisoner.

5. Temporary release of a convicted prisoner on emergency parole on certain conditions.- (1) The competent authority shall grant emergency parole to a convicted prisoner subject to such conditions and procedure as specified under sections 11 and 12. Emergency parole shall be granted to a convicted prisoner any time irrespective of the period of sentence undergone by him if a member of the convicted prisoner's family has died or is in serious condition or the convicted prisoner himself is in serious condition.

(2) The competent authority shall verify the facts through in-charge of the police station concerned or through a jail officer not below the rank of Assistant Superintendent Jail who shall submit his report within twenty-four hours. The facts of the serious condition of the convicted prisoner or his family member shall be certified by the Medical Officer concerned and countersigned by the Civil Surgeon concerned.

(3) The period for which a convicted prisoner may be released under this section shall be decided by the competent authority which shall not exceed four weeks in a calendar year cumulatively and the period may be in parts.

(4) The period of release under this section shall not count towards the actual sentence of a prisoner. No ordinary remission shall be granted for this period.

6. Temporary release of a convicted prisoner on custody parole and special provisions for hardcore convicted prisoners.- (1) The competent authority shall grant custody parole to a convicted prisoner subject to such conditions and procedure as specified under sections 11 and 12.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sections 3, 4 and 5, no hardcore convicted prisoner shall be entitled to be released on emergency parole or regular parole or furlough:

(3) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1), a hardcore convicted prisoner, who has not been awarded death penalty or life imprisonment till natural life and has completed five years of his sentence (including maximum two years under trial period), without committing any major jail offence or any cognizable offence during the last five years, shall be entitled for emergency parole or regular parole or furlough at par with convicted prisoners. Such period of five years shall be counted from the date of his latest offence or act which falls under the category of hardcore convicted prisoner:

Provided that a hardcore convicted prisoner who has been sentenced for imprisonment till natural life shall be eligible for emergency parole or regular parole at par with convicted prisoners only after completion of seven years of imprisonment after conviction:

Provided further that if the hardcore convicted prisoner so released temporarily violates any condition of parole or furlough or commits any cognizable offence, he shall be debarred from such release for next three years.

(4) Convicted prisoner including hardcore convicted prisoner may be granted custody parole without taking into account his period of completion of sentence for attending funeral of his family member or marriage of his children or siblings.

(5) The competent authority shall verify the facts for granting custody parole through in-charge of the police station where the prisoner wants to avail the custody parole or through a jail officer not below the rank of Assistant Superintendent Jail.

(6) Custody parole shall not be granted for more than six hours for one event excluding the journey time and the police escort guard for the custody parole shall be provided by the Superintendent of Police or the Deputy Commissioner of Police of the district within whose jurisdiction the jail is situated. The period of custody parole shall be treated as period spent in jail.

7. **Exclusion of certain days in computing period undersections 3,4,and5.-** For the purpose of calculating the period of temporary release of a prisoner under sections 3, 4 and 5, the dates of departure from and arrival at the jail shall be excluded.

8. **Prisoner not entitled to be released in certain cases.-** Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, no convicted prisoner shall be entitled to be released under this Act if, on the report of the District Magistrate or the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police or otherwise, the State Government or the competent authority is satisfied that his release is likely to endanger the security of the State or the maintenance of public order or cause reasonable apprehension of breach of peace.

Liability of convicted prisoner to surrender on expiry of temporary release period and consequences of overstaying.- (1) On the expiry of the period for which a convicted prisoner is released under this Act, he shall surrender before 05:00 PM on the day of surrender at jail from which he was temporarily released. Surrender from temporary release in an intoxicating state shall be treated as jail offence.

(2) If a convicted prisoner does not surrender himself as required by sub-section (1) within a period of ten days from the date on which he should have surrendered, it shall amount to an offence and he shall be arrested by any Police Officer or Jail Officer without a warrant and shall be handed over to the officer-in-charge of the jail from which he was released to undergo the unexpired portion of his sentence.

(3) If a convicted prisoner surrenders himself before the Superintendent Jail from which he was released within a period of ten days of the date on which he should have surrendered but fails to satisfy the Superintendent Jail that he was prevented by any sufficient cause from surrendering himself immediately on the expiry of the period for which he was released, the Superintendent Jail may award to the prisoner all or any of the following penalties after affording the prisoner a reasonable opportunity of being heard, namely:-

- (a) A maximum cut of five days remission for each day of overstay;
- (b) Stoppage of canteen concession for a maximum period of one month;
- (c) Withholding concession of interviews (including electronic interviews) for a maximum period of three months;
- (d) not to count the period of temporary release on furlough of the prisoner under section 4 towards his sentence;

(e) warning;

(f) reduction from higher to a lower class or grade.

10. Penalty for failure to surrender.- (1) Any convicted prisoner guilty of an offence under sub-section (2) of section 9 shall be punishable with imprisonment of either description which shall not be less than two years which may extend to three years and with fine up to one lakh rupees.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this section, the punishment awarded under this section shall be in addition to the punishment(s) awarded to the prisoner for the offence for which he was convicted earlier and shall start after execution of all such previous punishment(s) and the period spent during the trial of the offence committed under this Act shall not be set off against the punishment awarded under this Act except for the period which the prisoner spent exclusively for the offence committed under this Act.

(2) An offence punishable under sub-section (1) shall be deemed to be cognizable and non-bailable.

(3) The sureties of full amount shall be forfeited by the District Magistrate on the recommendation of the Superintendent Jail.

(4) Such a convicted prisoner shall also be liable for any of the punishments as specified under sub-section (3) of section 9.

4. General provisions.- (1) A convicted prisoner shall be entitled to consideration for a regular parole, furlough, emergency parole, or custody parole under this Act only if he is on bail in all the cases which are pending against him before any Court or competent authority.

(2)(a) The parole or furlough cases of convicted prisoners who are convicted by the Courts having jurisdiction outside the State of Karnataka and who are undergoing imprisonment in a jail of Karnataka on reciprocal basis or otherwise, shall be initiated by the Superintendent Jail and forwarded to the competent authority of that State where from he was convicted, for consideration or sanction or disposal as per the parole or furlough Act or rules of that State.

(a) The parole or furlough cases of convicted prisoners who are convicted by the Courts having jurisdiction in the State of Karnataka and who are undergoing imprisonment in a jail in other States on reciprocal basis or otherwise, shall be initiated by the Superintendent Jail concerned and shall be forwarded to the competent authority in the State of Karnataka wherefrom he was convicted, for consideration/sanction/disposal as per the provisions of this Act.

(b) In case of a convicted prisoner of the State of Karnataka who is also a convict of the State(s) other than Karnataka and is confined in a jail of Karnataka or other State, his parole or furlough case shall be decided

by the competent authority of the State where from he has been convicted and sentenced for more serious crime. If, the prisoner is convicted for the same offence in different State(s), his parole or furlough case shall be decided by the competent authority where from he is convicted first. In such cases, the consent or no objection certificate of all other State(s) shall also be obtained:

Provided that if objection is not received within one month, it shall be presumed that the State(s) has no objection for grant of parole or furlough.

- (c) A convicted prisoner who is resident of a State other than Karnataka but is a convicted prisoner of the State of Karnataka, parole or furlough case of such convicted prisoner shall be initiated by the Superintendent Jail and forwarded for sanction to the competent authority with a copy to the District Magistrate, Deputy Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police, where the prisoner wants to avail parole or furlough, for sending his report or recommendation to the competent authority within the specified time limit.
- (d) In case of convicted prisoner who is sentenced by a General Court-martial, the parole or furlough shall be granted by the Army authorities as per the provisions of clause (d) of section 179 of the Army Act, 1950 (Central Act 46 of 1950):

Provided that the custody parole may be granted to such convicted prisoner by the Superintendent Jail.

- (3) Any convicted prisoner who has been awarded a minor punishment for any jail offence, shall not be eligible for any kind of parole for six months from the date of such offence; and a convicted prisoner who has been awarded a major punishment for any jail offence or has violated the conditions of temporary release, he shall not be eligible for any kind of parole for one year from the date of such offence:

Provided that such convicted prisoner may be sent on custody parole to attend funeral of his family members.

- (4) Subsequent parole or furlough case of a convicted prisoner shall be initiated only after receipt of report of in-charge of police station concerned through the Superintendent of Police or the Deputy Commissioner of Police regarding his conduct during the temporary release or after one month of his surrender in the jail after availing last sanctioned parole or furlough, whichever is earlier:

Provided that the emergency parole shall be granted to the convicted prisoner anytime irrespective of the fact that his other parole or furlough case is still under consideration.

- (5) No parole or furlough shall be extended in any case.
- (6) Ordinarily, co-accused convicted prisoners shall not be granted regular parole or furlough simultaneously.
- (7) The validity period of emergency parole warrant shall be for fifteen days from the date of issuance of the order.

(8) The validity period of a regular parole or a furlough warrant shall be for four months from the date of issuance of the order. The specific date of release or surrender shall not be fixed in the release warrant.

(9) The criminal case under sub-section (2) of section 9 shall be registered at the police station where the temporary release period is being spent or address given in the application by the eligible convicted prisoner. In case of the address being outside the State of Karnataka, the criminal case shall be registered at the police station under whose jurisdiction the jail is situated.

(10) In case of rejection of regular parole or furlough by the competent authority, another application for the same purpose shall not be considered before a period of three months from the date of rejection.

(11) Before any convicted prisoner is released on parole or furlough, he shall execute a bond amounting to minimum one lakh rupees extendable to three lakh rupees along with minimum two sureties to the satisfaction of the competent authority. The bond shall be conditioned that the convicted prisoner or the hardcore convicted prisoner, as the case may be, shall surrender before the Jail Superintendent before the expiry of furlough or parole period:

Provided that in case of hardcore convicted prisoner, a bond shall be executed amounting to minimum two lakh rupees extendable to five lakh rupees along with minimum two sureties to the satisfaction of the competent authority:

Provided further that the surety amount shall not be more than one lakh rupees and three lakh rupees respectively for those convicted prisoners and hardcore convicted prisoners who have peacefully availed two regular parole and one furlough:

Provided further that the competent authority may call for more than two sureties to a maximum limit of five by recording reasons in writing.

(12) The competent authority while accepting the bond under sub-section (11), may impose such conditions, as it may deem fit. The fitness or sufficiency of the sureties shall be determined by the competent authority.

12. Procedure for parole or furlough.- (1) An application for grant of parole or furlough may be submitted by the convicted prisoner himself or his adult family member before the Superintendent Jail as per Form A.

(2) On receipt of an application from a convicted prisoner regarding custody parole or emergency parole, the Superintendent Jail shall immediately send a request to the in-charge of the police station concerned under intimation to the District Magistrate or the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police to depute a jail officer not below the rank of Assistant

Superintendent to verify the facts about the custody parole or emergency parole, as the case maybe and shall satisfy himself that the reason given in the application is genuine and is according to the provisions of this Act.

(3) On receipt of an application from a convicted prisoner for regular parole or furlough, the Superintendent Jail shall send the case of eligible convicted prisoner to the District Magistrate along with a copy to the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police, in-charge of the

police station concerned and competent authority to grant regular parole or furlough. In case, the convicted prisoner is not found eligible for the regular parole or furlough, the Superintendent Jail shall pass speaking order.

- (4) The Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police shall submit his report within the specified time limit to the District Magistrate.
- (5) Only one police verification shall be necessary in a calendar year in case of those convicted prisoners who have peacefully availed two regular paroles or one furlough. However, the competent authority may seek fresh report at its discretion.
- (6) The District Magistrate shall submit his recommendation or non-recommendation within the time limit as specified in sub-section (11) to the competent authority.
- (7) After receipt of recommendation or report from the quarter concerned, the competent authority shall take a decision and issue regular parole or a furlough release warrant as per Form B and in case of rejection of regular parole or furlough, speaking order shall be passed. The sanction or rejection, as the case may be, shall be sent to the District Magistrate concerned and the Superintendent Jail with a copy to the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police and the convicted prisoner concerned.
- (8) On receipt of the parole or furlough release warrant from the competent authority, the Superintendent Jail shall inform the prisoner concerned and such member of the prisoner's family as the prisoner may specify in that behalf for making arrangement for the execution of the personal bond and surety bond as per Form C and D respectively for securing the release:

Provided that on the written request of the convicted prisoner, the Superintendent Jail may postpone his release for a period of five days from the date of receipt of release order.

- (9) Before releasing the convicted prisoner on parole or furlough, the conditions shall be read over to and explained to him and he shall be clearly informed of the date of his surrender. Thereafter, his thumb impression and signatures shall be obtained on his release order and information regarding such release shall be sent to the authorities concerned as per Form E.

(10) The in-charge of police station concerned shall keep a watch on the conduct and activities of the convicted prisoner during the temporary release and submit a report in this regard to the Superintendent Jail through the Deputy Commissioner of Police or the Superintendent of Police as early as possible, but not later than one month.

(11) The process of deciding the application for a regular parole or furlough shall be completed by the different authorities expeditiously.

The maximum time for processing an application for a regular parole or furlough by the different authorities shall be as under: -

Superintendent Jail	One week
Deputy Commissioner of Police or Superintendent of Police	Two weeks
District Magistrate	Two weeks
Competent Authority	Two weeks

13. Power to make rules.- (1) The state govt may by notification make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act. Every rule made under this Act shall be laid , as soon as may be, after it is made, before the House of the state legislature, while it is in session

14. Repeal and savings.- The Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 1988 (28 of 1988), is hereby repealed:

Provided that such repeal shall not affect,-

- (a) the previous operation of the Act so repealed or anything duly done or suffered thereunder; or
- (b) any right, privilege, obligation or liability acquired or incurred under the Act so repealed; or
- (c) any penalty, forfeiture or punishment incurred in respect of any offence committed against the Act so repealed; or
- (d) any investigation, legal proceeding or remedy in respect of any such right, privilege, obligation, liability, penalty, forfeiture or punishment as aforesaid; and any such investigation, legal proceeding or remedy may be instituted, continued or enforced, and any such penalty, forfeiture or punishment may be imposed as if this Act had not been passed:

Provided further that anything done or any action taken under the Act so repealed shall be deemed to have been done or taken under the corresponding provisions of this Act and shall continue to be in force accordingly unless and until superseded by anything done or any action taken under this Act.

FORM A

[see section 12(1)]

(Application to be filled by a convicted prisoner or an adult member of his family for
Parole/Furlough)

1. Number and Name of the prisoner :
2. Father's Name :
3. Caste :
4. Complete Residential Address :
5. Reasons for release : Emergency Parole/Regular Parole/Furlough/Custody Parole

(Signature
impression of
the Applicant)

DECLARATION BY THE ELIGIBLE CONVICTED PRISONER

I hereby declare that I request to be released temporarily (Emergency Parole/Regular Parole/Furlough /Custody Parole) under section 30 r4 or 5 or 6 of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 2025, and on being so released shall faithfully comply with the conditions of my release.

(Signature or
thumb
impression
of the
Applicant)

(To be filled by the
Superintendent Jail)
Casual/ Hardcore

1. Number, Name and Age of the Prisoner :
2. FIR detail :
3. Full conviction detail along with fine :
4. Detail of period actually spent in jail : Year Months Days
up to the date of application (from ____ to ____)
5. Remission Earned : Year Months Days
6. Unexpired Sentence : Year Months Days
7. Details of other conviction cases, if any :
8. Details of pending cases, if any :
9. Physical and mental condition of the Prisoner:

10. Conduct in jail :
(Details of jail offences to be enclosed, if any)
11. (i)
Date when temporary release was last granted :
(ii) Date
when temporary release was last rejected :
12. Whether the Prisoner is eligible for release
as per : provisions of the Act
13. Recommendations of Superintendent Jail :
14. Any additional remarks :

Entries checked with warrant

Dated _____ Superintendent
of the Jail
_____ Jail, _

FORM B

[/seesection12(7)]

Warrant for the temporary release of prisoners

Whereas prisoner (Number, Name, Father's Name and Address) at present confined in ----Jail,----under warrant dated----- (date of conviction) of---- (name of sentencing court) has applied for his temporary release under section 3 or 4 or 5 of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 2025;

And where as the releasing authority is satisfied that the applicant is entitled to be released under the Act;

Now, therefore, Releasing Authority hereby authorise the temporary release of the said prisoner from custody on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough for a period of _ (period of release) subject to the conditions specified below: –

(1) _____ The prisoner shall during the period of his temporary release reside at _____ (complete address). He shall not without obtaining the prior permission of the District Magistrate visit any place not specified in the release warrant during the said period.

(2) At the time of his release on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough, the prisoner shall give to the District Magistrate _____ full particulars of the place where he intends to reside during the period of his temporary release and shall keep the District Magistrate informed of any subsequent changes of his residence during the said period.

(3) The prisoner shall during the period of temporary release keep peace and maintain good behavior.

(4) After the expiry of the said period of (period of release) for which the prisoner has been temporary released on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough, the said prisoner shall surrender himself to the Superintendent Jail from which he is so released to undergo the unexpired period of his sentence.

(5) The prisoner shall before his release on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough furnish to the satisfaction of the District Magistrate, a personal bond and (number of sureties) in the sum of Rs. _____ (Rupees _____) (in words) each for faithful observance of the conditions specified in the release warrant.

(6) When the surety furnished becomes insolvent or dies, the State Government may order the prisoner to furnish fresh surety immediately and if such surety is not furnished, the State Government may proceed as if there had been a non-compliance of the conditions of this order.

(7) In addition to the action under sub-sections (2) and (3) of section 9 and section 10 of this Act, the amount of bond shall stand forfeited to the State Government in case any condition of the bond is not fulfilled.

Given under my hand this _____ day of _____

SEAL

Signature of the Releasing Authority

Endst. No.

Dated

A copy is forwarded to :-

- (1) The Superintendent Jail, _____ Jail _____ for necessary action.
- (2) The District Magistrate, _____ for execution and necessary action.
- (3) The Superintendent of Police, _____ with the direction to keep a close watch on the activities of the said prisoner during the temporary release.

Signature of the Releasing
Authority

I _____ son of _____ hereby acknowledge receipt of the above warrant and understand the conditions specified in the above warrant of release and I accept them.

Signature and thumb impression of the
Prisoner.

FORM C
[see section 12(8)]
Personal Bond of the Prisoner

In the Court of the District Magistrate, _____

This bond is made on the _____ by _____ (Number, Name, Father's Name and address)
Whereas the Releasing Authority is pleased to order my release on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough for a period of _____ (period of release) under section 3 or 4 or 5 of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 2025, on conditions of my furnishing a personal bond and a surety bond, each for a sum of Rs. _____ to observe the condition specified below.

Now, therefore, I do hereby bind myself to faithfully observe all the conditions mentioned here below and in case of my making default in observing any of them, I bind myself to forfeit the State Government the sum of Rs. ____.

(1) I shall during the period of my temporary release reside at _____ (complete address) and shall not without obtaining the permission of the District Magistrate, _____, visit any place not specified in the release warrant.

(2) I shall during the period of my temporary release keep peace and maintain good behavior.

(3) After the expiry of the period of _____ (period of release) for which I have been temporarily released, I shall surrender myself to the Superintendent Jail, _____ Jail, _____ to undergo the unexpired period of my sentence.

(4) In case my sureties become insolvent or dies, I shall furnish fresh security immediately.

Signature and thumb impression of the Prisoner

Accepted for and on
behalf of the Releasing
Authority.

FORM D
[see section 12(8)]
Surety Bond

In the Court of the District Magistrate, _

This Bond is made on the _____ by _____
(1st surety) and _____ (2nd Surety) (hereinafter collectively referred to
as the "Sureties"). (Number of sureties as decided by the releasing authority);

Whereas the releasing authority is pleased to order the release of _ (Number,
Name, Father's Name and address of the prisoner) (hereinafter referred to as the
"prisoner") on emergency parole/regular parole/furlough for a period of _ Weeks) under
section 3 or 4 or 5 of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act,
2025, on the condition of the prisoner furnishing a bond as well as a surety bond each for
the sum of Rs. _____ to observe the conditions
on which the prisoner has been temporarily released;

And whereas the prisoner has on __ (date of execution of personal bond of the
prisoner) executed a personal bond for the sum of Rs. _____ to observe the
conditions specified therein.

Now, therefore, the sureties jointly and severally do hereby bind themselves to
forfeit to State Government the sum of Rs. _____. In case the prisoner makes a default in
observing any of the conditions specified in the warrant for temporary release.

Signature of the First Surety.

Signature of the Second Surety.

Accepted for and on
Behalf of the Releasing Authority

FORM E

[see section 12(9)]

Certificate of conditional release

In exercise of the powers conferred by section 3/4/5 of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act, 2025, the Releasing Authority, subject to conditions hereinafter set forth, hereby directs the release of prisoner _____ (Number, Name, Father's Name and Address of the prisoner), at present confined in, Jail, _____, for _____ (period of release) in pursuance of warrant, dated _____ (date of warrant of Releasing Authority). He has been permitted to visit the below noted places following the specified route:-

Proceed from _____ Jail, _____, to _____
(full address) Return from _____ (full address) to _____
Jail, _____ Conditions to be observed by the released prisoner:-

1. The prisoner shall proceed forth with to _____ (full address).
2. He shall report back to _____ Jail, _____ on (date and time of surrender).
3. He shall not proceed to any place other than those he has been authorised to visit.
4. He shall keep peace and maintain good behavior during the period of his temporary release.
5. If in the opinion of Releasing Authority, he is found to have committed a breach of any of these conditions, it may cancel his release warrant and direct his re-admission to the jail.

It is certified that the conditions specified in the above said temporary release warrant have been read over to the prisoner, he understands and acknowledge them and admit that he is being temporarily released on the above mentioned conditions.

I received directions to be present at Jail, _____ on _____ (date of surrender).

Thumb impression of the
Prisoner

I believe that the prisoner understands the conditions and acknowledge them.

Attested

Date of temporary Release: (_____)

Deputy Superintendent Prison
_____, Jail, _____

No.

Dated

A copy of the above is forwarded to the following for information and further necessary action please: -

1. The Divisional Commissioner, _____ Division, w.r.t. _____ (Release Warrant).
2. The District Magistrate, _____ w.r.t. _____ (orders regarding acceptance of

sureties).(Personal bond and surety bonds of the prisoner are enclosed).

3. The Superintendent of Police, _____ with a request to direct the concerned SHO to keep a close watch on activities of said prisoner during the period of temporary release.
4. S.H.O.P.S., _____ District, _____. A close watch shall be kept on activities of said prisoner during the period of temporary release and submit a report as per sub-section 10 of Section 12 of the Act.

Superintendent Jail,
_____ Jail, _____.

_____,
Administrative Secretary to
Government, Karnataka, Law
and Legislative Department.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The existing legislative framework of prison rules , including the Karnataka Prisons Act 1963, needs consolidation and modernisation in the public interest. The main objective of the Karnataka Good Conduct Prisoners (Temporary Release) Act 2025 is to provide for the temporary release of convicted prisoners based on good conduct, under specified conditions.

Objectives:

- To allow certain convicted prisoners an opportunity for temporary release (such as parole or furlough) if they demonstrate good behaviour during their imprisonment.
- To regulate the terms, conditions, and eligibility for such temporary release to ensure it is not misused and that public interest and security are not compromised
- To consolidate previous amendments and rules into a single, updated legislative framework tailored to the Karnataka prison administration.

Reasons for Enactment:

- The existing consolidation and modernization in the public interest.
- It was deemed necessary to clarify and streamline the criteria for parole/furlough, making the process more transparent and systematic.
- The Act intends to incentivize good conduct among prisoners, facilitate their social reintegration, and support their family ties, while setting appropriate checks to prevent abuse (e.g., exclusions for so-called "hardcore prisoners" and certain serious offences).

THE KARNATAKA ROAD SAFETY (PROHIBITION OF HAZARDOUS STUNTS AND WHEELING) BILL, 2025

A BILL to prohibit dangerous stunts and reckless wheeling on public roads, aimed at safeguarding public safety and well-being, and addressing related matters connected or incidental to these concerns.

Be it enacted by the Karnataka State Legislature in the Seventy-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:

CHAPTER I PRELIMINARY

1. Short Title, Extent and Commencement.- (1) This legislation shall be referred to as the Karnataka Road Safety (Prohibition of Hazardous Stunts and Wheeling) Act, 2025.

(2) The provisions of this Act shall apply throughout the entire State of Karnataka, encompassing all regions and communities therein.

(3) This Act shall take effect on a date to be determined and publicly announced by the State Government through a formal notification in the Official Gazette.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,-

(a) A “hazardous stunt” refers to any daring act that involves acrobatics, intricate tricks, or reckless driving executed on a moving vehicle on a public roadway, which poses a significant risk to the safety of the driver, passengers, and the surrounding public.

(b) “Wheeling” specifically denotes the intentional act of lifting one or more wheels of a two-wheeler or four-wheeler off the ground while the vehicle is in motion on a public road, creating a striking spectacle that compromises stability.

(c) The term “public road” encompasses any thoroughfare, including roads, streets, lanes, footpaths, and open spaces that are accessible to the general populace, serving as conduits for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

(d) “Vehicle” is defined as any motorised conveyance as stipulated under the Motor Vehicles Act of 1988, encompassing a broad array of transportation means designed for use on public roadways.

CHAPTER II PROHIBITIONS AND OFFENCE

3. Prohibition of Hazardous Stunts and Wheeling.- No person shall perform or abet the performance of hazardous stunts or wheeling on any public road or place accessible to the public.

The term “person” includes a pillion rider who abets the performance of hazardous stunts or wheeling.

4. Prohibition of Recording and Promotion.- No person shall record, stream, or disseminate videos or images of hazardous stunts or wheeling with the intent of promoting or glorifying such acts on social media or any public platform.

5. Penalty for Violation.- (1) Any person found guilty of contravening Section 3 or Section 4 shall be punished,-

(a) For the first offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs. 50,000 (Rs. Fifty Thousand) or with both.

(b) For a second or subsequent offence, with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and a fine which may extend to Rs 1,00,000 (Rs. one Lakh only)

(2) In addition to the above penalties,-

(i) The driving license of the offender shall be suspended for a period of not less than six months.

(ii) The vehicle involved in the offence shall be seized and may be subject to impoundment for a period not exceeding 1 year in total.

CHAPTER III ENFORCEMENT AND PROCEDURE

6. Powers of Police Officers.-(1) Any police officer holding a rank of Sub-Inspector or higher shall possess the authority to confiscate any vehicle believed to be engaged in dangerous stunts or reckless wheeling activities.

(2) The police may use video surveillance, traffic cameras, and other technological means to identify and prosecute offenders.

(3)The provisions of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 shall be applied with respect to all procedures including the powers of investigation, seizure and imposition of penalty.

7. Jurisdiction and Cognizance.- Offences under this Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable and prosecuted before the appropriate Magistrate.

CHAPTER IV MISCELLANEOUS

8. Awareness and Education Programs.- (a)The State Government shall, at regular intervals, organize comprehensive road safety awareness programs aimed at enlightening young individuals about the perils associated with dangerous stunts and reckless driving behaviors. These initiatives will focus on fostering a deep understanding of traffic safety, promoting responsible driving habits, and ultimately, safeguarding our youth from the severe consequences of risky road conduct.

9. Protection of Action Taken in Good Faith.- No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against any officer or authority for anything done in good faith under this Act.

10. Power to make rules.- (1) The State Government may by notification in the official gazette make rules to carryout the purposes of this Act.

(2) Every rule made under this Act shall be laid as soon as may be after it is made before each House of the State Legislature while it is in session for a total period of thirty days, which may be comprised in one session or in two or more successive sessions.

11. Removal of difficulties.- (1) If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the State Government may by order published in the Official Gazette, do anything

not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act which appears to it to be necessary to remove the difficulty:

Provided that no order shall be made under this section after expiry of two years from the date of commencement of this Act.

12. Repeal and Savings.- If any provision in any other law in force in Karnataka is inconsistent with this Act, the provisions of this Act shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Reckless road behaviour, characterised by dangerous stunts and reckless driving, has tragically resulted in countless injuries and fatalities, especially among the youth in Karnataka. In response to this alarming trend, this Bill aims to tackle such irresponsible actions head-on by criminalizing them, instituting strict penalties, and fostering public awareness campaigns. The ultimate goal is to promote a culture of road safety that protects all citizens, encouraging responsible driving habits and making our roads safer for everyone.

The government of Karnataka is committed to prevent road accidents and reckless road stunts such as wheeling.

Hence this Bill.