An attempt to demoralise scientists

Joyce

The All-India Committee of the Breakthrough Science Society is displeased with the scrapping of over a hundred awards in science and technology by the Union Government. They argued that such a measure stands to demoralise the scientific community and weaken the pursuit of science in India.

The awards were given to faculty and scientists who excelled in scientific research and encouraged young scientists to aspire for a higher degree of excellence. The Centre's decision to do away with the awards came on September 16 when Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla chaired a meeting to rationalise the process of selection for the awards, which followed PM Narendra Modi's direction to make the selection procedure for the awards transparent.

Speaking to The Beacon, the general secretary of the All India Committee of Breakthrough Science Society, Soumitro Banerjee, said the scrapping of the awards is a part of the collective decision of undermining the science and technology community. Earlier the funds for the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) were scrapped, and the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana (KVPY) scheme was slashed, instructing the scientific institutions to increase fees. The GST on scientific equipment was hiked from 5% to 18%. The Centre has allocated a meagre in the GDP for science and technology, he said.

"As a result of this curtailment policy, the younger scientist will not have enthusiasm towards science," he said.
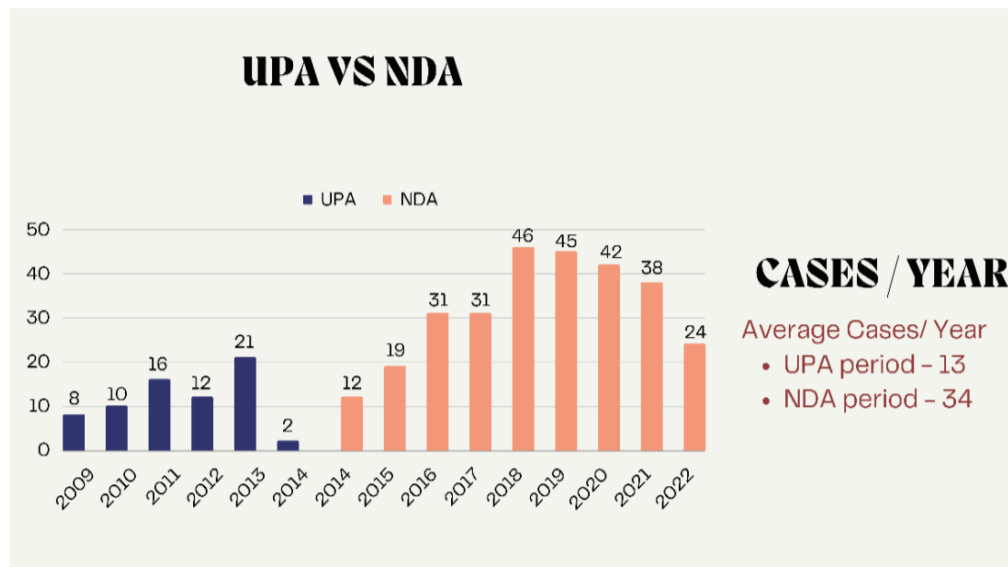
UAPA : A sordid tale of fabricated cases

Chandrasoodeshwar

A recent report on the status of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) claims that the number of cases under the Modi regime has increased 400 per cent as compared to that of Manmohan Singh's UPA-II. Most of the cases are fabricated by the state and the by the time the case ends and the accused is acquitted, they would have spent a decade languishing in jail, the report claimed.

The PUCL released a study on September 28, titled "UAPA: Criminalising Dissent and State terror" on the use and abuse of the UAPA law based on the NCRB report from 2009 till now.

The primary anti-terror law in India existing today is the UAPA which was passed

Representation of cases from 2009 - 2022   source: PUCL

in the aftermath of the terrorist assault in Mumbai in November 2008. A new law, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act, 2008, was approved to deal with terrorist crimes in addition to amendments to UAPA that made it more stringent. The NIA is directly supervised by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and has sweeping powers, said the report.

"The NIA prosecutions were examined in terms of the number of UAPA cases filed in the UPA and the NDA period. 69 UAPA cases were registered by the NIA when Manmohan Singh – led UPA regime was in power (2009 to May 2014), whereas 288 UAPA cases were registered in the Narendra Modi – led era (May 2014 to Continuing). The average number of UAPA cases registered per year by the NIA during the UPA regime (2009 – May 2014) is 13. In contrast, during the NDA regime (May 2014 – Continuing) the average number of cases registered per year is 34," it stated.

Speaking to The Beacon a senior Lawyer Arvind Narain said, "As we see the report that so many are charged with false accusations, even though it's a false accusation, a large majority of them are in jail for 10 years before getting released."

People detained under the UAPA wait years or even decades in jail before their trials may start. By the time they are released, the damage is already done, says the report.

Support pours in for Bihar girl shamed by IAS officer

Anjela

IAS officer Harjot Kaur Bamrah's derogatory remark last week has invited a severe backlash across the nation with activists demanding an unconditional apology and a few pointing out that this would further muffle the meek voices of girls on menstrual health.

The outrage was in reaction to Bamrah's response to the appeal of Riya Kumari, a 20-year-old student from Bihar, who asked the government to provide sanitary napkins in schools at an affordable price. "Tomorrow, you can ask for jeans, then beautiful shoes, and finally, when it comes to family planning, you can say the government should give condoms too," she said. The comment was made while addressing a workshop in Patna, 'Sashakt Beti, Samriddh Bihar'.

Condemning the statement of Bamrah, Amit Kumar, a member of Seva Bharat, a Patna-based NGO, said that the IAS officer shouldn't have spoken in such a disparaging tone without understanding the context of the question posed by the student. "Even today sanitary pads are not available in many villages, and even if they are available, they are not available at affordable prices," he said.

Anupriya, a woman activist working under Seva Kendra, said, "The position of an IAS officer is very reputable and asks for certain responsibilities. So, if such derogatory comments are received from them, people will step back from asking questions because they'll know how their genuine questions would be answered."

What we could expect from men if a woman says such things, she questioned. "Being a woman, it is wrong to pass such comments. She compared an essential need with that of fashion."

This incident has kindled a wave of support for girls, says Kumar. "It has already sparked a revolution. The girl recently received an offer of free sanitary pads and free education from a Delhi-based organisation. Instances like these lead to the betterment of society, especially girls. This will inspire other girls who were demotivated by the response or more specifically are ashamed, shy or restricted to talk on such issues to get up and stand against what is wrong and to stand for their own rights," said Kumar.

Will Metaverse dawn a new era?

Abhirami

Bengaluru: Metaverse banking is a game-changer in the field of banking. Ambika, manager in Pragati Gramina Bank.

Virtual reality has already been a part of banking. As VR headsets are getting cheaper, this technology has the potential to revolutionise banking transactions.

The idea of a persistent, online, 3D universe that integrates many virtual locations is known as a "metaverse." It can be compared to the internet in the far future. Thanks to the metaverse, users will be able to collaborate, interact, mingle, and play together in these 3D places. It might be a virtual setting where one's creativity is the only limit.

"Technology has changed the way banking functioned over the years. Metaverse in banking will add to the efficiency with which financing works," said Ambika, Manager of Pragati Gramina Bank in an interview with The Beacon. In virtual worlds, financial institutions can develop novel client experiences and product offerings. In a metaverse setting, transactions that were previously impossible or prohibitively expensive to conduct become possible.

RBI's new layer of protection

Kavya. S

To improve the digital payment experience and offer an additional layer of protection in online payments, the RBI has introduced a new system in which the credit and debit card details are replaced with tokens.

The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) card-on-file (CoF) tokenization regulations came into operation on Saturday, October 1, and seeks to enhance the security and safety of card transactions. From now on, the payment gateways or merchants won't be able to store the card information such as the CVV and expiry date of the customers for online transactions.

Tokenization is the process of replacing actual card information with a one-of-a-kind alternate code called "token". In case of an online transaction, a unique token will be saved on the server in place of the card information. The merchant or transaction platform sends a message to Visa, Mastercard, or a payment gateway, which requests a token for that card number and then sends it to the bank to approve the transaction. Only the authorised card network is able to tokenize the cards. Tokenization of cards can be availed by the customers free of cost. The tokenization facility is available on mobile phones, laptops, desktops, Internet of Things devices and wearable devices. "There is not much fraud happening right now in online transactions because of security reasons such as OTP (one-time password). But if the RBI is making it even simpler with technology, then it's a good decision, said Ambika, Bank manager at the Pragathi Grameena bank.

'Support is conditional'

Parnika and Meghana

Bengaluru: The intellectuals of Karnataka have extended "conditional" support for the Bharat Jodo Yatra of the Congress that entered the state on September 30. While they throw their weight behind the grand old party on communal harmony, they are sceptical of its neo-liberal policies and track record on corruption.

The 21-day campaign began in Gundlupet, located on the border of Kerala, on September 30 and is led by the Congress party leader, Rahul Gandhi.

Dr B Manjunath, a freelance journalist and an intellectual speaking to The Beacon, said, an atmosphere of fear has engulfed the country.

"We see trying to impose dress code in the name of Love Jihad; boys and girls are scared that somebody will come to beat us, this sort of atmosphere is there our country in last few years." However, he expressed that Congress and the BJP follow the same economic policies. "I would very much oppose the BJP's politics of division. When it comes to economic policies, both parties are the same," he said.