A Convention of CMs

Why in news?

The Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have jointly proposed a convention of non-BJP Chief Ministers.

What is the backdrop for proposing such a convention?

- West Bengal- The Governor Dhankhar has been accused of summoning the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police on a regular basis
- When they do not turn up, he takes up the matter to Twitter often tagging the Chief Minister.
- Mr. Dhankhar also had a run-in with Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee recently, on the premises of the State Assembly.
- He has withheld assent to the Howrah Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill 2021, delaying polls to the civic body.
- He has made allegations of impropriety in welfare schemes and has questioned the Government claims about investments in the State.
- **Tamil Nadu-** Governor R.N. Ravi has not acted upon the T.N. Admission to Undergraduate Medical Degree Courses Bill, adopted by the Assembly in September 2021.
- The Governor is required to either send it to the President of India for approval or return it for reconsideration by the Assembly, but the indefinite delay in taking a decision is undermining the legislature.

To know more about the tussle between Governor and Chief Minister, click here

What is the convention about?

- The initiative is still nascent and there is no clear agenda but the political context is very clear.
- Relations between the Centre and the States ruled by Opposition parties are strained due to various factors such as
    - questions related to GST
    - the partisan behaviour of central agencies
    - the Centre's move to give itself absolute powers in the transfer of IAS, IPS and IFS officers
    - the overbearing attitude of several Governors
- The relations among States are also worrying in many instances as the Centre's moral authority to be a neutral arbiter is at a low.

What are the implications of such initiatives?

- The tendency to mobilise political support in one State by criticising other States seems to have acquired an additional edge.
- This is added with the BJP drawing its support from the northern and western regions, while the Opposition holds on to the southern region in general.

- A communal angle is occasionally added, as Uttar Pradesh CM did last week in branding West Bengal, Kerala or Kashmir, apparently for the high levels of political power enjoyed by Muslims there.
- In Parliament recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had a heated debate on the scope and limits of Indian federalism.

What about the autonomy of the States in relations with the Centre?

- The autonomy of the States in their relations with the Centre depends on the nature of power sharing among them.
- When the government at the Centre is dependent on regional parties for survival, it is more accommodative towards the aspirations of constituent groups.
    - For instance, the 2014 victory of the current ruling party brought an end to the coalition era that had lasted for 25 years.
- Individual factors of power politics play a vital role. It includes
    - the DMK's anxiety to protect its social justice politics from the Centre's unilateralism
    - the Shiv Sena's determination to protect its turf from the former ally's persistent encroachment attempts
- A convention of the CMs can articulate the concerns of States but it should guard against turning into an occasion for electoral calculations.

Reference

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/centre-of-the-debate/article65050621.ece

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