Centre’s J&K Outreach - India’s Kashmir Policy

Why in news?

The Union Home Secretary has extended invitation to the leadership of the J&K-based political parties to discuss on the Kashmir issue.

What is the significance?

- On August 5, 2019, the State of J&K was stripped of its special constitutional status and dismembered into two Union Territories.
- The Prime Minister has now decided to meet 14 party leaders from the Union Territory.
- It includes those who were incarcerated for opposing the Centre's move.
- [The leaders of mainstream parties, including former CMs, were jailed after 2019.]
- This will be the first political engagement since the August 5 move.
- The decision signals a revival of the political process in Jammu and Kashmir.
- It demonstrates a desirable flexibility in the Centre’s approach towards resolving the Kashmir issue.

Why now?

- The political environment has changed since the 2019 move.
- The Joe Biden administration is eager to end the U.S. entanglement in Afghanistan.
- It is also keen of resisting China’s attempts to dominate the world.
- India is in a stand-off with China on the border.
- The Biden administration is publicly disapproving of India’s Kashmir policy.
- Pakistan is also trying to reclaim its strategic advantage.
- Besides, the mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic has dented India’s global image.
- This has triggered new political challenges domestically.
- All these make rigidity less rewarding in India’s Kashmir policy and call for a flexible approach.

What is the way forward?

- The Centre must now engage the political parties in good faith and with an open mind.

- Corruption investigations in Kashmir, legitimate as they may be, must not be used to debase politics itself.
- Efforts to tackle corruption and pilferage should not amount to furthering instability in J&K.
- There is no clear agenda for the meeting and a sense of betrayal prevails among Kashmiris.
- So, any hope of a quick resolution to the frozen political questions is not realistic.
- Nevertheless, it could be a beginning towards a durable and democratic resolution of the Kashmir question.

Source: The Hindu

