Constant Vigilance - Threats in Kashmir

What is the issue?

- The Delhi Police arrested five suspected terrorists, two of whom were allegedly involved in the recent killing of Shaurya Chakra winner Balwinder Singh in Punjab.
- This has made reflections of the long dead and buried Khalistan movement.

What is the Khalistan movement all about?

- Khalistan movement is a Sikh separatist movement.
- Its aim is to create a separate country called Khalistan in Punjab, as a homeland for Sikhs.
- The movement is long dead with the neutralisation of the threat and the ending of the Punjab insurgency in the early 1990s.
- It has lost support from the Sikh community within India and the Sikh diaspora across the world.
- Overall, attempts to revive the movement from fringe groups have failed.
- The killing of Balwinder Singh is one of a few isolated and sporadic incidents that have occurred in the last decade.
    - A communist, Singh was against religious radicalisation and opposed the Khalistani movement.
    - He has fought against Khalistani militants in the state for years.
    - He trained his family to use arms and fight militants.

What is the need for caution?

- The Delhi police have claimed that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is seeking yet again to link up terror outfits in Kashmir with pro-Khalistan activists.
    - Three of the others among the five arrested were from Kashmir.
- These claims need to be investigated before any conclusion can be made about the presence of a link.
- Also, there is no truth in the allegation that there are pro-Khalistani sections as part of the large-scale protests led by farmers in Punjab.
- Nevertheless, the central government should not take the threat lightly.
- Notably, agencies such as the ISI have not stopped trying to stir up such violence.

- They are doing it either directly by funding fringe sections or by linking them with terror groups in Kashmir.
- Security agencies must therefore remain vigilant.

What are the other threats in Kashmir?

- Even if the Khalistan movement is no more, the threat of terror in Kashmir remains well and truly active.
- Terror incidents and fatalities since the revoking of special status and statehood for J&K in 2019 have remained high.
- Many of these incidents have occurred due to acts of terror emanating from within the Union Territory.
- However, infiltration of terrorists from Pakistan continues as well.
- This is also correlated with the increased ceasefire violations at both the Line of Control and the International Border.

What next?

- The pause in terror activities and the relative peace in the Valley from 2011 to 2015 are now a thing of the past.
- Renewed violence besides disaffection has become a new normal, even if they have not reached the high levels of the 1990s and the early 2000s.
- The persisting disaffection in the Valley can only be addressed by a new political process.
- It must seek to review the unilateral changes made to the region's status.

Source: The Hindu

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