Demand for sixth schedule in Ladakh

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Indian Polity and governance*

Why in News?

The Union government has revoked the detention of activist Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act (NSA), nearly 6 months after his arrest amid the Ladakh movement seeking statehood and protections under the Sixth Schedule.

- **Sixth Schedule – Articles 244(2) and 275(1)** provides autonomous governance to tribal areas through ***Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)***.
- **Objectives –** Protect tribal identity, land, and customs and ensure self-governance.
- **Applicable areas -** Applicable Only in Northeast India – *Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram.*
- **Key Features of Sixth Schedule –**

1.Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)	**30 members (26 elected + 4 nominated by Governor)**
2. Legislative Powers	Land, forests (except reserved), customs, marriage, inheritance. Requires **Governor's assent**
3. Judicial Powers	Village courts for customary law disputes.
4.Financial Powers	Levy taxes, collect land revenue.
5. Limited Applicability of Laws	Parliament/State laws apply only with modifications.

Sixth Schedule demand in Ladakh

- **Demographic Argument –** 97% population are Scheduled Tribes.
- **Post-2019 Concerns –** After abrogation of **Article 370**, fear of *Land*

alienation, Job competition, Cultural dilution.

- **Environmental Protection** – Fragile Himalayan-glacial ecosystem needs local control.
- **Demand for Greater Autonomy** – Existing councils lack legislative & judicial powers.

Existing Governance in Ladakh

- Union Territory without legislature.
- **Two councils -** Leh Autonomous Hill Development Council and Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council, statutory bodies, not constitutional (unlike ADCs).

Government's Current Approach

- Instead of Sixth Schedule, Centre proposes:
- **Reservation & Domicile –**Up to **85% reservation** and **15-year domicile rule**.
- **Article 371-Type -** Safeguards like Article 371A and Article 371G
- **Strengthening Hill Councils** –More administrative & financial powers.
- Proposal for new councils in new districts.
- **Cultural Protection –** Recognition of local languages (Bhoti, Purgi etc.)

Quick Facts

- **Disputed Areas in Ladakh**
  - **Indo - China Border –** Aksai Chin, the Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Depsang Plains, Demchok, and the Gogra-Hot Springs region.
  - **India - Pakistan Border** – Shaksgam Valley, Siachen Glacier

References

1. The Indian Express | Sixth Schedule in Ladakh
2. Ministry of External Affairs| Sixth Schedule

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering