Handwara Encounter - Worrying Trend

What is the issue?

- Five security personnel and two unidentified militants were killed during an anti-militancy operation in north Kashmir's Handwara area.
- Encounters in Kashmir are on the rise, taking a disproportionate toll on security personnel.

What happened in Handwara area?

- It was an 18-hour anti-militancy operation near Handwara town in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district.
- Intelligence suggested that terrorists were present in a house in Changimulla village.
- On this, the security personnel reached the site which had a building and a cowshed adjoining it.
- An intense firefight commenced.
- All the enemy fire came from the cowshed, not the building.
- Then there was a lull for more than an hour during which the team apparently decided to approach the house.
- They decided to use the vantage of the upper floor to fire at the terrorists in the cowshed.
- They entered the house and there was a fresh firefight but no communication from the Colonel and his team.
- Then it was noticed that their communication instrument was being used by the terrorists.
- That is when realisation came all was not well, and firing ensued all over again.

Why is it a cause of worry?

- The five security personnel who were dead include -
  i. a Commanding Officer of a battalion in the rank of a colonel
  ii. a major
  iii. two other ranks
  iv. a special operations group policeman in the rank of a sub inspector

- The details on the attack are unclear, yet provide compelling evidence of an operation that went horribly wrong.
- It is unusual and disproportionate for just a couple of terrorists to take down five highly skilled and motivated soldiers.
- The way this operation ended will have ramifications.
- It might affect both morale and operating procedures, on future operations of this kind.

What does this imply?

- Evidently, changing the nomenclature and status of J&K has not addressed any of the underlying causes of unrest and angst.
- Neither has it deterred Pakistan from its steadfast goals.
- Since the beginning of the year 2020, in 127 days, as many as 55 terrorists have been killed in the region.
- Such encounters have only aided the impulse of the disaffected to embrace arms.
- As the dangerous drift in J&K continues, New Delhi must realise the implications and look for ways to arrest this trend.

Source: The Hindu

