Ladakh's Demand on Gilgit-Baltistan

Why in news?

The people of Ladakh, a Union Territory in India have raised a serious of demands including the territorial control of Ladakh up to Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Ladakh
• Ladakh is a region in the northernmost part of India, bordering China, Pakistan and Tibet. • It was a part of the Kashmir division of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. • **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019-** The Centre ended the special constitutional position of the region provided to it under ***Article 370.*** • Jammu and Kashmir bifurcated into • J&K, an UT with a Legislative Assembly • Ladakh, an UT without an Assembly • **Hill councils**- There are two hill councils namely • Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council-Kargil (LAHDC) and • LAHDC-Leh. • **Power of hill council-** They have limited powers over local administration, such as health, education, tourism, agriculture and rural development. • Ladakh is a Muslim-majority UT, with the Leh district dominated by Buddhists and Kargil by Shia Muslims. • The region witnessed a divided reaction to the Centre's moves to abrogate Article 370 and 35A, provisions that granted exclusive rights to locals over land, jobs and natural resources. • Leh for many decades, supported the demand for UT status. However, Kargil, after the events of 2019, has been insisting on reunification with Kashmir.

What are the latest demands of Ladakh?

- **Restore statehood**- They have been demanding that Ladakh be restored to a full-fledged state, with its own elected representatives and law-making powers.
- **Constitutional safeguards**- They have also been seeking safeguards to protect their unique culture, language and environment from the influx of outsiders and investors.
- **Special status**- Ladakh demanding special status under Sixth Schedule and Article 371 of the Constitution of India which would grant autonomy and protection to certain tribal and backward regions in the country.

  - Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution is a special provision for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
  - Article 371 deals with 12 states for better governance and political administrations.

- **Power to have autonomous councils**- The special status would allow the

autonomous councils which can make laws on matter such as land, forest, agriculture, education, health and culture.

- **Representation**- Before the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh had four seats in the assembly and two seats in the legislative council, the upper house of the state which now has only one seat in the Lok Sabha and no seat in Rajya Sabha.
- **Protect environment**- Ladakh is one of the most ecologically fragile and sensitive areas in the world, and that opening it up to outsiders and outside investment will have adverse effects on the environment and the biodiversity.
- **Ladakh Public Service Commission**- They demanded to create a separate commission for the recruitment of gazetted jobs, so that they have exclusive rights over recruitment.
- **Empower hill councils**- They should have the power to recruit lower rung staff for the region.
- **Domicile recruitment**- The Ladakh resident certificate should be the only basis for applying for these jobs in the region.
- **Territorial expansion**- Ladakh wants the central government of India to assert its sovereignty over this area and integrate it with Ladakh

Why extension of territorial control?

Ladakh has a historical and strategic claim over the Gilgit-Baltistan area, which is currently under the control of Pakistan.

- Prior to 1947, the Ladakh district also comprised the Gilgit-Baltistan area, which is now under the occupation of Pakistan.
- **Reservation-** It demanded reservation of seats for Gilgit-Baltistan once a legislature is granted to the region.
- **Security-** Ladakh also shares a long but volatile Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China which witnessed a violent face-off between two countries in 2020.
- **Empower locals**- The territorial extension will foster stability in the region which would enhance foreign policy, they know the harsh terrain of Ladakh and has helped in military and logistics operations.
- **G Kishan Reddy committee**- It was formed in 2022 to find an appropriate solution to the issues related to language, culture and conservation of land in Ladakh, but failed to arrive at a solution.
- **High power Ladakh committee**- It was headed by Nityanand Rai, to engage with the stakeholders of Ladakh.
- The committee recommended for more constructive dialogue between India and Ladakh over the list of demands.

Reference

[The Hindu- Ladakh’s demand on Gilgit Baltistan]



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering