‘Militant-free’ Baramulla - Significance and Challenges

Why in news?

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North Kashmir's Baramulla district has become the first police district in the Valley to be militant-free.

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Who is a militant in police records?

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- A militant is a person who has picked up a weapon and has joined a militant group fighting against the state.
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- The district police categorises militants according to their involvement in militancy-related activities, with categories as A++, A+, A, B, and C.
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- The killing of a militant in each category carries a different monetary reward and incentives.
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What is the achievement in Baramulla?

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- Three militants were killed in an encounter in the Baramulla police district recently.
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- With this, Baramulla has become the first police district in the Valley that no longer has any militants. (There are 13 police districts in Kashmir.)
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- When there is no militant listed as active in police records, the district would be deemed militant-free.

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- As with Baramulla, there is nobody in police record who is a militant either in the district, or any militant who belongs from Baramulla and is active in any other district.
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- There were efforts by police to dismantle the base of militant support and also to prevent people from joining militant ranks.
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- The developments leave hope for further consolidation of peace building efforts together by police and public.
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What are the challenges ahead?

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- According to security agencies, there are close to 300 active militants in the Valley at present.
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- The four South Kashmir districts of Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag have the highest number of active militants.
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- A large number, including many foreign militants, are active in North Kashmir as well.
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- Moreover, indigenous militancy spiked after the killing of Hizbul commander Burhan Wani in 2016.
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- This is the first time since the beginning of the current phase of renewed militancy that the police have claimed of freeing a district entirely of militants.
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- Earlier in 2008, police had declared Kulgam militancy-free, but that situation, however, did not last.
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- **Baramulla** is close to the Line of control (LoC), and neighbours the districts of Sopore, Handwara, Kupwara, Budgam and Bandipora, all of which have a significant presence of militants.
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- In the town of Sopore, which is under Baramulla district (administrative), 10 local militants are currently active, as per police records.
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- So there is a possibility of militants from neighbouring areas moving to Baramulla.
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- The presence of overground workers (OGWs) and militant sympathisers who could help to recruit for militant outfits also remains a challenge.
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Source: Indian Express

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