OIC Statement on Kashmir

Why in news?

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a statement calling on India to repeal its actions revoking Article 370 on Kashmir.

What is OIC?

- The OIC describes itself as “the collective voice of the Muslim world”.
- Its objective is to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world.
- It is the 2nd largest inter-governmental organisation in the world after the UN, with a membership of 57 states in 4 continents.
- It has reserved its membership for Muslim-majority countries.
- Russia, Thailand, and a couple of other small countries have Observer status.
- India is neither a member nor an observer.
- [However, India's External Affairs Minister was invited to address the OIC’s 2019 meet as the “Guest of Honour”.]

What is the statement?

- Saudi Arabia joined Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Niger to issue a statement on behalf of the OIC Kashmir contact group.
- In the statement issued, the group asked the Indian government to rescind its unilateral illegal actions in Kashmir.
- It also asked India to reiterate its commitment to abide by the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.
- India was also asked to provide assurances that it will not change the occupied territory’s demographic composition and not allow non-Kashmiris to acquire property or residency in J&K.
- The other demands included halting the human rights violations in J&K, repealing the draconian emergency laws, and withdrawing heavy military presence.

What is India’s stance?

- India, though not a part of the OIC, has the second largest numbers of Muslims in the world.
- There are perhaps more Muslims in India than in Pakistan and some of its most ardent backers put together.

- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) did not respond to the statement from the organisation.
- MEA has routinely dismissed any comments on what it considers India's "internal matter".
- Notably, from the mid-1990s, when this Contact Group was formed, it has issued several statements against India on behalf of Pakistan.

Why does India ignore the statement?

- The OIC achieved little other than pleasing Pakistan through its Kashmir pronouncements.
- It is also extremely doubtful if the statement issued by the Contact Group reflects faithfully the national positions of the individual member states.
- [For instance, the UAE conferred its highest civilian award, the Order of Zayed, on Indian PM Modi, more than a week after India's moves on Art 370.
- UAE also declared that Kashmir was India's internal matter.]
- Also, the OIC's record of conflict resolution when it comes to issues between OIC member states has been poor.
- The organisation, constituted on religious lines, but seeking to fulfill geopolitical interests, needs reforms from within.

What lies ahead?

- It serves no useful purpose for the OIC to paint Kashmir in communal and religious political colours.
- Pakistan should change its state policy on terrorism and ensure that it abjures support to Kashmir-centric groups such as the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Taiba.
- Meanwhile, India must demonstrate to the world that its new Kashmir policy is in the larger interest of all Kashmiris.

Source: The Hindu

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