Prospects of Kashmir Dialogue

Why in news?

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On the Centre's request, the court has ordered to defer hearing on petitions against Article 35A.

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What is the case?

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- Article 35A primarily deals with the ‘permanent residents’ of J&K and their special rights and privileges in the State. Click here to know more on Art 35A.
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- The government has recently appointed an interlocutor to facilitate talks in Kashmir which is in a political turmoil in recent months.
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- The **interlocutor** on behalf of the government will hold talks with various representatives of the region.
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- In this line, the Centre said that the court should adjourn the hearing on petitions against Article 35A, as it would affect the dialogue process.
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- Accordingly the court has ordered to defer hearing on the issue for a period of 12 weeks.
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What are the challenges in the peace process?

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- Improving the strained relations between the central government and the Kashmiris is one of the foremost challenges.
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- **Sovereignty** - This is because, Kashmir is deeply embedded in its idea of

territorial integrity and sovereignty for long.
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- The facilitator will have to genuinely address the political aspirations of those who seek an independent Kashmir.
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- This includes a variety of pro-secessionist groups, including the Hurriyat and the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).
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- **Communal** - The highly communal and polarised nature of the conflict further complicates the peace process.
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- A suspicious attitude prevails between the aspirations of Kashmiri Muslims and the perceivably Hindu nationalist, anti-minority rhetoric of the present government.
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- Conversely, Kashmiri Hindus seek to push their interests having been driven away from the valley during the 1990s Islamist insurgency.
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- All these require the interlocutor to maintain a fair balance between opposing religious groups.
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- **Radicalisation** - The al-Qaeda and IS groups are suspectedly increasing their presence in the Kashmir region.
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- A possible allegiance of Kashmiri fighters to the Islamic State and the related national security concerns is an added pressure for the peace talks.
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- **Pakistan** - Even if efforts to influence Kashmiris yield a positive outcome internally, talks with Pakistan still remain on the agenda.
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- Several bilateral and diplomatic channels already exist between the two countries.
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- But the conflict still remains unresolved with both states unwilling to compromise their respective territorial positions on Kashmir.
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- Any terrorist attack or a border crisis with Pakistan and the slightest provocation might derail chances for the Kashmir dialogue.
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What lies ahead?

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- The appointment of an interlocutor signals a shift from reliance on military solutions to that of diplomacy.
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- However it should go beyond a symbolic gesture and seriously intend on engaging with the Kashmiris.
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- The interlocutor should function beyond a mere representative of the primary political interests of the Centre.
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- The facilitator of dialogue will also have to consider de-radicalisation efforts and develop a series of counter-terrorism measures.
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- A clear strategy with well-articulated goals and objectives on the Kashmir issue is a prerequisite for the success of the peace process.
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Source: The Hindu

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