Suspension of ‘Machail Mata Yatra’ in J&K

Why in news?

The ‘Machail Mata Yatra’ in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir was suspended recently due to security reasons.

What is the Machail Mata Yatra’?

- The ‘Machail Mata Yatra’ is a 43-day-long journey in Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Thousands of devotees from across the country visit the scenic Paddar valley, also famous for its sapphire mines, during the yatra.
- They also worship at the holy shrine of goddess Durga in Machail village of Kishtwar after trekking a 30-km hard route.

What is the order?

- The yatra commenced on July 25, and was scheduled to end on September 5.
- It has now been suspended with immediate effect due to security reasons.
- Authorities have asked people not to start the yatra and those on the way to leave and get back.
- The move comes a day after the J&K government asked Amarnath Yatris and tourists to cut short their stay in the Valley and return as soon as possible.

What are the security concerns?

- Kishtwar was declared terrorism-free over a decade ago.
- However, it was disturbed by the killing of state secretary of BJP Anil Parihar and his brother Ajeet Parihar in November 2018.
- This was followed by assassination of senior RSS leader Chanderkant Sharma and his security guard inside a health centre in April 2019.
- The recent announcement came close on the heels of an unexplained troop surge in the State, already one of the most militarised regions of the world.
- The decision was taken keeping in view the latest intelligence inputs of terror threats, with specific targeting of the Amarnath Yatra.

What are the other concerns?

- The present government has been particular about annulling the special

status that J&K is accorded in the Constitution through Articles 370 and 35A.
- There is no any encouraging negotiation with people in the Valley on resolving the disputes over this.
- The Centre also seems to be pursuing a policy of undermining the mainstream political parties in the State through administrative measures and political rhetoric.

What lies ahead?

- In recent years, the situation in the Valley has worsened, and tensions between India and Pakistan have become aggravated.
- It is high time that the Centre engage with all stakeholders in resolving the conflict in the Kashmir Valley.

Source: The Hindu

