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ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**Ladakh's Demand for Sixth
Schedule**

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LADAKH'S DEMAND FOR SIXTH SCHEDULE

Context

- Environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk, currently on a 21-day fast to demand the implementation of the **Indian Constitution's Sixth Schedule** and statehood for the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh,

About Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule under **Article 244 of the Constitution** protects tribal populations, allowing for the creation of **autonomous development councils** which can frame laws on **land, public health, agriculture**.
 - ♦ autonomous councils exist in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- Under the provision of the Sixth Schedule, the Governor of the State is
- empowered to determine the area or areas as administrative units of the Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions.

Demand of Ladakh

- Ladakh has a population of 2.74 lakh, according to the 2011 Census.
- Ladakh was turned into a **Union Territory** without any Legislative Assembly after the special status of **Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370** of the Constitution was revoked by the Parliament in 2019 and the erstwhile State was split into the **UTs of Ladakh and J&K**.
- Ladakh has erupted in protests several times over the past few years amid concerns about the protection of **land, resources, and employment for local residents, and bureaucratic overreach**.
 - ♦ It is argued that Ladakh is heading towards an uncertain, perhaps destructive future, all in the name of development. Its natural resources are under attack in the name of large-scale tourism, hydel and even solar power.
- Climate activists have raised serious concerns **regarding mining and industrialisation in the fragile glacial ecological system of Ladakh**. Sixth schedule status is being demanded to protect the high-altitude deserts, glaciers and alpine meadows which are a crucial habitat for rare and endangered species.

Benefits

- Inclusion under Sixth Schedule would allow Ladakh to create Autonomous District and Regional Councils (ADCs and ARCs) — elected bodies with the power to administrate tribal areas.
- This would include the power to make laws on subjects such as forest management, agriculture, administration of villages and towns, inheritance, marriage, divorce and social customs.
- These provisions would enable greater autonomy for the people of Ladakh in determining development policies and exercising control over their natural resources
- The Sixth Schedule would allow the **Kargil and Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils** to regulate land, minerals, tourism, and developmental activities as per local needs.
 - ♦ Statehood is seen as critical for political empowerment.

Challenges and Limitations

- The granting of special provisions to certain tribal groups can lead to a further demand by other groups.
- This can create a disparity among the people residing in the area where a particular group has been granted while others have felt deprived of it.
 - ♦ This has resulted in the rise of conflict between different groups—tribes vs tribes and tribes vs non-tribes.
- The introduction of the Autonomous District Councils under the Sixth Schedule has **weakened the position and relevance of the traditional structure** ruled by the Chiefs and Headmen in the tribal society.

- Number of criticisms have been levelled against the functioning of District and Regional Councils. Some sections of people alleged that the Autonomous District and Regional Councils are used by some vested interests.
- They are also accused of indulging in corruption and misuse of public funds.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- The special provisions of the constitution are meant to protect the cultural identities and the rights of the tribal inhabitants of the concerned regions, especially from the encroachment and cultural, economic and political exploitation by the outsiders.
- According to the government the main objective of including tribal population under the Sixth Schedule is to “ensure their overall socio-economic development, which the UT Administration has already been taking care of since its creation.”
 - ◆ Sufficient funds are being provided to Ladakh to meet its overall developmental requirements”.
- Still ,There is a need to discuss measures to protect the region’s unique culture and language taking into consideration its geographical location and strategic importance

Mains Practice Question

[Q] What is the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution ?Is Inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule needed ?Give reasons to support your arguments

