

3. Ladakh Statehood Demand & Sixth Schedule – Polity

Protest rallies were held in Ladakh recently for Statehood status and inclusion in the Sixth Schedule.

1. Background

1. Ladakh was carved out as a Union Territory in 2019 after abrogation of Article 370.
2. It does not have a Legislative Assembly and is administered by the Lieutenant Governor.
3. Protests emerged in Leh and Kargil demanding constitutional safeguards, autonomy and representation.

2. Sixth Schedule of the Constitution

2.1 Constitutional Basis

1. Provided under Article 244 of the Constitution.
2. Designed for administration of tribal areas with special autonomy.

2.2 Geographical Applicability

1. Applicable to Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura.
2. Covers 10 notified tribal areas.

2.3 Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)

1. Each ADC has 30 members with a 5-year term.
2. Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception with more than 40 members.

2.4 Powers and Functions

1. Legislative powers over land, forest, agriculture, social customs and local governance.
2. Judicial powers to establish courts for tribal disputes.
3. Administrative powers over local development and resource management.

2.5 Role of Governor

1. Governor acts as the supervisory authority.
2. Has powers to approve, modify or annul council laws.

3. Major Concerns of Ladakh

3.1 Lack of Political Autonomy

1. Absence of a legislative assembly limits democratic participation.
2. Decision-making is concentrated with the Centre and Lieutenant Governor.

3.2 Demographic Concerns

1. Fear of migration altering ethnic and cultural composition.
2. Concerns about dilution of tribal identity.

3.3 Environmental Stress

1. Fragile Himalayan ecosystem facing pressure from tourism and infrastructure.
2. Issues like water scarcity and waste management are increasing.

3.4 Youth Discontent

1. Rising unemployment and limited opportunities.
2. Lack of higher education and skill development avenues.

4. Key Demands of the People

4.1 Inclusion in Sixth Schedule

1. Demand for constitutional protection of land and tribal identity.

2. Greater autonomy in governance through ADC-like institutions.

4.2 Statehood or Legislative Assembly

1. Demand for full-fledged statehood or at least a legislative assembly.
2. Aim is to ensure local participation in governance.

4.3 Job Reservation

1. Reservation for locals in government and private sector jobs.
2. Prevents displacement by outsiders.

4.4 Environmental Protection

1. Strong regulations to control tourism and infrastructure expansion.
2. Focus on sustainable development practices.

4.5 Cultural Protection

1. Safeguarding Buddhist heritage and local traditions.
2. Preservation of language, monasteries and customs.

4.6 Inclusive Economic Development

1. Promotion of local participation in tourism, renewable energy and agriculture.
2. Ensures equitable benefits from development.

5. Issues in Extending Sixth Schedule to Ladakh

1. Sixth Schedule currently applies only to states, not Union Territories.
2. Ladakh's administrative structure differs from North-East tribal areas.
3. Strategic importance of Ladakh may require stronger central control.
4. Need to balance autonomy with national security considerations.

6. Way Forward

1. Explore a hybrid governance model combining autonomy with central oversight.
2. Consider constitutional or legal mechanisms tailored to Ladakh's unique context.
3. Strengthen local institutions like Hill Development Councils.
4. Introduce safeguards for land, employment and environment.
5. Ensure participatory development respecting cultural and ecological sensitivities.

Conclusion

1. Ladakh's demands reflect deeper issues of identity, autonomy and sustainable development.
2. Addressing them requires a nuanced approach balancing national security with democratic aspirations.
3. Institutional innovation and inclusive governance will be key to long-term stability in the region.

Source- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-bit-of-a-blur-over-indias-new-carbon-credit-plan/article70754773.ece>