Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Why in news?

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) was held recently in London.

What is the Commonwealth grouping?

- It is a group of nations of mostly former British colonies.
- It is now a 53-nation grouping.
- The present Queen Elizabeth II is the head of CHOGM.

How was the latest summit perceived?

- The meeting came with hopes of a “re-energised Commonwealth”.
- The summit was held in the U.K., the founder State, after 32 years.
- Besides, Queen Elizabeth II attended the summit.
- She has skipped the meeting often in the last few years owing to her health.

- Also, the present meet took place amidst Britain’s exit from the EU.
- All these led to hopes of reviving the grouping as Commonwealth 2.0.
India - Mr. Modi was the first Indian PM to attend CHOGM in a decade.

Some of the earlier summits were skipped over bilateral differences.

It was widely expected that India would step up to play a leadership role.

It was seen to be helping chart a future course for the Commonwealth.

Prince Charles’s visit to Delhi to invite Indian PM bolstered that belief.

Were the expectations met?

The outcome of the meet was largely against the expectations.

CHOGM again failed to make a case for its relevance in the 21st century.

**Head** - It was announced that Prince Charles would ‘succeed’ his mother as the head of the Commonwealth.

This has ignored calls by members for the position to be more democratically shared or rotated.

**China** - There were statements on the Blue Charter on Ocean Governance and on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment.

This could together counter China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

But there was little by way of a road map to achieve the goals.

**Immigration** - Britain PM Theresa May apologised for her Home Office’s threat to deport thousands of immigrants.

They were brought as manual labour in the 1940s on the ship Empire Windrush from the Caribbean.

But she failed to convince most members of the Commonwealth that Britain would reverse its present policies on immigration.

**Trade** - The U.K.’s hard line on Indian “illegals” prevented the signing of a bilateral agreement on immigrant “returns” with India.
• This was in regard to return of illegal Indian migrants within a month of their being detected by authorities.

• This indicates that post-Brexit London is likely to welcome trade in goods from the Commonwealth, but not services.

What is the way forward?

• The Commonwealth remains a great platform for development aid, democratic values and educational opportunities.

• But its relevance is put to test with increasing call for democracy within the grouping.

• It needs to adopt a more egalitarian and inclusive attitude to its next generation of Commonwealth citizens.

• Only this can ensure the sustainability and credibility of this grouping.

Source: The Hindu