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Waiting for Democracy in Jammu and Kashmir

Why in news?

It has been three years since the orders that read down Article 370 of the Indian Constitution were passed dividing the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

What was rationale for the actions?

- Security would improve and militancy would be eradicated
- The former State would integrate with the Indian economy and its people would prosper
- Kashmiri Pandits who have been internal refugees for over three decades would be able to return
- A new era of non-dynastic politics would emerge

What draconian actions were taken aftermath the bifurcation?

- **Arrests without trial**- Several hundreds were arrested in 2019 and are still in jail without trial.
- **Muzzling the media**- The media continues to be muzzled, and the journalists suffer from repeated arrests that the Supreme Court criticised in the case of Mohammed Zubair.
- **Delayed elections**- Despite the completion of the delimitation commission's exercise, Legislative Assembly elections have still to be announced.
- **Imposition of President's rule**- Jammu and Kashmir has been under President's rule and then Lieutenant-Governor's rule for four years now.
- **Civilian fatalities**- According to Home Ministry, the number of civilians killed between 2019 and 2021 was higher than in Mr. Modi's first term (2014-19).
- **Alienation and insurgency-** Valley alienation from the Indian Union is such that public support for insurgency is touching the heights of the 1990s.
- According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 437 Kashmiri youth joined insurgent ranks between 2019 and 2021.
- **Economic decline-** From being in the top performing States of the Indian Union, according to the NITI Aayog, Jammu and Kashmir was ranked among the bottom last year.
- **Militant attacks**- Kashmiri Pandits have once again become targets of militant attack, as they were during the 1990s.
- **Delimitation commission's report**- The central question of why Jammu has gained 6

Assembly seats and the Valley only 1 has been brushed under general remarks on methodology.

What lies ahead?

- Assembly elections are a first step which should be taken immediately.
- If they could be held under the earlier delimitation and the commission's present report be put to the new Assembly for consultation, it would be in the spirit of 'cooperative federalism'.
- Home Minister Shah has repeatedly promised the restoration of statehood but three years is a long time to hold up that promise without implementing it.

References

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