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Criticism of Policies on Kashmir: OIC

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Why in News

India has 'strongly' **rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)**.

The **47th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers**, held at **Niamey (Niger)**, had made a reference to India over its **policies on Jammu and Kashmir**.

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- OIC is the **second largest intergovernmental organization** after the United Nations with a membership of **57 states**.
India is not a member of the OIC.
- It is the **collective voice of the Muslim world**. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of **promoting international peace and harmony** among various people of the world.
- It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in **Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, in 1969**.
- **Headquarters:** Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Key Points

- **47th Session of OIC:** A report submitted at the 47th session referred to the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - It said that the decision of the Indian government to **repeal special status** (in 2019) was aimed towards **changing the demographic and geographic composition** of the territory.
 - The continuous blockade and restrictions together have **led to human rights abuses**.
 - The statement **acknowledged the support that Pakistan has been providing to keep the Kashmir issue** on the agenda of the organisation.

- **India's Stand:**

- India strongly hit out at the OIC, accusing it of making "**factually incorrect and unwarranted**" references to Jammu and Kashmir in resolutions adopted by the grouping at the session.
- India asserted that the **union territory is an integral and inalienable part of the country.**
- India **advised the OIC to refrain from making such references in future** and said it is regrettable that the **grouping continues to allow itself to be used by a certain country** "which has an abominable record on religious tolerance, radicalism and persecution of minorities" in a **clear reference to Pakistan.**
 - After India revoked **special status** in Kashmir, Pakistan lobbied with the OIC for their condemnation of the move.
 - Over the last one year, Pakistan has tried to rouse sentiments among the Islamic countries, but only a handful of them, **Turkey** and **Malaysia** publicly criticised India.

Saudi Arabia and the **UAE**, both top leaders among the Muslim countries, were **not as critical** of India as Pakistan had hoped.

- **Significance of India's latest statement:**

- India believes to bust the **double standard of OIC**, where it supports the agenda of Pakistan in the name of human rights.
- India now sees the **duality of the OIC unjustifiable**, since many of the member countries of the OIC have **good bilateral ties** and convey to India to ignore OIC statements **but sign off on the joint statements** which are **largely drafted by Pakistan.**
- India also wants to challenge this issue because of the possibility of the **Joe Biden administration in the US** which may have a strong view on human rights in Kashmir and may issue statements that **may complicate India's** image at the global stage.
- With India preparing to take **over a non-permanent member's seat at the UN Security Council**, it wants to use its diplomatic clout and goodwill to bury this issue at the global body in the next two years and bring up the **Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism** high on agenda.

India and OIC

- **India's relationship with OIC as an organisation:**
 - At the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, Bangladesh, the host, **suggested that India**, where more than 10% of the world's Muslims live, **should be given Observer status**, but **Pakistan opposed** the proposal.
 - In 2019, India **made its maiden appearance** at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting, as a "guest of honour".
 - This **first-time invitation was seen as a diplomatic victory for India**, especially at a time of heightened tensions with Pakistan following the Pulwama attack.
- **Criticism of India's Policies by OIC:**
 - It has been **generally supportive of Pakistan's stand on Kashmir**, and has issued statements criticising the alleged Indian "atrocities" in the state/Union Territory.
 - In 2018, the OIC General Secretariat had "expressed strong condemnation of the killing of innocent Kashmiris by Indian forces in Indian-occupied Kashmir".
 - It described the "**direct shooting at demonstrators**" as a "**terrorist act**", and "**called upon the international community to play its role in order to reach a just and lasting solution to the conflict in Kashmir**".
 - OIC has criticised the Government of India over the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019**, and the **Babri Masjid verdict** of the Supreme Court.
 - OIC has also criticised the Indian government for what it called "**growing Islamophobia**" in India.
- **India's Response:**

India has always maintained that **OIC has no locus standi in matters strictly internal to India** including that of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir which is an integral and inalienable part of India.
- **India's relationship with OIC member countries:**
 - Individually, India has good relations with almost all member nations.
 - Ties with the **UAE** and **Saudi Arabia**, especially, have improved significantly in recent years.
 - The **Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (UAE)** was a special chief guest at the **68th Republic Day** celebrations in 2017.
 - The OIC includes two of **India's close neighbours**, Bangladesh and Maldives. Indian diplomats say both countries **privately admit that they do not want to complicate their bilateral ties with India on Kashmir**.

Source:TH