



# **DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS**

**THE HINDU**

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**Topic: GS2 - Governace in J&K**



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## The ban on civilian traffic on the Udhampur-Baramulla highway

### Context:-

- Recently the Jammu & Kashmir Home Department issued the **ban on civilian traffic for two days a week** on the **271-km stretch of National Highway 44** between **Udhampur** in Jammu and **Baramulla** in Kashmir, which came into force on April 7.
- The ban, which is to last till May 31, is supposedly **to enable the orderly conduct of the Lok Sabha elections** in Jammu and Kashmir, **in the light of the tragic February 14 suicide attack on a CRPF convoy on NH 44 at Pulwama**, that killed 40 personnel.
- On Sundays and Wednesdays, between 4 a.m. and 5 p.m., **only pre-determined categories of civilian traffic** will be allowed on the highway with clearance from the authorities.
- For the rest of the time, the highway will be given over to the movement of troops. As a measure to prevent another Pulwama-type attack.
- However the ban is draconian in nature and ill advised..

### Issues involved with Banning of Civil Traffic:-

- Criticality of Highway:
  - NH 44 is the **lifeline of the State**, it is vital to move goods (including perishable agricultural produce), and along it lie many educational and medical institutions.

- The national highway is **not just the only road link that connects Kashmir to the outside world** but also the **key highway that connects Srinagar with the southern and northern districts of the Valley**.
- It means a **virtual lockdown of the Valley for two days every week**.
- In many cases, avoiding the stretch would greatly multiply the time and distance between two points.

➤ **Against the Principle of Good Governance and Rights of Citizens:**

- Though, the government is at pains to emphasise that **exceptions** are in place for those *in medical emergencies, lawyers, doctors, tourists, government employees, students, and so on.*
- But such a system of permits and bans militates against the **freedom of movement at the heart of a democratic society**. To be sure, even before the ban, civilian traffic has not moved on the highway unfettered by checks. Such is the security challenge in J&K.
- But to **officially segregate civilian traffic** is to put **people's lives at the mercy of a calendar**, and to invite confusion about the organising principles of Indian troop deployment.
- The restrictions violate **Articles 14, 19 and 21 of the Constitution**.

➤ **Further Alienating Kashmiris:**

- The ban also positions the **administration against the people**, as has become clear from the political and legal challenges to the traffic restrictions.

- In a State that is already under **President's Rule**, it has **pushed the political class and the administration farther apart.**
- Overall it further Increased feeling of Alienation of Kashmiris with the mainstream India..

### **Way Ahead : Doubling up Security Protocol while Achieving Good Governance:-**

- The Pulwama attack was a wake-up call about the security drills in place to prevent terrorist strikes. It demanded an appraisal, so that the lives of soldiers and civilians alike can be secured.
- To throw civilians out of gear — as they were on the first day of the highway ban, on April 7 — defies logic.
- The effect of any response to the Pulwama attack ought **not to be an increased alienation** that places troops and local people in an **us-versus-them timetable**. It must, instead, be a **doubling up of the security protocol** to make life **more secure and hassle-free for civilians and soldiers alike.**