Armenia-Azerbaijan Peace Deal

Why in news?

Recently, Russia brokered a new peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

What is the new peace deal?

- The deal is meant to end the military conflict between the two nations over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.
- It was signed by Russian President, Azerbaijani President and Armenian Prime Minister.
- As per the new peace deal, both sides will now maintain positions in the areas that they currently hold.
- This will mean a significant gain for Azerbaijan as it has reclaimed over 15-20% of its lost territory during the recent conflict.
- Further, under this agreement, all military operations are suspended.

What is the role of Russia?

- Russian peacekeepers will be deployed along the line of contact in Nagorno-Karabakh and along the Lachin corridor that connects the region to Armenia.
- These peacekeepers will be deployed in the area for a period of five years.
- Refugees and internally displaced persons will return to the region and the adjacent territories.
- The two sides will also exchange prisoners of wars and bodies.
- A new corridor will be opened from Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan, which will be under Russian control.

- Russia's role in the conflict has been somewhat opaque since,
    1. It supplies arms to both countries and
    2. It is in a military alliance with Armenia called the Collective Security Treaty Organisation.

What is the Nagorno-Karabakh region?

- Nagorno-Karabakh, straddling western Asia and Eastern Europe, is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan.
- But most of the region is controlled by Armenian separatists.
- It has been part of Azerbaijan territory since the Soviet era.

- When the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, Armenia's regional parliament voted for the region's transfer to Armenia.
- But, the Soviet authorities turned down the demand.
- Years of clashes followed between Azerbaijan forces and Armenian separatists.
- While the area remains in Azerbaijan, it is governed by Armenians who declared it a republic called "Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast".
- While the Armenian government does not recognise Nagorno-Karabakh as independent, it supports the region politically and militarily.

Have there been other ceasefire agreements?

- Even after the 1994 peace deal, the region has been marked by regular exchanges of fire.
- In 2016, it saw a Four-Day War before Russia mediated peace.
- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has tried to get the two countries to reach a peace agreement for many years.
- In October 2020, both countries agreed to a ceasefire agreement, which was also brokered by Russia but was unsuccessful.

What is the role of ethnicity in the conflict between them?

- Ethnic tensions from decades ago have a crucial role in the dispute.
- The Azeris claim that the disputed region was under their control in known history.
- Armenians maintain that Karabakh was a part of the Armenian kingdom.
- The disputed region has a majority Armenian Christian population, but it is internationally recognised as a part of Muslim-majority Azerbaijan.

Source: The Indian Express

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