Hate Speech triggering a Diplomatic Storm

Why in news?

The Government's decision to take a stern view of hate speech targeting religious beliefs to assert India's traditional values of tolerance and respect for all religions is welcome.

What is the issue?

- A leader from ruling party had made objectionable remarks against Prophet Muhammad during a television debate on an English news channel.
- It happened during during a debate on the Gyanvapi mosque-Kashi Vishwanath temple dispute.
- The episode spurred criticisms and protests by the Islamic community leading to the suspension of the leader from the party.
- An FIR was filed under Indian Penal Code
    - Section 153A -promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, language, etc.
    - Section 295 - deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings
    - Section 505 - statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes

What is hate speech?

- There is no specific legal definition of 'hate speech'.
- According to Law commission report, hate speech is an incitement to hatred primarily against a group of persons in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief and the like.
- Hate speech can be of any form (writings, actions, signs and representations).
- **Sections 153A and 505 of IPC** deal with inflammatory speeches and expressions.

To know more about hate speech, click here

What was the reaction of foreign countries against the remarks?

- The remarks against Prophet Muhammad caused uproar in the Arab world where hashtags calling for the boycott of Indian products are trending on Twitter.
- Qatar and Kuwait summoned India's Ambassadors and demanded a public apology from New Delhi for the comments that were considered Islamophobic.
- Even, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia slammed for the remarks made.
- The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a strong condemnation against the remarks.
- The Ministry of Foreign affairs reaffirmed its permanent rejection of prejudice against the symbols of Islamic religion and refuses to prejudice all religious figures and symbols.

References

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Quick facts

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

- The OIC is formerly the Organisation of the Islamic Conference.
- It is the world's second largest inter-governmental organisation after the UN, with a membership of 57 states.
- Headquarters- Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- Its objective is 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.
- OIC has reserved membership for Muslim-majority countries.
- Russia, Thailand, and a couple of other small countries have Observer status.
- India is not a member of OIC.

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