Israel-UAE-US deal

Why in news?

Israel and the United Arab Emirates, helped by the US, have arrived at an important peace agreement.

What is the big deal?

- The deal was announced by the US White House.
- The deal says that the UAE will establish diplomatic relations with Israel if its President commits to give up the plan to annex the West Bank.
- [West Bank is the main territory of a state that the Palestinians want.]
- The UAE becomes the third Arab nation to recognise Israel after Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).
- It has the potential to change the geopolitics of West Asia and beyond.

What about the Palestinians?

- The Palestinian leadership rejects and denounces the UAE, Israeli and the US trilateral announcement.
- The Palestinian Authority, which seeks a two-state solution, lashed out against the deal as a betrayal by the UAE.
- For the Palestinians, the Israeli commitment that it will not pursue its plan to annex the West Bank is an empty concession.
- This is because the deal does not address the Palestinian demand for statehood.
- President Binyamin Netanyahu floated the annexation plan recently.
- It says Israel will claim sovereignty of all land in the West Bank on which Jewish settlements have come up.
- This plan would literally cut up the dream of a Palestinian state.
- It was not certain if Netanyahu would have gone ahead with it even without the UAE deal.
- Now, by agreeing not to, he has enabled the UAE to talk it up to its Arab allies as a major concession extracted from Israel.
- Netanyahu himself can project it elsewhere abroad as a big give on his part, without compromising on the core issues of the conflict.

How have the Arab states reacted?

- **Saudi Arabia** has said nothing so far.
- But, the ruling family's Prince Turki al-Faisal had rejected the proposals for Israel-Palestine peace unveiled by the US in January 2020.
- But Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) has been hailed as an ally by the Trump administration.
- He has formed a friendship with Trump's son-in-law, tasked with finding a solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict.
- There is bound to be speculation that the UAE could not have taken its decision on Israel without the support of Saudis.
- Over the years, the Saudis have seen both the US and Israel as insurance against Shia Iran.
- The smaller Gulf States of **Oman and Bahrain** have quickly fallen in line behind UAE.
- It could be a matter of time before the others, including Saudi, do as well.

How does the region's geopolitics change?

- If the **Arab states** do fall in line, it would bring all Sunni nations in the region in an anti-Iran alliance with Israel.
- **Iran** and its proxies and allies have been weakened and broken by war, the ISIS and al-Qaeda.
- [Iran's allies - Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, the Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Houthis in Yemen]
- Hezbollah, which Israel has treated as enemy, faces a domestic backlash after an explosion in Beirut.
- **Russia**, a staunch ally of Syria, has not yet reacted.
- The deal will send ripples through other parts of the world.
- In South Asia, it will put **Pakistan** in a bind.
- Pakistan is already facing criticism at home for not being able to take on India over its 2019 decisions in Kashmir.
- Pakistan is unlikely to be seen as joining an Arab alliance that has abandoned another cause dear to Pakistan, that of Palestine.
- But then, UAE is a good friend.
- Pakistan has already annoyed Saudi Arabia by not agreeing to hold a special session on Kashmir at the OIC.
- Even if Pakistan does not join the Arab stampede towards Israel, it cannot rail against them for it.

Source: The Indian Express



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