Jerusalem as Israel's Capital - US

Why in news?

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- U.S. President Trump reversed the decades old policy, and recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.
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- The US administration would also begin a process of moving the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.
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What is the tussle with Jerusalem?

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- Jerusalem is in ways symbolic of the Israel-Palestine conflict itself.
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- The tussle centres on who gets to control the ancient city that is sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians.
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- After the end of the First Arab-Israel War in 1948, Jerusalem was partitioned into West and East, under Israeli and Palestinian control respectively.
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- But in 1967, during the Six-Day Arab-Israel War, Israel snatched East Jerusalem from Jordanian forces.
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- Israel’s Parliament also declared the territory had been “annexed to Israel” and Jerusalem had been “reunited”.
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- The predominantly Palestinian population in the east lives under full Israeli control, but cannot vote in parliamentary elections.
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- This marginalised the Palestinians, who wanted East Jerusalem to be their capital under the “two-state solution”.
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- Israel was undeterred by the refusal of the international community to endorse the annexation.

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- It further added over 200,000 Jewish settlers to the once-almost entirely Arab East Jerusalem.
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- Meanwhile, in 2016, the UN reaffirmed that Jerusalem's Palestinian territories were under "hostile occupation".
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- The international community considers east Jerusalem illegally occupied by Israel.
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- Notably, foreign embassies to Israel are in Tel Aviv and not Jerusalem.
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- India for its part has traditionally backed a two-state solution, and assured that the Indian embassy would stay in Tel Aviv.
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What is the significance of the US's move?

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- **Jerusalem** - Jerusalem is almost the key to stability of the entire Middle East.
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- It has many shrines that are equally significant for the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians.
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- Trump's move reflects Jerusalem as the centre of Jewish faith, and the fact that the city is the seat of the Israeli government.
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- **US** - Trump expressed hope for start of the peace process and reiterated his commitment to the two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.
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- The effort to please the core base of pro-Israel hardliners and the overwhelming Jewish population in US cannot be denied.

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- But, as with most political developments in the Middle East, a bigger regional game could also be behind.
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- This possibly includes a US-Saudi-Israel alliance against Iran, the common enemy.
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- **Response** - The UN Secretary General voicing dissent had said that the issue on the holy city must be resolved only through direct negotiations.
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- The Islamic world is outraged and many Arab leaders warned it could trigger an upheaval in the already volatile Middle East.
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- Palestine has warned of dangerous consequences and said the decision was a declaration of war in the region.
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- Neighbouring Jordan and Turkey have cautioned the US and have threatened to cut ties with Israel.
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- Militant groups in the region could possibly take aggressive stances.
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Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

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