

Mystery of Jamal Khashoggi

Why in news?

Mr Khashoggi - a critic of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman - was killed in a fist fight in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Who is Jamal Khashoggi?

- Mr Khashoggi is a journalist and citizen of Saudi Arabia.
- Once he was an adviser to the Saudi Royal family.
- He went into self-imposed exile last year as he had fallen sharply out of favor with the Saudi government.
- The 59-year-old commentator had been living in the US and working as a contributor to the Washington Post.
- He started his career as a journalist in the 1980s as a reporter for regional newspapers covering the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.
- He had followed closely the rise of Osama Bin Laden, interviewing the late al-Qaeda leader several times during the 1980s and 1990s.
- He returned full-time to Saudi Arabia in the 1990s and in 1999 became the deputy editor of the English-language Arab News newspaper.
- In 2003 he became editor of the Al Watan newspaper.
- He was fired within two months for publishing stories that were critical of the Saudi clerical establishment.
- After his dismissal, he moved to London and later Washington to serve as a media adviser to ambassador Prince Turki bin-Faisal, Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief.
- Following the Arab Spring uprisings in 2011, he expressed support for Islamist groups that had gained power in several countries.
- The journalist left Saudi Arabia for the US in summer 2017.
- The reason for exile was that dissidents under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman were detained arbitrarily.
- In his last column, he criticized the Saudi involvement in the Yemen conflict.

What happened to him?

- Jamal Khashoggi went into his country's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey on 2 October.
- He went to obtain a marriage document.

- But according to Turkish police, he never came out.
- According to Reuters news agency, Khashoggi had died in a fist fight after resisting attempts to return him to Saudi Arabia.
- His body was then rolled in a rug and disposed of.
- A Saudi operative then reportedly wore his clothes and left the premises.
- In regard to this killing, the Saudi authorities announced the arrest of 18 Saudi nationals.
- It also announced the dismissal of two senior officials - deputy intelligence chief and senior aide to Prince Mohammed.

Why Saudi Arabia wants Khashoggi?

- He is one of the most prominent critics of the crown prince, who has unveiled reforms praised by the West while carrying out an apparent crackdown on dissent, which has seen human and women's rights activists, intellectuals and clerics arrested, and waging a war in Yemen that has triggered a humanitarian crisis.
- After several of his friends were arrested, his column was cancelled by the Al-Hayat newspaper.
- He was allegedly warned to stop tweeting.
- Mr Khashoggi left Saudi Arabia for the US, from where he wrote opinion pieces for the Washington Post and continued to appear on Arab and Western TV channels.

What repercussions had been caused due to Khashoggi's murder?

• Divided opinion on the course of action in USA

1. The USA Senate's foreign policy lawmakers have signaled bipartisan support for punishing the Saudis with sanctions.
2. While the President Trump states the number of jobs that would be generated due to the defense deals with Saudi Arabia.
3. Even before Khashoggi's case, USA lawmakers condemned Riyadh, over its military campaign in Yemen that has claimed thousands of civilian lives and helped cause a humanitarian catastrophe.
4. Congress has only narrowly approved recent arms sales to Saudi Arabia.
5. The USA Congress has demanded the Trump administration to certify whether the Saudi-led coalition is abiding by the laws of war in Yemen.

• Saudi Arabia's Oil output

1. Riyadh noted that if sanctions are imposed, it will retaliate with bigger measure.
2. However it was assured that Saudi Arabia has no intention of using its oil

wealth as a political tool in this controversy, as it did in 1973 oil embargo.

3. In 1973 oil embargo the kingdom and several regional allies squeezed supplies to the US and Europe in retaliation for their support for Israel.

- **Turkey' Stand**

1. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan proised to bring the truth in the Jamal Khashoggi case.
2. Khashoggi's murder happened as the United States was on the verge of constructing its entire Middle East policy around the crown prince of Saudi Arabia.
3. Ankara seeks a readjustment of Washington policy in the region.
4. Erdogan wants the United States to pivot to a more traditional engagement in the region, with a huge role for Turkey.

How deep is the US-Saudi relationship?

- Unlike U.S, Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy and religiously conservative.
- However both the countries' interests are intertwined when it comes to trade and oil, and the fight against an expanding Iran.
- The United States provides security in return for Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, ensuring affordable oil supplies for the global economy.
- In 2017, U.S. and Saudi Arabia's trade in goods and services was worth over \$45 billion.
- The kingdom is also the 10th-largest holder of U.S. Treasury bills and notes, currently worth around \$166 billion.
- The two economies have an array of connections.
- Saudi Arabia is the largest recipient of U.S. arms.
- The top exports from the U.S. include aircraft and weapons.
- US-Saudi Arabia sealed weapons deal worth nearly \$110 billion immediately and \$350 billion over 10 years in May 2017.

Source: The Hindu, The Guardian, Business standard