

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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BusinessLine



1. West Asia Peace Plan

Why in News?

Recently, the West Asia Peace Plan was unveiled by the U.S. President.

- It plans to revive the stalled two-state talks between Israel and Palestine.

Key Points:

- The plan seeks to address most of the contentious issues in the conflict such as:
 - Border of Israel
 - Status of Palestinian refugees
 - Jewish settlements on the West Bank
 - Land swap between Israel and Palestine,
 - Israel's security concerns
 - Status of the city of Jerusalem
- However the proposed plan is almost in favour of the Israeli positions
 - Israel, for example, would be allowed to annex the Jewish settlements on the West Bank as well as the Jordan Valley.
 - The Palestinian refugees, who were forced out from their homes following 1948 Arab-Israeli War-1948 that followed with the declaration of the state of Israel in the historic Palestine, would not be allowed to return.
- They could move to the future Palestinian state, be integrated into the host countries or settled in other regional countries.

Jerusalem: The undivided Capital

- Jerusalem would be “the undivided capital” of Israel, with Palestine gaining its capital in the east of the city.
- In return, Israel would freeze further settlement activities on the West Bank for four years — the time for negotiations.

Land Swap

- According to the Oslo Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas and only one of them is under the direct control of the Palestinian Authority.
- The West Asia Peace plan proposes some land swap for the Israeli annexation of the West Bank Jewish settlements.
 - It seeks to enlarge Gaza and connect the strip with the West Bank through a tunnel.
 - The Arab towns in the southeast of Israel, which are close to Gaza, could become part of a future Palestinian state.
- In the final settlement, Palestine would get control over more land than what it currently controls.

Curb on Hamas

- During this period, the Palestinian Authority should dismiss its current complaints at the International Criminal Court against Israel and refrain itself from taking further actions.
- It should also crack down on “terrorist” groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

Investment Plans

- The US has also proposed \$50 billion in investment over 10 years.

Implications for Palestine

- The Palestine position, backed by most of the world powers is the formation of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 border.
- It means the whole of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital including the Old City.
 - It houses Haram esh-Sharif, also known as Temple Mount, a holy site for both Muslims and Jews.
- Issues like the right of return of the Palestinian refugees are to be settled in final negotiations.
- However US has effectively rejected the Palestinian claims outright and asked them to make more compromises.
- The US seeks to give Jerusalem and about 30% of the West Bank to the Israelis and has denied the right of return of the Palestinian refugees.
- For this, the Palestinians should take action against militant groups, stop supporting Palestinian families of those jailed or killed by Israel and refrain itself from questioning the occupation in international fora.

Israel’s View:

- Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, who had earlier spoken against the two-state solution, has accepted the plan.
- He termed the plan as a “realistic path to a durable peace”

Palestine’s View:

- Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the plans as a “conspiracy”.
- The Palestinians want an **independent state of their own, comprising the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.**

India’s response:

- India urged both Israel and Palestine to “engage with each other, including on the recent proposals put forward by the United States, and find an acceptable two-state solution for peaceful coexistence”.

Analysis of the Plan

- The plan clearly shows that the US **has completely sided with Israel** without even involving Palestinians during the drafting process.
- Critics have said the real intention can **change the start point of future negotiations**.
 - The Palestinians will begin with a disadvantage, and be forced to fight to simply hold on.

2. Oslo Peace Accords

Why in News?

Palestine has threatened to withdraw from key provisions of the **Oslo Accords** if the US announces its **Middle East Peace Plan**.

- The concern is that the **US's Plan** will turn Israel's temporary occupation of Palestinian territory into a permanent occupation.
- The Palestinians see east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state and believe the plan buries the two-state solution that has been the cornerstone of international Middle East diplomacy.

Oslo Accords

- Oslo Accords are a series of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians signed in the 1990s.
 - Oslo I (1993) is formally known as the Declaration of Principles (DOP). The pact established a timetable for the Middle East peace process.
 - It planned for an interim Palestinian government in Gaza and Jericho in the West Bank.
 - Oslo II is officially called the **Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza** (1995), expanded on Oslo I.
 - It included provisions for the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from six West Bank cities and about 450 towns.
 - Additionally, the pact set a timetable for elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council.
 - The interim pact was only supposed to last five years while a permanent agreement was finalised but it has tacitly been rolled over for more than two decades.
- The question of **Jerusalem** was left **undecided** under the Oslo Accords.

3. European Parliament

Why in News?

Recently, a joint motion resolution was tabled in the European Parliament that “condemned” India’s decision to adopt the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA).

- The resolution also expressed concerns about the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and called India to adhere to UN Human Rights Council procedures.

European Parliament:

- The European Parliament is made up of 705 Members elected from the 27 Member States of European Union (MEPs).
 - Since 1979 MEPs have been elected by direct universal suffrage for a five-year period.
- Secretariat: **Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg.**
- The Members of the European Parliament sit in political groups – they are not organised by nationality, but by political affiliation. There are currently 7 political groups in the European Parliament.
- The Parliament acts as a co-legislator, sharing with the Council the power to adopt and amend legislative proposals and to decide on the EU budget.
- It exercises democratic supervision over other EU institutions.
- It plays a key role in electing the president of the European Commission.

Institutions of the European Union

- The **Institutions of the European Union** are the seven principal decision-making bodies of the European Union (EU). They are, as listed in Article 13 of the Treaty on European Union:
 - The European Parliament,
 - The European Council (of Heads of Government),
 - The Council of the European Union (of national Ministers, a Council for each area of responsibility),
 - The European Commission,
 - The Court of Justice of the European Union,
 - The European Central Bank and
 - The Court of Auditors.

4. Brexit Why in News?

Britain has officially left the European Union (EU) and has become the first country to leave the 28-member bloc.

- The United Kingdom (UK) left the European Union on 31st January, 2020.

UK-EU Exit Deal

- This agreement sets out the **exact terms of the UK and EU relationship** immediately after exit but it is not clear on what terms the UK and EU's future relationship will be.
- A key part of the withdrawal agreement was, there would be an **11-**

month transition period, until the end of 2020.

- The transitional arrangement is designed **to make the separation process smoother** and it covers subjects like trade, law, and immigration.
- It will give them more time to iron out all the details of their future relationship including a possible free trade deal.
- During the transition period, the UK will be able **to work in and trade freely with EU** nations and **vice versa**.
- However, it will be officially out of the EU and not be represented on EU bodies but would still have the same obligations as an EU member.
 - This includes remaining in the EU customs union and the single market, contributing to the EU's budget and following EU law.
- From 2021, the UK and EU will enter a new relationship possibly underpinned by a free trade deal.

5. National Consultation on the Review of Beijing +25

Why in News?

The Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD), the National Commission for Women (NCW) and UN Women organized a **National Consultation on the Review of Beijing +25**.

- 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), (Beijing + 25).

World Conference on Women

- The United Nations has organized 4 world conferences on women:
 - Mexico City, 1975
 - Copenhagen, 1980
 - Nairobi, 1985
 - Beijing, 1995

Beijing Declaration

- Beijing Declaration is an **agenda for women's empowerment** and considered the key global policy document on gender equality.
- It sets strategic objectives and actions for the **advancement of women and the achievement of gender equality** in 12 critical areas of concern.

National Consultation on the Review of Beijing +25

- The consultation aims to bring together all shareholders in a national public conversation on the **urgent actions that need to be taken for the realization of gender equality**.
- **Objectives:**
 - To assess progress and challenges to the implementation of the

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in India over the past 5 year

- Discuss lessons learned, priority actions required to realize gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2030.

6. India- Togo

Why in News?

Recently, the Togolese Republic (also known as Togo) and India have come together for the development of about 300 MW Solar Power Projects in Dapaong (Dalwak region) and Mango (Savanes region).

- National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Limited will be the Project Management Consultant (PMC) for the projects.
- Togo is the first International Solar Alliance (ISA) country to avail the services of NTPC.

Togo

- Togo, is a country in West Africa bordered by Ghana to the west, Benin to the east and Burkina Faso to the north.
- Its capital Lomé is located on the Gulf of Guinea.
- It is a member of the United Nations, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, the African Union.

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