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Israel Adopts Jewish Nation Law

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Israel has adopted a law defining the country as the nation-state of the Jewish people. The legislation becomes part of the country's basic laws, which serve as a de facto constitution.

Key Highlights of the Legislation

- Lays down that Israel, with the 'whole and united' Jerusalem as its 'capital' is the historic homeland of the Jewish people and they have an exclusive right to national self-determination in it.
- Defines the promotion, encouragement, establishment and consolidation of Jewish communities as being in the national interest.
- Stripping Arabic, the first language of 1.8 million citizens, of its national language status and only granting it a 'special status' while making Hebrew the co

untry's national language.

Why the Need for this Legislation?

- Since the time of Israel's independence, it has sought Jewishness as the ethnic religious character of the state and hence this law sets the stage for this transition.
- Supporters of the bill say it is aimed to boost Israel's Jewish identity and will not discriminate against minorities.

Criticism of the Law

- The new law will deepen a sense of alienation within the Arab minority.
- An exclusive right to national self-determination only to the Jewish people and by downgrading Arabic's status - challenging the basic concepts of equality, which even Israel's declaration of independence promised to all its inhabitants.
- This law could add up to the discrimination that the Arab community, which makes up a fifth of Israel's population, faces when it comes to opportunities and rights.
- The emphasis on Jerusalem (as it remains a disputed territory; and the promise to promote settlements) pose a direct threat to any peace process with the Palestinians.
- The promotion of Jewish settlements would question Israel's commitment to the '**Two-State Solution**' and would also erode its professed support for an independent Palestinian state.

NOTE: What is the Two-State Solution?

- The Two-State solution is meant to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At its most basic level, the conflict is about whether or how to divide the territory between two peoples.
- The two-state solution would establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — two states for two peoples.
- In 1967, Israel seized the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights and the Gaza Strip. The UN Security Council passed a series of resolutions asking Israel to withdraw from this land to desist from building settlements on the occupied territory. The U.S., which had already become the shield for Israel, abstained from the major resolutions.
- The Two-State Solution (the international consensus for the Israel-Palestine conflict) is premised on Israeli withdrawal from the lands occupied in 1967. Although the UN has periodically returned to censure Israel for its ongoing occupation and in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the settlements continue unabated.