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News Analysis (13 May, 2021)

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Al-Aqsa Mosque & Sheikh Jarrah: Israel-Palestine

Why in News

Recently, Israeli armed forces attacked **Al-Aqsa Mosque in the Haram esh-Sharif in Jerusalem**, ahead of a march by Zionist nationalists commemorating Israel's capture of the eastern half of the city in 1967.

- The threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of **Sheikh Jarrah** escalated the crisis further.
- **Zionism** is a worldwide Jewish movement that resulted in the establishment and development of the state of Israel and that now supports the state of Israel as a Jewish homeland.



Key Points

- **Al-Aqsa Mosque:**

- It is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith. It sits inside a 35-acre site known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.

The site is part of the Old City of Jerusalem, **sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims.**

- It is believed to have been **completed early in the eighth century** and faces the Dome of the Rock, the golden-domed Islamic shrine that is a widely recognized symbol of Jerusalem.
- The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO**, has classified the **Old City of Jerusalem and its walls as a World Heritage Site.**

- **Conflict over Jerusalem:**

- Jerusalem has been at the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. According to the original 1947 **United Nations (UN)** partition plan, Jerusalem was proposed to be an international city.
- But in the **first Arab Israel war of 1948**, the Israelis captured the western half of the city, and **Jordan took the eastern part**, including the Old City that houses Haram al-Sharif.
- Israel captured East Jerusalem from Jordan in the **Six-Day War 1967** and annexed it later.

Since its annexation, **Israel has expanded settlements in East Jerusalem.**

- **Israel** sees the whole city as its “**unified, eternal capital**”, whereas the **Palestinian leadership** across the political spectrum have maintained that they would not accept any compromise formula for the future Palestinian state unless **East Jerusalem is its capital.**

- **Sheikh Jarrah Issue:**

- Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in 1948.

Twenty-eight of those **Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.**

- In 1956, when East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan, the Jordanian Ministry of Construction and Development and the **UN Relief and Works Agency facilitated the construction of houses for these families in Sheikh Jarrah.** But Israel would capture East Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967.

By the early 1970s, **Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land.**

- Earlier this year (2021), **the Central Court in East Jerusalem upheld a decision to evict four Palestinian families** from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah in favor of Jewish settlers.
- The issue remains **unresolved and potentially inflammable.**

- **India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Issue:**

- India **recognised Israel in 1950** but it is also **the first non-Arab country to recognise Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)** as the sole representative of the Palestinian.

India is also one of the first countries to **recognise the statehood of Palestine in 1988.**

- In 2014, India favored **UNHRC's** resolution to probe Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. Despite supporting the probe, **India abstained from voting against Israel in UNHRC in 2015.**
- As a part of Link West Policy, India has **de-hyphenated its relationship with Israel and Palestine in 2018** to treat both the countries mutually independent and exclusive.
- In June 2019, India **voted in favor of a decision introduced by Israel** in the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** that objected to granting consultative status to a Palestinian non-governmental organization.
- So far **India has tried to maintain the image of its historical moral supporter for Palestinian self-determination**, and at the same time to **engage in the military, economic, and other strategic relations with Israel.**

- **Related Developments:**

- In March 2021, **International Criminal Court (ICC)** launched investigations into the war crimes in **Palestinian territories occupied by Israel (West Bank and the Gaza Strip).**
- In April 2021, the **US restored at least USD 235 million in financial assistance to the Palestinians.**

Way Forward

- The **world at large needs to come together for a peaceful solution** but the reluctance of the Israeli government and other involved parties have aggravated the issue more. Thus a **balanced approach would help to maintain favorable relations with Arab countries as well as Israel.**
- The recent **normalization agreements between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco**, known as the **Abraham Accords**, are the steps in the right direction. All **regional powers should envisage peace** between the two countries on line of Abraham Accords.

Source:TH

Iron Dome Air Defence System: Israel

Why in News

Israel used its Iron Dome air defence system in recent violent clashes over Jerusalem.

Key Points

- **About:**

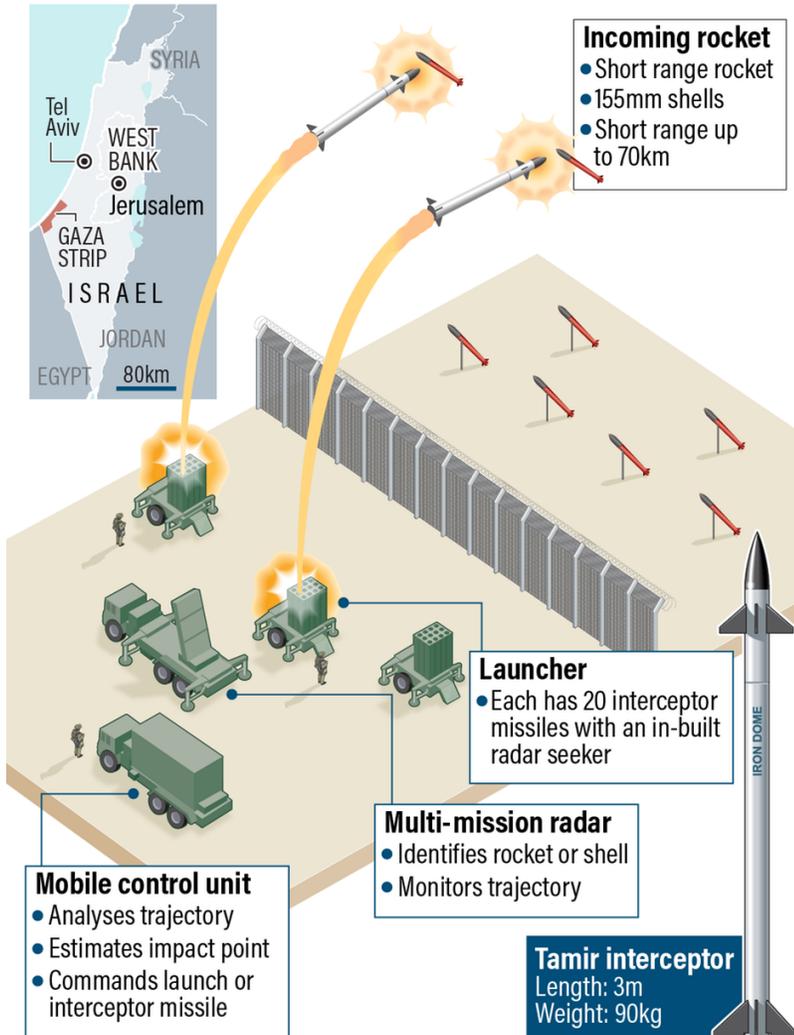
- It is a **short-range, ground-to-air, air defence system** that includes a **radar** and **Tamir interceptor missiles** that track and neutralise any rockets or missiles aimed at Israeli targets.
- It is **used for countering** rockets, artillery & mortars as well as aircraft, helicopters and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV).
 - It is capable of being **used in all weather conditions**, including during the day and night.
- It was **developed by the state-run Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Israel Aerospace Industries** and was **deployed in 2011**.
- Rafael claims a **success rate of over 90%, with more than 2,000 interceptions**, however experts agree the **success rate is over 80%**.
- It can **protect** deployed and manoeuvring forces, as well as the **Forward Operating Base (FOB)** and urban areas, against a wide range of indirect and aerial threats.

- **Components:**

- The Iron Dome has **three main systems that work together** to provide a shield over the area where it is deployed which are:
 - **Radar:** It has a detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats.
 - **Weapon Control:** It has a battle management and weapon control system (BMC),
 - **Missile Fire:** It also has a missile firing unit. The **BMC basically liaises between the radar and the interceptor missile**.

ISRAEL'S IRON DOME DEFENCE SYSTEM

Mobile system to intercept rockets with range of 4-70km



Indian Alternatives:

○ S-400 TRIUMF:

▪ About:

- India has **S-400 TRIUMF**, which also caters to the three threats (rockets, missiles and cruise missiles). But they have **much longer range**.
- It has a much **larger air defence bubble** to knock off threats.
- It is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) **designed by Russia**.

▪ Range & Effectiveness:

- The system can **engage all types of aerial targets** within the **range of 400km, at an altitude of up to 30km**.
- The system can **track 100 airborne targets and engage six of them simultaneously**.

○ Prithvi Air Defence and Advance Air Defence:

▪ About:

It is a **double-tiered system consisting of two land and sea-based interceptor missiles**, namely the **Prithvi Air Defence (PAD)** missile for high altitude interception, and the **Advanced Air Defence (AAD)** Missile for lower altitude interception.

▪ Range:

It is able to **intercept any incoming missile launched 5,000 kilometres away**. The system also **includes an overlapping network of early warning and tracking radars**, as well as command and **control posts**.

○ Ashwin Advanced Air Defence Interceptor Missile:

▪ About:

- It is also an indigenously produced Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor missile developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- It is the advanced version of the low altitude supersonic ballistic interceptor missile.
- The missile also **has its own mobile launcher, secure data link for interception, independent tracking and homing capabilities and sophisticated radars**.

▪ Range:

It uses an endo-spheric (within the Earth's atmosphere) interceptor that knocks out ballistic missiles at a maximum **altitude of 60,000 to 100,000 feet, and across a range between 90 and 125 miles**.

Source: IE

Article 311 of the Constitution

Why in News

Recently, a police officer was dismissed from the service by **Mumbai Police Commissioner under Article 311(2)(b) of the Constitution** without a departmental enquiry.

Key Points

- **Article 311:**
 - **Article 311 (1)** says that **no government employee** either of an **all India service** or a **state government** shall be dismissed or **removed by an authority subordinate to the own** that appointed him/her.
 - **Article 311 (2)** says that **no civil servant shall be dismissed or removed or reduced in rank except after an inquiry** in which s/he has been informed of the charges and given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in respect of those charges.
 - **People Protected under Article 311: The members of**
 - Civil service of the Union,
 - All India Service, and
 - Civil service of any State,
 - People who hold a civil post under the Union or any State.
 - The protective safeguards given under Article 311 are **applicable only to civil servants, i.e. public officers**. They are **not available to defence personnel**.
 - **Exceptions to Article 311 (2):**
 - **2 (a)** - Where a person is dismissed or removed or reduced in rank on **the ground of conduct which has led to his conviction on a criminal charge**; or
 - **2 (b)** - Where the **authority empowered** to dismiss or remove a person or to reduce him in rank **is satisfied** that for some reason, to be recorded by that authority in writing, it is **not reasonably practicable to hold such inquiry**; or
 - **2 (c)** - Where the President or the Governor, as the case may be, is satisfied that **in the interest of the security of the State**, it is not expedient to hold such inquiry.
- **Other Recent Case Related to Use of Article 311(2) Subsections:**

Recently, the **Jammu & Kashmir** administration set up a **Special Task Force (STF)** to **scrutinise cases of employees suspected of activities requiring action under Article 311(2)(c)**.

Three government employees, including **two teachers**, were fired using the Article.

- **Options to Dismissed Employee:**

The government employee dismissed under these provisions can approach either tribunals like the **state administrative tribunal** or **Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)** or the **courts**.

- **Other Related Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Part XIV** of the Constitution of India deals with Services under The Union and The State.
- **Article 309** empowers the Parliament and the State legislature to **regulate the recruitment, and conditions of service of persons appointed**, to public services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of any State respectively.
- According to **Article 310**, except for the provisions provided by the Constitution, a civil servant of the Union works at the pleasure of the President and a civil servant under a State works at the pleasure of the Governor of that State (**English doctrine of Pleasure**).
But this **power of the Government is not absolute**.
- **Article 311** puts **certain restrictions** on the absolute power of the President or Governor for dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of an officer.

Source: IE

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture

Why in News

The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** has provided an enhanced allocation of **Rs. 2250 Crore** for the **year 2021-22** for '**Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture**' (MIDH).

Horticulture is the branch of plant agriculture **dealing with garden crops, generally fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants**. **M.H. Marigowda** is considered the **Father of Indian Horticulture**.

Key Points

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH):

- **About:** MIDH is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** for the holistic growth of the horticulture sector **covering** fruits, vegetables, root & tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.
- **Nodal Ministry:** The **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** is implementing MIDH **with effect from 2014-15**.

MIDH is implemented **under Green Revolution - Krishonnati Yojana**.

- **Funding Pattern:** Under MIDH, **Government of India (GoI)** contributes **60% of total outlay** for developmental programmes in **all the states** except states in North East and Himalayas, **40% share** is contributed by **State Governments**.

In the case of **North Eastern States and Himalayan States**, **GoI contributes 90%**.

The infographic features a green header with the text 'Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer's Welfare, Government of India' and 'Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture'. Below this is a photograph of a large poly-house with a central aisle. A dark banner at the top of the poly-house reads 'Production of quality planning material'. Six colorful circles with dashed borders are overlaid on the image, each containing a key objective of the mission. At the bottom of the infographic is a vibrant display of various fresh fruits and vegetables, including pineapples, oranges, tomatoes, and leafy greens.

Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer's Welfare, Government of India

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture

Production of quality planning material

- Nurseries, Tissue culture labs, seed infrastructure, hybrid seeds import of planning materials
- Area expansion i.e. Establishment of new orchards gardens for fruits, flowers, and hybrid vegetables.
- Creation of market linked cold-chain logistics and PHM facilities.
- Rejuvenation of unproductive, old, and senile orchards
- Creation of water resources structures and watershed management.
- Protected cultivation i.e. poly-house, green-house, shade-nets, etc for growing off-season high value vegetables and flowers.

- **MIDH Sub-Schemes:**
 - **National Horticulture Mission (NHM):**
It is being implemented by **State Horticulture Missions (SHM)** in selected districts of **18 States and 6 Union Territories.**
 - **Horticulture Mission for North East & Himalayan States (HMNEH):**
HMNEH is being implemented for overall **development of Horticulture in North East and Himalayan states.**
 - **National Horticulture Board (NHB):**
NHB is **implementing various schemes under MIDH in all States and UTs.**
 - **Coconut Development Board (CDB):**
CDB is **implementing various schemes under MIDH in all Coconut growing states** in the country.
 - **Central Institute for Horticulture (CIH)**
CIH was **established at Medi Zip Hima, Nagaland in 2006-07** for providing technical backstopping through **capacity building and training of farmers** and Field functionaries in the North Eastern Region.
- **Achievements of MIDH:**
 - During the **year 2019-20**, the country recorded its **highest ever horticulture production of 320.77 million tonnes.**
 - MIDH has played a significant role in **increasing the area under horticulture crops.**
Area and production during the years 2014-15 to 2019-20 has increased by 9% and 14% respectively.
 - It has contributed significantly towards **improving the quality of produce and productivity of farmland.**
 - The initiative of MIDH has not only resulted in **India's self-sufficiency** in the horticulture sector but also contributed towards achieving **sustainable development goals of zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, no poverty, gender equality** etc.
- **Challenges:**
The Horticulture sector is still facing a lot of challenges in terms of **high post-harvest loss** and **gaps in post-harvest management and supply chain infrastructure.**

Way Forward

- There is **tremendous scope for enhancing the productivity of Indian horticulture** which is imperative to cater to the **country's estimated demand of 650 Million MT of fruits and vegetables by the year 2050.**

- Some of the new initiatives like focus on planting material production, cluster development programme, credit push through **Agri Infra Fund**, formation and promotion of **FPOs (Farmers Producer Organisations)** are the right steps in this direction.

Source: PIB

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series

Why in News

The Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has decided to issue Sovereign Gold Bonds in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021.

Key Points

- **Launch:** The Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) scheme was **launched in November 2015** with an **objective** to reduce the demand for physical gold and shift a part of the domestic savings - used for the purchase of gold - into financial savings.
- **Issuance:** The Gold Bonds are issued as Government of India Stock under the **Government Securities (GS) Act, 2006**.
 - These are **issued by the RBI on behalf of the Government of India**.
 - Bonds are **sold through** Commercial banks, Stock Holding Corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), designated post offices and recognised stock exchanges viz., **National Stock Exchange of India Limited** and Bombay Stock Exchange, **either directly or through agents**.
- **Eligibility:** The bonds are restricted for sale to **resident individuals, Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs), trusts, universities and charitable institutions**.

- **Features:**
 - **Issue Price:** Gold bond prices are linked to the price of gold of 999 purity (24 carats) **published by India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA), Mumbai.**
 - **Investment Limit:** Gold bonds can be **purchased in the multiples of one unit**, up to certain thresholds for different investors.
 - The **upper limit** for retail (individual) investors and HUFs is 4 kilograms (4,000 units) each per financial year. For trusts and similar entities, an upper limit of 20 kilograms per financial year is applicable.
 - **Minimum permissible investment is 1 gram of gold.**
 - **Term:** The gold bonds come with a **maturity period of eight years**, with an **option to exit the investment after the first five years.**
 - **Interest Rate:** A fixed rate of **2.5% per annum** is applicable on the scheme, payable **semi-annually.**
 - The interest on Gold Bonds **shall be taxable** as per the provision of Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Benefit:**
 - Bonds can be used as **collateral for loans.**
 - The **capital gains tax** arising on redemption of SGB to an **individual** has been **exempted.**
 - Redemption is the act of an issuer repurchasing a bond at or before maturity.
 - Capital gain is the profit earned on the sale of an asset like stocks, bonds or real estate. It results in when the selling price of an asset exceeds its purchase price.
- **Disadvantages of Investing in SGB:**
 - This is a **long term investment unlike physical gold which can be sold immediately.**
 - Sovereign gold bonds are **listed on exchange but the trading volumes are not high**, therefore it will be difficult to exit before maturity.

Source: PIB
