

2. US-Israel Talks on West Bank Annexation

Prelims Syllabus: Places in News

Mains Syllabus: GS-II Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Why in News?

- Recently, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to discuss Israel's plans to annex parts of the West Bank.

Where is West Bank?

- It is a landlocked territory near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan to the east and by the Green Line separating it and Israel on the south, west and north.
- The West Bank also contains a significant section of the western Dead Sea shore.



What is the Issue?

- The West Bank was captured by Jordan after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

- Israel snatched it back during the Six Day War of 1967, and has occupied it ever since. During this war, the country defeated the combined forces of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan.
- In the 1967 Six-Day War, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria.
- It has built some 130 formal settlements in the West Bank, and a similar number of smaller, informal settlements have mushroomed over the last 20-25 years.
- Over 4 lakh Israeli settlers — many of them religious Zionists who claim a Biblical birth right over this land — now live here, along with some 26 lakh Palestinians.
- The territory is still a point of contention due to a large number of Palestinians who live there and hope to see the land become a part of their future state.
- When Israel took control of the land in 1967 it allowed Jewish people to move in, but Palestinians consider the West Bank illegally occupied Palestinian land.

Are these Settlements Illegal?

- The United Nations General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the International Court of Justice have said that the West Bank settlements are violative of the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- Under the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949), an occupying power “shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies”.
- Under the Rome Statute that set up the International Criminal Court in 1998, such transfers constitute war crimes, as does the “extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly”.

International Views:

- **USA:** In November 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said America no longer considers Israeli settlements to be in violation of international law and claimed the Trump administration believes they are necessary to preserve Israeli security.
- Trump also revealed his Middle East peace plan in the form of a two-state solution during a press conference at the end of January with Netanyahu and claimed the deal would be a boon to both nations.
- **India:** India traditionally believes in the 2-state solution and supports the establishment of a sovereign independent and a viable state of Palestine. However, India’s support for Palestine has not deterred its growing relationship with Israel.

What about the Jerusalem?

- Under the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, both Israel and the Palestinians agreed that the status of settlements would be decided by negotiations. But the negotiations process has been all but dead for several years now.
- Israel walked into East Jerusalem in 1967, and subsequently annexed it. For Israel, Jerusalem is non-negotiable.
- The Palestinians are seeking to establish an independent state in the occupied parts of the West Bank, along with the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip – with East Jerusalem serving as its capital.

