

US recognizes Jerusalem as Israel's capital

- United States has officially recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and has directed the State Department to initiate the process of moving the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Why Jerusalem is important:

For Jews:

- According to tradition, the place where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son Isaac but was commanded by God not to do so was the spot on which Jerusalem was later built.
- Son of Jews King David Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem (1000 BCE). A remnant of a massive, western retaining wall for the temple ruins is now the Wailing Wall or Western Wall of Jewish prayer and pilgrimage.
- Jews were in exile for the next 2,000 years, but kept Jerusalem's memory intact as the symbol of national unity.

For Christians:

- Jerusalem was the city where Christ preached, ate the Last Supper with his disciples before his death, where he was arrested, put on trial, condemned to death, crucified, and died. It is where, Christians believe, his tomb was found empty and he rose from the dead. Jerusalem, then, is a place of deep sorrow, utter desolation but also of hope and redemption. It is the sacred heart of the Christian story.

For Muslims:

- Jerusalem is important to Muslims for many reasons. First of all, Jerusalem was Islam's first direction of prayer (qibla), before this was changed to Mecca.
- According to Islamic tradition, the prophet travelled miraculously from Mecca to Jerusalem and then upwards through the seven heavens, culminating in a direct conversation with, and/or vision of, God.
- India's Stand on this issue:
- India position on Palestine shall remain independent and consistent. It must be shaped by its humanitarian views and national interests and not determined by any third country. India has always supported two-state solution and advocated for independent and viable Palestine. India shall maintain status quo and must not move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Consequences of this step:

- U.S. diplomacy in the region has become gray and lost an important arbitral position in the region.
- The move will propel further instability in the region infact Hamas has already declared third intifada.
- Its also a voilation of international law considering the fact that UN Security Council Resolution 478, which also asks member-countries to "withdraw diplomatic missions from

the Holy City". These violations instigate trust deficit in international community and undermine the legality and validity of international law.

- Its repercussions will broaden religious rifts among Arabs and Jews.
- It will hinder future peace process between Israel and Palestine.
- It will initiate new power games in West Asia and Israel which will promote religious wars and anti-state actors which will be threats to human rights.

International community's stand

- The position of the majority of the international community has been largely unchanged for decades.
- Essentially Jerusalem is viewed as an issue for final status negotiations between the two sides. United Nations statements suggest, however, that the city could remain the capital of both Israel and a future Palestinian state in any deal.
- The vast majority of countries have largely followed this line. All embassies are based in the commercial capital Tel Aviv, but most countries simply do not specify what they consider to be Israel's capital. Thirteen countries did have embassies in Jerusalem until 1980, however, when a U.N. resolution called upon them to remove them. Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, the Netherlands, Panama, Uruguay and Venezuela then shifted their embassies.

Israel – Palestine dispute:

- Israel is the world's only Jewish state, located just east of the Mediterranean Sea.
- Palestinians, the Arab population that hails from the land Israel now controls, refer to the territory as Palestine, and want to establish a state by that name on all or part of the same land.
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is over who gets what land and how it's controlled.
- In 1897, Jews started a movement called a Zionist movement, to escape persecution and establish their own state in their ancestral homeland, Israel. The World Zionist Organisation was created to advocate for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- As a result, a large number of Jews started flowing into Palestine and they bought land and started settling down there.
- By 1916, Palestine came under the British control after the Sykes-Picot Agreement (a secret agreement between Great Britain and France). This led to the division of the old Ottoman Turkish Empire.
- Later through Balfour declaration, the British foreign secretary James Balfour agreed to the establishment of a Jewish homeland.
- After Nazis gained power in Germany in 1930s, the Jews influx to Palestine took a major turn with hundreds of thousands of them resettled from Europe to Palestine. Arabs saw this as a threat to their homeland and they fought bitterly with them. As the British Government remained as a mute spectator, violence reached its peak.
- In 1947, the British Government referred the question of the future of Palestine to the United Nations. UN voted to split the land into two countries. Jewish people accepted the agreement and declared independence of Israel.