

Israel's Expanding Settlement

Why in news?

 $n\n$

Israel passed a legislation that would legalise nearly 4,000 Jewish settler homes on private Palestinian lands in the West Bank.

 $n\n$

What are settlements?

 $n\n$

\n

• Settlements are communities established by Israel on land occupied in the 1967 Middle East war.

\n

- This includes the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.
- Prior to that no Israeli citizens had lived in the territory.
- \bullet In 1968 Israeli government reluctantly allowed Jews to stay "temporarily." $\ensuremath{^{\backslash n}}$
- Since then hundreds of thousands of Israeli Jews now reside in the West Bank, citing religion, history and Israel's security among their reasons for being there.

\n

• There are 131 settlements in the West Bank, housing about 385,000 Israeli Jewish settlers, and 97 outposts - settlements built without official authorisation.

\n

 Palestinians, along with the rest of the world, see their presence as one of the key obstacles to a peace agreement and the creation of a Palestinian state.

۱'n

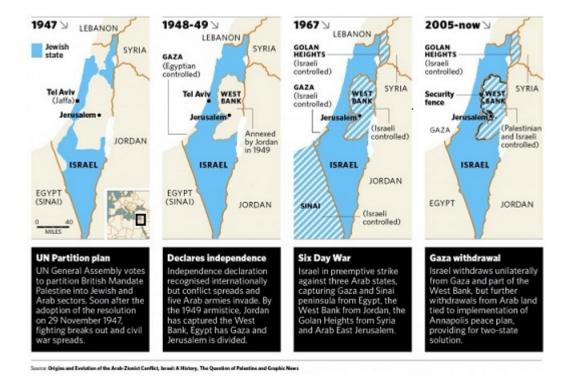
 Palestinians say the presence of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem - land they seek for a future state - make such a state with contiguous territory impossible.

\n

• They have demanded Israel freeze all settlement activity as a precondition for resuming peace talks.

\n

 $n\n$



 $n\n$

What is the legislation about?

 $n\n$

\n

• Despite international criticism, successive governments have supported the settlements.

\n

- The legislation allows the Israeli government to confiscate private Palestinian land if the land-owners are unknown.
- If known, they will be compensated in cash or kind.

 $n\n$

What will be the impact?

 $n\n$

\n

 \bullet The legislation seeks to extend Israeli law to the West Bank. $\ensuremath{^{\backslash n}}$

- It can be overturned by the judiciary.
- \bullet Israel's Attorney-General has said he wouldn't defend the bill in the high court as it is unconstitutional and violates international law. \n
- But this is unlikely to stop the current government from taking more Palestinian land.

۱n

- Earlier UN Security Council demanded that Israel stop all settlement activity in the Occupied Territories.
- An international conference attended by more than 70 countries urged both sides in the conflict to resume talks
- \bullet In this scenario, Israel's legislation shows its disregard for international opinion and institutions. $\mbox{\sc h}$

 $n\n$

What is the Israel's stand?

 $n\n$

\n

- Israel still says it is committed to the **two-state solution**.
- But the two-state solution will not be relevant if it continues to grab Palestinian land.

\n

- \bullet The current government has shown no interest in resuming negotiations.
- This is compounded by the election of Donald Trump as U.S. President, who also does not believe in two state solution.

 $n\n$

 $n\n$

Source: The Hindu

\n

