

Qatari Crisis

Why in news?

\n\n

\n

- The biggest political crisis to hit the Middle East in years.
- Qatari nationals are now officially on notice to leave neighbouring countries within two weeks after an unprecedented diplomatic freeze of the nation by key allies and neighbours.

\n

\n\n

What is the background of the issue?

\n\n

\n

- A total of nine nations have so far moved to indefinitely sever ties with Qatar a country of nearly 2.3 million people, mostly foreign workers.
- Gulf allies have repeatedly criticized Qatar for alleged support of the Muslim Brotherhood, a nearly 100-year-old Islamist group considered a terrorist organization by Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

\n

- The UAE accused Qatar of "funding and hosting" the group in its statement announcing the severance of ties.

\n

- The rift is also driven by the belief that Qatar is too closely aligned with Iran.

\n

- The diplomatic crisis came two weeks after Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt blocked several Qatari media outlets.

\n

- Saudi Arabia and Iran are at odds over a number of regional issues, including Iran's nuclear program and what Saudis see as Tehran's growing influence in the kingdom's sphere of influence.

\n

- Qatari diplomats have been given notice to leave their foreign posts.

\n

- Qatari citizens have been told they have 14 days to leave Saudi Arabia,

Bahrain and the UAE, and those countries also banned their own citizens from entering Qatar.

\n

\n\n

How this will affect Qatar and rest of the world?

\n\n

\n

- Qatar is rich in oil and gas but it doesn't really produce its own food -- almost all of comes from Saudi Arabia. Now the borders have been shut, food prices could skyrocket.

\n

- Qatar Airlines is a major global airline but it's no longer allowed to use the airspace above Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE.

\n

- This causes raising of fuel costs, flight times and potentially ticket prices.

\n

- Qataris are a minority in their own country it's home to as many as two million foreign workers, mainly from India, Nepal, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

\n

- Any kind of instability in the Middle East tends to send up oil prices, and the longer prices stay high.

\n

- Qatar is the world's biggest LNG exporter. It has pipelines in the Gulf and could retaliate but cutting off supplies to its neighbours.

\n

- The diplomatic crisis is also the latest complication for the 2022 World Cup, which Qatar is preparing to host.

\n

- The tournament is already facing allegations of worker misconduct, and it had to slash the budget for the soccer tournament by more than 40% because of the falling price of oil.

\n

\n\n

How this crisis would affect India?

\n\n

\n

- Qatar has a high number of foreign workers, and most of them are from India, there are over six lakh Indian workers in Qatar.

\n

- Ministry of External Affairs is trying to assess who and how many are stuck in the middle, and then It will make a move.
\n
- Securing the Indian diaspora in the Gulf is, of course, of paramount importance.
\n
- India must, however, look at the current crisis, and West Asia and North Africa as a whole, from a broader prism than just Indian labour in the region.
\n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

- Since the “Arab Spring”, the Iran-Saudi rivalry has been playing out in civil wars, diplomatic manoeuvrings and internal conflicts in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Egypt.
\n
- For the Sunni-ruled countries of the GCC, that has serious implications Bahrain, for example, has a restive Shia majority ruled by a Sunni monarchy.
\n
- Qatar is also a US ally and houses arguably its most important military base in the region.
\n
- The situation in West Asia only looks to be escalating if the serial attacks in Tehran, for which the Islamic State has taken responsibility, are any indication.
\n
- The pressure on Qatar seems to be aimed at changing its policy direction, making it fall in line with Saudi interests.
\n
- If Iran intervenes or the royal family feud continues, India should be prepared to evacuate its people.
\n
- Over the longer term, India can’t continue with a mercantilist approach to the Gulf.
\n
- The region’s salience to India’s strategic and energy concerns demand a deeper engagement.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The India Express

\n

