Proposal on Muslim Brotherhood as Foreign Terrorist Organisation

Why in news?

The White House recently said that a proposal to designate the Muslim Brotherhood as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation was being worked out.

What were the earlier developments in this regard?

- The statement was linked to a meeting between Presidents Donald Trump and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt.
- During the meet, the Egyptian leader had urged the U.S. to impose sanction on the Muslim Brotherhood, which opposes his government.
- Also recently, the U.S. designated Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO).
- The designation imposed economic and travel sanctions on IRGC and on organisations, companies, and individuals that have links to it.

What is a Foreign Terrorist Organisation?

- Section 219 of the United States Immigration and Nationality Act provides for the designation of an organisation as an FTO.
- It authorises the Secretary of State to designate an organization as an FTO if s/he finds that -
    i. the organization is a foreign organization
    ii. the organization engages in terrorist activity or terrorism
    iii. it threatens the security of U.S. nationals or the national security of the country
- FTO designation plays a critical role in US's fight against terrorism, by curtailing support for terrorist activities and pressuring groups.

Who are the Muslim Brotherhood?

- Muslim Brotherhood is a movement that was founded in Egypt in 1928 by a

schoolteacher named Hassan al-Banna.

- He preached that an Islamic religious revival would help Muslim nations improve their situation and defeat their colonial masters.
- Hassan al-Banna was not specific about the kind of Muslim revivalist government he was advocating.
- But his ideas travelled all over the world, and inspired a large number of Islamist groups and movements.
- It reached across political movements and parties as well as powerful missionary and charitable initiatives.
- Among others, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, Turkey and Tunisia have large parties that trace their origins to the Brotherhood.
- Not all of today's movements and organisations call themselves the Muslim Brotherhood, however.

How about their terrorist orientation?

- In the 1940s, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood created an armed wing.
- In 1948, one of its members killed the Prime Minister, Mahmoud Fahmy el-Nokrashy Pasha.
- Hassan al-Banna denounced the killers as "neither Brothers nor Muslims".
- In the 1960s, the Brotherhood formally announced they were only "preachers".
- There is a broad consensus now that the Egyptian Brotherhood, as an organisation at least, has not undertaken violent action since then.
- However, after the military takeover in Cairo in 2013, some factions of it have broken off and carried out violence against the government.
- These include Hasm and Liwa al-Thawra which have already been designated as FTOs by the US.
- Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, designated as an FTO, carries out bombings and rocket attacks on Israeli civilians.
- Ayman al-Zawahiri, the fugitive leader of al-Qaeda, is a former member of the Egyptian Brotherhood.
- Given these, President Al-Sisi accuses the Brotherhood, as a whole, of supporting and carrying out terrorism.
- But the Brotherhood has strongly criticised al-Qaeda and violent undertakings of other factions.
- All over the world, Muslim Brotherhood movements have been advocating democratic elections.
- This has put them in the crosshairs of both authoritarian ruling regimes as well as militant Islamists.

Source: Indian Express

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