Prelims and Mains focus: about the Arab Spring and its features

News: Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian leader who for nearly 30 years was the resolute face of stability in the Middle East, died on 25th February, ending his days after a swift and ignominious tumble from power in the Arab world’s pro-democracy upheaval.

- Though Tunisia’s president fell before him, the ouster of Mr. Mubarak was the more stunning collapse in the face of the Arab Spring shaking regimes across the Arab world.

What was the Arab Spring?

- The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy uprisings that enveloped several largely Muslim countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt and Bahrain.

- The events in these nations generally began in the spring of 2011, which led to the name. However, the political and social impact of these popular uprisings remains significant today, years after many of them ended.

- When protests broke out in Tunisia in late 2010 and spread to other countries, there were hopes that the Arab world was in for massive changes.

- The expectation was that in countries where people rose, such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain and Syria, the old autocracies would be replaced with new democracies.

- But Tunisia is the only country where the revolutionaries outwitted the counter-revolutionaries. They overthrew Zine El Abidine Ben Ali’s dictatorship, and the country transitioned to a multi-party democracy.
But except Tunisia, the country-specific stories of the Arab uprising were tragic.

Features

- The Arab uprising was originally triggered by a combination of factors.

- The economic model based on patronage was crumbling in these countries.

- The rulers had been in power for decades, and there was popular longing for freedom from their repressive regimes.

- More important, the protests were transnational in nature, though the targets of the revolutionaries were their respective national governments.

- The driving force behind the protests was a pan-Arabist anger against the old system. That’s why it spread like wildfire from Tunis to Cairo, Benghazi and Manama.

- They may have failed to reshape the Arab political order, but the embers of the uprisings appear to have survived the tragedy of ‘Arab Spring’.