

Karen Rebels of Myanmar:

May 1, 2021

In News: Myanmar's military launched air strikes on a village and outpost near the Thailand border after ethnic minority Karen insurgents attacked a Myanmar army post.

About Karen conflict-

- The **Karen National Union (KNU)** is the most powerful political organisation in **Karen, or Kayin State, which borders Thailand.**
- Its **aim is to** give the Karen people self-determination in an area of about 1.6 million people, approximately the size of Belgium, where they are the ethnic majority.
- The KNU, which had been marginalised in Burma's post-independence political process, launched a revolt in 1949 that lasted nearly 70 years.
- The **majority Bamar community's** domination of Myanmar's state and military was one of its main grievances.
- Karen nationalists have been fighting for an **independent state known as Kawthoolei** since 1949 but since 1976 they have shifted towards calling for a federal system in Myanmar instead.
- The conflict has been identified as one of the world's "longest running civil wars".
- Myanmar's oldest rebel faction, the KNU, has also claimed control of an army camp on the **Salween river's west bank.**

Karen people-

- The Karen are an ethnolinguistic **group of Sino-Tibetan language-speaking people.**

- The group as a whole is heterogeneous and many Karen ethnic groups do not associate or identify with each other culturally or linguistically.
- These Karen groups reside primarily in Kayah State, southern and southeastern Myanmar.
- A few Karen have settled in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India** and other Southeast Asian and East Asian countries.

Padaung tribe, best known for the neck rings worn by their women, are just one sub-group of the Red Karens (Karenni), one of the tribes of Kayah in Kayah State, Myanmar.