

Xinjiang province

December 23, 2020

In news

Recently, the European Parliament asked China to allow UN fact-finding team to visit Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region

Key issues raised by the European parliament

- The European Parliament (EP) on passed a resolution on forced labour and the situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region while calling on the EU to proactively work towards an independent UN inquiry on China with a view to ensuring accountability for the crimes committed.
- According to the resolution of European Parliament, the situation in Xinjiang, where more than 10 million Muslim Uyghurs and Kazakhs live, has rapidly deteriorated, particularly since the launch of the Chinese Government's 'Strike Hard against Violent Terrorism' campaign in 2014"
- The European Parliament also raised concern over forced labour practice in Xinjiang which produces over 20 per cent of global cotton production.
- The European Parliament requested China to allow a mission from the European Parliament to Xinjiang on the condition that it is given free and unrestricted access while guaranteeing confidentiality and safety for the local population.

About Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region

- Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in northwest China, is a vast region of deserts and mountains.
- It's home to many ethnic minority groups, including the Turkic Uyghur people.
- The ancient Silk Road trade route linking China and the

Middle East passed through Xinjiang province

- Xinjiang borders the countries of Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.
- It is home to a number of ethnic groups, including the Turkic Uyghur, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, the Han, Tibetans, Hui, Tajiks, Mongols, Russians and Xibe.

The conflict between Uyghur and the Chinese authorities

- It is a conflict in China's far-northwest autonomous region of Xinjiang centred on the Uyghurs, a Turkic minority ethnic group who make up the largest group in the region
- Though the conflict is traced to 1931, factors such as the massive state-sponsored migration of Han Chinese from the 1950s to the 1970s, government policies promoting Chinese cultural unity and punishing certain expressions of Uyghur identity and harsh responses to separatism have contributed to tension between Uyghurs, and state police and Han Chinese.
- In recent years, government policy has been marked by mass surveillance and the incarceration without trial of over one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minority ethnic groups in "re-education camps"
- The government is now also accused of a programme of forced sterilisation against Uighur women
- China initially denied the existence of the camps, before claiming they were a necessary measure against separatist violence in Xinjiang.
- It also denies carrying out forced sterilizations.

Who are the Uighurs?

- The Uighurs are a mostly Muslim Turkic ethnicity who regard themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
- The majority live in Xinjiang, where they number about

11 million people.

- Uighur communities are also found in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, and several thousand live in Australia.
- They have their own language, also called Uighur, though China is accused of forcing those taken to camps in Xinjiang to learn Mandarin.
- In the early part of the 20th Century, Uighurs briefly declared independence, but the region was brought under the complete control of communist China in 1949.
- Xinjiang has currently designated an autonomous region within China, like Tibet to its south, but in reality the province has little autonomy from the Chinese state.

What's the view of China?

- China has long denied operating internment camps and says that the outside world does not understand the situation in Xinjiang.
- It insists that Uighur militants are waging a violent campaign for an independent state by plotting bombings, sabotage, and civic unrest.