

PLUTUS IAS



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1. Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis: Key Facts

The Ethiopian National Defense Force conducted airstrikes against the forces of the Tigray region as a result of the conflict between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). As of now, military operations as well as air strikes have been conducted against the forces of Tigray region since November.

What is the Tigray Crisis?

- If we talk about the recent conflict that is going on, then the Tigray Crisis began with the announcement by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that forces supporting TPLF have attacked a military base and many soldiers have been martyred. After this, PM Abiy started military operations against the forces of the fortified Tigray region on November 4, 2020.
- Although TPLF refused any of such attacks, a state of emergency has been declared by the Ethiopian government in the region. Electricity and internet services were shut down in the region.
- On November 6, 2020 airstrikes were launched against the forces of TPLF.
- On November 7, 2020 the Ethiopian parliament voted to form an interim government in the northern Tigray region and declared the Tigrayan government as illicit. This government was formed by local elections during COVID-19. The Ethiopian government had postponed the elections that were to be held in September due to the pandemic.

The Ethiopian government has also made some replacements in the middle of all this; Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen has been appointed as the Foreign Minister while Birhanu Jula has been promoted to the post of Army Chief.

Background: What led to the Conflict?

- The tensions between Ethiopian government and Tigray People's Liberation Front actually began with the appointment of Abiy Ahmed as the prime minister of the country in 2018.
- Before the year 2019, TPLF used to be a part of Ethiopia's governing coalition but it refused to join the Prosperity Party formed by Abiy and separated itself from the coalition.
- TPLF has been one of the most influential members of the ruling coalition that was formed by ethnic-based parties but after the merger of all other parties in the Prosperity Party formed by Abiy, TPLF has been left alone.
- The Federal government of Ethiopia voted to postpone the September 2020 elections but TPLF was against the extra time given to Abiy in the government and also conducted its local elections.
- This is where the tensions between the government and TPLF became stronger.

Why is Tigray Important?

Tigray is the northernmost region of Ethiopia and has only 6% of the country's population. Even with this small population, Tigray is a strategically important region of Ethiopia. It is because the region has played a great role in power and government for almost 3 decades. After the end of Ethiopian Civil War in 1991, Tigray People's Liberation Front became the leader of the governing coalition of Ethiopia. Also, Meles Zenawi, a Tigrayan, led Ethiopia from 1991 until his death in 2012. This is the reason why Tigray is one of the important regions of the country.

How the Tigray Conflict affects Ethiopia and its neighbors?

As the conflict has taken a bad turn now, there is a possibility that it can spread to other regions of Ethiopia. So, the Tigray crisis can lead to unwanted war-like situations. Not only this, the Tigray crisis can also affect the neighboring countries like Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea. Ethiopian forces have started to withdraw from Somalia; Sudan is also going through a major political transition.

2. Migration Policy Index: Kerala at top and Delhi at bottom

The Mumbai based research non-profit India Migration Now has recently released "Interstate Migrant Policy Index" (IMPEX). The index measures integration of interstate migrants.

Key Highlights

The average IMPEX score of India is 37 out of 100. According to the index, the states of Kerala, Goa, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have been most successful in integrating migrant workers. On the other hand, Delhi has the least Interstate Migrant Policy Index.

The index helps India to evolve policy for 455 million internal migrants. According to Census 2011, there are 455 million internal migrants in the country.

Background

Migration within the country is a fundamental right for every citizen. However, the issue is that the legislation that envisages welfare of the migrants are not implemented to the full extent.

Legislation

The central Government has constituted the following laws for the welfare of the migrants

- Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Interstate Migrant Workmen (Regulation and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979
- Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996.

3.NASA: Earth Surface Mass has deviated

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration recently announced that the Earth Mass has deviated in August 2020 as compared to that of 2004-09. According to NASA, the sea level increase may be due to the change in earth mass.

Findings of NASA

The change in earth mass is mainly caused due to land movement relative to sea. The changes in land movement was more in snow- and ice-covered regions. This is because, here the ice cover is disappearing. In other words, here the surface mass of the earth is being lost.

NASA released maps showing how several factors affect the sea level increase.

Land Motion

The natural drivers such as shifting of tectonic plates, compression of buried ocean sediments produce gradual motion. Apart from these, the human driven factors such as ground water extraction, oil production and drying of peat soils also cause land motion. The Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) helped analyse land movement. According to NASA, oil production and ground water extraction can produce subsidence at the rate of centimetres per year as compared to millimetres per year as caused by natural processes.

Ocean Altimetry

The Altimetry missions of Oceans are used to learn about ocean topography. The Radar Altimeters send out pulses of radio waves that bounce the surface of ocean and reflect

back towards the satellite. The satellite calculates the time taken for the signal to return. Using this, the scientists can determine the height of the sea.

Reasons for change in earth masses

The changes were mainly because of changes in the amount of water, ice and snow. These changes were calculated by GRACE Mission. It was a joint mission by NASA and Germany. GRACE mission found that there were mass losses of Greenland ice sheet between 2002 and 2016. Also, the mission found that between 2002 and 2017, there were mass losses of 1.2 milli metres per year.

Greenland

The losses in ice masses in Greenland was more than that of Antarctica. Greenland lost around 200 Gigatonnes of ice per year from its coastal glaciers alone.

4. First Anniversary of Kartarpur Corridor celebrated

The Pakistan Gurudwara body, PSGPC (Pakistan Sikh Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee) is to celebrate the first anniversary of the inauguration of Kartarpur Corridor. The Corridor connects Dera Baba Nanak in India with Gurudwara Darbar Sahib.

Key Highlights

The corridor is closed from Indian side due to COVID-19 pandemic. Every year, around 3000 people from India reach the site to commemorate the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

Recent Issues

On November 6, 2020, India condemned Pakistan over the latter's decision to transfer the management and maintenance of Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara to a non-Sikh body. Pakistan has transferred the management and maintenance of the shrine from PSGPC to an administrative control of Evacuee Trust Property Board. The board is a non-Sikh body.

According to India, the decision is against the spirit of Sikh community at large.

5. India attends SCO Summit: Key Facts

India is to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit. India was represented by PM Modi at the summit. This is the 20th summit of the organization and third for India since it became a member in 2017. India was an observer at the SCO since 2005. This is the first time PM Modi and President Xi Jing Ping are to be on the same platform since the stand off at the border.

Highlights

The summit is to be chaired by the Russian President Vladimir Putin. The other countries to attend the summit are Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. During the summit, the leaders are to adopt the Moscow Declaration. The Executive Director of the SCO RATS (Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure) is to make his interventions during the summit.

The Summit will also focus on issues such as Commemoration of 75th anniversary of World War II, COVID-19, digital economy and countering the spread of terrorism. It also includes Internet and Countering Drug threats.

6.GoI: 29 Projects approved to benefit Farmers

Shri Narendra Singh Tomar chaired the Inter-Ministerial Approval Committee meeting. The committee approved 29 projects leveraging investment of Rs 443 crores.

Key Highlights

Under the Scheme of Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition, Rs 189 crores were allocated. Rs 15 crores was allocated to the BFL scheme. BFL is creation of Backward and Forward Linkages. BFL is a part of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana.

The projects are to generate 15,000 employment and will benefit more than 2 lakh farmers. These projects are to be implemented in ten states such as Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Kerala, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Telangana, Nagaland.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana

It was launched in 2016 with a total outlay of Rs 6,000 crores. The scheme has seven components namely Mega Food Parks, Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, Human Resources and Institutions, Creation and Expansion of Food Processing and Preservation capacities, Infrastructure for agro-processing clusters and creation of Operation Greens as a vertical.

Operation Greens

It was launched in 2018 for integrated development of supply chain of Tomato, Onion and Potato crops. The scheme aims to stabilize the supply of Tomato, Potato and Onions. The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries. The nodal agency implementing the scheme is NAFED (National Agriculture cooperative marketing Federation of India).

Operation Greens aims to double farmers' income by 2022. It is implemented through short term price stabilization measures and long term integrated value chain development projects.

NAFED

It was launched in 1958 and is the apex organization for marketing cooperatives for agricultural produce in India. NAFED along with the Food Corporation of India procures pulses, oil seeds. The headquarters of NAFED is in New Delhi. The four regional offices of NAFED are Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.

7. India attended first BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meet. The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman represented India at the meet.

Key Highlights

During the meet, the finance ministers observed that BRICS members have delivered significant initiatives in 2020 at the G20 Action Plan in response to COVID-19. Also, the leaders highlighted that the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative ensured immediate support.

During the meet, the ministers also discussed the expansion of the membership of the New Development Bank.

New Development Bank

The New Development Bank was set up at Fortaleza Summit in 2014. According to Fitch and Standard and Poor's, the bank has been provided with AA+ risk rating. AA+ risk rating is one of the credit rating codes and classes. AA+ is of higher grade. The ratings of Moody's are Aaa, Aa1, Aa2, etc. Ratings of S&P are AAA, AA+, etc.

Contingent Reserve Arrangement

The Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) of BRICS aims to shore up its member countries during the event of crisis in their Balance of payments. The total amount of resources allocated to CRA is 100 billion USD. The individual commitments are as follows

- China: 41 billion USD
- Brazil: 18 billion USD
- Russia: 18 billion USD
- India: 18 billion USD
- South Africa: 5 billion USD

BICAS

It is the BRICS Initiative for Critical Agrarian Studies. It is largely concerned with Global agrarian transformations. It connects academic research across political sociology, political Ecology and political economy to exclude agrarian transformations.

BRICS STI

It is science, technology and innovation cooperation among the BRICS countries. It began in 2014. The main objective of this cooperation is to create concrete economic results based on innovation.

Security

The group holds National Security Advisors meetings annually. During the meet the member countries exchange their approaches towards International security threats, terrorism, corruption, money laundering, drug trafficking and cyber-attacks.

Business Council

It was established in 2013 during Durban submit. It aims to bring the business communities of the members closer. There are 9 working groups under the Council. They are manufacturing, infrastructure, energy, agri-business, regional aviation, financial services, harmonization levels and capacity development.