

4. U.S. House Passes Bill Seeking Action over Uighur Crackdown

Prelims Level: International Policies and Schemes

Mains Level: GS-II Effects of Policies and politics & developing Countries on India's Interest's, Indian Diaspora.

Why in News?

- The U.S. House of Representatives have overwhelmingly approved a Bill that would require the Trump administration to toughen its response to China's crackdown on its Muslim minority, drawing swift condemnation from Beijing.

Highlights:

- The Uighur Act of 2019 is a stronger version of a Bill that angered Beijing when it passed the Senate in September 2019.
- It calls on President Donald Trump to impose sanctions for the first time on a member of China's powerful politburo (executive committee for communist parties).
- The Uighur Bill, requires the U.S. President to condemn abuses against Muslims and call for the closure of mass detention camps in the north-western region of Xinjiang.
- It calls for sanctions against senior Chinese officials who, it says, are responsible.
- The revised Bill still has to be approved by the Republican-controlled Senate before being sent to Mr. Trump for approval.

China's Response:

- China's Foreign Ministry called the Bill a malicious attack against China.
- "We urge the U.S. to immediately correct its mistake, to stop the above Bill on Xinjiang from becoming law, to stop using Xinjiang as a way to interfere in China's domestic affairs," said the statement, attributed to the Ministry's spokeswoman.
- Commenting on the repercussions the bill would have on the trade negotiations between the two countries, the spokeswoman hinted a strong counter reaction to the move.

Who are Uighurs?

- The Uighurs live in Xinjiang, the largest and most western of China's administrative regions, which is surrounded by Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.
- They are Muslim, speak a language close to Turkish, and are culturally and ethnically closer to Central Asia than the rest of China.

- Till recently, they were the majority in Xinjiang, but massive registered and unregistered settlements of Han Chinese and heavy troop deployments have likely changed that situation.
- International concern has been growing about what China is doing to its Uighur population, a Muslim minority community concentrated in the country's north-western Xinjiang province. Reports have emerged of China 'homogenising' the Uighurs, who claim closer ethnic ties to Turkey and other central Asian countries than to China, by brute – and brutal – force.
- Around a million Uighurs, Kazakhs and other Muslims have been bundled into internment camps, where they are allegedly being schooled into giving up their identity, and assimilate better in the communist country dominated by the Han Chinese.

