



EU Imposes Sanctions Against Belarus

Why in News

Recently, the [European Union \(EU\)](#) imposed **sanctions against Belarus**, including banning its airlines from using the airspace and airports of the **27-nation bloc EU**.



Key Points

▪ Background of Belarus' Polity:

- Europe's **longest-serving ruler, President of Belarus Lukashenko took office in 1994** amid the chaos caused by the **collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991**.
- Often described as **Europe's "last dictator"**, he has tried to preserve elements of **Soviet communism**.
 - He has been in power for **26 years**, keeping much of the **economy in state hands**, and using censorship and police crackdowns against opponents.
- In 2020, after Lukashenko was announced as the winner in elections, protests broke out in the capital, Minsk which was met with a **violent security crackdown**.

- There has been widespread anger against the government over a stagnant economy and doubts about the fairness of the election.

▪ Previous Sanctions:

- In response to the violent crackdown, the **EU and the United States (US) imposed several rounds of financial sanctions** against Belarus in 2020.
- The US also imposed travel restrictions and targeted financial sanctions on nine state-owned entities and 16 individuals, including President Lukashenko. **First imposed in 2006, these were tightened in 2008.**
- The EU first introduced **restrictive measures against Belarus in 2004**, following the disappearance of two opposition politicians, a journalist and a businessman several years earlier.

▪ Reason for Recent Sanctions:

- Belarus **forcely diverted a passenger jet and scrambled a warplane to arrest an opposition journalist** in an act denounced by Western powers as **“state piracy”** (an act of piracy where the state is involved).

▪ Steps Taken by EU:

◦ Restrictions on Airspace:

- Called for **Belarusian airlines to be banned** from the 27-nation bloc’s airspace and **urged EU-based carriers to avoid flying over the former Soviet republic.**

◦ Investigation into Forced Plane Diversion:

- Agreed to widen the list of Belarusian individuals they already sanction and called on the **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** to urgently investigate Belarus forcing a Ryanair plane to land in Minsk on a Greece-Lithuania flight.
- It also called for the release of the journalist who was detained.

◦ Sanctions on Individuals and Businesses:

- Since October 2020, the EU has progressively been restricting more and more key political figures with measures like travel bans and asset freezes.
- With the recent incident, the bloc decided to add even **more targets to its sanction list of 88 individuals and seven entities.**

◦ Billion-Euro Economic Package:

- The EU had a 3 billion Euro investment package ready for Belarus that it will now freeze until the country turns democratic.

▪ Implications:

- Belarus lies on the **flight path of routes within Europe and between Europe and Asia.** Skirting Belarus would slow flights down and **cost airlines money.**
- Belarus receives income from airlines that enter its airspace of up to 70,000 Euro each day, losing this amount of money would be **an inconvenience** but **not have a significant impact on the economy of Belarus.**

International Civil Aviation Organisation

▪ About:

- It is a **United Nations (UN) specialized agency**, established in 1944, which laid the foundation for the **standards and procedures for peaceful global air navigation.**
 - The **Convention on International Civil Aviation** was signed in December 1944 in Chicago.
 - It **established the core principles** permitting international transport by air, and also led to the creation of the ICAO.

▪ **Objective:**

- To foster the **planning and development of international air transport** so as to ensure the safe and orderly growth of international civil aviation throughout the world.

▪ **Members:**

- India is among its **193 members**.

▪ **Headquarter:**

- Montreal, Canada.

Way Forward

- The President of Belarus should ensure the **formation of a legitimate government that could address the country's vital problems**.
- He has to **reach out to the Opposition and offer talks to find a peaceful settlement to the crisis**.

[Source:TH](#)

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