



TARGET PRELIMS 2024

BOOKLET-29

INTERNATIONAL MAPPING AND PLACES IN NEWS-1

AUSTRALIA, ASIA AND EUROPE

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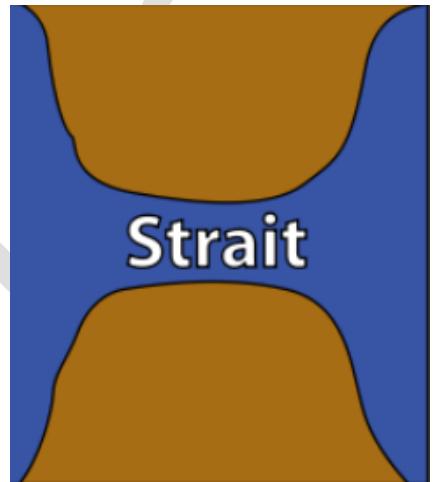
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1) BASICS

A) STRAIT

- A strait is a naturally formed, narrow, typically navigable waterway that connects two larger bodies of water. Most commonly, it is a channel of water bodies that lies between two large land masses.
- **Important Straits of the world:**
 - » Bering Strait (Bering Sea and Chuksi Sea)
 - » Malacca Strait (joins Andaman Sea and South China Sea)
 - » Sunda Strait (Java Sea and Indian Ocean)
 - » Palk Strait (Joins Palk Bay and Bay of Bengal)
 - » Bosphorus Strait (Black Sea and Marmara Sea)
 - » Bab-el-Mandeb Strait (Red Sea and Gulf of Aden)
 - » Dardenleez Strait (Marmara Sea and Aegean Sea)
 - » Yucatan strait (Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea)
 - » Mesina Strait (Mediterranean sea)
 - » Otranto Strait (Adriatic Sea - Ionian Sea)
 - » Davis Strait (Baffin Bay & Atlantic Ocean)



Diagrammatic map of a strait



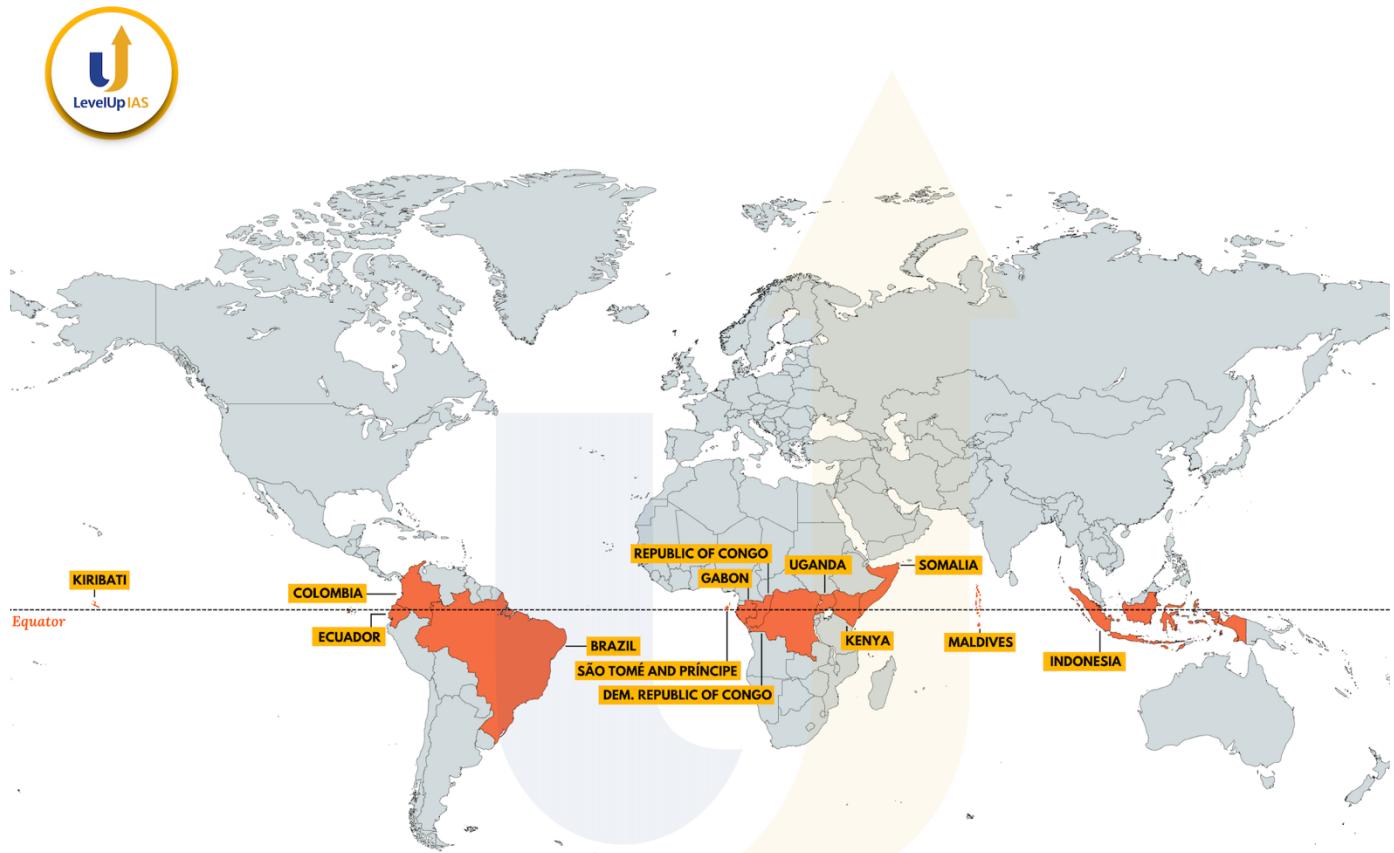
B) Isthmus

- It is a narrow strip of land that connects two larger landmasses and separates two bodies of water.
 - » **Isthmus of Panama** links continent of North and South America and separates Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean.
 - » **Isthmus of Suez** in eastern Egypt connects the continents of Africa and Asia and separates Mediterranean and Red Sea

2) COUNTRIES THROUGH WHICH EQUATOR PASSES

13 countries:

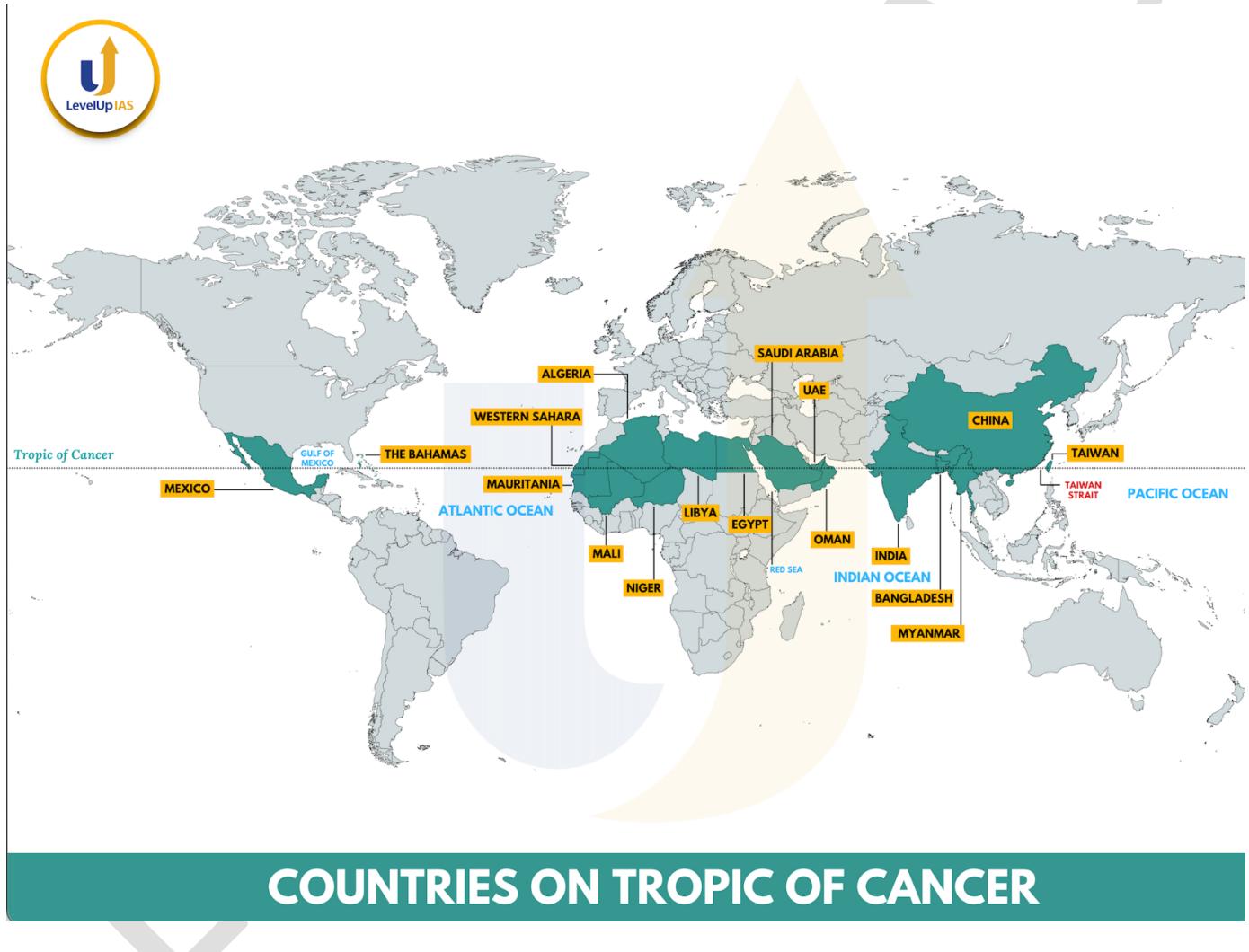
- **South America (3):** Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil.
- **Africa (7):** Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Republic of Congo, DRC, Uganda, Kenya, Somalia.
- **Asia (2):** Maldives, Indonesia
- **Central Pacific Ocean (1):** Kiribati



COUNTRIES ON EQUATOR

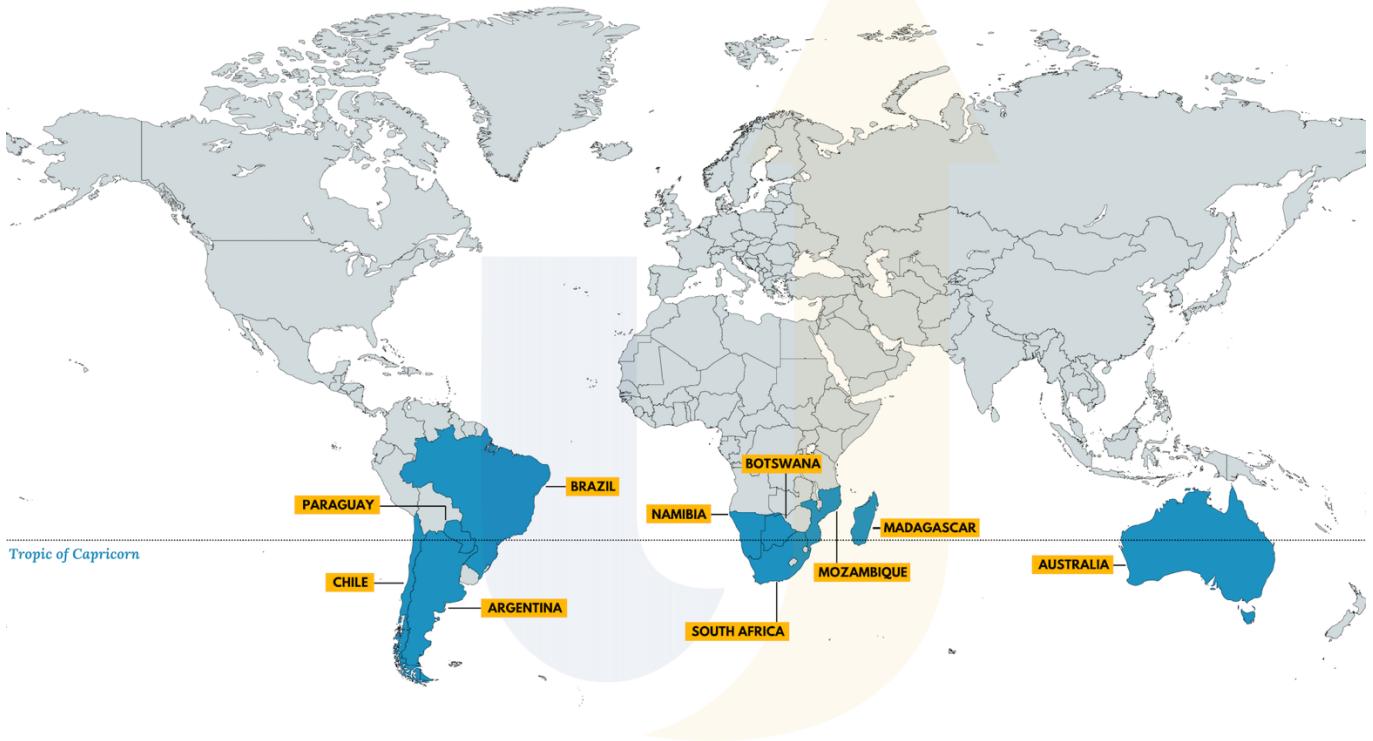
3) TROPIC OF CANCER COUNTRIES

- **17 countries:**
 - North America (2): Mexico, Bahamas (Archipelago)
 - Africa (7): Western Sahara, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria, Niger, Libya, Egypt
 - Asia (8): Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Taiwan.
 - **Water Bodies:** Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean, Red Sea, Indian Ocean, Taiwan Strait, Pacific Ocean



4) TROPIC OF CAPRICORN COUNTRIES

South America	Chile, Argentina, Paraguay and Brazil
Africa	Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Mozambique, Madagascar
Australia	Australia



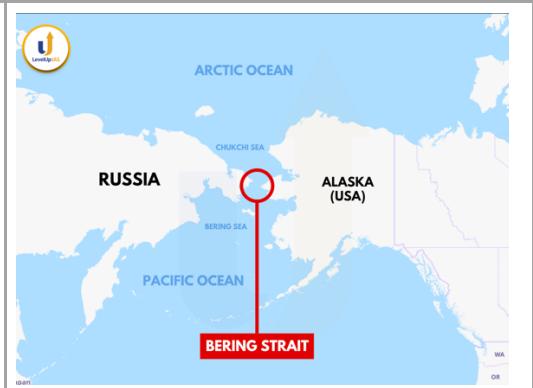
COUNTRIES ON TROPIC OF CAPRICORN

5) BERRING STRAIT

Location: Between Russia and Alaska (USA); Only marine gateway between icy Arctic and the Pacific Ocean. It joins Arctic ocean and Bering sea.

At its narrowest point the strait is only 55 miles wide.

Biodiversity: Though the strait is narrow, it is teeming with wildlife - Beluga whales, bowhead whales, walruses, polar bears, ringed and ribbon seals etc.



Wildlife Migration: Each spring, one of the largest wildlife migrations on earth passes through this narrow gateway to reach the Arctic's incredibly nutrient-rich and productive waters.

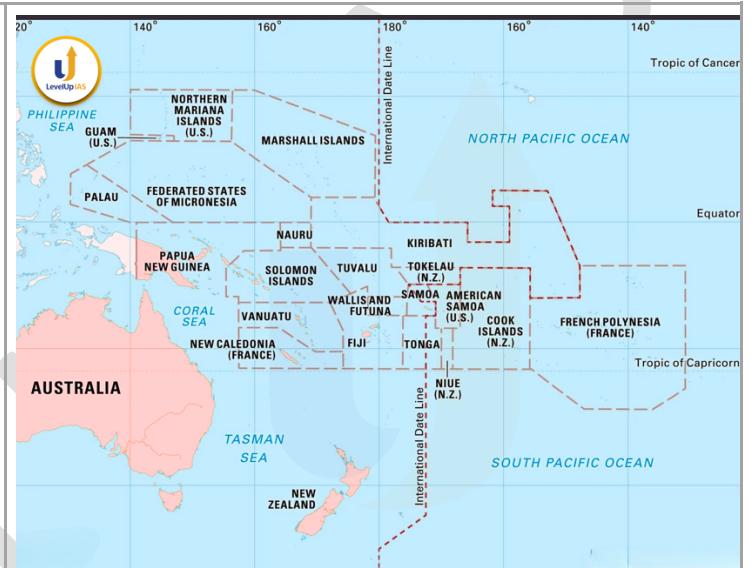
Humans reaching north America: Scientists studying land masses and climate know that the Pleistocene Ice Age, created a land bridge which allowed humans to reach Americas for the first time. This happened around 13,000 years ago

6) OCEANIA

Oceania collectively refers to the islands scattered throughout most of the Pacific Ocean.

In its widest sense it covers entire region between Asia and Americas.

In its most restricted meaning, it includes more than 10,000 islands, with a total land area (excluding Australia, but including Papua New Guinea and New Zealand) of approx. 822,800 sq km.

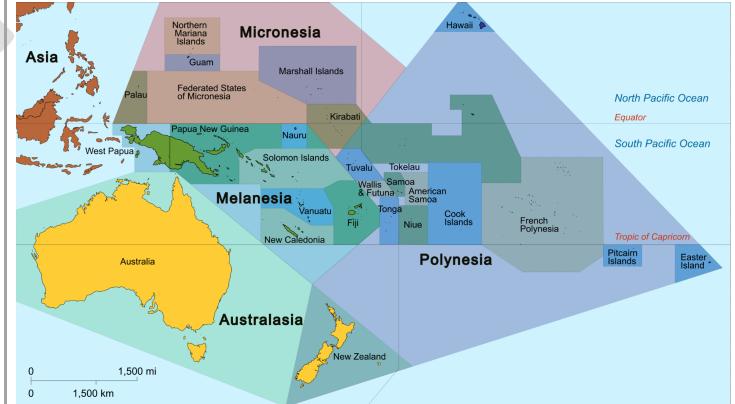


Oceania is traditionally divided into **four parts**: **Australasia** (Australia and New Zealand); **Melanesia**, **Micronesia**, and **Polynesia**.

Australasia: The term literally means "south of Asia" referring to all land that lies to the south of mainland Asia in its widest sense. However, its definition has evolved over the years and in its strictest sense include Australia, New Zealand, and islands neighbouring these two countries in the Pacific Ocean.

Melanesia: It includes Island of New Guinea and Island nation of Fiji, and the area in between the two islands. It thus includes area north and north east of Australia from the Arafura Sea to Fiji.

Micronesia: It is located in western Pacific ocean. It features thousands of islands. Five independent



nations (Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Palau, Nauru, and Federated State of Micronesia) and three US territories are part of Micronesia. The regions shares cultural heritage with Polynesia and Melanesia.

Polynesia: It consists of over thousand islands in the central and southern part of the Pacific ocean. It is bounded by Hawaii to the north, Easter Island to the southeast and New Zealand to southwest.

Note: As recently as 33,000 years ago no human beings lived in the region, except in Australasia.

7) PALAU

Officially known as Republic of Palau, it is an island country located in the western Pacific Ocean.

The country has more than 300 islands and connects the western chain of the Caroline islands with parts of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Neighbours:

International Waters (North); Micronesia (East); Indonesia (South) and Phillipines (West)

Its territory consists an archipelago located in the Pacific Ocean.



8) TUVALU

Tuvalu is a country in West Central-Pacific Ocean. It is composed of 9 coral islands scattered in chain lying approximately northwest to southeast.

History: Together with what is now Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands), Tuvalu formed the British Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony before separately gaining its independence in 1978.

De facto capital: Vaiaku. This is where most of the government offices are located.

Geography:

- The islands are low-lying, most being 13 to 16 feet above sea level.



- **No Rivers:** Rain catchment and wells are sources of fresh water.

Recent Developments: Australia Offers Climate Refuge to Tuvalu Citizens (Nov 2023)

- A new **treaty** - known as the **Australia-Tuvalu Falepili Union Treaty** - is the most significant agreement between Australia and Tuvalu.
 - It promises **Australian assistance** to the nation on **climate action** and **security**.
 - Under this **Australia will provide migration pathways** for people from Tuvalu facing the existential threat of climate change. It is the **world's first bilateral agreement on climate mobility**.
 - Under the treaty, **Australia will implement special visa agreement** to allow Tuvaluans to work, study and live in Australia. This is **not a refugee visa**, but rather will allow **up to 280 Tuvaluans** (from a population of around 11,200) to migrate to Australia each year - presumably on a **permanent basis**. This will provide people with **both legal and psychological security**.

9) NEW CALEDONIA

Details:

New Caledonia is a French territory comprising dozens of islands in the South Pacific. It was colonized by Napoleon's nephew in the 19th century.

It's known for its palm-lined beaches and marine-life-rich lagoon, which, at 24,000-sq.-km, is among the world's largest.

It also hosts a French Military base.

A massive barrier reef surrounds the main island, **Grand Terre**, a major scuba-diving destination.

The archipelago is located east of Australia, north of New Zealand, south of the Equator, and just west of Fiji and Vanuatu.

Referendum (2021)

Voters in the French Island territory of New Caledonia chose overwhelmingly to stay part of France, in a referendum boycotted by pro-independence forces and closely watched around the south pacific.



10) TORRES STRAIT

The Torres Strait is a strait **between Australia and the Melanesian island of New Guinea**.

To the South is the **Cape York peninsula**, the northernmost extremity of the Australian mainland. To the north is the western province of Papua new Guinea.

It is named after the Spanish navigator Luis Vaz de Torres, who sailed through the strait in 1606.

The Torres Strait joins Arafura Sea and Gulf of Papua.



11) COOK STRAIT

Cook Strait separates, northern and southern islands of New Zealand, extending northwest to southeast from the **Tasman Sea** to the **South Pacific Ocean**.

In 1642 the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman entered the western end of the strait and believed it to be a bay. Captain James Cook discovered its true nature as a strait in 1770.



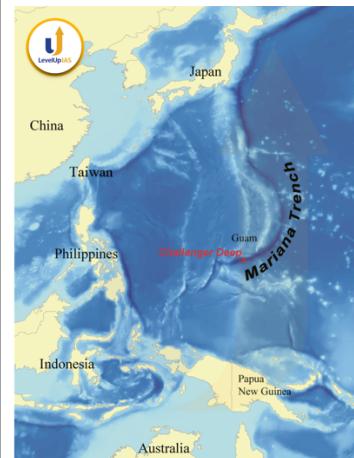
12) MARIANA TRENCH

The Mariana Trench or Marianas Trench is located in the western Pacific Ocean about 200 kilometres east of the Mariana Islands; it is the deepest oceanic trench on Earth.

It is crescent-shaped and measures about 2,550 km in length and 69 km in width.

What is trench?

Trenches are long, narrow depressions on the seafloor that form at the boundary of tectonic plates where one plate is pushed, or subducts, beneath another



13) EAST ASIA – SUMMARY OF WATER BODIES



14) KAMCHATKA PENINSULA

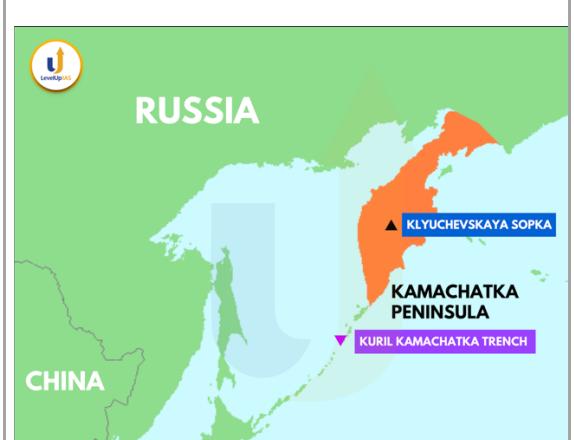
Kamchatka peninsula is a peninsula in the Russian Far East, with an area of about 2.7 lakh km². It is sparsely populated.

The Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Okhotsk make up the peninsula's eastern and western coastlines, respectively.

The peninsula is noted for its array of active and dormant volcano, geysers and geothermal springs.

Immediately offshore along the Pacific coast of the peninsula runs the 10,500 meter deep Kuril-Kamchatka Trench.

Biodiversity Disaster in 2020: Many dead sea creatures (Octopus, Seals, and other sea creatures) have washed up on beaches in



Kamchatka, in Russia's far east, in what is being treated as a **major marine pollution incident**. Initial analysis detected oil products and phenol in the water.

15) KLYUCHEVSKAYA SOPKA VOLCANO:

It is the **tallest volcano of Eurasia** and is located on **Kamchatka Peninsula**. It is a stratovolcano with a height of 4,650 m.

It has been active in recent years and have released lava in June 2023. It also erupted in Nov 2023 and sent ash as high as 13 kms above sea level.

16) KURIL KAMCHATKA TRENCH:

It is an oceanic trench that lies off the **southeast coast of Kamchatka** and **parallels Kuril Island chain to meet the Japan Trench east of Hokkaido**.

Detail: What is **Oceanic Trench**?

- » Oceanic trenches are long, narrow, depressions on the seafloor. These chasms are the deepest parts of the ocean - and some of the deepest natural spots on Earth.
- » Oceanic trenches are features of the Earth's distinctive plate tectonics. They mark the location of convergent plate boundaries, along which lithospheric plates move towards each other.

17) KURIL ISLANDS

Why in news?

- Russian President Vladimir Putin says that he plans to visit the Kurils and would consider building up the travel sector there (Jan 2024)
- **Reason:** Ukraine War: Territorial rows have long been a problem between the two countries. Japan's support for Ukraine is just another reason for Russia to challenge Japan which it calls an 'unfriendly state'.

About Kuril Islands:

- Kuril Islands (archipelago) extends for 12,00 km from the southern tip of Kamchatka Peninsula to the north eastern corner of Hokkaido island (Japan) and separates Sea of Okhotsk from the Pacific Ocean. There are more than 50 islands in this archipelago.
- **Disputed:** Both Russia and Japan claim sovereignty over them, though the island have been under Russian control



History of The Kuril Dispute:

HISTORY OF THE KURIL DISPUTE
■ 1855: The Treaty of Shimoda gives southern Kurils to Japan and rest of the island chain to Russia. Sakhalin Island to be under joint administration
■ 1875: The Treaty of St. Petersburgh cedes all Kurils to Japan in exchange for Russian jurisdiction over Sakhalin
■ 1905: After Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, Japan gains control of southern Sakhalin
■ 1945: The Soviet Union occupies the entire Kuril chain and southern Sakhalin after declaring war on Japan during the final days of World War II
■ 1951: Japan renounces claim to Kurils in the Treaty of San Francisco, signed between Japan and the Allied powers. The Soviet Union does not sign, and Japan later claims that the four southern islands are not part of the Kuril chain
■ 1956: The Soviet-Japanese Joint Declaration restores diplomatic ties between the two countries. The Soviet Union agrees to cede islands of Shikotan and Habomai to Japan after signing of formal peace treaty. Japan claims territorial rights to all four southern islands, so no agreement is signed

since the end of WW-2. Tokyo says that the disputed islands have been part of Japan since the early 19th century.

18) VLADIVOSTOK

It is a city and the administrative centre of the **Far Eastern Federal District** and **Primorsky Krai, Russia**, located on the **Golden horn bay**, not far from Russia's borders with China and North Korea.

The city is **home to Russian Pacific Fleet** and is the largest Russian Port on the pacific coast.



19) JAPAN

It is an island country in East Asia. It is located in north-west Pacific Ocean and is bordered on the west by Sea of Japan in the north-east by Sea of Okhotsk and in the south and South-west by East China sea.

Nearly the entire land area is taken up by the country's four main islands; from north to south these are **Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kyushu**.

Honshu is the largest of the four islands. National Capital **Tokyo** is also located in east-central Honshu.

Mt Fuji (12,388 feet, 3,776 metres), is Japans' highest mountain and also located on Honshu island.

Important Straits: Korea Strait, Tsushima Strait; Tsugaru Strait

Note: The island of Tsushima defines Korean Strait on the Korea side and the Tsushima Strait on the Japanese side.

Important Islands:

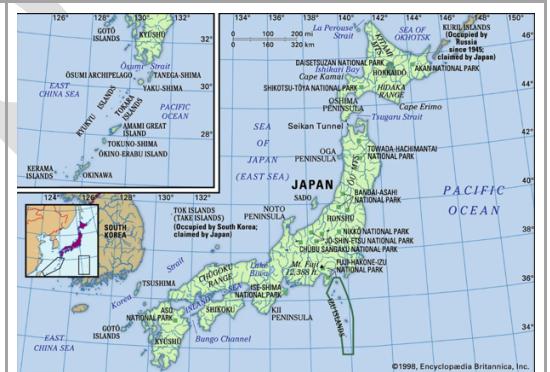
Kuril Islands (Occupied by Russia since 1945, claimed by Japan)

Tok Islands (Take Islands) - Occupied by South Korea; claimed by Japan)

Senkaku Island (disputed by China and Japan):

It is called Senkaku by Japan; Diaoyu in China and Tiaoyutai (in Taiwan)

It is a ground of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, administered by Japan.



20) FUKUSHIMA

The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant is in the town of Okuma, in Fukushima Prefecture. It sits on the country's east coast, about 220 km (137 miles) north-east of the Capital Tokyo.

What happened at Fukushima?

In March 2011, after an earthquake of magnitude 9, a tsunami flooded the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma and damaged its diesel generator. The loss of power suspended coolant supply to reactors at the facility; the tsunami also disabled the backup system. This led to radioactive material leaking from the reactor pressure vessels, exploded in facility's upper levels, and exposed themselves to the ambient air, water, soil, and local population. Since then, the powerplant and the surrounding land have been uninhabitable.



21) SEA OF JAPAN

It is a marginal sea of the West Pacific Ocean. It is partially enclosed by Islands, archipelagos or peninsulas.

Land Boundaries: Boundaries:

It is bound by Russia north; North Korea in the West, South Korea in South West and by the Japanese Archipelago (Hokkaido island, Honshu Island, and Kyushu Island) in the east and South.

News (July 2023)

China and Russia have started joint air and sea drill in Sea of Japan. Codenamed "Northern/Interaction - 2023", the drill marks enhanced military cooperation between China and Russia since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and is taking place as Beijing continues to rebuff U.S. calls to resume military communication.



22) EAST CHINA SEA

The East China Sea is an arm of the Pacific Ocean.

It is bounded on the east by Kyushu and the Ryukyu Islands of Japan, on the south by the South China Sea, and on the west by the Asian continent.

It connects with the Sea of Japan through the Korea Strait; it opens in the north to the Yellow Sea.



23) TAIWAN AND TAIWAN STRAIT

Taiwan, officially the Republic of China, is a country in East Asia.

It shares **maritime borders** with the People's Republic of China to the northwest, Japan to the northeast, and the Philippines to the south.

The **bilateral relations between India and Taiwan** have improved since the 1990s, despite both nations not maintaining official diplomatic relations.

India recognises only the People's Republic of China (in mainland China) and not the Republic of China's claims of being the legitimate government of Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau - a conflict that emerged after the Chinese Civil War (1945–49).

However, India's economic and commercial links as well as people-to-people contacts with Taiwan have expanded in recent years.

China want to bring Taiwan under one country two system (like Hong Kong and Macau).



Taiwan Strait:

The Taiwan Strait is a 180-kilometer-wide strait separating the island of Taiwan and continental Asia.

The strait is part of the South China Sea and connects to the East China Sea to the north.

The narrowest part is 130 km wide.

Earlier, Taiwan strait was also called **Farmosa Strait** or Strait of Farmosa.

24) SOUTH CHINA SEA

The South China Sea is a marginal sea of the Western Pacific Ocean.

It is bounded in the north by the shores of South China (hence the name), in the west by the Indochinese Peninsula, in the east by the islands of Taiwan and Northwestern Philippines (mainly Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan), and in the south by Borneo, eastern Sumatra and the Bangka Belitung Islands, encompassing an area of around 3,500,000 km² (1,400,000 sq. mi).

It communicates with the East China Sea via the Taiwan Strait, the Philippine Sea via the Luzon Strait, the Sulu Sea via the straits around Palawan (e.g. the Mindoro and Balabac Strait), the Strait of Malacca via the Strait of Singapore, and the Java Sea via the Karimata and Bangka Strait.

The **Gulf of Thailand** and the **Gulf of Tonkin** are also part of the South China Sea.



Triton Island:

It is one of the major islands in the Paracel group, which is roughly equidistant from the coast of Vietnam and China's island province of Hainan.

The shallow waters south of the Riau Islands are also known as the **Natuna Sea**.

The **South China Sea disputes** involve both island and maritime claims by several sovereign states within the region, namely Brunei, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan (Republic of China/ROC), Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam

It is claimed by China, Vietnam and Taiwan.

News: Aug 2023 - China appears to be constructing an airstrip on the disputed South China Sea.

25) MALACCA STRAIT AND SINGAPORE STRAIT

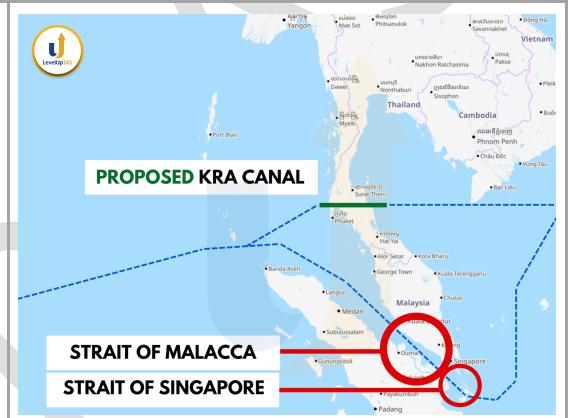
MALACCA STRAIT:

It is a waterway connecting the **Andaman Sea (Indian Ocean)** and **South China Sea (Pacific Ocean)**. It runs between the Indonesian Island of Sumatra to the west and peninsular (west) Malaysia and extreme southern Thailand to the east.

It is funnel shaped strait with width of only 40 miles in the south and that broadens northward to some 155 miles (250 km).

As the link between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, the strait of Malacca is the shortest route between India and China and hence is **one of the most heavily travelled shipping channels** in the world.

Singapore, of the world's most important ports, is situated at the strait's southern end.



Singapore Strait: It lies between strait of Malacca in the west and the South China Sea in east. Singapore is on the north of the channel, and the Indonesian Riau Islands are on the south. The two countries share maritime border along the strait.

26) CHINA

People's republic of China is a country in East Asia. It is the second most populous country in the world.

Neighbouring Countries: China borders 13 countries by land: North Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

Note: China doesn't have borders with Pakistan. Though currently, both Pakistan and China have illegally occupied Aksai Chin and thus have a working border.



It is also the 4th largest country in the world (note - some sources also mention it as the 3rd largest country).

Rivers: Yangtze (third longest in the world) and the Yellow Rivers are the most important rivers of China.

Gobi Desert runs west to east along the border with Mongolia.

Important Sea: China is also bound by Yellow Sea and East China Sea in the east and South China Sea in the southeast.

27) GOBI DESERT

The giant Gobi Desert in Asia, stretches across parts of China and Mongolia. It is the sixth largest desert in the world after Antarctic Desert, Arctic Desert, Sahara Desert, Great Australian Desert, and Arabian Desert.

The Gobi desert is expanding through desertification, most rapidly on the southern edge into China. It is mostly attributed to human activities, locally driven by deforestation, overgrazing, and depletion of water resources, as well as to climate change.

China's the Three North Shelter Forest Program (or "Green Great Wall") is an initiative of China that began in 1978 and is set to continue through 2050.

28) IMP RIVERS OF CHINA: YELLOW RIVER (HUANG HE); YANGTZE RIVER; PEARL RIVER

Yellow River (Huang He)

It is the second-longest river in China, after the Yangtze River.

It originates in the Qinghai province of Western China and empties in Bohai Sea (Northwestern and innermost extension of the Yellow Sea, to which connects the Bohai strait)

Yangtze River:

It is the longest river in Asia, (the third longest in the world and the longest in the world to flow entirely within one country).

It originates at Jari Hill in the Tanggula Mountains (Tibetan Plateau) and flows 6,300 km in generally eastern direction to reach east China Sea.

The three Gorges Dam on the Yangtze river is the largest hydro-electric power station in the world.

Pearl River:

The Pearl River is an extensive river system in southern China.



It is the third-longest river of China, after the Yangtze River and the Yellow River

It also drains in the northern parts of Vietnam.

The name "Pearl River" is also often used as a catch-all for the watersheds of the Xi ("West"), Bei ("North"), and Dong ("East") rivers of Guangdong.

The Pearl River Delta is **notoriously polluted with sewage and industrial waste treatment facilities failing to keep pace with the growth in population and industry in the area. A large portion of the pollution is brought about by factories run by Hong Kong manufacturers in the area**

29) MEKONG RIVER

The Mekong is a trans-boundary river in East Asia and Southeast Asia.

It is the world's twelfth longest river and the sixth longest in Asia.

Its estimated length is 4,909 km and it drains an area of 795,000 km²

From the Tibetan Plateau the river runs through China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

The extreme seasonal variations in flow and the presence of rapids and waterfalls in the Mekong make **navigation difficult**. Even so, the river is a major trade route between western China and Southeast Asia.



30) KRA CANAL

Kra Canal, also known as Thai Canal or Kra Isthmus Canal, is a proposed canal that would connect the Gulf of Thailand with the Andaman Sea across southern Thailand.

The canal would provide an alternative to transit through the straits of Malacca and shorten transit for shipments of oil to Japan and China by 1200 kms.

China refers to Kra canal as part of its 21st century Maritime Silk Road.

In 2015 proposal, the canal was planned to be 102 km long, 400 meter wide and 25 meters deep

31) BORNEO ISLAND

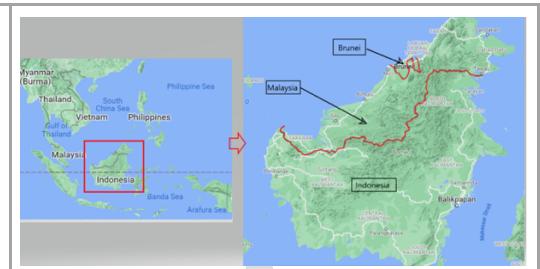
Borneo is the third-largest island (after Greenland and New Guinea) in the world and the largest in Asia.

At the **geographic centre of Maritime Southeast Asia**, in relation to major Indonesian islands, it is located north of Java, west of Sulawesi, and east of Sumatra.

The island is politically divided among **three countries**: Malaysia and Brunei in the north, and Indonesia to the south.

Approximately 73% of the island is Indonesian territory.

The **sovereign state of Brunei**, located on the north coast, comprises about 1% of Borneo's land area.



A little more than half of the island is in the Northern Hemisphere, including Brunei and the Malaysian portion, while the Indonesian portion spans the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Borneo is home to one of the oldest rainforests in the world

32) INDONESIA

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world. It consists of five major islands and 30 smaller groups.

The **main Indonesian Islands** are: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo), Sulawesi, and the Indonesian part of New Guinea (known as Papua or Irian Jaya).

Note: Indonesia has nearly 130 active volcanoes, more than any other country



33) KALIMANTAN

- Indonesia's Parliament has approved a bill to relocate the nation's capital from Jakarta to a jungled area of Kalimantan on Borneo island. (Jan 2022)
- The new state capital law, which provides a legal framework for President Joko Widodo's ambitious \$32 billion mega project, stipulates how development of capital will be funded and governed.
- The new centre will be called "Nusantara", a Javanese name for the Indonesian archipelago.
- Nusantara will be led by a chief authority whose position is equivalent to a minister.
- The new capital has been envisioned as a low-carbon "superhub" that will support pharmaceuticals, health and technology sector and promote suitable growth beyond Java Island.
- **Problems with Jakarta:**
 - Chronic congestion (10 million population); Floods and air pollution;

34) SABANG

It is a city consisting of main island (Weh Island) and several smaller islands of the northern tip of Sumatra.

The Islands form a city within the Aceh Special Region, Indonesia.

It is also known as the northernmost and westernmost city of Indonesia.

It is considered a strategic location near the strait of Malacca.

It was in news recently as government of Indonesia is planning to develop a port here to promote tourism.



35) MOUNT SINABUNG

Mount Sinabung is a **Pleistocene-to-Holocene stratovolcano**.

It is located in a relatively cool area on a fertile plateau with mountains bounding the north on **Sumatra Island** of Indonesia.

The plate tectonic setting at Mount Sinabung is one of ocean-continent subduction between the Indo-Australian plate under the Eurasian plate.

It is one of many volcanoes located along the Sunda Arc, a 5000km long volcanic chain.

Mount Sinabung first erupted in 2010 after being inactive for centuries, and has seen an increase in its activity over the last year.



36) ANAK KRAKATOA VOLCANO

Anak Krakatoa Volcano

It is an active volcano in **Sunda Strait** roughly halfway between Sumatra and Java.

This volcano had emerged from the sea in 1928 in the Caldera of Krakatoa and has been on the high-level eruption watchlist for the past decade.

With subsequent lava flows it eventually converted into a small **volcanic Island** with an altitude of 300 meters above sea level.

Since its birth, Anak Krakatoa has been in a **state of semi-continuous eruptive activity**, growing bigger as it experiences eruptions every two to three years. It has been on the high-level eruption watchlist for the past decade.



The island is part of Ujung Kulon National Park "demonstrating on-going evolution of geological process".

37) MT SAMERU VOLCANO

Erupted in Dec 2022, after a year.

It is an active volcano located in **East Java**. It is a stratovolcano.

It is located in a subduction zone, where Indo-Australian plate subducts under Eurasian plate.

It is the highest mountain on the island of Java. The name "Semeru" is derived from Meru, the Central world mountain in **Hinduism**, or Sumeru, the abode of gods.



38) MERAPI VOLCANO

About Mount Merapi: It is the most active volcano of Indonesia and have erupted regularly since 1548. It is located on Java Island. It is a stratovolcano whose height is 2,930 miles.

It is located at a subduction zone, where the Indo-Australian Plate is subducting under the Sunda Plate.

Mount Merapi's last significant eruption was in 2010 which killed more than 300 people.

Dec 2023 Eruption:

Mount Merapi erupted again and killed at least 11 hikers. This eruption sent hot ash and other volcanic debris three kms into sky.

It is also one of the 16 Decade Volcanoes

About Decade Volcanoes

The Decade volcanoes are 16 volcanoes identified by the International Association of Volcanology and Chemistry of the Earth's Interior (IAVCEI) as being worthy of particular study in light of their history of large, destructive eruptions and proximity to populated areas.

The Decade Volcanoes project aims of achieving a better understanding of the volcanoes and the dangers they present, and thus being able to reduce the severity of natural disaster.

They are called decade volcanoes because the project was initiated in the 1990s as part of the United Nations - sponsored International Decade for Natural Disasters Reduction.



About IAVCEI

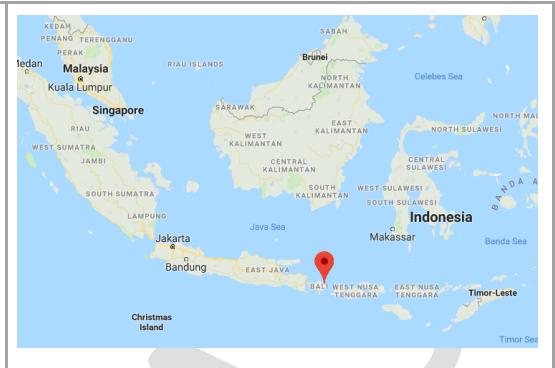
It is an international NGO that focuses on research in volcanology, efforts to mitigate disasters, and research into closely related disciplines, such as igneous geochemistry and petrology, geochronology, volcanogenic mineral deposits, and the physics of the generation and ascent of magmas in the upper mantle and crust.

39) MOUNT AGUNG / GUNUNG AGUNG

Mount Agung or Gunung Agung is a volcano in **Bali, Indonesia**, south east of **Mt Batur Volcano**, also in Bali.

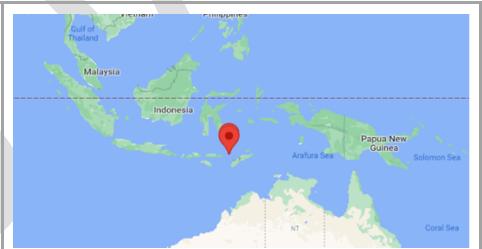
The Agung **Stratovolcano** is the highest point of Bali; it dominates surrounding area, influencing climate, especially rainfall patterns.

An important temple on Bali, **Pura Besakih**, is located high on the slopes of Mount Agung.



40) MT. ILLE LEWOTOLOK

Mount Ile Lewotolok or Lewotolo is a **stratovolcano** in the north-central part of the island of Lembata in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara in Indonesia.

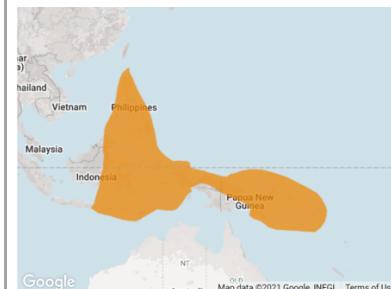


41) CORAL TRIANGLE

The Coral Triangle is a marine area located in the western Pacific Ocean.

It includes the waters of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Solomon Islands.

Named for its staggering number of corals (nearly 600 different species of reef-building corals alone), the region nurtures six of the world's seven marine turtle species and more than 2000 species of reef fish.



The Coral Triangle also supports large populations of commercially important tuna, fuelling a multi-billion dollar global tuna industry.

42) MYANMAR

Myanmar is a country in South-East Asia. It is the largest country in the mainland south-east Asia.

Neighbouring countries include (4): Bangladesh and India in Northwest; China to its northeast; Laos and Thailand to its east and South east.



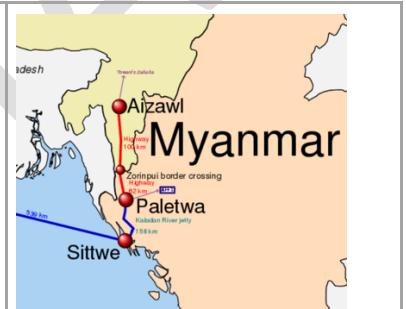
Water Bodies: Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal to its south and southwest.

43) SITTWE PORT

Sittwe Port is a deep-water port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal.

Situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the USD 120 Million port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a collaboration between India and Myanmar.

The project is aimed at developing transport infrastructure in Southwestern Myanmar and North-eastern India



44) RAKHINE STATE

Rakhine State is a state in Myanmar.

Situated on the western coast, it is bordered by Chin State to the north, Magway Region, Bago Region and Ayeyarwady Region to the east, the Bay of Bengal to the west and the Chittagong Division of Bangladesh to the northwest.

The Arakan Mountains or Rakhine Yoma separated Rakhine State from central Burma from North to South



45) BHASHAN CHAR ISLAND

Bhasan Char, also known as Char Piya, is an island in Hatiya Upazila, Bangladesh.

Until 2019 it was known as **Thengar Char**.

It is located in the Bay of Bengal, about 6 kilometres from Sandwip island and 37 miles from the mainland.

The island was formed by Himalayan silt in 2006.

It spans 40 square kilometres.

The Government of Bangladesh planned to construct a total of 1,440 buildings, including 120 cyclone shelters, to relocate 100,000

Rohingya refugees from the mainland camps of Cox's Bazar.



46) AFGHANISTAN

It is a landlocked country between Central Asia and South Asia.

It is bordered by: Pakistan, India, China, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran.

Taliban's return to Power in Aug - Sep 2021: Taliban now controls most of the country.

Important Cities:



47) PANJSHIR VALLEY

It is a valley in north-eastern Afghanistan, north east of Kabul and near Hindukush mountain ranges. It is divided by **Panjshir river**. This valley has the Afghan's largest concentration of ethnic Tajiks.



48) BAMYAN VALLEY

Bamyan is the capital of Bamyan Province in central Afghanistan.

With an altitude of about 2,550 m and a population of about 100,000 (in 2014), Bamyan is the largest town in the central Afghanistan region of Hazarajat, and lies approximately 240 kilometres north-west of Kabul, the national capital.



Many statues of Buddha are carved into the sides of cliffs facing Bamyan city.

At the end of the 10th century AD, there was a Buddhist culture in which several thousand Buddhist monks lived in caves carved into the mountain.

The 53 and 35 meters high standing Buddha statues were two of the best known monuments left from the Buddhists, which were then destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

Furthermore, there are several cultural sites left from both the Buddhist and from the later Islamic era of the valley. After the overthrow of

The valley is the Center of the Hazara settlement area, now known as Hazarajat.

49) SHATOOT DAM

Shatoor Dam is a proposed dam in the Char Asiab (11 km south of Kabul) District of Kabul Province.

The establishment of the dam will provide drinking, irrigation and environmental water for the city of Kabul.

The dam will be constructed by engineers from India.

In Feb 2021, India and Afghanistan signed an MoU to build Shahtoot Dam in Kabul. It will be constructed on the Kabul River Basin.



50) CENTRAL ASIA

Region: In modern context Central Asia includes the following five republics of former Soviet Union. They all became independent in 1991 after the fall of USSR.

- Kazakhstan (Astana (now called **Nur Sultan**))
- Kyrgyzstan (Bishkek)
- Tajikistan (Dushanbe)
- Turkmenistan (Ashgabat)
- Uzbekistan (Tashkent)



The Great Game and Central Asia

Traditionally, Central Asia has been an arena of great game. The modern version is being played out even today. Russia, China, US, Turkey, Iran, Europe, EU, Japan, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan all have substantial security and economic stakes in the region.

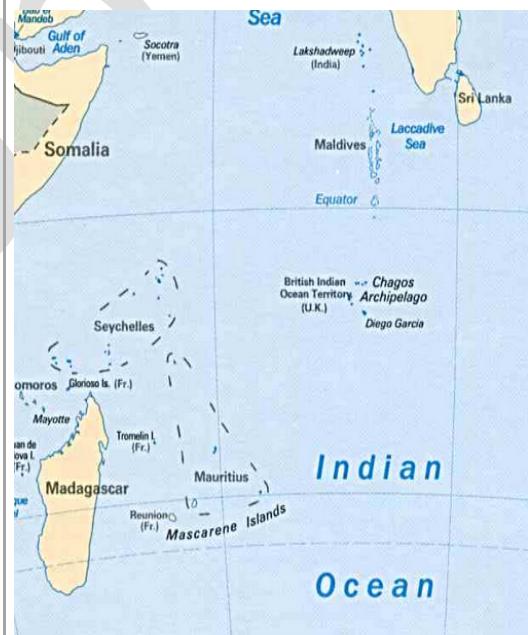
51) IMPORTANT INDIAN OCEAN COUNTRIES:

Note:

The **eight degree line** separates the islands of Minicoy and Maldives.

The **nine degree line** separates the island of Minicoy from the main Lakshadweep archipelago.

The **10 degree Channel** separates the Andaman Islands and the Nicobar Islands from each other in Bay of Bengal.



52) MALDIVES

- It is an archipelagic state in the Indian-subcontinent of Asia, situated in Indian ocean. It is located southwest of India and Sri Lanka about 750 km from Asian continent's mainland.
- The chain of **26 atolls** stretches from Ihavandhippolhu Atoll in the north to Addu Atoll in the south (Across the Equator)
- **Capital: Male** (also called King's Island)

- The Maldives archipelago is located on Chagos-Laccadive ridge, a vast submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean;
- With an average ground level of 1.5 metres, and a highest natural point of only 5.1 meters, it is the world's lowest lying country.

A) ADDU CITY

- Cabinet approved opening up of a new consulate General of India in **Addu City**, Maldives in May 2022 (May 2021)
- **Significance:** Augment India's diplomatic presence and increase engagement
- **About Addu City:** It is a city in Maldives that consists of the inhabited islands of Addu atoll, the southernmost atoll of the archipelago. It is the second largest urban area of Maldives, in terms of population, and is one of the two urban areas to get the status of "city" other than the capital city.
- Maldives occupies an important place in the 'Neighbourhood First Policy' and the 'SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision of the Government of India.

53) MAURITIUS

With an area of 2,040 sq km, it is one of the smallest countries in the world. It is located in the Indian Ocean, just east of Madagascar.

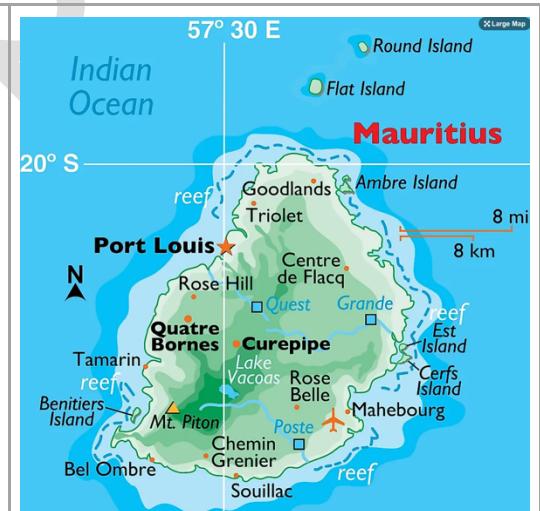
It is made up of the main island of Mauritius and several outlying islands like Ambre, Est, Cerfs, Benitiers etc. Off the coast of mainland Mauritius, there are nearly a hundred islets and rocks without any human habitation.

About Mauritius Island: It is a volcanic island formed due to volcanic activities around 8 million years ago. However, no volcanic activity has been reported in last 1 lakh years. Much of the island is made up of low-lying grasslands surrounded by towering mountains and rolling hills.

Coral Reef surround the island protecting the land from storms and waves.

Lake Vacoas, is the primary source of water for the islanders. Most of the islands water need is fulfilled by this lake and the three major rivers -> Grand River, South East River and Black River.

Capital: Port Louis



Pointe d'Ensy Wetland:
Wetland of international importance

Located in the south east Mauritius.

It was in news due to one of the worst oil spill (August 2020)

54) SEYCHELLES

Capital: Victoria

Seychelles, officially the Republic of Seychelles, is an archipelago and country in the India ocean. The 115-island country, whose capital is Victoria, lies 1500 km east of mainland East Africa.

Other nearby islands include: Comoros, Mayotte, Madagascar, Reunion and Mauritius to the south.

Population: Roughly 93,000, has the smallest population of any independent African state.

55) ALDABRA ATOLL

Aldabra atoll comprised of four large coral islands which encloses a shallow lagoon; the group of islands is itself surrounded by a coral reef.

Aldabra atoll is also one of the world's second-largest coral atoll and is situated in the Aldabra group of islands in Seychelles in the Indian Ocean.

It is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Due to difficulties of access and the atoll's isolation, Aldabra has been protected from human influence and thus retains some 152,000 giant tortoise, the world's largest population of this reptile



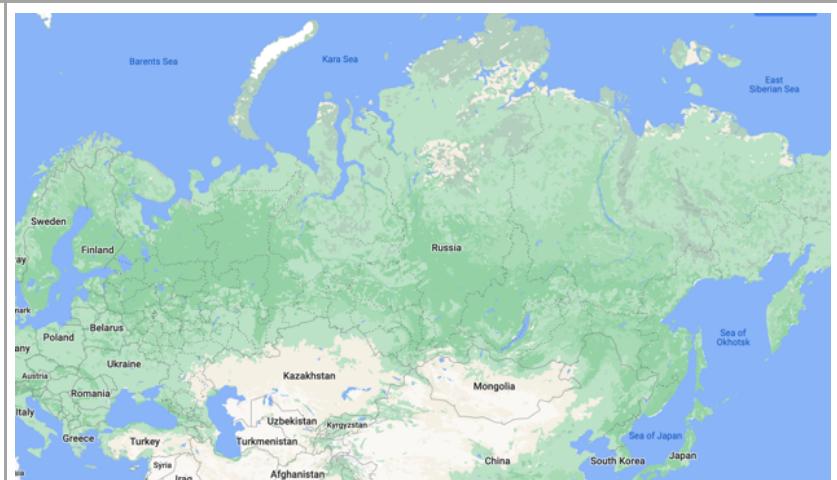
56) RUSSIA

Area: 17 million square km (largest country in the world)

Population: 144 million (9th most populous)

Spans 11 time zones and incorporate a wide range of environments and landforms.

Neighbours: From northwest to Southeast, Russia shares **land borders** with Norway, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (both with Kaliningrad Oblast), Belarus,

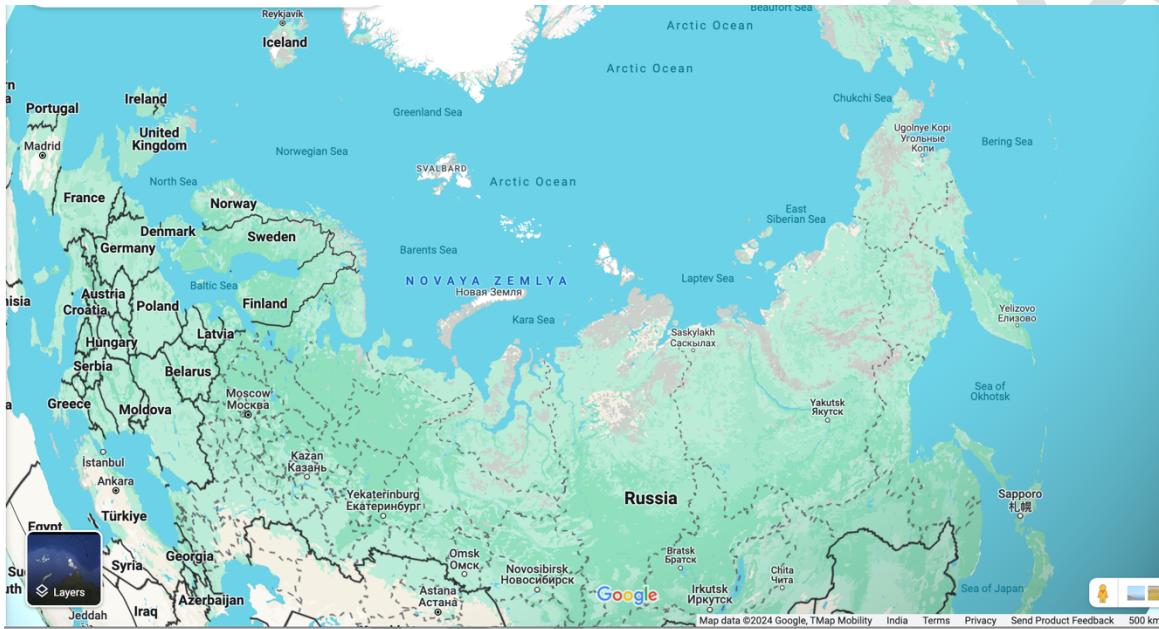


Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia and North Korea.

Maritime borders with Japan (by sea of Okhotsk) and the US state of Alaska across Bering strait.

Water bodies around Russia

White Sea, Barents Sea, Kara Sea, Laptev Sea, East Siberian Sea, Chukchi Sea, Bering Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, Sea of Japan, Caspian Sea, Black Sea and Baltic Sea



57) CASPIAN SEA

It is located to the east of Caucasus mountains and to the west of Central Asian steppes.

It is the **world's largest inland body of water** (largest salt lake in the world).

An **endorheic basin**, it lies between Europe and Asia; east of the Caucasus, west of the broad steppe of Central Asia, south of the fertile plains of Southern Russia in Eastern Europe, and north of the mountainous Iranian Plateau of Western Asia



The sea is bordered by **Kazakhstan (North-East), Turkmenistan (South-East), Iran (South), Azerbaijan (South West) and Russia (North-West)**
(Hint: KaTIAR) [Hint2: TARIK]

Important rivers that drain in Caspian Sea are: **Volga** (longest in Europe), **Ural, Kura and Terek**.

Human made changes, particularly those resulting from construction of dams, reservoirs, and canals on the **Volga** river, have affected the contemporary hydrology.

58) SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION

It is a region between Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and mainly occupies **Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Southern Russia**.

It is home to the Caucasus Mountains which has been traditionally considered a natural barrier between Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

Europe's Highest Mountain - Mount Elbrus (5,642 meters) is in the western part of the Greater Caucasus Mountain range.



NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT BETWEEN ARMENIA AND AZERBAIJAN

Straddling western Asia and Eastern Europe, Nagorno-Karabakh is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, but most of the region is controlled by Armenian separatists.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been part of Azerbaijan territory since the Soviet era.

When the Soviet Union began to collapse in the late 1980s, Armenia's regional parliament voted for the region's transfer to Armenia; the Soviet authorities turned down the demand.

Note: Religious differences: People of Ngorno Karabakh are primarily Christians whereas Azerbaijan is Muslim dominate.

Years of clashes followed between Azerbaijan forces and Armenian separatists.



Highly tensed relations between Armenia and its long-time ally Russia.

- Armenia angered Russia, which maintains a military base in the country, by holding military exercise with the USA in Sep 2023 and by moving towards ratifying Rome Convention that created International

The violence lasted into the 1990s, leaving tens and thousands dead and displacing hundreds of thousands.

In 1994, Russia brokered a ceasefire, by which time ethnic Armenians had taken control of the region.

In November 2020, Russia brokered a new peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan, after the two countries engaged in military conflict for six weeks over the disputed region in South Caucasus. The armistice also placed a Russian Peacekeeper contingent in Nagorno-Karabakh.

2023:

In Sep 2023, Azerbaijan's forces opened fire on Armenian positions in the Ngorno-Karabakh region. It claimed that it was an "anti-terrorist operation". There were concerns that the tensions could escalate into full-fledged war.

Later, on 20th Sep 2023, Azerbaijan halted military action after its battlefield successes forced Armenian separatist forces to agree to a ceasefire. Key Highlights:

1. Azerbaijani military had routed separatists and then separatist agreed to cease fire.
2. They are meant to disband and disarm under the deal.
3. Talks on future of the region due to start in 1-2 days.

Criminal Court, which has indicted Russian President Vladimir Putin

59) WEST ASIA

The region is surrounded by eight major seas: Aegean Sea, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea.

This region is delimited from Europe by the drainage divide of the Greater Caucasus; delimited from Africa by the Isthmus of Suez; It adjoins Central Asia in North East and South Asia in East. It is located South of Eastern Europe.

Countries: Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus.





60) IRAN (PERSIA)

Iran (formerly known as Persia) is situated at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and Arab states of West Asia. This strategic position - and its access to Persian Gulf in the south - have made Iran an important country throughout its history.

Location and neighbouring countries:

It is country located in West Asia and has land boundaries with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkey and Iraq.

In the north, it touches Caspian Sea, and in the south, the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

Government and Economy: Iran's government is controlled by a religious figure called the Supreme Leader, who is appointed by a group of Islamic clerics called the assembly of experts. A President, elected by the people, is second in command.

History: Iran has seen many great empire - Achaemenid Persian Empire (beginning 559 BCE), Sassanids (beginning 224 CE), Safavids (beginning 1501);

In the North west, Iran also has some areas of Majority Kurdish Population.



Physical features: Iran has Gazros mountain (which runs from North west to South East) and Elbruz Mountain (which lies to its north). It also has Kavir Desert and Lut Desert.

Lut Desert often experience highest land and surface temperature: A temperature of 70.7 degree C has been recorded here.

It is also an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Lake Urmia is located in the North-west of the country.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

Important Ports:

1. Bandar Abass (Gulf of Hormuz)

2. Chabahar Port (Gulf of Oman):

- The Chabahar port is located in the Southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan and is considered a crucial gateway for Iran to gain access to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The idea is that the **Port would enable India to bypass Pakistan and access Afghanistan and ultimately Central Asia**.
- In May 2016, India signed a tripartite agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to develop the Shahid Behesti terminal at Chabahar Port. India has pledged to invest \$85 million in the terminal and has already provides cranes and equipment worth a few million dollars.
- Chabahar is India's first foreign port project.



61) INSTC

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a 7,200 km long multi-modal network of ship, rail, and road routes for the transport of freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe. The objective of the corridor is to increase trade connectivity between major cities such as Mumbai, Moscow, Baku, Astrakhan, Tehran, Bandar Abbas, and Bandar Anzali.

Member States: India, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Ukraine, and Syria.



62) PERSIAN GULF

The body of water is an extension of the Arabian Sea (Gulf of Oman) through the **Strait of Hormuz** and lies between Iran to the northeast and the Arabian Peninsula to the southwest.

Countries touching Persian Gulf: 8 - Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Rivers: The Tigris-Euphrates river system is a large river system in Western Asia which discharges into the Persian Gulf. Both Tigris and Euphrates originate in Turkey.

The river flows into a south-easterly direction through the central plains and combine with Al-Qurnah to form **Shatt al-Arab** and discharge into Persian gulf.

Mesopotamia is a historical region in Western Asia situated within Tigris Euphrates river system, in the northern part of the Fertile Crescent. Today, Mesopotamia occupy modern Iraq. In broader sense it covered parts of Iran, Syria, Turkey and Kuwait as well.

The Shatt al-Arab river delta forms the northwest shoreline.

Note: Shatt al-Arab river is formed at the confluence of Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Iraq.

The Persian Gulf has many fishing grounds, extensive reefs (mostly rocky, but also coral), and abundant pearl oysters, but its ecology has been damaged by industrialization and oil spills



Persian Gulf



63) GULF OF OMAN AND STRAIT OF HORMUZ

GULF OF OMAN:

It connects Arabian sea with the Strait of Hormuz, which then runs into the Persian Gulf.

Neighbouring Countries

UAE, Oman, Iran and Pakistan

Important Ports on the Gulf

- Port of Fujairah, UAE
- Port of Khor Fakkan, UAE
- Port of Sultan Qaboos, Oman
- Port of Chabahar, Iran



STRAIT OF HORMUZ

It is a strait between Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

It provides the only sea passage from Persian Gulf to the open ocean and is **one of the world's most strategically important choke points**.

Neighbouring Countries

- Iran, UAE and Oman (Musandam, an enclave of Oman)

Significance

- A third of the world's liquefied natural gas and almost 20% of total global oil consumption passes through the strait, making it a highly important strategic location for international trade.

64) QATAR

About Qatar: It is an independent emirates on the west Coast of Persian Gulf. It shares land boundary only with Saudi Arabia to its south. It also shares maritime borders with Iran, Bahrain and UAE.

A very interesting aspect about Qatar is that non-Qatari population form around 88% of the total population.

Oil Resources: Qatar has one of the world's largest reserves of petroleum and thus employs large number of foreign workers in the production process.

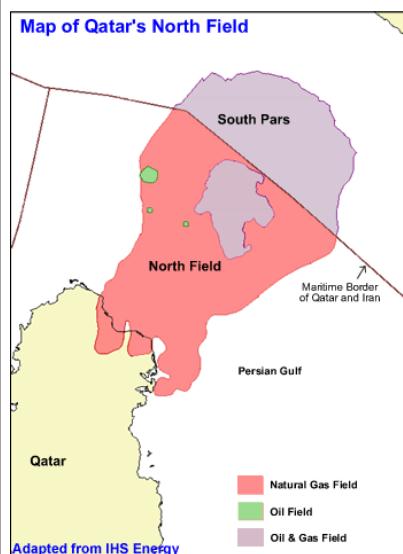
High Standard of Living: Because of oil wealth, country's residents enjoy a very high standard of living.

Capital: Doha - an eastern coast city

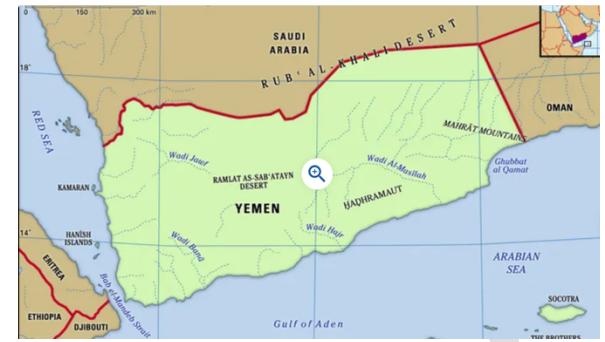
North Field and South Pars is a natural-gas condensate field located in the Persian Gulf. It is by far the world's largest natural gas field. With North field being owned by Qatar and South Pars by Iran.

Non-NATO Aly: Qatar is also a major non-NATO ally. Major non-NATO ally (MNNA) is a designation given by the US government to close allies that have strategic working relations with the US Armed forces, but are not members of NATO. Important Non-Nato Ally of USA include

Significance: The status of MNNA doesn't automatically include a mutual defense pact with the USA, it confers variety of military and financial advantages.



- **Geographical basics**
 - » It is situated on the South-western corner of the Arabian Peninsula.
 - » Most of the Yemen's northern frontier with Saudi Arabia traverses the great desert of the peninsula, the Rub' al-Khali ("Empty Quarter"), and until 2000 remained non demarcated, as did the eastern frontier with Oman until 1992.
 - » It is bound on the south by Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea and the west by Red Sea.
- **The ongoing Civil War:**
 - » The war began in 2014, when Iran-backed Houthi rebels seized Sanaa and the country's northwest, sending the ruling party in exile. Very soon, a military coalition led by Saudi Arabia intervened with a massive air campaign to drive back Houthis and restore the government.
 - » **Yemeni Officials and Sunni States** have repeatedly alleged that Iran and its proxy Hezbollah have provided arms, training and financial support to the Houthis.
 - » Several ceasefire agreements over the years have seen no impact on reducing the military action on the ground. **The UN, USA, and Gulf nations diplomats** have been trying to broker a peace deal for years now.
 - » **Who are Houthis?**
 - » The Houthis are a large clan originating from Yemen's Northwest Saada province. They practice the Zayadi form of Shiism. They make around 35% of Yemen's population.
 - » **They Zayadi imamate ruled Yemen** for 1,000 years, before they were overthrown in 1962. Since then, they have struggled to restore their authority and influence in Yemen.
- **Current Situation:**
 - » Clashes continue, with the Houthis disrupting Red Sea shipping in late 2023.
 - **For e.g.** Yemen's Houthi rebel seized an Israeli linked cargo ship (the Galaxy Leader) in a crucial Red Sea shipping route on Nov 19, 2023, and took its 25-crew member hostage. The rebels said that they hijacked the ship over its connection to Israel and would continue to target ships in international waters that were linked to or owned by Israelis. This shows that regional tensions heightened over the Israel-Hamas war were playing on a new maritime front. The issue remains unresolved as of today.



66) SINAI PENINSULA

The Sinai Peninsula is a peninsula in Egypt, and the only part of the country located in Asia.

Sinai has a land area of about 60,000 km².

Sinai is triangular in shape, with its northern shore lying on the southern Mediterranean Sea, and its southwest and southeast shores on the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba of the Red Sea.



Note: Israel also borders Gulf of Aqaba.

Note: Sharm el Sheikh is located at the mouth of Gulf of Aqaba.

It is linked to the African continent by the **Isthmus of Suez**, 125 kilometres (78 mi) wide strip of land, containing the **Suez Canal**.

The eastern isthmus, linking it to the Asian mainland, is around 200 kilometres (120 mi) wide. The peninsula's eastern shore separates the Arabian plate from the African plate

67) SUEZ CANAL

The Suez Canal is an artificial sea-level waterway in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea through the **Isthmus of Suez** and dividing Africa and Asia.

The canal is part of the Silk Road that connects Europe with Asia.



68) RED SEA

It is a sea-water inlet of the Indian ocean, lying between Africa and Asia.

It connects to Gulf of Aden through the **Bab el Mandeb strait**.

In North it is bound by Sinai Peninsula, Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez.

Countries neighboring Red Sea: Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia.

Why in news?

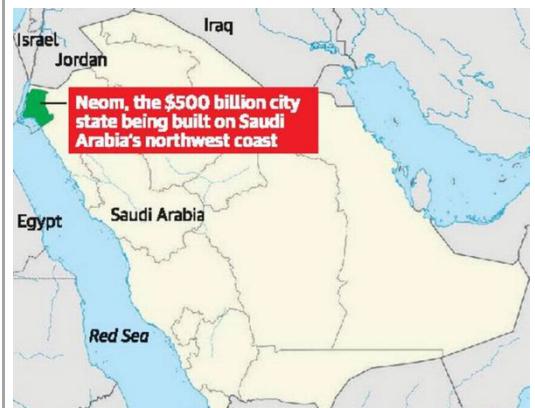
More than 3,000 US military personnel have arrived in the Red Sea aboard two warships, part of beefed-up response from Washington after tanker seizure by Iran (Aug 2023).



69) CITY OF NEOM

Details of Neom:

The planned city along the Red Sea is emerging as the new centre of power in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the Crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) is largely running government from here. Since the COVID-19 outbreak he has been chairing the cabinet meeting in Neom.



The plan for the building of the city was first unveiled in 2017. As part of the vision 2030 plan, which seeks to diversify the Kingdom's economy and reduce its dependency on oil, the \$500 billion ambitious project plans to build a carbon-neutral, technologically advanced city state that can house upto 1 million people.

The city is expected to be opened up for the residents by 2025. It will have flying cars, artificial rain generated through cloud seedings, a giant fake moon and a robot dinosaurs once it is complete.

The entire project is coming up on 26,500 sq km of land in the Tabuk province.

The autonomous city will have its own tax and labour laws and judicial system, independent of the existing governing system in Saudi Arabia.

70) ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT

- Brief Historical Trail of Events

- » **Creation of Israel:** In 1948, the state of Israel was created by an UNGA resolution, on land inhabited by both Jews and Arab Palestinians. The resolution divided Palestine into two countries. But Arabs didn't accept this. This has led to several wars since then and Israel has won all the wars mostly because of military supremacy, US support and Disunity among Arabs.
- » **Hostilities between two communities** in 1948 led to mass displacement of Palestinians. Many of them became refugee in Gaza strip, a narrow swath of land that had come under control of Egyptian forces in 1948-49 Arab-Israel war. The Fate of Gaza strip fell into the hands of Israel when it occupied the territory in the six-day War of 1967.
- » **Israel's continuous increase in Area:** All areas allotted to Palestine



have come under Israel Occupation - Israel has continuously increased settlements in West Bank and Gaza.

- » **In 1987**, the First Intifada (the first uprising), a popular uprising by the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation began.
 - **Hamas**, a militant Palestinian group was also founded in 1987.
- » **1993 Oslo Agreement** between Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel came as a glimmer of hope.
 - **PLO** accepted the 2-state solution and recognized Israel for the first time.
 - **Israel agreed** to vacate occupied territory.
- » **Opposition from both sides and derailment of Plan:**
 - **Hamas** opposed to the more conciliatory stance taken by PLO, rejected the plan, and carried out a terror campaign to disrupt it.
 - The Plan was ultimately derailed among suicide bombing by Hamas and assassination of Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish extremist in 1995.
- » **The second Intifada** (2000-2005), was a major uprising by Palestinians against Israeli Occupation, characterized by a period of heightened violence.
 - It ended with the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit and Israel's military withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.
- » **Gaza under Hamas Control:** After collapse of peace process, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the settlements it had constructed in the Gaza strip after 1967. In **2007**, there emerged a factional conflict within Palestinian authorities (PA) (between Hamas and Fatah) and Hamas emerged as the defacto ruler in the Gaza strip.
 - This takeover by Hamas promoted blockade of Gaza strip by Israel and Egypt and set the stage for the next 17 years of continued unrest.
 - There were regular hostilities in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021.
 - High population density of Gaza strip and the proliferation of subterranean tunnels there have complicated the situation. These tunnels have been used by Gazans to sidestep the blockade and also to hide from Israeli forces.
 - But, before the 2023-24 conflict, the conflicts generally lasted only weeks. Though these conflicts did a lot of damage in Gaza, Israel saw very few causalities and losses.

A) 2023-24 CONFLICT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HAMAS

- On 7th Oct 2023, Hamas, officially designated a terrorist organization by many countries including Israel, USA, UK etc. led a stunning coordinated attack which took place on Shemini Atzeret, a Jewish Holiday.
- It launched several thousand rockets into Israel and conducted attacks on border areas, killing 1200 civilians and taking 253 hostages. This was called "Operation Al Aqsa Flood". Families were attacked in

their homes in **Kibbutzim** and an outdoor music festival was also attacked.

- **Overwhelming of Iron Dome System:** During the attack Hamas launched at least 2,200 rockets into Israel in just 20 mins. This overwhelmed the iron dome system.
- It was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust.
- In response, Israel conducted air strikes and later ground assault against Hamas in Gaza with the aim to "destroy Hamas" governing and military capabilities and to bring hostages home. Hamas continues to fire rocket into Israel.
- **Clashes in other areas:**
 - Hostilities are also going on between Israel and Iran-Aligned Hezbollah in Lebanon and north Israel.
 - Other Iran-aligned groups in Syria and Iraq have conducted attacks against US forces, killing three troops in Jordon in Jan 2024, drawing a US response.
 - From Yemen, the Houthis have launched attacks on shipping lane in Red Sea.
 - Israeli Defense forces (IDF) have also intensified raids in the West bank, blockading several urban areas.
- **Estimated Causalities and Displacements:** As of Feb 2024, more than 29,000 Palestinians were reportedly killed. As per UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), an estimated 1.7 million of Gaza's population (or the total 2.2 million) are now displaced.
 - This has become the deadliest conflict for the Palestinians since the 1948 Arab Israeli war.

Important Places in news recently:

- **Rafah Crossing** (between Egypt and Gaza): On 18th Oct, Israel agreed to reopening of Rafah crossings between Egypt and Gaza for humanitarian aid. Around 5,000 foreign nationals and injured Palestinians have been able to leave daily from the crossing.
- **Kerem Shalom Crossing** between Israel and Gaza was opened for aid in Dec 2023.

71) ISRAEL - PALESTINE (WEST BANK)

West Bank:

The West Bank is a **landlocked territory** near the Mediterranean coast of Western Asia, bordered by Jordan and the Dead Sea to the east and by Israel to the south, west and north.

The "West Bank" name was given to the territory after it was captured by Jordan in the 1948 Arab–Israeli War because it sits on the west side of the Jordan River.

Jordan subsequently annexed the territory in 1950 and held it until 1967 when it was occupied by Israel during the 1967 Six-Day War.



Note: After the six-day war in 1967, Israel gained control of Sinai Peninsula and Gaza strip from Egypt; West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan; and Golan Heights from Syria.

72) GOLAN HEIGHTS

- Golan Heights (also called Golan Plateau) are hilly areas overlooking the upper Jordan River valley on the west. It is an area of conflict between Syria and Israel
- The area was part of extreme South West Syria till 1967, when it came under Israeli military occupation, and in Dec 1981 Israel unilaterally annexed the part of the Golan it held.
- Geographically, it is bound by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee on the West.
- In April 2023, 6 rockets fired from Syria to Golan Heights. Three of them landed in Israeli territory.
- After this, the Israel Defence Forces carried out artillery and drone strikes in southern Syria, targeting the launchers that had been used to fire the rockets.

73) SEA OF GALILEE

The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake in Israel.

It is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth and the second-lowest lake in the world, at levels between 215 metres and 209 metres below sea level.

The lake is fed partly by underground springs but its main source is the Jordan River, which flows through it from north to south and exits the lake at the Degania Dam.

The **Sea of Galilee** is situated in northeast Israel, between the Golan Heights and the Galilee region, in the Jordan Rift Valley, the valley caused by the separation of the African and Arabian plates. Consequently, the area is subject to earthquakes, and in the past, volcanic activity. This is evident from the abundant basalt and other igneous rocks that define the geology of Galilee



74) JORDON RIVER

Jordon river in west Asia has the lowest elevation of any river in the world. It lies in a structural depression.

Origin: The river rises on the slopes of **Mount Hermon**, on the border between Syria and Lebanon, and flow southwards through northern Israel to the Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberius). After that it continues south, forming a border between West Bank and Jordon. It eventually empties in Dead Sea.

Jordon river is shared by Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordon, and the Palestinian Authority.

Jordon Valley: The lower course of the Jordon river from the exact point where it exits the sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea is referred to as the Jordon Valley. This 105km long Jordon valley forms a part of the Jordon Rift Valley



and has the lowest elevation in the world **starting from -212m and ending at -400m.**

75) JORDON RIFT VALLEY

- It is an elongated depression located in modern day Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank. The geographic region include entire length of Jordon River - from its sources, through the Hula valley, the Sea of Galilee, the Lower Jordon Valley, the Dead sea (lowest land elevation on earth) and then continues through the Arabah depression, the Gulf of Aqaba, whose shorelines it incorporates, until finally reaching Red Sea proper at the Straits of Tiran.
- **Why was it formed?**
 - » It was formed many million years ago when the **Arabian Plate** moved northward and then eastward away from Africa.

76) DEAD SEA

- It is a landlocked salt lake between Israel and Jordon. Its eastern shore belongs to Jordon, and the western shore belongs to Israel.
- The sea has the lowest elevation and is the lowest body of water on the surface of earth. The surface of dead sea, at an elevation of about 430 meters below sea level, is the **lowest land point on earth**.
- Dead sea receives almost all its water from Jordon river.
- **Continuous dropping water levels:**
- The water level has dropped from 390 to 550m (below sea level), while the surface area shrank from 950 km², in the beginning of the 20th century, to the current 392 km². It's because of excess utilization by both Israel and Jordon. Most of the water is being diverted upstream.

77) TURKIYE (OLD NAME TURKEY)

- **Details**
 - » Following an official letter submitted to the UN by the Republic of Turkiye, the country's name has been changed to Turkiye at the UN.
- **Why the name change:**
 - » President Recep Tayyip Erdogan issued a statement saying the "word Turkiye represents and expresses the culture, civilization, and values of the Turkish nation in the best way.
 - » Domestically, citizens refer to the land as Turkiye, but its anglicised version "Turkey" was adopted internationally.

Turkiye is a transcontinental country bridging South-eastern Europe and Western Asia.

Asian Turkey, which includes 97 percent of the country's territory, is separated from European Turkey by the **Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmara, and the Dardanelles**. European Turkey comprises only 3 percent of the country's territory.

Dardanelles Strait (also known as Gallipoli strait) is a narrow natural strait and internationally significant waterway in the northwest of Turkey. It forms the continental boundary between Asia and Europe and separates Asian Turkey from European Turkey.

Bosphorus Strait: it is an internationally significant waterway located in Istanbul in north-western Turkey. It also forms part of continental boundary between Asia and Europe and divides Turkey by separating Anatolia and Thrace. It is world's narrowest strait used for international navigation.

Dardanelles Strait and Bosphorus Strait are together called Turkish Straits.

Sea of Marmara: In 2021, the Sea of Marmara saw the largest outbreak of 'Sea Snot'. Sea snot refers to marine mucilage that is formed when algae are overloaded with nutrients due to pollution. It looks like vicious brown and foamy substance.

The country is encircled by seas on three sides: the Aegean Sea to the west, the Black Sea to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the south.

Turkey also contains the Sea of Marmara in the northwest

Neighbouring Countries: Syria, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Bulgaria, and Greece.

Note: Anatolia (also known as Asia Minor) is a large peninsula in Western Asia and is the westernmost extension of continental Asia. The landmass of Anatolia constitute most of the territory of contemporary Turkey. Geographically, Anatolia consist of Turkish Straits in the North-west, Black Sea to the north, the Armenian Highlands to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the South, and the Aegean Sea to the west.



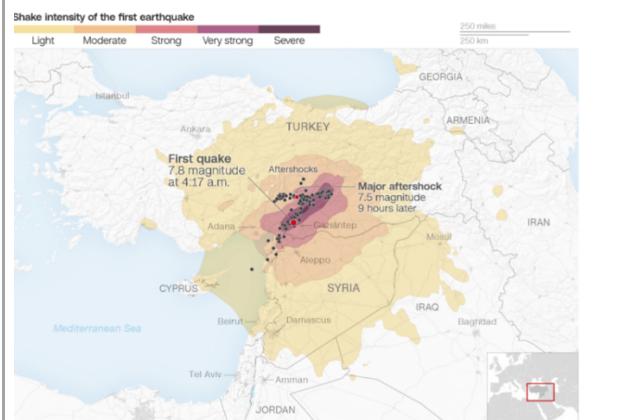
78) TURKEY SYRIA 2023 EARTHQUAKE

On 6th Feb 2023, earthquake of 7.8 intensity had struck Southern and Central Turkey and northern and western Syria. It has killed around 60,000 people.

It is the deadliest earthquake in what is now present day Turkey since the 526 Antioch Earthquake.

The epicentre was near the Turkish city of **Gaziantep**.

- **Gaziantep** is a major city in south-central Turkey. It is the capital of the Gaziantep Province in the westernmost part of Turkey's southeastern Antolia region and partially in the Mediterranean region.
- It was heavily damaged by 2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake and at the time of earthquake, around half a million Syrian refugees were living here.



Antakya (known as **Antioch** to the people of ancient Greece and Rome) is another city that has been badly damaged by the earthquake. It is the capital of southernmost province of Turkey. The city is located in a well-watered and fertile valley on the Orontes river.

Turkey's **two main fault zones**, the **East Anatolian** and the **North Anatolian**, make it one of the most seismically active regions in the world, and more than 70 quakes of magnitude 6.5 or higher have been recorded in the region since 1990.

Central Southern Turkey and Northwestern Syria are affected by the interaction between three tectonic plates - the African Plate, Arabian Plate and Anatolian Plate. The boundary between the African and Arabian plate is represented by the Dead Sea Transform (DST) - a major zone of left-lateral strike slip fault - **it accommodates the relative northward movement of Arabia with respect to Africa**.



The Northern end of DST truncates at East Anatolian Fault (EAF) another major left lateral strike slip fault zone that accommodates the overall westward movement of Anatolian Plate as it is extruded in that direction by the northward movement of the Arabian plate.

A) EARTHQUAKE BASICS: RICHTER SCALE VS MERCALLI SCALE

The Richter Scale and the Mercalli Scale are two different ways of measuring the magnitude of an earthquake. Here is tabular comparison of the two:

Criteria	Richter Scale	Mercalli Scale
Magnitude	Based on the seismic waves recorded by seismographs.	Based on the intensity of shaking and damage caused by an earthquake.
Units	Measures <u>magnitude on a logarithmic scale from 1 to 10</u> .	Uses Roman numerals from I to XII to describe earthquake intensity. It is not algorithmic but rather a subjective measurement.
Objective/Subjective	Objective, uses <u>quantitative measurement of the energy released</u> by an earthquake.	Subjective, uses <u>qualitative description of earthquake effects on people, structures, and the environment</u> .
Distance	<u>More useful for measuring earthquakes that occur at a distance</u> from the seismograph.	<u>Less useful for measuring earthquakes that occur far away from the seismograph.</u>
Time	Measures the energy released at the moment of the earthquake.	Measures the effect of the earthquake on the ground and on people, buildings, and the environment.
Usefulness	Useful for scientific and engineering purposes.	Useful for communicating the effects of an earthquake to the general public.

It's important to note that both scales are useful in their own ways and are often used together to provide a more complete picture of an earthquake's impact.

79) SYRIA

Capital: Damascus

Neighbours: Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon

Maritime boundary with Mediterranean Sea.

Lake: Al Assad (along Euphrates river)

Rivers: Euphrates and Khabur

Civil War in Syria: Northern part is controlled by Kurdish Forces.



80) LEVANT

Levant is a term in geography that refers to an area in the middle east. It includes the historic areas of Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Syria. It also includes parts of Iraq, Turkey, Cyprus, and Saudi Arabia.

It is bounded by Taurus mountain to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the West, the Northern Arabian Desert to the South and the Upper Mesopotamia to the east.



81) BLACK SEA

It is a large inland sea situated at the South-eastern extremity of Europe.

It is bordered by **Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Turkey.** [BRU-RGT]

The Crimean Peninsula is located on the north of Black Sea and just to its north is located **Kerch Strait** which links the Black sea to **Sea of Azov.**

Important Ports: Sevastopol (On Crimean Peninsula)

Important rivers that flow into Black sea are: Danube, Dnieper, Don



82) SEA OF AZOV

Sea of Azov is a sea in eastern Europe. It is linked to the Black sea in south through Strait of Kerch. It is sometimes also regarded as the northern extension of the black sea.

Ukraine in **Northwest** and **Russia** in east are the two countries which surround the sea.

Don and **Kuban** are the major rivers that flow into the sea.

Other features

It is the shallowest sea in the world with a depth between (0.9 and 14 meters)

There is a constant outflow of water from this sea to Black sea.



A) KERCH STRAIT

It is the only connection point between black sea and the sea of Azov, and the only way to reach two important Ukrainian ports, Mariupol and Berdiansk. Since Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia had been controlling the strait and thus making movement very difficult for Ukrainian ships.

83) KERCH BRIDGE (CRIMEAN BRIDGE)

It is a 19 km bridge which links Russian mainland with Ukrainian Peninsula in the black sea. The bridge has two parallel rail and roadways. It was opened in 2018 by Russian President Vladimir Putin with great fanfare, four years after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine after a contested referendum.



In July 2023, According to Russian authorities, one of the sections of the bridge was blown up killing two people and injuring a child. Russians have claimed that this was an attack by Ukraine.

The **bridge is so important for Russians** for symbolic, administrative and operational reasons.

- **Connectivity:** Before Russia had control over Donbas and Kherson, the bridge was the only connection between mainland Russia and Crimea.
- Even now, when it has control over the Donbas and Kherson, it is not far from the frontline and well within the range of Ukrainian fire. So, the **Kerch bridge remains a critical logistical supply link for the Russian troops in the south.**

84) CRIMEAN PENINSULA

Crimean Peninsula lies between Black Sea and Sea of Azov.

It is connected to the mainland by the narrow Perekop Isthmus.

The region has a population of 2.4 million and has been under Russian occupation since 2014.

The **port city of Sevastopol** serves as the headquarters of Russian Black Sea Fleet.



85) UKRAINE

Geographical Details

Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe. It is the second largest country in Europe after Russia.

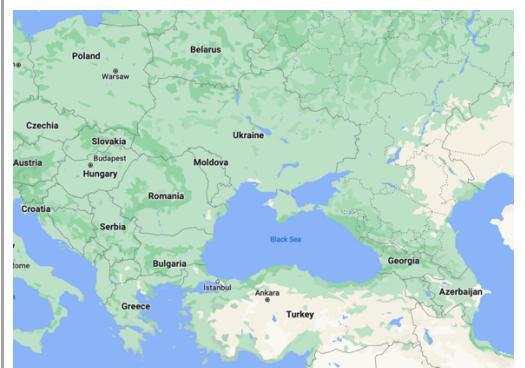
Neighbours: It shares its borders with Hungary, Slovakia, Poland to the West, Belarus to North, Russia to North, Northeast and East and Moldova and Romania to the South.

Trick: Hungry, Slow, Polar, Bear of Russia are Roaming in Moldova.

Coastline: the country has coastline along the sea of Azov and Black Sea.

Recent Political Events:

Ukraine gained its independence in 1991 after dissolution of Soviet Union. Ukraine declared itself a neutral state, forming limited partnership with both Russia and NATO.



In 2014, Kremlin leaning Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych rejected an association with the European Union (EU) in favor of close ties with Moscow. This resulted in a series of protests across Ukraine, ending with Yanukovych's removal from power the same year. Mass protests and demonstrations known as the Euromaidan erupted, escalating into the Revolution of Dignity that led to the establishment of new government. These events led to Russia annexing Crimea and a war in Donbas against Russian backed separatists, culminating in Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022

Donbas Region

The Donetsk and Luhansk region of Ukraine is collectively called the Donbas.

Strategic significance of Donbas region: Donbas can act as a corridor between Russia and Crimea (and by extension, the strategically significant port of Sevastopol).

The population of this region is more Pro-Russia and thus a war has been going on since 2014 against Russia-backed separatists in the region.

On 21st Feb 2022, Russia officially recognized the DPR (Donetsk People's Republic) and LPR (Luhansk People's Republic) and on 24th Feb launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine.



Kherson

On Sep 30, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin combatively announced the annexation of four "oblasts" (regions) that are currently de jure Ukraine territory - Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson - and claimed that these regions will be with Russia "forever".

Kherson is strategically very significantly located - It is located just north of the Crimean peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in 2014.

Mariupol

It is a city of the north coast of the Sea of Azov at the mouth of Kalmius river. While internationally recognized as in Ukraine, the city is under the de facto administration of the Donetsk People's Republic.

During the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the city was besieged and severely damaged in which it received the title of Hero City of Ukraine.

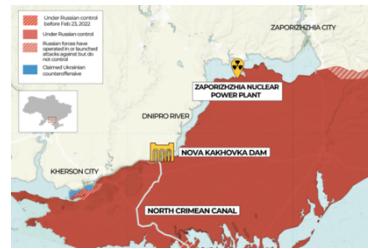
On 16th May 2022, Ukrainian troops in Azovstal Steel Plant surrendered to Russian forces and were evacuated to Russian held territory in the Donetsk People's Republic, as Russia secured complete control of the city



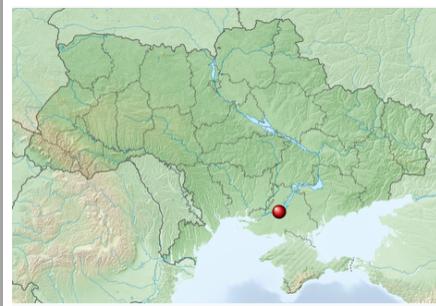
Nova Kakhovka Reservoir (DAM)

The Kakhovka Dam was a dam on the Dnieper River (also known as Dnipro) in Kherson Oblast, Ukraine. It is a soviet era dam and was destroyed in June 2023.

This breach has unleashed flood water in the war zone. Both, Ukraine and Russia have conflicting accounts on who destroyed it.



This Dam is part of Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant. It supplies water to Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, and to the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is also under Russia control.



Location of Kakhovka Dam in Ukraine

The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is the largest nuclear power plant of Europe. It gets its cooling water from Kakhovka Reservoir. It is located on the southern side, now under Russia control.

86) MEDITERRANEAN SEA

The Mediterranean Sea is a sea connected to the Atlantic Ocean, surrounded by the Mediterranean Basin and almost completely enclosed by land: on the north by Western and Southern Europe and Anatolia, on the south by North Africa, and on the east by the Levant.

Today, **21 countries** form border with Mediterranean Sea

Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Spain (note: No Portugal), France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, and Greece.



87) AEGEAN SEA

It is an extension of Mediterranean sea between Europe and Asia. It is located between Balkans and Anatolia.

In the north it is connected to Marmara sea, which in turn is connected to black sea.

In June 2022, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Greece to demilitarize islands of the Aegean Sea.



88) ADRIATIC SEA

Countries bordering Adriatic Sea:

Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Albania.



89) ITALY

Italy is a country consisting of Peninsula, located in the centre of Mediterranean sea.

Neighbouring Countries:

France, Switzerland, Austria, Slovenia, and the enclaved microstate of Vatican City and San Marino.

It is surrounded by Adriatic Sea in the east, Tyrrhenian Sea in West and Ionian Sea in South.



90) VENICE AND VENETIAN GRAND CANAL

Venice: It is a city in north-eastern Italy and is the capital of Veneto region. It is built of 118 small islands. That are separated by expanses of open water and by canals.

Venetian Grand Canal:

It is a channel in Venice, Italy. It forms one of the major water traffic corridors in the city.

One end of the canal leads into lagoon near the Santa Lucia Railway Station and the other end leads into the basin at San Marco; in between, it makes a large reverse-S shape through the central districts of Venice.

Why in news?

Venetian canal had turned green. Initially known one was able to give a reason. But in June 2023, authorities found that the test samples of the water confirmed the canal's bright new hue was caused by fluorescein, a chemical often used to find leaks during underwater construction. The official are investigating how the chemical got into the canal.



91) MOUNT ETNA

Mount Etna is Europe's most active volcano. It is a stratovolcano on the east coast of Sicily, Italy, in the Metropolitan City of Catania.

Recent eruptions in Feb 2021 have led to spectacular spurts of lava lighting up the sky each night.

Satellites images shows that the volcano has erupted so much in 2021 that it has grown about 30 meters (100 feet)



Other two active volcanoes of Italy:

- Mount Vesuvius (Near Naples, last erupted in 1944)
- Stromboli (on Aeolian Islands) (three major explosions in 2019)

92) RIVER VOLGA

Longest river of Europe (3700 kms)

It originates in Valdai hills in north western Russia, a heavily forested region and drains into Caspian Sea.

Source of water: It is fed mostly by snow (around 60% of the water), underground water (30%) and rain water 10%.

It passes through much of the heart of historic Russia.



93) DANUBE RIVER

2nd longest river of Europe (2,850 km) after Volga.

It is located in Central and Eastern Europe.

Originates in Germany and passes through Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, and Ukraine before draining into Black Sea



Sulina Channel:

News: (Aug 2023)

It is a distributary of the river Danube that contributes to forming the **Danube Delta**. The other two main branches of Danube are the **Chilia Branch** to the north and the **Sfantu Gheorghe branch** to the south

The Danube delta has provided Ukraine with an alternative passage for its grain after Russia withdrew from Black Sea grain deal recently.

The deal, was brokered by the UN and Turkey, and is used to provide safe passages for cargo ships carrying grain from Ukrainian Black Sea Ports of Odessa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi.

Sulina channel is of particular significance in this 'new' trade route. It connects major Ukrainian ports on the river to the Black Sea, lying completely within the borders of Romania, a NATO member

94) RHINE RIVER

About Rhine River

It is the second longest river in Central and Western Europe (after Danube)

River Rhine originates at Swiss Canton of Graubünden in the south-eastern Swiss Alps and travels 1232 kms to empty into North Sea at Rotterdam.

Source of water: A mix of glacial run off and rains feed the river. It acts as important inland waterways and carry ships through some of the important industrial centers.

It forms many national borders:

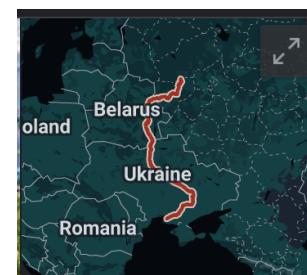
- Swiss Liechtenstein
- Swiss - Austria
- Swiss German
- France German

It then flows through German Rhine Land and Netherlands to eventually empty into the northern sea.



95) RIVER DNIEPER OR DNIPRO

- It is one of the major rivers of Europe.
- It originates in Russia (Valdai Hills), before flowing through Belarus and Ukraine to the **Black Sea**.
- It is the longest river of Ukraine and Belarus and the **fourth longest river of Europe** after Volga, Danube and Ural.



96) ALPS MOUNTAIN

The Alps are the highest and most extensive mountain ranges system that lies entirely in Europe. The alps form part of France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania.

Alps are inter-zonal mountain system (or a "transition area") between Central and Mediterranean Europe.

Mont Blanc is the highest mountain (4,808 m) in Alps, spanning 3 countries. Its granite ramparts distinguish it from other peaks.

It is the second highest and second most prominent mountain in Europe and the eleventh most prominent mountain summit in the world. It stands between regions of Italy and France.

Note: The Highest peak of the Caucasus and the highest point in Europe is **Mount Elbrus** in southwestern Russia.



97) BALTIC SEA

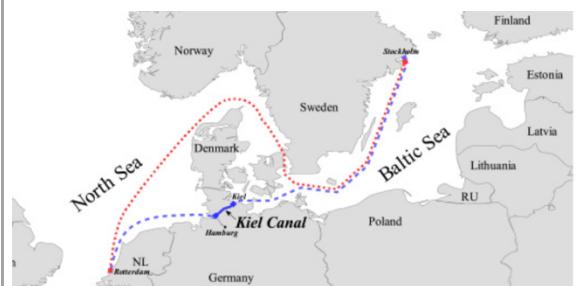
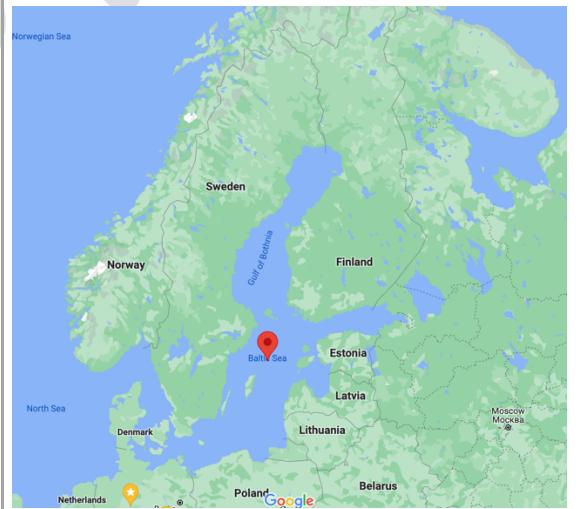
Baltic Sea is an arm of Atlantic Ocean. It is enclosed by Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and Denmark

Baltic Proper is bordered on its northern edge, at latitude 60 degree north, by Aland Islands and the Gulf of Bothnia, on its north eastern edge by Gulf of Finland.

Gulf of Riga: (Latvia border – opens into Baltic Sea)

Baltic Sea is connected to White Sea by White Sea Baltic Canal and to German Bight of the North Sea by Kiel Canal.

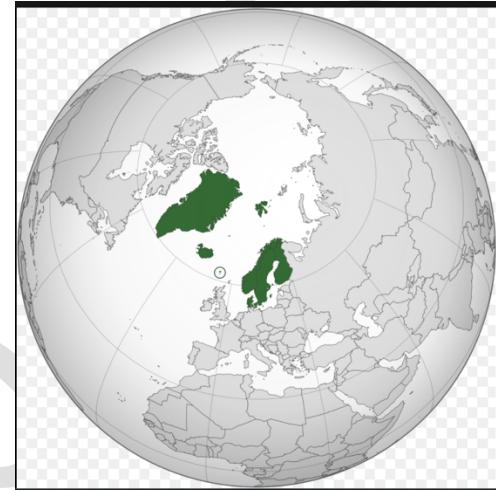
White-Sea Baltic Canal:



- In Baltic Sea, citizen divers restore seagrass to fight climate change (July 2023)
 - » This is part of a new project that trains local citizens to restore seagrass meadows in the Baltic Sea. The hope is that this painstaking work can help tackle climate change.
 - » **What is the Project:**
 - Seastore Seagrass Restoration Project , run by the GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research in Keil, Germany, is one of the first that aims to enable citizens to restore seagrass autonomously.

98) NORDIC COUNTRIES

- Which are Nordic Countries?
 - » The Nordic countries are a geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic.
 - » It includes:
 - Norway
 - Sweden
 - Finland (including autonomous region of Aaland)
 - Denmark (including autonomous territories of Faroe Island and Greenland)
 - Iceland
- Note1: Svalbard is a Norwegian archipelago.
- Note2: Only Norway and Finland form border with Russia. (Sweden and Denmark don't)
- Note3: All Nordic countries are part of Arctic Council



A) NORDIC COUNCIL

- It is an official body for formal inter-parliamentary Nordic Cooperation among the Nordic Countries.
- It was formed in 1952, and has 87 representatives from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland as well as from the autonomous area of Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Aaland. The representatives are Member of Parliaments in their respective countries or areas and are elected by those parliamentarians.
- Headquarter: Copenhagen, Denmark

B) SVALBARD (ALSO KNOWN AS SPITSBERGEN)

- It is a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. North of mainland Europe, it is about midway between the northern coast of Norway and the North Pole. The islands of the group range from 74 degree to 81-degree N.
- The largest island is Spitsbergen.
- Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a seedbank to store seeds from as many of the world's crop varieties and their botanical wild relatives as possible. It is a cooperation between the government of Norway and the Global Crop Diversity Trust, the vault is cut into rock near Longyearbyen, keeping it at a natural – 6 degree C and refrigerating the seeds to



-18 degree C. It is also referred as Earth's dooms day vault.

- **IndARC:** It is India's first underwater moored observatory in the Arctic region. It was deployed in 2014 at Kongsfjorden fjord, Svalbard, Norway. It is focused on studying arctic climate.

99) NORD STREAM

- Nord stream is a set of offshore natural offshore gas pipeline in Europe, running under the Baltic Sea from Russia to Germany.
- It includes **two Nord Stream-1 pipelines** running from Vyborg in northwestern Russia, near Finland, and two **Nord Stream-2 pipelines** running from Ust-Luga in northwestern Russia, near Estonia.
- **Both set of pipelines** run to **Lumbin** in the northeastern Germany.
- Recently, **NORD STREAM-2** has been denied certification as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.



100) SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

- Scandinavia is a sub-region in Northern Europe, with a strong historical, cultural, and linguistic tie between its constituent people.
- It includes **Norway, Sweden and Denmark** (please note that it doesn't include Finland)
- A more **narrow definition** only includes Scandinavian Peninsula (i.e. Norway and Sweden)
- Sometime the term is used more broadly to also include Finland, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Åland.
- **Broadest definition** is similar to Nordic countries.



101) ICELAND

It is located in North Atlantic Ocean and is one of the least populated countries of Europe.

After Great Britain, it is Europe's largest island.

Its capital **Reykjavik**, is the northernmost national capital in the world.

Location: It is located halfway between Europe mainland and North America and is just below the Arctic circle.

The country is famous for its geo-thermal pools, volcanoes, and glaciers.



News (July 2023)

Almost 2200 earthquakes have been recorded in the vicinity of Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland, within 24 hours.

This surge of seismic activity has prompted the Icelandic Meteorological Office to issue a warning, suggesting the possibility of an imminent volcanic eruption. The earthquakes originated beneath Mount Fagradalsfjall, a mountain situated on the Reykjaness Peninsula, which has witnessed two eruptions in the past 2 years.

Note: Iceland's name is misnomer as the country is quite green and fertile.

102) GREENLAND AND WATER BODIES AROUND IT

- Greenland is an island nation located between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, east of Canadian Arctic Archipelago.
- It is world's largest Island and is one of the three constituent countries that form the Kingdom of Denmark, along with Denmark and the Faroe Islands. The citizens of these countries are all Danish nationals.
- With a permanent population of 56,081, it is the least densely populated region in the world.
- **Capital and largest city: Nuuk.**
- **Physiographically**, it is part of North America; But, politically, and culturally it is associated with Europe (specifically Norway and Denmark, the colonial powers)
- **Water Bodies around Greenland** (see adjacent figure)



103) ENGLISH CHANNEL

The English Channel is the Atlantic Ocean's 30th largest arm.

It is located between the isle of Great Britain's southern coast and France's northern coast.

It is separated from North Sea by the **Strait of Dover**.



104) NEXT BOOKLET – AFRICA, NORTH AMERICA AND SOUTH AMERICA