

# FORTUNE Prelims Precise Compilation



## PLACES IN NEWS

January 2025 - April 2026



## Toppers in Top 100



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## Z-Morh Tunnel



- The 6.5 km-long **Z-Morh tunnel** at Sonamarg was inaugurated recently.
- The project was developed by the **National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)**.
- The Z-Morh tunnel is part of the **Zojila tunnel project** that aims to provide all weather connectivity from **Srinagar to Ladakh throughout the year**.
- The tunnel will provide **all-weather connectivity to Sonamarg**, a famous tourist destination on the Srinagar-Leh highway.
- The tunnel situated at an altitude of over **8,500 feet** has acquired its name for the **Z-shaped road stretch** at the place where the tunnel has been constructed.

## Anji Khad Rail Bridge

- The Railways has successfully conducted a trial run of a tower wagon on the Anji Khad Bridge, in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district.
- Anji Khad Bridge is the country's "**first cable-stayed bridge**" connecting Katra and Reasi in Jammu and Kashmir.

- The bridge is a part of the national project, the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) Project which provides rail connectivity between the **Kashmir Valley and the rest of the country**.

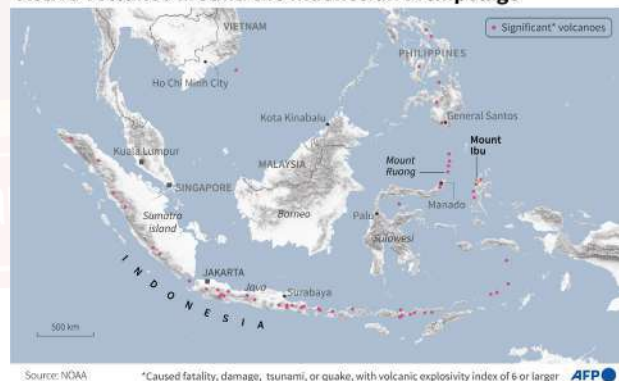
- The Bridge with a total length of 473.25 metres is the second-highest railway bridge after the arch bridge over the Chenab at Kauri.

➤ Chenabi Bridge is the **world's highest railway bridge at 359 metres** above the riverbed 35 metres higher than the Eiffel Tower in Paris.



## Mount Ibu

### Active volcanos around the Indonesian archipelago



- Mount Ibu is a stratovolcano at the north-west coast of Halmahera island, Indonesia.
- A stratovolcano, also known as a composite volcano, is a tall, conical volcano built up by multiple layers of lava, ash, and volcanic rocks.
- Indonesia, a vast archipelago, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity as it lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire.
- Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki of Flores Island & Mount Ruang in North Sulawesi province are other active volcanoes in Indonesia.

## Goma



- Rwanda-backed M23 rebels captured Goma in Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC)
- Goma is the capital and largest city of the North Kivu Province.
- The infamous Rwandan Genocide of 1994 saw the mass execution and exodus of Tutsis at the hands of majority Hutus.
  - The M23 claims to be fighting for the rights of the Tutsi ethnic group in the DRC, alleging discrimination and marginalization by the government
- Goma is situated on the shores of Lake Kivu at the Rwandan border.
- It is flanked by two active volcanoes, Nyiragongo and Nyamuragira.

## Point Nemo

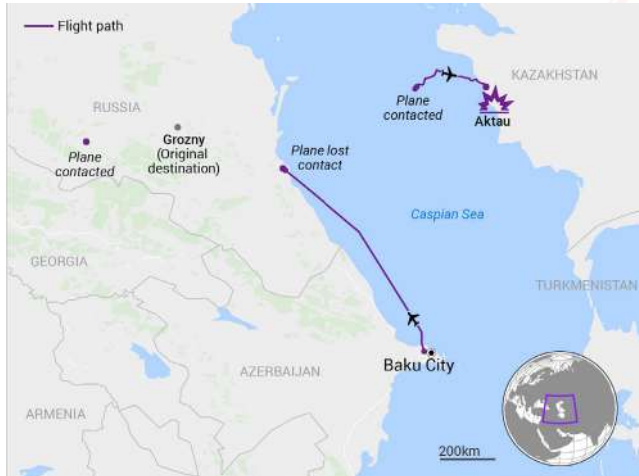


- Lieutenant Commanders Dilna K and Roopa A, aboard INSV Tarini, crossed Point Nemo recently as part of a circumnavigation expedition by the Indian Navy.
- The expedition for circumnavigation the globe on INSV Tarini by Indian Navy's Women Naval Officers is called Navika Sagar Parikrama.
  - INSV Tarini, named after the Tara Tarini temple (Odisha), is a 56-foot long second sailboat commissioned in 2017
- Point Nemo is located in the South Pacific Ocean, approximately 2,688 kilometers (1,670 miles) away from the nearest land.
- Geographically, this mystery point is located at the intersection of the equator, the International Date Line, and the 90th meridian west.
- Officially called an "Ocean Point of Inaccessibility," it is a watery graveyard for titanium fuel tanks and other high-tech space debris.

## Plane crashes - places

- Plane crashes were reported across the world..
- Azerbaijan Airlines flying from Baku (Azerbaijan) to Grozny (Chechnya, Russia) crashed near Aktau International Airport in Kazakhstan.
- It is suspected to be an anti-aircraft missile that damaged the aircraft since the Grozny area was under attack from Ukraine and Russia had placed defence installations on high alert.
- GPS spoofing is alleged to have misdirected the flight into the conflict zone.

- **Jeju Air** was flying from **Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok**, Thailand, to **Muan International Airport** in x'Muan County, South Korea.
- It is suspected to have faced a **bird strike/hit** that might have damaged its controls.
- It tried a **belly landing** at the airport as the landing gear did not deploy, but overshot the runway and **crashed** into a concrete structure holding the airport navigation system.



## Jeju Air flight crashed on landing at Muan airport



SOURCE: AFP  
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

# February

## The Aravali Safari Park



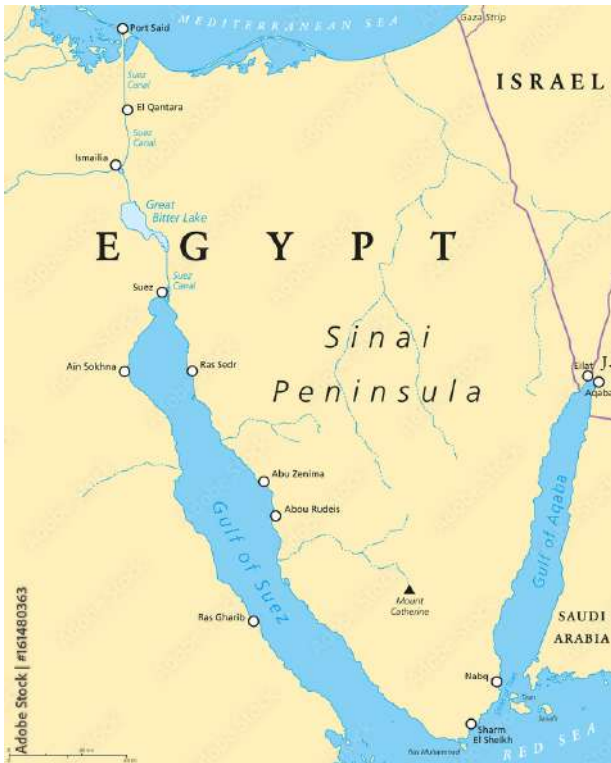
- **Haryana's** 3,858-hectare Aravali safari park, planned in Gurugram and Nuh, aims to be the world's largest.
- It will **feature** animal enclosures, safaris, hotels, restaurants, botanical gardens, aquariums, and an animal hospital.
- The Aravali Range is considered as the **world's oldest fold mountain, estimated to be around 2.5 to 3.2 billion years old**, helps combat desertification and recharge groundwater.
- **Critics** argue the project prioritizes tourism over conservation, with concerns over groundwater depletion and forest protection under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.
- Haryana's **low forest cover** (3.6%) calls for rewilding efforts instead.

The **Aravalli Range** extends across **four Indian states**—Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat, and Delhi. Rajasthan has the largest portion, including **Mount Abu**, the highest peak.

In Haryana, the range runs through southern districts like **Gurugram and Nuh**.

In Gujarat, it reaches the **northeastern region near Champaner**, while in Delhi, it forms the **Ridge area**, a crucial ecological zone.

## Gulf of Eilat



- A new study has uncovered a significant pause in coral reef growth in the Gulf of Eilat.
- The Gulf of Eilat is also known as the **Gulf of Aqaba**.
- It falls in the northeastern arm of the Red Sea, penetrating **between Saudi Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula**.
- Navigation is difficult because of the gulf's **narrow entrance at the Straits of Tiran**.
  - ▶ The Tiran Strait connects the **Gulf of Aqaba with the Red Sea**.
  - ▶ It also serves as a connecting **point between the continents of Asia and Africa**.
- The Gulf is part of the complex **East African Rift System**, and its head touches the Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabian boundaries.

## Mount Etna

- Mount Etna has erupted once again, in Sicily, Italy, sending lava flows and thick clouds of ash into the sky.

- Mount Etna is the **highest active volcano in Europe**, its topmost elevation being about 10,900 feet.
- The name comes from the Greek word **Aitne**, which is from **aithō**, meaning **“I burn.”**
- Etna’s geological characteristics indicate that it has been active since the end of the **Neogene Period** (i.e., for about the past 2.6 million years).
- Mount Etna **World Heritage Site** comprises the most strictly protected and scientifically important area of Mount Etna, and forms part of the **Parco dell’Etna Regional Nature Park**.



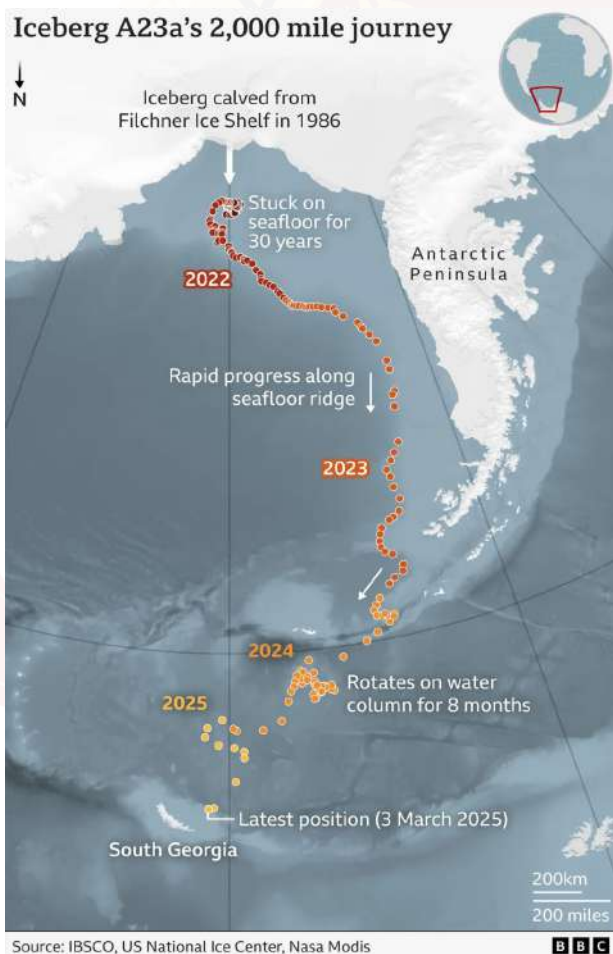
## Kurdistan Region of Iraq



- India has sent a shipment of medical supplies to support the residents of the **Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)** as part of India's **Vishwabandhu** (global friend) policy.
- Kurdistan refers to a geographical and cultural region primarily inhabited by **Kurds**, an ethnic group native to the Middle East.
- It is **not an independent country** but spans parts of **Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria**.
- The **Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI)** is the only officially recognized autonomous Kurdish region, governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).
- The Kurdistan region, comprising **Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Dohuk**, has seen a steady increase in Indian workers
- India established a **consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan region**, in August 2016 to enhance economic and commercial ties with Iraq.

- The world's largest iceberg has run aground in shallow waters off the **remote British island of South Georgia**, home to millions of penguins and seals.
- South Georgia is an island in the **South Atlantic Ocean** that is part of the **British Overseas Territory** of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.
- It lies around 1,300 kilometres **east of the Falkland Islands**.
- The terrain is mountainous, with the central ridge rising to 2,935 metres **at Mount Paget**.

## South Georgia Island



## Mount Taranaki



- Taranaki Maunga, the **second-highest mountain on New Zealand's North Island**, has been granted legal personhood, becoming the third natural feature in the country to receive the same rights, duties, and protections as an individual.
- **It is also known as Mount Egmont** and is located in Egmont National Park.
- It is one of the **most symmetrical volcanic cones** in the world.

## Gulf Of Tonkin



- **Vietnam's** foreign ministry released a map defining its baseline claim in the Gulf of Tonkin, where it shares a maritime border with **China**.
- Located in the **northwest South China Sea**, the gulf receives the **Red River** and hosts key ports like Haiphong (Vietnam) and Beihai (China).
- A **1964 incident** involving North Vietnamese torpedo boats and U.S. destroyers led to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, escalating U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.
  - The US involvement ended with the **Vietnam War**, and North Vietnam's victory in 1975 led to the unification of Vietnam

- India recently dispatched humanitarian assistance of 26 tons to Honduras in the wake of the recent **Tropical storm SARA**.
- Honduras is a country of Central America situated between **Guatemala and El Salvador** to the west and Nicaragua to the south and east.
- The **Caribbean Sea** washes its northern coast, the **Pacific Ocean** its narrow coast to the south.
- More than **three-fourths of the land area** of Honduras is **mountainous**.
- The official language of Honduras is **Spanish**, and the predominant religion is Roman Catholicism.

## Honduras





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## Reunion Island



- At least four people died after **cyclone Garance** struck the **French overseas territory of La Reunion**, bringing wind speeds of up to 155 kph (96 mph).
- It is an island in the western Indian Ocean and is located about **680 kilometers east of Madagascar & 180 km southwest of Mauritius**.
- It was a **French colony until 1946**, when it became a French overseas department.
- It is volcanic in origin, and its landform is dominated by volcanic cones, craters, and high plateaus.
  - ➔ Frequent tropical cyclones result in abundant annual rainfall.
- The economy is **largely based on sugar**, which makes up about three fourths of Reunion's total export.
- French is the official language, but **Creole is the language in common use**.

## Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR)

- Rescue operations were underway to trace the eight missing personnel inside the **Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC)** tunnel in Nagarkurnool which falls under the **Amrabad Tiger Reserve forest area**.
- The ATR was notified as a sanctuary in **1983** and was declared an **official Tiger Reserve** in 2014 following the bifurcation of the Telugu States.
- The Reserve which is part of the Nallamala Forest track falls under the national conservation initiative **'Project Tiger.'**

- This is the **second-largest Tiger Reserve in terms of core area** but the sixth-largest tiger reserve in terms of total area among 51 Tiger Reserves in India.
- The reserve was established on the lands of the **Chenchu Indigenous People**.



## Kanger Valley National Park (KVNP)



- The Kanger Valley National Park (KVNP) has been included in **UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites** under the Natural Heritage category.
- The KVNP is located in Jagdalpur within the Bastar District of Chhattisgarh.
- The park draws its name from the **Kanger River**, meandering from the northwest to the southeast.
- Designated in **1982 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972**, the national park encompasses an area of 200 square kilometres.

## The Chagos Archipelago

- Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to **Mauritius**, India affirmed its support for the island **country's claim over the Chagos archipelago**.
- Chagos has long been the subject of a **dispute between Mauritius and the UK**, which held on to these islands for decades after **granting independence to Mauritius in 1968**.
- It was only last year that **London officially recognised Mauritius' sovereign rights over all of Chagos**, although it retained control over Diego Garcia.

➔ Diego Garcia is the largest island in the archipelago and home to a **strategically important joint UK-US military base.**

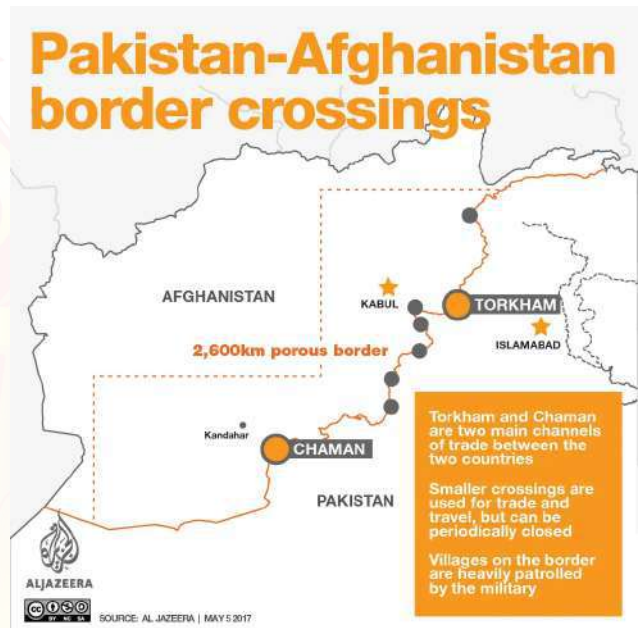
- The Chagos archipelago comprises more than **60 low-lying islands in the Indian Ocean roughly 1,600 km to the northeast of the main island of Mauritius.**
- Chagos has a land area of only 56.1 sq km, with Diego Garcia alone spread over 32.5 sq km — which is about the **same as the land area of Lakshadweep.**
- **The Great Chagos Bank**, spread over 12,642 sq km, is the **world's largest atoll structure.**
- The Islands closest inhabited neighbour **Addu, the southernmost Maldivian atoll**, lies 500 km away.



## Torkham Border Crossing

- The **Pakistani and Afghan security forces** traded fire at the recently closed main border crossing between the two countries, the Torkham border crossing.
- Torkham borders **Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province** and Afghanistan's Nangarhar province.
- It is along the Durand Line, the **2,640-kilometer (1,640-mile) international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.**
- It was established in **1893** through an agreement between **Sir Mortimer Durand**, a British diplomat of British India, and **Abdur Rahman Khan**, the then Emir of Afghanistan.
- However, it controversially **cut through the Pashtun tribal areas**, dividing ethnic Pashtuns and Baloch people who have historically lived on both sides.

- While **Pakistan recognizes the Durand Line** as its official border, **Afghanistan has never officially accepted it** as a legitimate international boundary, viewing it as a colonial-era imposition that divided their people.



## Okjökull Glacier

- Satellite images spanning over three decades document the disappearance of Iceland's **Okjökull, the first glacier officially declared dead** due to human-caused climate change.
- "Okjökull" means "Ok glacier" in Icelandic, and it was a **dome-shaped glacier atop the 3,940-foot-tall shield volcano Ok**, northwest of Reykjavik.
- Once covering 39 sq km in 1901, **Okjökull was declared dead in 2014** when its ice thinned too much to move by gravity.
- In 2023, Iceland also **established the world's first iceberg graveyard**, creating symbolic headstones for 15 major glaciers, including Okjökull, listed as dead or critically endangered by the UN.

## Iceland loses first glacier to climate change



## Etalin Hydroelectric Project



- A significant financial milestone was reached as Rs 269.97 crore was transferred to the **Dibang Valley district administration** for the 3097 MW **Etalin Hydroelectric Project**.
- The project is a combination of **two run-of-the-river schemes** with limited storage requiring concrete gravity dams on **rivers Tangon and Dri** (Both tributaries of Dibang River).
- The plant is in Anini Circle, **Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh**.

## Yellow Sea



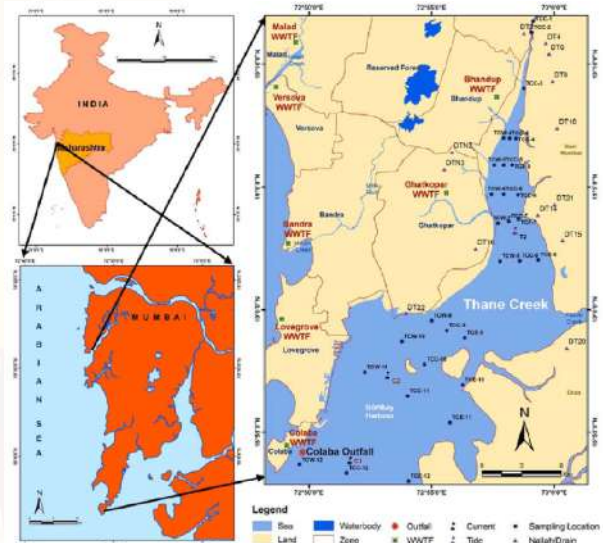
- The ongoing dispute between **South Korea and China** over Chinese-constructed steel platforms in the Yellow Sea has **escalated into a critical geopolitical flashpoint**.

- It falls in the **western Pacific Ocean** and is bordered by the **Korean peninsula and the Japanese island of Kyushu** on the east and China on the north and west.

👉 In the south is the East China Sea.

- **Korea Bay and the gulf of Bo Hai** are its main inlets, shaped by the Liaodong Peninsula jutting from the north and the Shandong Peninsula from the southwest.
- The sea's name is derived from the **colour of the silt-laden water** flowing into it from major Chinese rivers.

## DPS Flamingo Lake



- The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board has declared the **30-acre DPS Flamingo Lake as a Conservation Reserve**.
- This makes it the first wetland connected to the **Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS)** to receive such protection.
- The 30-acre lake serves as a critical resting and feeding ground for flamingos that migrate from TCFS during high tide.
- The Thane Creek falls under the **Marine Ecoregions of the World (MEOW)** but is fed by numerous freshwater sources, making the water brackish.

## Morag axis

- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently announced the capture of an area that he referred to as the **"Morag axis" in the southern Gaza Strip**.

- This area consists mainly of **agricultural land located between Khan Younis and Rafah**, stretching from east to west across the Gaza Strip.
- It includes parts of what the Israeli military had previously designated as a “**humanitarian zone**”, where they had told internally displaced Palestinians to seek refuge.
- The area had not been identified as an “axis”, also known as a “corridor”, until Netanyahu’s announcement.
- Netanyahu declared the **purpose of capturing** such an axis or corridor is to force Hamas to release **Israeli hostages** but is also reportedly to be enable the Israeli forces to push out the Palestinians from the territory for complete take over by the Israeli forces.



- Mount Spurr is a **stratovolcano**, also known as a **composite volcano**, is a typically conical volcano built up by **many alternating layers (strata) of hardened lava**.
- It is one of a **string of volcanoes on the Aleutian Arc**, an arc of islands with more than 80 named volcanoes **stretching the Southwest tip of Alaska to the Kamchatka Peninsula of the Russian Federation**.
- Mount Spurr is one of the volcanoes that **makes up the Ring of Fire**, created by the Pacific plate sinking below the North American plate.
- Standing 3,374 meters tall, and it is located near **Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city**.

### India’s longest Rail Tunnel

#### ABOUT THE PROJECT

The rail line will be a boon for locals as well as pilgrims



- The rail project will have the country’s longest tunnel of 15.1 km between Devprayag and Lachmoli
- The rail link will cut down the travel time between Rishikesh and Karnpryag from seven hours to two hours
- The project has been delayed by six years mainly due to the Union environment and forest ministry’s initial objections to handing over the possession of forestland to Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd.

**₹16,200 cr**

The current cost of the proposed 125-km rail link is about four times the original cost

### Mount Spurr

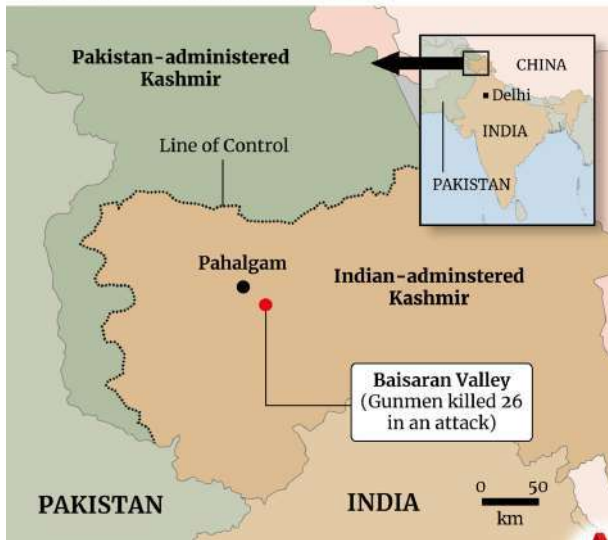


- Dozens of mini-earthquakes have rattled **Alaska’s Mount Spurr** over the past week, sparking fears of a major eruption.

- The Ministry for Railways informed about the “**tunnel breakthrough**” of **tunnel no. 8** on the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag railway in the Himalayas.
- Spanning a length of 14.58 km, **tunnel no. 8, or the Janasu tunnel**, falls on the Devprayag to Janasu stretch of the **Rishikesh-Karnaprayag line**.
- At present, the **longest rail tunnel** in India is the 12.75 km long **Katra-Banihal Section** of the Kashmir line or the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)**.
- The **longest road tunnel** is the Atal tunnel on the Manali-Leh highway, which is 9.02 km long.
- **A tunnel breakthrough** is the point or moment when a **tunnel being excavated from both ends finally connects**, marking the completion of a **critical phase of tunnel-building**.

## Pahalgam

### Apr 23 attack in Kashmir



- The recent **terror attack** in Pahalgam claimed the lives of 26 civilians on April 22.
- The attack was claimed by **The Resistance Force (TRF)**, an offshoot of Pakistan based terror group, **Lashkar-e-Taiba**.
- Pahalgam is a town in Anantnag district of Jammu & Kashmir, **91 kms from the Srinagar city**.
- It is situated at 2,200 metres altitude in the **Lidder Valley along the Lidder River**.
- The town is the starting point of the annual pilgrimage to the **Amarnath Temple**, which takes place in the month of **Sawan (July / August)**.
- The **Baisaran meadow**, also called as 'mini Switzerland' is located about 6 km from Pahalgam town.

May

## Vizhinjam International Seaport



- The newly built **all-weather Vizhinjam International Seaport**, was dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently.
- This **first semi-automated port** in the country is intended primarily to bring home the Indian cargo transshipment presently being undertaken at the foreign ports of **Singapore, Colombo, Salalah and Dubai**.
- The Vizhinjam port also features remote-controlled quay cranes, and India's first AI-powered Vessel Traffic Management System.
- It is strategically located just **10 nautical miles** from the busy **international shipping route** connecting Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Far East.
- It is a natural port with a deep draft of **18m close to shore** that requires no capital dredging.
- Its curvilinear coast **mitigates tsunami impact** while the port's positioning results in only mild erosion, minimizing maintenance costs.

## Palamu Tiger Reserve



- The relocation of **Jaigir village from the core area** marks a milestone in conservation efforts at Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR), Jharkhand.
- The Reserve is located in the western side of Latehar district on the **Chhotanagpur plateau** in Jharkhand.
- The project area is constituted mainly of **Sal forests**, mixed deciduous forests and bamboo groves.
- The reserve zone is the watershed area for 3 important rivers **Koel, Burha and Auranga**.
- The PTR was constituted in the year **1974 under Project Tiger** and is one of the first 9 tiger reserves created in the country at inception of 'Project Tiger'.
- Palamau Tiger Reserve has the distinction of being the **first sanctuary in the world in which a tiger census was carried out as a pugmark count**, as early as 1932.

## The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP)



- The **National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA)** has found "irreparable damage" in the structure of three barrages that are part of the **world's biggest multi-stage lift irrigation project, KLIP**.
- The Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP) falls on the **Godavari river** in Telangana's Jayashankar Bhupalpally district.

- It is close to **the Maharashtra border** and will supply water for irrigation, industrial, and domestic uses over a swath of **northern Telangana**.
- The project sprawls over **approximately 500 km in 13 districts**, with a canal network of 1,800 km.
- **Note:** The National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) is a statutory body set up under the National Dam Safety Act, 2021.

## Uturuncu Volcano



- Recent studies reveal that Uturuncu Volcano in Bolivia is linked to the movement of magma and gases beneath the surface.
- Uturuncu hasn't erupted for more than 250,000 years, but it shows signs of activity similar to those seen in active volcanoes, such as **gas plumes and earthquakes**.
- It is the tallest mountain in Bolivia and part of the **Central Andes mountain range** and is known as a "**zombie volcano**" - thought to be dormant or extinct but shows signs of renewed activity
- Beneath Uturuncu at a depth of about 10 to 20 kilometers lies a vast reservoir of magma called the **Altiplano-Puna Magma Body**.
- Spanning roughly 200 kilometers, it is the biggest known active magma body in the planet's crust.

## India's First AI Special Economic Zone



- India's **first artificial intelligence-focused special economic zone (SEZ)** is set to come up in **Chhattisgarh's capital city Nava Raipur**.
- The project comes with a substantial **investment of Rs 10 billion from Indore-based RackBank Datacenters**, a company known for its carbon-neutral data centres.
- Spanning six acres, this SEZ will house a **1.5 lakh square foot facility featuring high-performance servers** and infrastructure capable of supporting AI research, development, and deployment.
- **Nava Raipur**, officially known as **Atal Nagar-Nava Raipur**, is a planned and fully Greenfield city in the Indian state of Chhattisgarh.
- It is planned to **replace Raipur as the capital city** of Chhattisgarh.
- The city is located between **National Highway 53 and National Highway 30**, about 17 km south-east of the capital city Raipur.
- Swami Vivekananda Airport separates Raipur and Nava Raipur.

## Chagos Islands



- Recently, the United Kingdom and Mauritius signed an agreement by which the United Kingdom has agreed **to cede the control of Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius**.
- However, the United Kingdom and the United States will keep the **Diego Garcia Airbase**.
- The Chagos Archipelago, **in the Indian Ocean**, was earlier governed by the United Kingdom as the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**.
- Chagos Island, which consists of more than 60 low-lying islands, is located in the **central Indian Ocean, south of the Maldives** and off India's southern coast.
- The Archipelago is a collection of **seven atolls made up of 58 separate tropical islands**.
- There haven't been any indigenous inhabitants, often referred to as **Chagossians or Ilois**, since Britain forcibly uprooted up to 2,000 people, mostly former agricultural labourers, from the islands in the late 1960s and early 1970s **to build the Diego Garcia base**.

## Lake Manzala



- According to a recent study, dredging increased salinity and reduced nutrients in Manzala lake considerably in 2022 compared to 2015 (before dredging).
- Manzala is situated in the **northern part of Egypt**, with the **Mediterranean Sea to its north**.
- It sustains biodiversity in the Mediterranean region and acts as a natural buffer zone between the saline water of the Mediterranean Sea and the agricultural fields.
- In 2021, Manzala contributed to Egypt's 16% natural fish production and 3.6% total fish production.
- Lake Manzala, also **Manzaleh**, is a **brackish lake**, in northeastern Egypt on the **Nile Delta near Port Said**.

## Sagar Bhavan and Polar Bhavan

- The Government of India inaugurated "**Sagar Bhavan**" and "**Polar Bhavan**", two first-of-its-kind facilities at **Goa's "National Centre of Polar and Ocean Research" (NCPOR)**.
- **Polar Bhavan**: The largest building at the NCPOR campus, spans 11,378 square metres and was constructed at a cost of ₹55 crore.
  - ✍ It includes laboratories for **polar and ocean research**, and houses the "**Science On Sphere (SOS)**" initiative and will eventually serve as the home of **India's first Polar and Ocean Museum**.
- "**Science On Sphere (SOS)**" initiative is a 3D visualization platform for displaying earth systems and climate-related data.
- **Sagar Bhavan**: It includes two **-30°C ice core laboratories** and **+4°C storage units** for archiving sediment and biological samples.

## Iran's Nuclear Facilities

US strikes three nuclear facilities in Iran

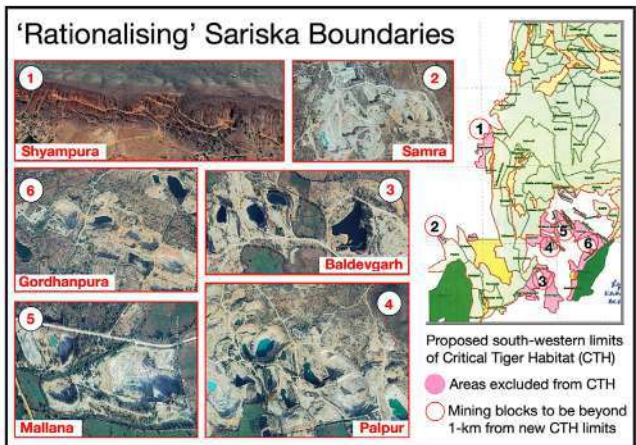


- The recent military actions by the **United States against Iran's nuclear installations** have escalated tensions in the Middle East.
- The operation - codenamed **Midnight Hammer** - involved 125 US military aircraft and targeted three nuclear facilities:
  - **Fordow**: located buried in a mountain near the **city of Qom**.
  - **Natanz**: Iran's primary **enrichment facility**.
  - **Isfahan**: multi-purpose research center suspected of being the center of a secret Iranian nuclear weapons program and operates three small Chinese-supplied research reactors.
- The US used **bunker buster bombs**, the sole weapons that could conceivably reach the concealed site.
- The UN's nuclear watchdog said there had been no increase in radiation levels after the attack, showing limited nuclear damage..

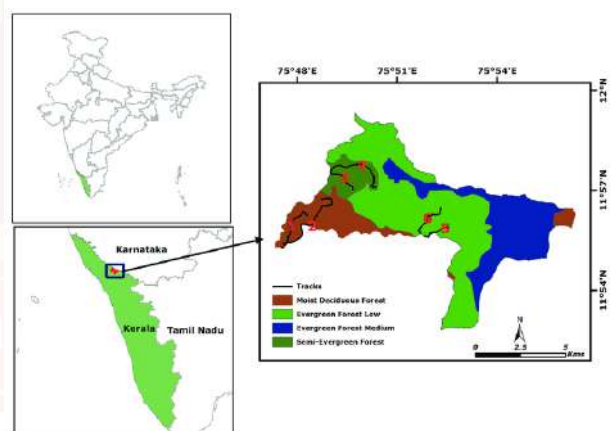
## The Sariska Tiger Reserve

- The Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan is undergoing changes in its **Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH)** as the government plans to redraw the boundaries for the reactivation of over 50 mining operations.

- Sariska was declared a sanctuary in 1955 and became a Tiger Reserve under Project Tiger in 1979.
- It stretches over an area of **881 km<sup>2</sup>** comprising **scrub-thorn arid forests, dry deciduous forests, grasslands, and rocky hills** in Alwar district, Rajasthan.
- This area was a **hunting preserve** of the Alwar state and was declared a wildlife sanctuary in **1958**.
- It is a tiger habitat spread over the **world's oldest mountain range**- the **Aravallis** and has the unique distinction of successfully **reintroducing the tiger** after its local extinction.
- The Sariska Tiger Reserve currently has a tiger population of 49, as of June 2025



## Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary



- The Aralam Butterfly Sanctuary**, located in **Kannur, Kerala**, has recently gained recognition as India's first protected area dedicated solely to butterflies.
- It is home to more than **260 species** of butterflies.

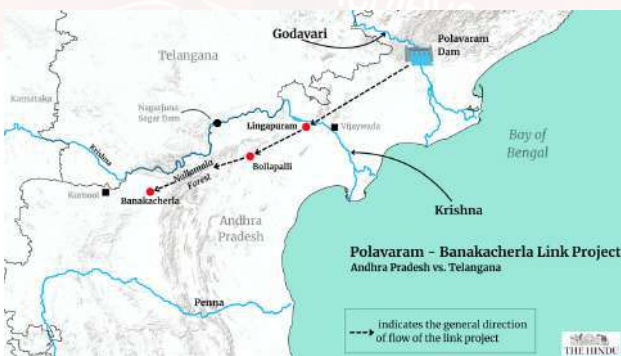
- It is unique because of the number of butterfly species that pass through the sanctuary as part of their **seasonal** or **annual migration** routes including the elegant **Common Albatross** and various **Danaine** species.
- It also houses herds of **elephants, sambar, Nilgiri Langur, Hanuman Langur and the Malabar Giant Squirrel.**
- The **Cheenkanni Puzha River** forms the main drainage system of Aralam

## Greater Flamingo Sanctuary



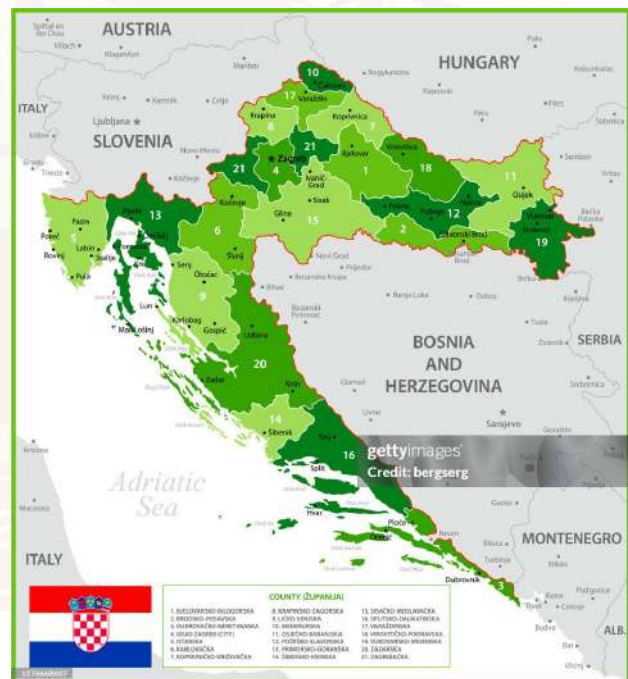
- **The Tamil Nadu** government has established a **Greater Flamingo Sanctuary** at **Dhanushkodi**, coinciding with World Environment Day (June 5).
- It is a critical stopover point along the **Central Asian Flyway** for thousands of migratory wetland birds.
- It is a part of the ecologically sensitive **Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve** and includes mangroves, sand dunes, mudflats, and marshes.
- Mangrove species such as **Avicennia** and **Rhizophora** dominate the Dhanushkodi lagoon, providing essential breeding grounds and natural defenses against coastal erosion.

## Banakacherla Reservoir



- The Banakacherla reservoir project has ignited **a fierce political debate between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh** recently.
- The ambitious project will link the **Godavari and Krishna River basins** via reservoirs, canals, and lift irrigation scheme.
- It was **first envisioned in 2014** after the bifurcation of Andhra and Telangana.
- The Banakacherla reservoir project is meant to transform **Andhra Pradesh's drought-prone Rayalaseema region into fertile land.**
- The project aimed to divert water from the **Polavaram multipurpose project on the Godavari to the Krishna basin** using the canal network of Nargarjunasagar and Srisailem reservoirs situated on the Krishna.
- **The Godavari River** is the second-longest river in India and the longest in peninsular India.
  - ➔ It originates from the **Brahmagiri Hills**, located in the Nashik district of Maharashtra.
- **Krishna River** rises at Mahabaleshwar near the Jor village in the extreme north of Satara district.

## Croatia



- The Prime Minister of India became the **first Indian Prime Minister to visit Croatia**, after attending the **G7 Summit in Canada.**

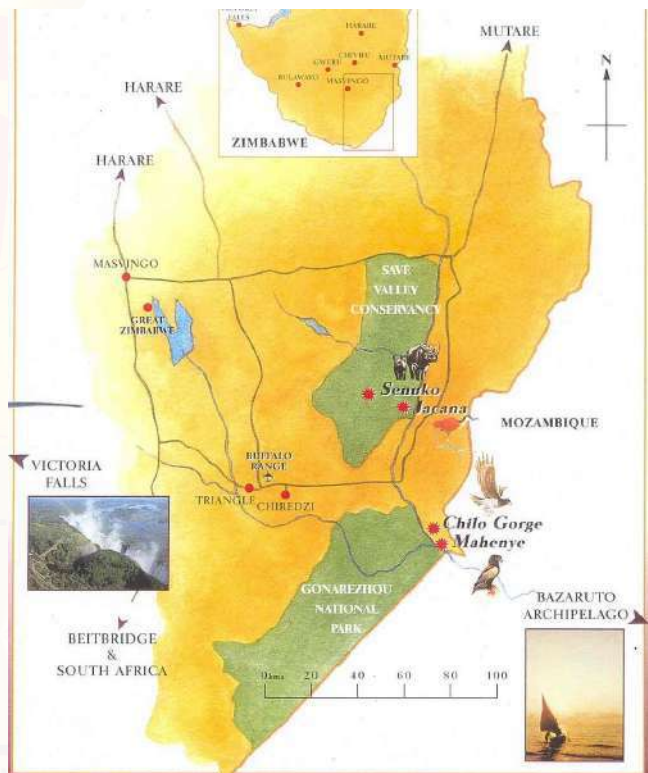
- Croatia is considered a potential partner in the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** due to its well-developed Adriatic ports and EU connectivity.
- The **University of Zagreb in Croatia** is a historic centre for Indology.
- The lands that today comprise Croatia were part of the **Austro-Hungarian Empire** until the end of World War I.
- It is bordered by 5 countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia.

- The Savé Valley Conservancy is **one of the largest private game reserves in Africa.**
- Located in the **South Eastern lowveld of Zimbabwe**, bordering on the **Save River** on its eastern side, the Conservancy comprises 750,000 acres of diverse wildlife habitat.
- It consists of Southern African game species, including the **Big Five (elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, and rhino).**
- It is also home to one of Africa's largest populations of critically endangered **black and near threatened white rhinos**, and to a healthy population of endangered **African Wild Dogs.**

### Yemen's Hodeidah Port



- **Israel conducted its first-ever naval strike on Yemen's Hodeidah Port**, targeting docks allegedly used by **Houthi rebels** to transfer weapons.
- **Hodeidah Port** is situated on the **coastal plain that borders the Red Sea** & is one of the **country's chief ports** and has modern facilities.
- The port is **vital for nearly two-thirds of Yemen's population**, who depend heavily on imported food, fuel, and medicine. Its importance grew after the 2015 conflict escalation and blockade, which severely disrupted essential supplies.



### Save Valley

- **Zimbabwe** has approved the culling of **50 elephants in Save Valley Conservancy** due to ecological overcapacity and human-wildlife conflict.
- The reserve currently holds around **2,550 elephants, far exceeding its ecological carrying capacity of 800** causing an unsustainable situation by putting immense strain on the habitat and increasing the risk of human-wildlife conflict.

### Great Rann of Kachchh



- Recent evidence from **Khadir island** in the Great Rann of Kachchh (Kutch) suggests human presence with links to Arabian Sea coastal communities long before the Indus Valley civilisation city of **Dholavira's settlement**.
- The **Rann of Kachchh** is a vast area of **saline mudflats** in west-central India and southern Pakistan, divided into the **Great and Little Rann**.
- Its name derives from **Hindi "Rann" (desert)** and Sanskrit "**Kachchh**" (**tortoise**).
- Once a shallow part of the Arabian Sea, a **geological shift** closed its connection.
- The Great Rann is a bowl-shaped depression merging with the **Luni River's drainage**, and was **historically described as a non-navigable gulf** in the ancient Greek Periplus Maris Erythraei.
- Kachchh is the **largest district in India**
- Uniquely, it can **remain stable even if one of its eight piers fails**.
- The **Anji Khad Bridge** is **India's first cable-stayed rail bridge** and the country's second-highest railway bridge.
- It is constructed over the **Anji River**, a tributary of the Chenab River
- The Chenab River, a major Indus tributary, is formed by the Chandra and Bhaga rivers in Himachal Pradesh

### Chenab Rail Bridge and Anji Khad Bridge

ENGINEERING MARVEL		Cost of the bridge	Total length	Span of main bridge
		₹14,860cr	725.5m	290m
		Total length	1,315m	
		Deck height above river bed	359m	
		Design life	120 years	
CHENAB BRIDGE: WORLD'S HIGHEST RAILWAY BRIDGE		Design wind speed	266 km/h	
		ANJI BRIDGE: FIRST CABLE-STAYED BRIDGE OF INDIAN RAILWAYS		

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the **Chenab Rail Bridge** and **Anji Khad Bridge** in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Both will be key components of the **Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)** project providing all-weather rail connectivity to Kashmir.
- The 1.3 km **Chenab Rail Bridge**, located in Reasi district, is the **world's highest railway arch bridge**, standing 359 meters tall (35m higher than the Eiffel Tower).
- Engineered by Konkan Railway Corporation with design input from IISc Bengaluru, and seismic analysis by IIT Delhi and Roorkee, it's designed to withstand magnitude 8 earthquakes, 40-tonne TNT blasts, and extreme temperatures/winds.



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## Chola Gangam Lake



- Recently the Tamil Nadu government has launched a ₹19.25 crore project to restore and develop the historic Chola Gangam lake, also known as **Ponneri**.
- It was dug by **King Rajendra Chola I** of Chola Dynasty to commemorate his northern military campaign.
- The lake operated as the major source of water to **Gangaikondacholapuram**, the capital city of Chola dynasty.
- Currently the lake is largely dry and shrunk in size due to neglected canals and abandoned water channels and the tank's water supply now solely depends only on seasonal rains.

## Kamchatka Peninsula



- Recently the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia experienced a series of powerful earthquakes, which triggered **Tsunami warnings** across the Pacific Ocean.
- It is a peninsula in **far eastern Russia**, lying between the Sea of Okhotsk on the west and the Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea on the east.
- It sits in the junction of the **Pacific and North American tectonic plates** which makes it a hotspot for earthquakes and volcanic activity.

- It is also a center for **geothermal activity**, with numerous hot springs and geysers, adding to its unique geological characteristics.

## Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary



- The National Board for Wildlife's Standing Committee has granted in-principle approval for diverting 142 hectares of forest land in Karnataka's Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It is located in the **Sharavathi River Valley** in Shivamogga District of Karnataka, spans **431.23 sq. km** in the Western Ghats.
- The sanctuary is mainly covered with evergreen and semi-evergreen forests in the valleys and grassy patches on hill tops.
- It is also part of **Western Ghats**, a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- Also the Sanctuary is immensely rich in species like Dhoopa, Gulmavu, Surahonne, Mavu, Nandi, etc and also harbors wildlife like Bison, Spotted deer, Tiger, Panther, etc

## Meghalaya's Sohra

- Meghalaya's Sohra also called **Cherrapunji**, known as the wettest place on Earth, has experienced a drastic drop in rainfall in 2025.
- It is a subdivisional town in **Meghalaya** which sits on a plateau in the southern part of the Khasi Hills.
- It is also the traditional capital of **ka hima Sohra** (Khasi tribal kingdom).

- It has often been credited as being the wettest place on Earth, but for now nearby **Mawsynram** currently holds that distinction.
- It still holds the all-time record for the most rainfall in a calendar month and in a year, despite Sohra facing an acute water shortage due to climate change.



## Thailand-Cambodia Border Conflict

THAILAND-CAMBODIA

### Deadly border clashes

Several people, including civilians, have been reported killed in fighting between Thai and Cambodian troops in a disputed area of their countries' shared border.



© Mapbox, © OpenStreetMap  
Source: Al Jazeera, Google Earth | July 26, 2025

@AJLabs ALJAZEERA

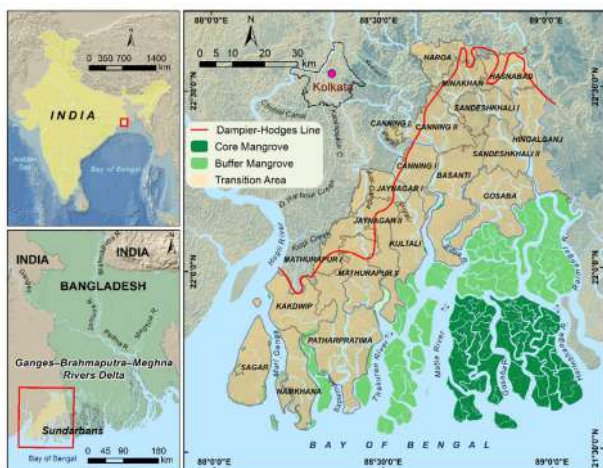
## Seine River



- **The River Seine in Paris**, once infamous for pollution, has recently been declared safe for public swimming.
- It is France's **second-longest river** after the Loire, covering a distance of 775 kilometers.
- This river has a drainage basin, known as the **Paris Basin**, of approximately 79,000 sq.km. and drains mainly northern France.
- It finally empties into the **English Channel**, an arm of the Atlantic Ocean separating northern France and southern England.

- Thailand's army launched strikes on Cambodian military sites along their disputed border recently.
- The two nations share over **800 kilometres of border**, and have longstanding border disputes based on a **1907 map drawn during French colonial rule in Cambodia**.
- One other dispute centres around the mountainous area surrounding the **11th-century Hindu temple of Preah Vihear**, located between Cambodia's **Preah Vihear** province and Thailand's **Sisaket** province.
- Both countries have **claimed the temple dedicated to Lord Shiva as their own**.
- Legal arbitration to resolve this territory claim resulted in an **International Court of Justice ruling awarding sovereignty of the region to Cambodia** in 1962, spurring further diplomatic tensions.
- It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 2008 of Cambodia, much to Thailand's consternation

## The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR)



- The Sundarbans Tiger Reserve (STR) in **West Bengal** has become **India's second-largest tiger reserve** after the National Board for Wildlife approved an expansion of 1,044.68 sq km.
- This moves STR from seventh to second among India's 58 tiger reserves, just behind **Andhra Pradesh's Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve**.
- "Sundarban" means "beautiful forest", named after the mangrove tree Sundari (*Heritiera fomes*).
- It is the world's **only mangrove tiger habitat**, home to endangered species like tigers, fishing cats, estuarine crocodiles, Gangetic and Irrawaddy dolphins, king cobras, and water monitor lizards.
- Located in the **southernmost Ganges-Brahmaputra delta** bordering the Bay of Bengal, it lies between 21°51'–22°31'N and 88°10'–89°51'E, separated from West Bengal by the Dampier-Hodges line and from Bangladesh by the Kalindi, Raimangal, and Harinbanga rivers

## Mithi River

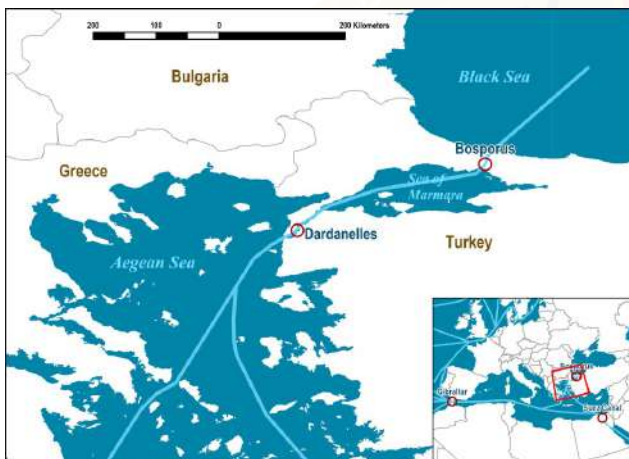


- Mumbai recently witnessed 300 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, causing severe waterlogging in the Mithi River.
- It is formed by the overflow of **Vihar Lake** and **Powai Lake**, and flows for approximately 17.84 kilometers before meeting the Arabian Sea at **Mahim Creek** creating a critical **mangrove ecosystem**
- It flows through some of Mumbai's most densely populated areas, including Kurla, Dharavi, and Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC).
- The river is **heavily polluted** due to the discharge of untreated domestic and industrial waste, making it an open sewer. This has led to the loss of its original biodiversity.

## Dardanelles Strait

- **Turkey** recently **suspended all shipping traffic through the Dardanelles Strait** due to extensive forest fires.

- Dardanelles is a **narrow strait in northwestern Turkey**, 61 km long and 1.2 to 6.5 km wide, **linking the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara**.
- The surface current is **freshwater** and flows from the Sea of Marmara toward the Aegean Sea.
- **The underwater current is salt water** and flows in the opposite direction.
- Together with the Bosphorus Strait, it serves as a vital route for commercial shipping between Europe and Asia.
- Historically known as **Hellespont**, it has also been connected to significant ancient events, such as the **Trojan War**, and has witnessed the crossings of notable figures like Xerxes I and Alexander the Great



- It uses **run-of-the-river technology**, which minimizes environmental impact by avoiding the creation of large reservoirs.

## Lipulekh Pass & Shipki La



- India recently rejected **Nepal's objection to resumption of India-China border trade** through the Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand.

➔ China has agreed in principle to the proposal of **resuming trade through Shipki-La in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh**.

- It is located near the **India-China (Tibet)-Nepal tri-junction** in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district, and is a crucial pass in the **Kumaon region's Kali Valley**.
- It offers a shorter travel route for the **Kailash Mansarovar Pilgrimage**, saving considerable travel time.
- **Shipki La** is situated at an elevation of 3,930 metres above sea level, and the pass has been part of **documented trade since the 15th century**, although oral histories suggest its legacy extends even further back.

## Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project



- The **Arunachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board** recently conducted a public hearing for environmental clearance for the proposed **1200 MW Kalai-II hydroelectric project**.
- Located on the **Lohit River, a major tributary of the Brahmaputra**, the project is situated in the Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh.

- Through this pass the **Sutlej River (known as Langqen Zangbo in Tibet)** enters India.
- The old name of **Shipki La** was **Pema La, or Shared Gate**, also known as Shared Pass.
- It was declared the **Line of Actual Control post-1962**, and later, the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police** named it **Shipki La**.

## Krasheninnikov Volcano

# RUSSIA VOLCANO

Volcano erupts for the first time in 600 years



- The **Krasheninnikov Volcano** in far eastern **Russia** has recently erupted for the first time in more than 600 years.
- **Krasheninnikov** is a special type of volcano on the **Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia**.
- **It's not just one volcano, but two volcano cones that grew inside a giant crater** left by an even older, massive volcano.
  - It is located in the **Kronotsky Nature Reserve**, a protected area known for its beautiful landscapes.
- The **Kamchatka Peninsula is remote but lies in the "Pacific Ring of Fire"** - so called because of the high number of earthquakes and volcanoes that occur here.

## Anchorage, Alaska

- The 2025 Russia - United States Summit was held at **Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska**.
- Anchorage is **Alaska's largest city** and geographically, it lies at the base of the **Chugach Mountains** and serves as a port at the head of **Cook Inlet**, connecting to the Pacific Ocean.

- Historically, Alaska was part of **Tsarist Russia** (Russian Empire) till the United States bought Alaska for \$7.2 million in a deal known as the **Alaska Purchase in 1867**.
- Many Americans criticized the purchase as a waste of money due to the remote, icy landscape, mocking the deal as "**Seward's Folly**" after then-Secretary of State William H. Seward.
- Decades later, **Alaska would officially become the 49th state** on January 3, 1959, with Hawaii following as the 50th state on August 21, 1959

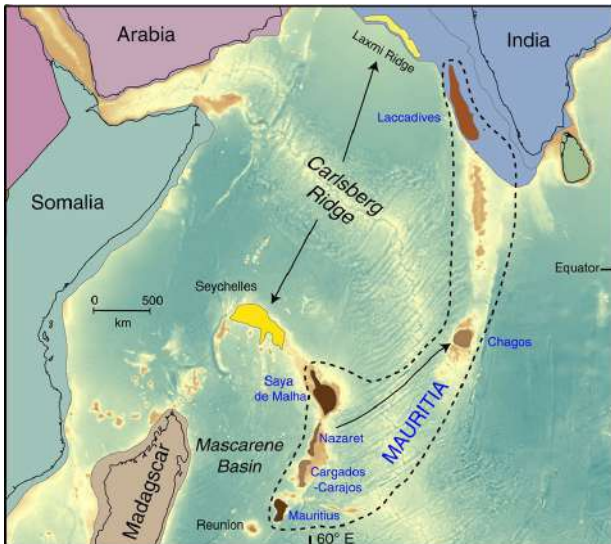


## Bering Strait



- A study found that vessel movements in the Bering Strait are **generally following the designated routes and safety rules set up in 2018** by the U.S. and Russia through the International Maritime Organization (IMO)..
- The Bering Strait is a narrow (85 km), shallow (50 m) strait (narrow waterway that connects two larger bodies of water) between **Russia's Cape Dezhnev and Alaska's Cape Prince of Wales** that links the Bering Sea to the Chukchi Sea in the Arctic Ocean.
- It includes key islands like the **Diomede Islands**—Big Diomede (Russia) and Little Diomede (USA)—divided by the International Date Line, and the St. Lawrence Islands.

## Carlsberg Ridge



- The government signed a contract with the **International Seabed Authority (ISA)** to explore polymetallic sulphide nodules (**PMS**) in the Carlsberg Ridge, a 3,00,000-sq km mid-ocean ridge in the northwest Indian Ocean.
- Formed by **seafloor spreading** between the Indian and Somali Plates, it hosts hydrothermal vents and potential PMS deposits.
- Its proximity to India (~2°N) makes it strategically important compared to the Central and Southwest Indian Ridges (~26°S).
- India **applied to ISA in 2024** for exploration rights in two areas: **Carlsberg Ridge** (approved) and **Afanasy-Nikitin Sea mount** (pending).

## Nauru



- Australia has signed a **\$267 million deportation deal** with **Nauru** to relocate non-visa holders, drawing criticism from refugees.
- Nauru, a tiny island nation in the **central Pacific**, is the **world's smallest republic** with around **10,000 people**.
- Located **3,000 km northeast of Australia**, it is surrounded by a coral reef and rich in **phosphate deposits**, its main economic resource since 1900.
- The island's people belong to **12 tribes** (represented by the 12-pointed star on its flag) and are of **Micronesian, Polynesian, and Melanesian** descent, speaking the **Nauruan** language.

## Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary



- Odisha's **Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary** has received **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in-principle approval** to become India's newest **tiger reserve**.
- Located near **Sambalpur**, between the **Hirakud Dam and Reservoir (Ramsar sites)**, it hosts rich wildlife including **gaur, sambar, leopards**, and over **300 bird species**.
- The area lies at the **junction of central and eastern Indian forests**, linking with **Achanakmar, Udanti, and Kanha** reserves.
- Once a base for **freedom fighter Veer Surendra Sai**, Debrigarh saw the **voluntary relocation of 400 families**, ensuring conservation and local welfare.
- It is also emerging as **India's first dark-sky destination**, spanning **1,000 sq km free of human habitation**.
- India currently has **58 officially approved tiger reserves** across 18 states with the **latest addition** is the **Madhav Tiger Reserve** in Madhya Pradesh.

## Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)



- Ethiopia inaugurated the **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)**, Africa's largest hydroelectric project, even as Egypt lodged a protest at the UN, calling it an existential threat to its water security.
- GERD is a 6,450 MW hydropower project nearing completion on the **Blue Nile in Ethiopia**.
- The reservoir can hold about 1.6 years' worth of average flow of the Blue Nile - 48.5 km<sup>3</sup>/yr, at the El Diem gage station, just below the border in Sudan.
- The basin of the upper Blue Nile tributary to the dam drains the Ethiopian highlands.
- Nearly **half of Ethiopians currently lack access to electricity and GERD aims to alleviate the power crisis.**

## Power of Siberia 2 Pipeline

New Gas Pipeline Strengthens Ties Between Russia and China



Source: Global Energy Monitor  
Note: Data as of December 2024. Power of Siberia 2 route is based on estimates

Bloomberg

- Russian energy giant **Gazprom** has signed a deal with **China's CNPC** to build the **Power of Siberia 2**, set to be the **world's largest and most expensive gas pipeline.**
- **Siberia**, spanning northern Asia from the **Urals to the Pacific**, is known for its **harsh, frigid climate** (as low as **-68°C**) and diverse **tundra to forest-steppe vegetation.**
- Rich in **coal, petroleum, natural gas, diamonds, iron ore, and gold**, it is a key resource hub for Russia.

## Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal)

### Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea

Scarborough Shoal has long been a flashpoint in the dispute between Beijing and Manila over sovereignty and fishing access. China claims almost the entire South China Sea via a "nine-dash line" on its maps, which cuts into parts of the Exclusive Economic Zones of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.







Sources: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, Center for Strategic and International Studies; marinerregions.org | Vijdan Mohammad Kawotia and Arathy J Aluckal

- China announced the **creation of a national nature reserve on Huangyan Island (Scarborough Shoal)** in the South China Sea **to preserve a 3,524-hectare (8,708-acre) coral reef ecosystem.**
- Located **200 km off the Philippines and inside its exclusive economic zone**, the shoal is coveted for its bountiful fish stocks and safe haven for vessels during storms.
- It is named **Huangyan Island by Beijing, while Manila calls it the Panatag Shoal, or Bajo de Masinloc.**
- Its position is strategic for Beijing, sitting in the middle of the South China Sea and near shipping lanes carrying more than \$3 trillion of annual commerce.
- **China seized the shoal in 2012** after a standoff with the Philippines and has since maintained a deployment there of coast guard and fishing trawlers.

## Ramsar Sites/Wetland City Accreditation

Site	Location	Description
Udaipur	Rajasthan	Udaipur was conferred the prestigious <b>Wetland City Accreditation</b> by the Ramsar Convention. known as the ' <b>City of Lakes</b> ', it qualified for the recognition due to its long-standing conservation measures and integration of wetland management into urban planning.
Gokul Jalashay	Buxar, Bihar	It was included in the global list of Ramsar Convention sites as the wetlands of international importance.
Udaipur Jheel	West Champaran, Bihar	It was included in the global list of <b>Ramsar Convention</b> sites. It brings the total number of such sites in India to 93, continuing the country's top position in Asia and third in terms of total number of Ramsar sites.

## Seven Natural Heritage Sites Added to UNESCO's Tentative List

Sites	Location	Description
<b>Deccan Traps</b> 	Panchgani and Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra	One of the best-preserved <b>lava flows in the world</b> . It forms part of the massive Deccan Traps and is located within the <b>Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary</b> , already a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
<b>Geological Heritage of St. Mary's Island Cluster</b> 	Karnataka	Known for its rare columnar basaltic rock formations, this island cluster dates back to the Late Cretaceous period.
<b>Meghalayan Age Caves</b> 	Meghalaya	The cave systems of Meghalaya, particularly the <b>Mawmluh Cave</b> , serve as the global reference point for the Meghalayan Age in the Holocene Epoch, reflecting significant climate and geological transitions.
<b>Naga Hill Ophiolite</b> 	Nagaland	A rare exposure of ophiolite rocks, these hills represent oceanic crust uplifted onto continental plates, offering deep insights into tectonic processes and mid-ocean ridge dynamics.

### Erra Matti Dibbalu (Red Sand Hills)



Andhra Pradesh

These red sand formations near **Visakhapatnam** showcase unique **paleo-climatic and coastal geomorphological features** that reveal Earth's climatic history and dynamic evolution.

### Natural Heritage of Tirumala Hills



Andhra Pradesh

The site features **Eparchean Unconformity and the iconic Silathoranam (Natural Arch)** and holds immense geological significance, representing over 1.5 billion years of Earth's history.

### Varkala Cliffs

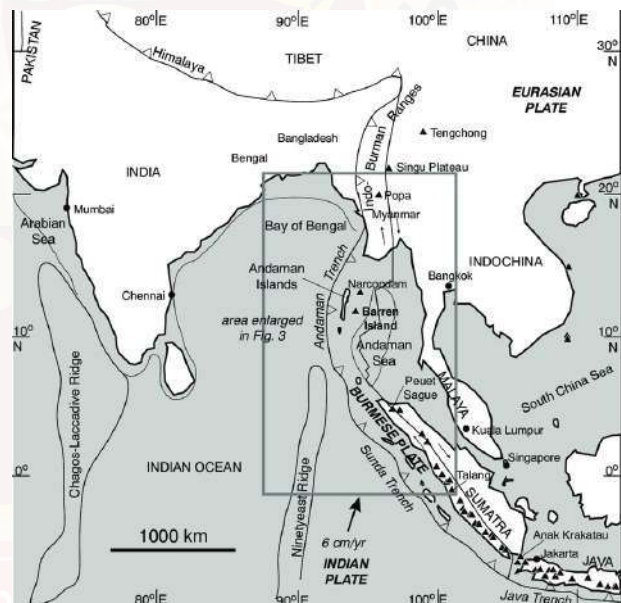


Kerala

This coastline exposes the **Warkalli Formation of the Mio-Pliocene age**, along with natural springs and striking erosional landforms.

## Barren Island Volcano

- Minor volcanic eruptions were noticed **twice in a span of eight days at Barren Island** in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It holds the distinction of **being India's only active volcano**.
- Uninhabited and **located nearly 140 km away from Port Blair**, it lies at the junction of the Indian and Burmese tectonic plates.
- The total area of the island is 8.34 sq km, and the nearest habitation is **Swaraj Dweep (Havelock Island) and Narcondam Island**.
- According to data available with the Andaman and Nicobar administration, the first eruption took place in 1787, followed by mild eruptions in 1991, 2005, 2017 and 2022.



- Its capital, **Antananarivo**, lies centrally, with hills and mountains dominating the interior; **Mount Maromokotro** is the highest at 9,435 ft. Over 60% of Madagascar's population is under 25.

## Sir Creek



- India has warned Pakistan of a decisive response to **any misadventure in the Sir Creek sector**, citing Pakistan's growing military presence.
- Sir Creek is a **96 km tidal estuary** along the India-Pakistan border in Gujarat, flowing into the **Arabian Sea and separating Gujarat (India) from Sindh (Pakistan)**.
- The **dispute** is over the maritime boundary: India claims the boundary is at the midline of the creek, while Pakistan claims the eastern bank, giving them the entire creek.
- The area has **potential oil and gas reserves** and affects maritime boundaries, EEZs, and continental shelves.
- It also impacts local fishers, and India opposes **Pakistan's WHO funded Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) canal** discharges into the creek, citing violation of the Indus Waters Treaty.
- **Sir Creek** is named after a British official, **Sir Richard Temple**, who conducted surveys in the area during the 19th century when the **Indo-Pak boundary was part of the Bombay Presidency**.



## Thitu Island



- The Philippines and China blamed each other after Chinese maritime forces and a Filipino vessel rammed into each other near the **Philippine-occupied Thitu Island** recently.
- Thitu Island is a **rock located in the contested Spratly Islands in South China Sea**.
- The Philippines first took possession of the feature in 1974.
- The Philippines calls **Thitu Pag-asa**, while China calls it **Zhongye**.
- Less than a mile long, Thitu is one of the **largest** and the only civilian-inhabited island of the Spratlys, and it has approximately 250 full-time residents.

## Madagascar

- The military recently seized power in **Madagascar**, ousting President Andry Rajoelina, who had fled.
- Located about **250 miles east of Mozambique** in the **Indian Ocean**, Madagascar is bordered by the **Mozambique Channel** to the west and neighbored by the **Comoros, Réunion, and Mauritius**.

## New Green Hydrogen Hubs

- The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** has recognised three major ports as **Green Hydrogen Hubs** under the **National Green Hydrogen Mission: Deendayal Port (Gujarat), V.O. Chidambaranar Port (Tamil Nadu), and Paradip Port (Odisha)**.
  - Deendayal Port (Kandla):** Built in the 1950s, it is India's **largest port by cargo volume**, located on the **Gulf of Kutch**, serving western India.
  - V.O. Chidambaranar Port (Tuticorin):** An **artificial deep-sea harbour** on the Coromandel Coast, well-sheltered and close to the **East-West international sea route**.
  - Paradip Port:** Strategically located to serve **Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, MP, UP, Bihar, and West Bengal**, with soft soil allowing deepening and mid-point between **Kolkata and Visakhapatnam**



## Ayni Air Base



- India has officially **closed its Ayni airbase in Tajikistan**, ending a **two-decade military presence** in Central Asia.
- The base, **near Dushanbe** and just 20 km from Afghanistan's **Wakhan Corridor**, was operational from **2002** and provided strategic oversight near **Afghanistan and Pakistan**, pressuring Pakistan militarily and enhancing India's regional presence.
- Its importance declined after the **Taliban takeover in 2021**, and **Russia and China's influence** led Tajikistan not to renew the lease.
- Russian forces have now taken over, though India maintains a broader presence in Central Asia

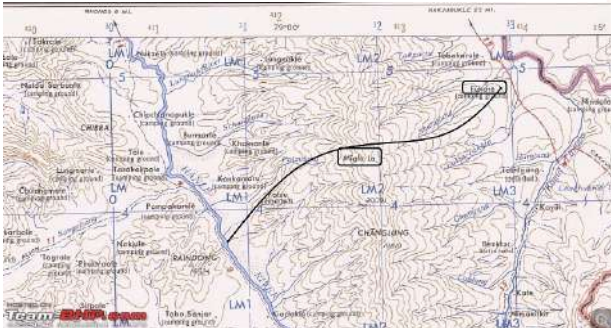
## Namchik Namphuk Coal Block



- Arunachal Pradesh launched its first commercial coal mine** at the Namchik-Namphuk coal block in Changlang district.
- The Namchik Namphuk Opencast Coal Mine, located in **Kharsang Circle** of Changlang District will be developed as an opencast mine.

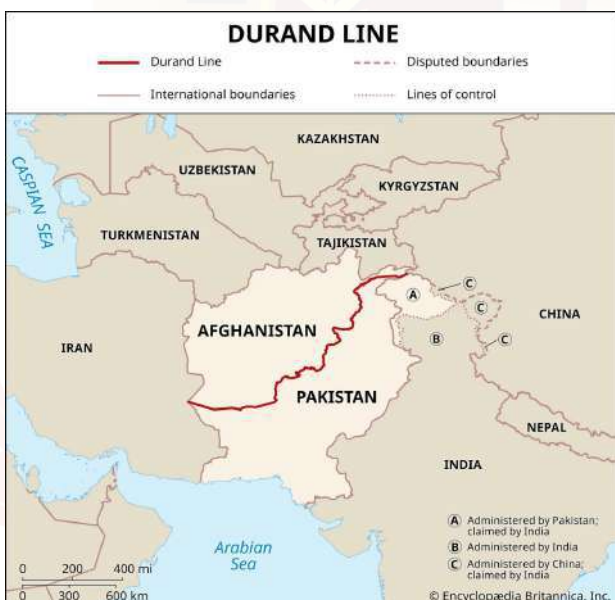
- Coal in the area had been **known since 1865 during British exploration**, but operations were halted after the 1996 closure of the North Eastern Coalfield units.

## Mig La Pass



- India has built the world's highest motorable road at **Mig La Pass (19,400 ft)** in eastern Ladakh under **Project Himank** by the BRO.
- It **surpasses Umling La (19,024 ft)** and Mount Everest base camps.
- The road, in extreme cold and low-oxygen conditions, connects **Likaru-Mig La-Fukche** and will improve accessibility for residents of **Hanle and Fukche** during harsh winters.

## Durand Line



- Recently, fierce cross-border clashes erupted along the Durand Line.
- Key border crossings—such as **Torkham and Chaman**—were closed.

- The Durand Line was **drawn in 1893 between British India and Afghanistan** via tribal lands of the **Hindu Kush**, signed by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand and Afghan Amir Abdur Rahman.

- Stretching some **2,670 km from the Chinese border to Iran**, it was part of the 19th-century “Great Game” and served as a buffer zone.

- Pakistan inherited the Durand Line in 1947**; however, successive Afghan governments, including the current Islamic Emirate of **Afghanistan (Taliban-led)**, **refuse to recognise it**, calling it an “imaginary” line **dividing Pashtun and Baloch communities**

- Mediation from Qatar and Turkey secured a **ceasefire** in late October 2025, but the issue of recognition of the line remains unresolved..

## Atacama Desert



- South America's Atacama Desert**, the **world's driest nonpolar desert** averaging only 2 mm of rain a year, has burst into rare colour after unusual winter rains in 2025.

- Seeds from over **200 native species**, long dormant in the soil, **germinated** when moisture levels crossed a 15 mm threshold, creating a vivid carpet of pink, purple, and yellow flowers known as **Desierto Florido**.

- The bloom prompted conservation moves, including the 2023 creation of **Desert Bloom National Park** to protect the fragile ecosystem.

- The Atacama Desert is primarily located in **Chile**, but also extends into parts of **Peru, Bolivia, and Argentina**.

## Hayli Gubbi Volcano



- Ethiopia's Hayli Gubbi volcano, which erupted after nearly 10,000 years, has sent a massive ash cloud drifting toward India, raising air quality and aviation concerns.
- Located 800 km northeast of Addis Ababa, it is the southernmost volcano of the Erta Ale Range in the Afar region—a tectonic triple junction between the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and East African Rift.
- Hayli Gubbi, a 500-meter-high shield volcano, sits in a geologically active zone.
- After Erta Ale's July 2025 eruption, magma was tracked moving south beneath Hayli Gubbi.

## Ningaloo Reef



- Nearly 70% of corals in Australia's Ningaloo Reef—the world's largest fringing reef and a UNESCO World Heritage site—have died due to the country's most intense marine heatwave.
- A fringing reef is a type of coral reef that grows directly along the coastline, often separated from the shore by a narrow, shallow lagoon or no lagoon at all.
- Stretching along Western Australia's coast in the East Indian Ocean, the Ningaloo reef hosts whale sharks, manta rays, turtles, and humpback whales.
- The Ningaloo Coast also features an extensive karst system of caves and watercourses.

## Gogabeel Lake



- Gogabeel Lake in Katihar, Bihar, has been designated India's 94th Ramsar Site and Bihar's sixth, becoming the state's first community reserve.
- A natural oxbow lake between the Ganga and Mahananda rivers, it functions as a floodplain wetland, linking with rivers during monsoons.
- An oxbow lake is a crescent-shaped lake formed when a river meander is cut off from the main channel, common in lowland rivers with wide floodplains.
- A community reserve is a protected area on community-owned land in India, declared under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, where local communities help conserve flora, fauna, and their habitat.
- Ramsar Convention (1971) is an international treaty promoting wetland conservation and sustainable use through local, national, and global cooperation.
- Currently India has 94 Ramsar sites ranking third globally after the United Kingdom (176) and Mexico (144) and first in Asia.

## Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary NWS



- Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary (NWS) in Madhya Pradesh, spread over 1,197 sq km, will become the state's third cheetah habitat after Kuno and Gandhi Sagar.
- Located between the Yamuna and Narmada basins, it serves as a crucial wildlife corridor linking Panna, Satpura, and indirectly Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserves.
- Dominated by Vindhyan sandstone, Lameta, and Deccan Trap formations, the sanctuary features Tropical Dry Deciduous forests and varied grasslands.
- It hosts tigers, leopards, Indian wolves (keystone species), wild dogs, sloth bears, nilgai, chinkara, sambar, and blackbuck.

## Lake Turkana



- A Nature Scientific Reports study found that declining water levels in Lake Turkana over the past 6,000 years increased earthquake activity.
- Africa's largest desert lake and the most saline in East Africa, it is known for its jade-green waters and active tectonics.
- Located mainly in northern Kenya with a tip in southern Ethiopia, it lies in the East African Rift.

- Fed by the Omo, Kerio, and Turkwel rivers (Omo contributes ~90%), it was formed by rift tectonics and features volcanic outcrops and three volcanic islands, and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

## Kunar River



- India has backed Afghanistan's plan to build a dam on the Kunar River, a major transboundary river that originates in Pakistan's Chitral district, flows into Afghanistan, and then re-enters Pakistan as the Kabul River before joining the Indus at Attock.
- The Kabul-Kunar system is vital for irrigation, drinking water, and hydropower in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region.
- If Afghanistan builds dams upstream, it could sharply reduce Pakistan's already strained water supply, worsening shortages for farms and communities.

## Mount Semeru



- Mount Semeru, Indonesia's tallest and most active volcano on Java, erupted violently, sending ash 13 km high and causing dangerous pyroclastic flows.
- Standing 3,676 m tall, Semeru (also called Mahameru) is one of Indonesia's ~130 active volcanoes along the Pacific Ring of Fire.

- It frequently emits ash, has periodic major eruptions, and—despite its risks—remains a popular trekking destination

## Siliguri Corridor



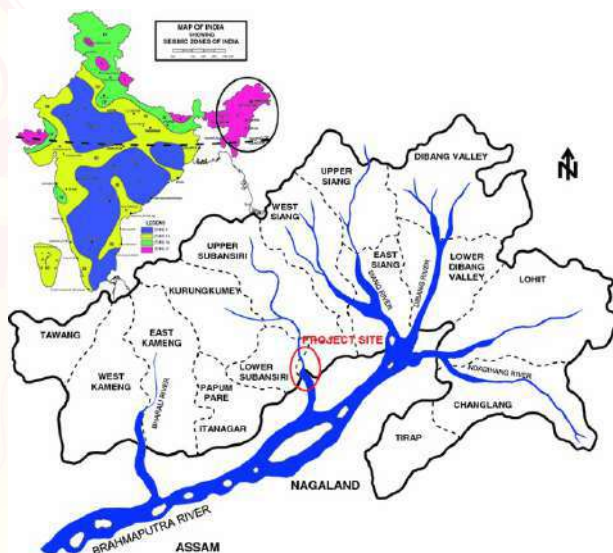
- India has set up three new Army garrisons at Dhubri, Kishanganj and Chopra to boost surveillance and readiness around the sensitive Siliguri Corridor.
- This narrow 60 km × 22 km “Chicken’s Neck” is the only land link between mainland India and the northeast, bordered by Bangladesh and China, and also connects to Nepal and Bhutan.
- Because of its geography, even a 130-km Chinese advance could potentially cut off the northeast, making the corridor extremely strategic.

## Lake Urmia (Iran)



- Iran has attempted cloud-seeding over the Lake Urmia basin to induce rainfall amid the country’s worst drought in decades.
- Lake Urmia is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and once the second-largest hypersaline lake in the world after the Caspian Sea.
- It has shrunk drastically now due to climate change as well as thousands of dams and irrigation projects on the rivers (especially Zarrineh and Simineh) which reduced the inflow that once kept the lake full..

## Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project

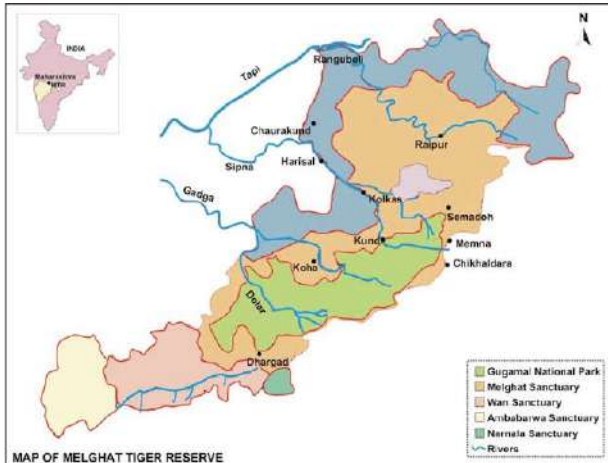


- India launched Unit-2 (250 MW) of the Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (SLHEP), a 2,000 MW **run-of-the-river project** on the Subansiri River at the **Assam–Arunachal Pradesh** border, implemented by NHPC Limited.
- Once fully commissioned, it **will be India’s largest hydropower project**, supplying power to 16 states, providing free power to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, and allocating 1,000 MW to the North-East.
- The project features a **116-metre concrete gravity dam (largest in NE India)**, flood management via reservoir storage of 1,365 million cubic metres, India’s **heaviest hydro generator rotors**, largest stators, inlet valves, and the first use of the Rotec Tower Belt system.
- While the project was **officially launched in 2003**, delays occurred due to engineering issues, landslides and protests.

## Melghat Tiger Reserve

- The **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** and **Maharashtra Forest Department** recently tagged **15 long-billed vultures** at **Melghat Tiger Reserve** in Amaravati, Maharashtra.
- Established as a **wildlife sanctuary in 1967** and the **first tiger reserve in Maharashtra (1974)**, Melghat lies in the **Gavilgarh Hills** of the Satpura range.

- It is a catchment for **five Tapti tributaries** and home to tribal communities like the **Korkus and Gonds**.
- The reserve features **dry deciduous forests** with teak, bamboo, and mahua, and supports fauna including **tigers, leopards, gaur, sloth bears, sambar, deer, wild boar**, and diverse birds and reptiles.



- Majuli is also the hub of Assamese **neo-Vaishnavite** culture, initiated in the 16th century by **Srimanta Sankardeva** and **Madhavdeva**, with **Satras** (monastic institutions) preserving Sattriya dance, literature, bhaona (theatre), mask-making, and boat-making.

## Tigris River



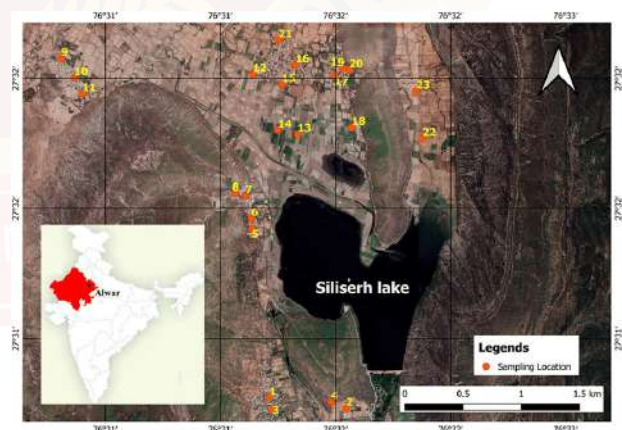
## Majuli Island



- The **Tigris River**, a **1,900 km-long river** in southwest Asia, is facing a severe crisis due to **shrinking flows, heavy pollution, and upstream water controls**, raising fears that parts of it may dry up.
- Originating in **eastern Turkey**, it flows through **Syria and Iraq**, joins the **Euphrates** in southeastern Iraq to form the **Shatt al-Arab**, and finally empties into the **Persian Gulf**.

## India Ramsar List update

- In an effort to revive the **nearly defunct Royal Bird Sanctuary** at Majuli island, the **Charaichung Festival** has been organised in the island district for the second time.
- Majuli, the **world's largest river island in Assam** (421 sq km), lies between the Brahmaputra and Subansiri rivers and is home to the Mishing, Deori, and Sonowal Kachari tribes.
- Primarily dependent on **rice cultivation**, it grows unique **varieties** like Komal Saul and Bao Dhan.



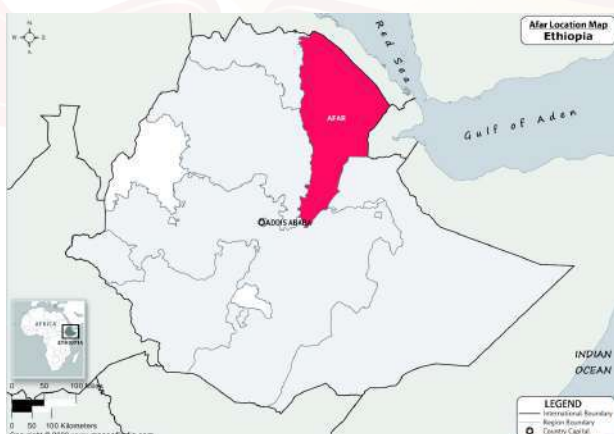
- **Siliserh Lake**, a **man-made wetland** in **Alwar district**, lies in the **buffer zone of Sariska Tiger Reserve** and was built in **1845 by Maharaja Vinay Singh** by damming a Ruparel River tributary to supply **drinking water to Alwar**.
- It supports **water supply, tourism, and recreation**, but faces pressures from **agriculture and urban expansion**, with restoration efforts underway.
- **Kopra Jalashay, Chhattisgarh** is a reservoir-type wetland in the **upper Mahanadi** catchment near **Bilaspur**, built mainly for irrigation.
- It supports over 60 **migratory bird species** but faces threats from siltation, invasive species, and intensive agriculture.

## Guinea-Bissau



- **Guinea-Bissau**, a small West African country with capital **Bissau**, recently came under **military rule**.
- It borders **Senegal** and **Guinea**, has an **Atlantic coastline**, a **tropical climate**, major rivers like **Geba, Corubal, and Cacheu**, and includes the **Bijagós archipelago**.

## Afar Region



- Scientists predict that Africa's Afar region could become Earth's next ocean basin.
- It is the **northeastern part of Ethiopia, where the Red Sea meets the Gulf of Aden**.
- It is **also known as the Danakil depression**, forms the northern part of the region and is largely desert scrubland with shallow salty lakes and long chains of volcanoes and the **Awash River valley forms the southern part of the area**.
- It is **situated at a unique triple junction where the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and East African Rift converge** and the region's landscape is marked by deep rift valleys, volcanic plateaus, and extensive fissures, reflecting the dynamic forces reshaping the Earth's crust.
- It offers scientists a **rare opportunity to observe the processes of continental break-up and ocean genesis in action**.

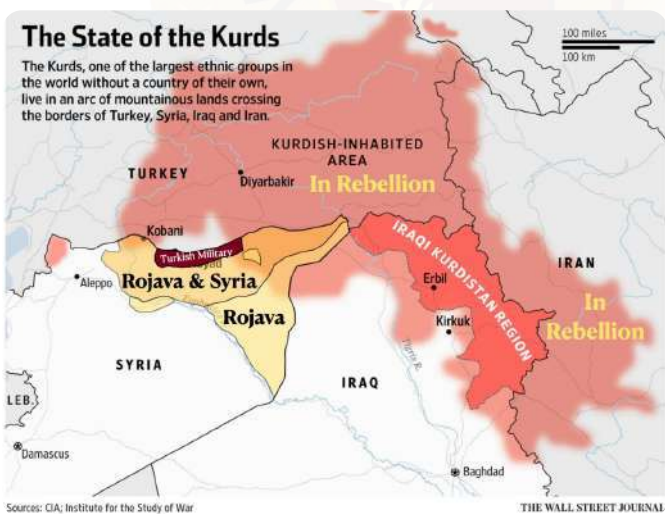
- Established in **2012** after Syrian government forces withdrew, Rojava—meaning “**west**” in Kurdish—is home to **Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Armenians, Yazidis, Turkmen, and Chechens**, with Kurds as the largest ethnic group.

## Shiveluch volcano



- The **Shiveluch volcano** in **Kamchatka, Russia**, erupted recently, sending an **ash plume up to 11.5 km** above sea level.
- Rising to **3,283 meters**, it is the **northernmost active volcano in Kamchatka**, part of the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, with at least **60 major eruptions in the last 10,000 years** and an estimated age of **60,000–70,000 years**.

## Rojava Region



- The **ceasefire between the Syrian government and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** marks the end of **Rojava**, the Kurdish-run autonomous region in **northeast Syria**.

## Shaksgam Valley



- The **Shaksgam Valley has returned to focus** after China reaffirmed its territorial claims and defended infrastructure construction in the region, following India’s strong diplomatic protest.
- Shaksgam Valley, or the Trans Karakoram Tract**, is part of the Hunza-Gilgit region occupied by Pakistan and lies to the north of the Siachen glacier.
- It **borders China’s Xinjiang province to the north, Pakistan-occupied Gilgit-Baltistan to the south and west**, and the Siachen area to the east.
- While it is **claimed by India, Pakistan used to control it until it ceded it to China in 1963** under China- Pakistan boundary Agreement.
- CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) launched in 2015** to connect the Gwadar port of Pakistan with the Chinese city of Kashgar in Xinjiang also passes through Shaksgam Valley.
- India has categorically rejected Pakistan’s territorial claims** and refused to recognize the 1963 agreement with China and maintains the valley as an integral territory of India.

## Chattergala pass

- Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** successfully carried out a high-altitude rescue and road restoration operation under **Project Sampark at Chattergala Pass**.

- It is situated at an altitude of 10,500 ft. in the Bharderwah–Chattergala axis in Jammu region of Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is tucked in the **Chamba-doda ranges of the greater Himalayas** and it is surrounded by alpine meadows, snow-covered peaks, and dense forest.
- A major 6.8 km **Chattergala tunnel is planned** beneath the pass to provide all-weather connectivity.



- It is also called **Larapinta in the Indigenous Arrente language**, and is located in central Australia and flows through the **Northern Territory and the state of South Australia**.
- It originates in **MacDonnell Ranges in Australia** and forms where two smaller creeks, Davenport and Ormiston, meet.
- It is the **oldest riverbed in the world and also one of the four crucial waterbodies of Lake Eyre Basin**.
- The river has a **cross-axial drainage system or antecedent system** and the river system that cuts across geological structures rather than following them.
- The river is intermittent in nature and flows mainly after heavy rainfall.

### Finke River



- **The Finke River, Australia** is believed to be the world's oldest river system and began flowing between 300 and 400 million years ago, long before dinosaurs walked the planet.

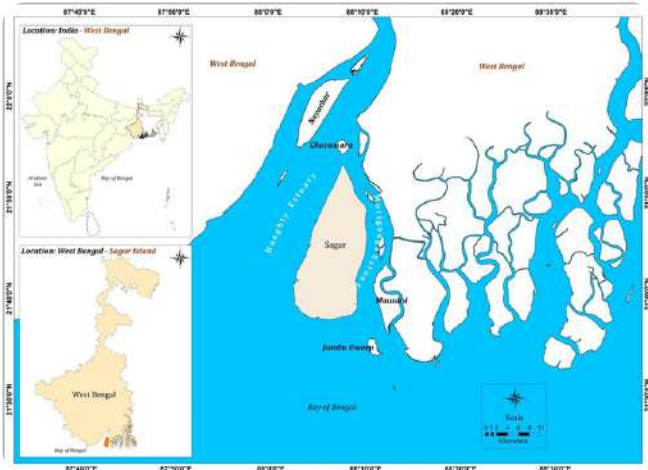
### Zaskar River



- The much-awaited **Chadar trek on the frozen Zaskar river in Ladakh** has been deferred due to inadequate ice formation, disappointing trekkers eager to participate in the adventure sport.
- It is a **major left-bank tributary of the Indus River**, flowing entirely within the union territory of Ladakh in northern India and it drains the remote Zaskar Valley in the northwestern Himalayas.
- It originates from the northeast **of the Great Himalayan range**.

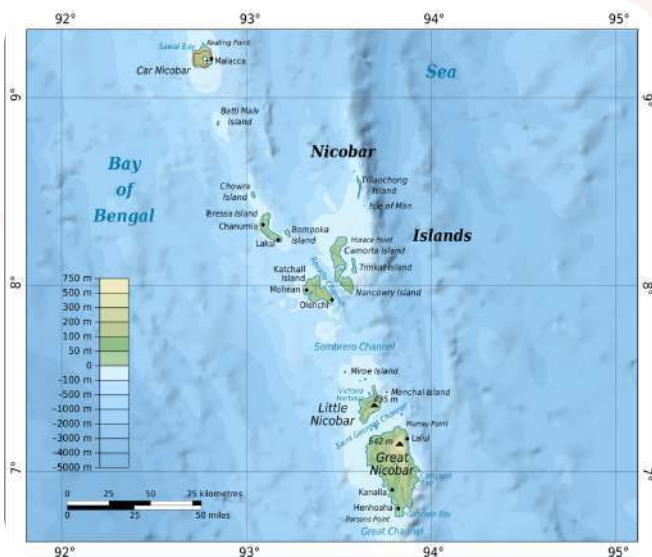
- **Doda and TsrapLingti Chu** (Lungnak River) are two significant tributaries that join together at padam village to form Zanskar river.
- It is famous for its incredible **Zanskar Gorge**, which is a super deep canyon it has carved over many years.

## Sagar Island



- **West Bengal** recently laid the foundation for a **5-km bridge** connecting **Sagar Island (Gangasagar/Sagardwip)** to the mainland.
- Located **100 km south of Kolkata** in **South 24 Parganas**, it lies at the **Ganges delta meeting the Bay of Bengal**, is cyclone-prone, lacks mangroves or tigers, and attracts **thousands of pilgrims annually** for **Makar Sankranti** at the **Kapil Muni temple**.

## Car Nicobar Island



- The **Chief of Defence Staff** recently inaugurated a runway upgrade at the **Indian Air Force's Car Nicobar base**.
- The northernmost island of the **Nicobar group** (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), it covers **under 127 sq km**, houses nearly **18,000 people** (mainly **Nicobarese tribals**), has a **tropical monsoon climate**, extensive **coconut plantations**.
- It is recognized as an **Important Bird Area** by BirdLife International.

## Socotra Island



- Hundreds of tourists are stranded on Socotra, a **250 km long Yemeni island** in the northwest Indian Ocean.
- It lies near the **Gulf of Aden** and forms part of the **Socotra Archipelago**, which includes four islands and two rocky islets.
- The island features the **Hajhir Mountains** in the interior, narrow coastal plains in the north, and a broader southern plain, with a total **population of around 70,000 who speak Socotri**.
- Often called the **"Galápagos of the Indian Ocean,"** it is rich in endemic flora and fauna—37% of plant species, 90% of reptiles, and 95% of land snails are found nowhere else—and was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008**.

## Druzhba Oil Pipeline

### Verified Ukrainian strikes on oil pumping stations, August 2025



- The **Druzhba oil pipeline**, meaning “friendship,” carries **Russian crude through Ukraine to Eastern Europe**, including Belarus, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine.
- A **recent halt** in flows due to drone attacks has triggered a geopolitical standoff, with Hungary and Slovakia **vetoing new EU sanctions** on Russia.
- Built during the Soviet era, Druzhba was once a major artery, pumping over **1 million barrels per day**—more than 1% of global oil supply.
- Currently, only Hungary and Slovakia still import Russian oil via Druzhba.

## Chagos Islands



- The UK is reconsidering its **Chagos Islands sovereignty deal** with Mauritius after opposition from former US President Donald Trump.
- The **Chagos Islands** (British Indian Ocean Territory) have been under UK control since the 19th century, with residents forcibly displaced to establish the UK-US military base on Diego Garcia.
- In 2019, **Mauritius won a legal battle** for sovereignty, and the ICJ urged the UK to hand over control.
- Under the 2025 deal, the UK would pay **£101 million annually for 99 years** to retain the Diego Garcia base.

## Congo Lakes (Mai Ndombe and Tumba)



- A study found that **Lakes Mai Ndombe and Tumba** in the Congo Basin are releasing ancient carbon stored in peatlands for over 3,000 years, contributing up to **40% of their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**.
- Mai Ndombe and Tumba, both in the **Democratic Republic of Congo**, are shallow lakes in low-lying areas of the basin.
- Although Congo Basin peatlands cover only **0.3% of the Earth's land**, they store **one-third of tropical peatland carbon**, making the region a crucial global carbon reservoir.

## Takeshima/Dokdo Islands



- South Korea lodged a firm diplomatic protest **against Japan's Takeshima Day**, an annual event to assert sovereignty over disputed islets.
- The **small islets** — known as **Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea** — have remained a source of tension **since Japan's colonial rule of the Korean peninsula** from 1910 to 1945.
- **Dokdo** is 215 kms from mainland Korea and 250 kms from Japan proper.
- Known also as the **Liancourt Rocks**, this group of islets is located in the **Sea of Japan (East Sea)**.
- Although **claimed by both Korea and Japan**, **Dokdo Island is currently administered by the Republic of Korea**.
- It lies in **fertile fishing grounds** and may sit above **substantial deposits of natural gas hydrate** that could be worth billions of dollars.

## Ravi River



- India plans to utilise surplus **Ravi River** waters via the **Shahpur Kandi Dam (Pathankot, Punjab)**, preventing unused flows into Pakistan.
- The **Ravi River** originates at an altitude of about 4,300 meters in the Himalayas, in Chamba district of Himachal Pradesh, India, flowing through a valley bounded by the **Pir Panjal** and **Dhauladhar** ranges.
- It travels a total length of **about 720 km**, with **nearly 320 km in India**, and forms part of the **India-Pakistan border** for over 80 km before entering Pakistan's Punjab and merging with the **Chenab River** near Ahmedpur Sial.
- Known historically as **Iravati** or **Parushni**, the Ravi is classified as an **eastern river** under the **Indus Waters Treaty**, with its entire annual flow allocated to India for unrestricted use.

## Mount Aconcagua

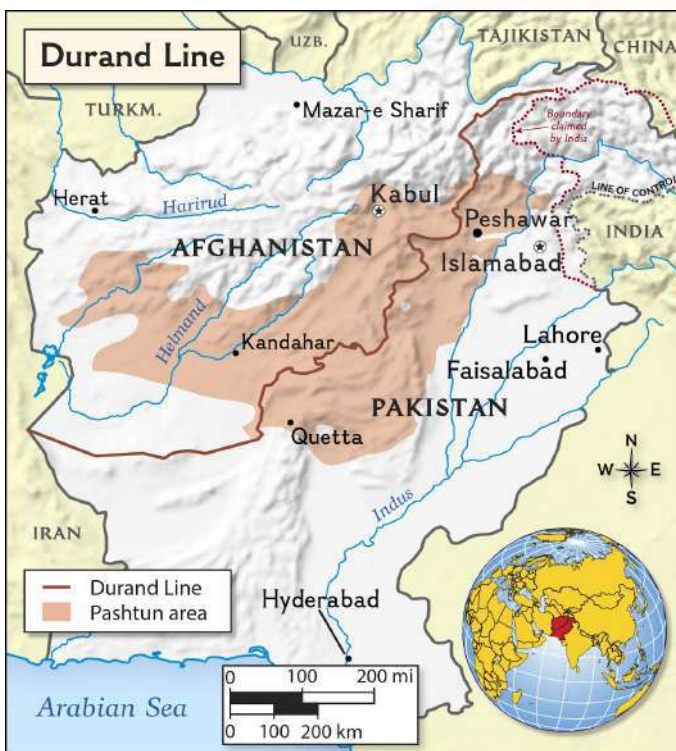


- Indian mountaineer **Kabak Yano** from Arunachal Pradesh successfully summited **Mount Aconcagua** in Argentina as part of her 7-Summit Expedition.
- Located in western Mendoza province near the Chilean border, Aconcagua is the **highest peak in the Western Hemisphere**, part of the **Southern Andes**, of **volcanic origin** but not an active volcano.
- Its name likely comes from Quechua: **Ackon Cahuak**, meaning "Sentinel of Stone."

## Durand Line

- **Pakistan and Afghanistan** have engaged in an intense military clash over the **Durand Line**.
- It is the **international land border** that stretches for about 1,600 miles (2,600 km) stretching **from the Karakoram Range near China in the northeast down to the Registan Desert near Iran in the southwest**, which passes through vital geographic and strategic features like **Khyber Pass** and the **Spin Ghar (White Mountains)**.

- It was **established in 1893** through an agreement **between Sir Mortimer Durand**, a British colonial administrator, and **Abdur Rahman Khan**, the then Emir of Afghanistan.
- It was **originally designed to demarcate the spheres of influence between British India and the Afghan Emirate**, serving as a buffer zone against the Russian Empire.
- After the partition of India in 1947, Pakistan inherited this border.
- However, **Afghanistan has historically refused to recognize it as an international boundary** as it considers the 1893 agreement a **colonial-era imposition** by the British that **divided Pashtun and Baloch tribal lands** without their consent.



## Malawi



- India has dispatched 1,000 metric tonnes of rice as humanitarian assistance to Malawi after a severe drought triggered by the El Niño caused a major food crisis.
- Malawi is a **south-east African country bordered by Zambia**, the United Republic of Tanzania and Mozambique.
- ★ The capital of **Malawi is Lilongwe**.
- It is narrow and **landlocked** but has a **750-kilometre-long border with Lake Malawi** (also called Lake Nyasa).
- Lake Malawi is the **third largest lake** in Africa after Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, spanning a length of 568 km and a width of between 16 and 80 km.
- The **East African Rift Valley** runs through the country from north to south.
- The main ethnic groups are the Chewa, Tumbuka, Yao and Ngoni.

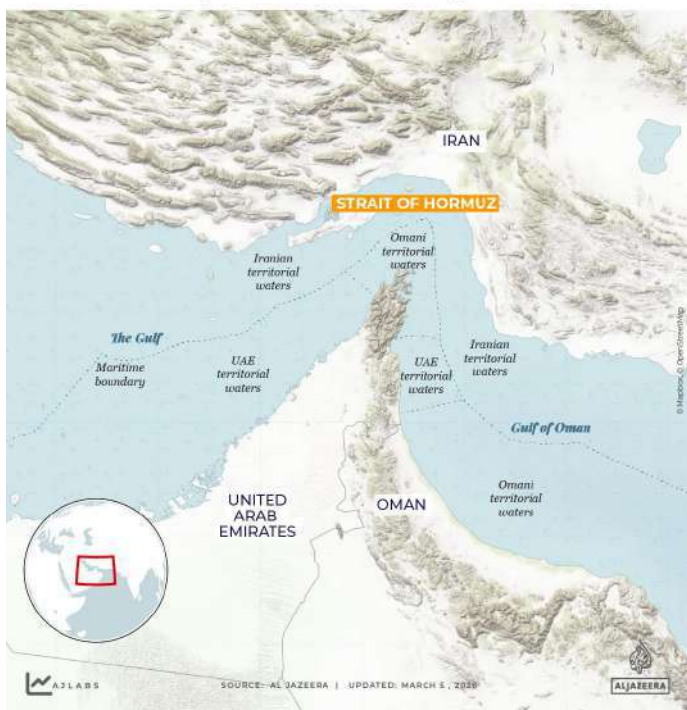
## The Strait of Hormuz

- Rising tensions involving Iran, Israel, and the U.S. have put the **Strait of Hormuz** under focus due to risks to oil and LNG supply.

- It is a narrow waterway between **Iran and Oman's Musandam Peninsula**, linking the **Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman**.
- The strait is about **33 km wide at its narrowest** and ~50 km at its entrance/exit, with shipping lanes passing through **Iranian and Omani territorial waters**.
- Around **20 million barrels of oil per day (≈20% of global supply)** and about **20% of global LNG (mainly from Qatar)** transit through it, making it a critical global energy chokepoint.

### Strait of Hormuz

The 39km (24-mile) Strait of Hormuz is the world's most critical oil chokepoint, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. It is the only route to the open ocean for Gulf-based exporters and handles one-fifth of global oil and LNG.



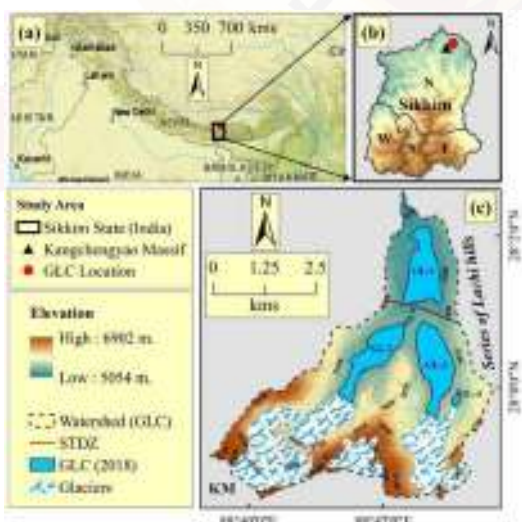
- Tourism to **Gurudongmar Lake** in North Sikkim is reviving after disruption caused by the **South Lhonak Lake GLOF**.
- A **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)** is a sudden release of water from a glacial lake, caused by the failure of natural barriers like ice or moraines, leading to severe downstream flooding.
- Located at **17,800 ft (5,430 m)**, Gurudongmar Lake is one of the highest lakes in India and the world, and a key source of the **Teesta River**.
- Situated north of the **Khangchengyao Range** and surrounded by snow-clad mountains, it is a freezing alpine lake and a sacred site for **Buddhists, Sikhs, and Hindus**, named after **Guru Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche)**.

### Sulawesi Island



- A **hand stencil in a limestone cave on Sulawesi (Indonesia)** has been dated to **67,800 years ago**, making it the **oldest known rock art**.
- Sulawesi, formerly called **Celebes**, is the **world's 11th largest island**, located between the **Asian and Australian continental shelves**.
- Its unique shape with five peninsulas formed due to **tectonic plate collisions**, and it has **13 freshwater lakes**, including **Lake Matano**, the deepest in Southeast Asia.

### Gurudongmar Lake



### Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve



- Madhya Pradesh has begun setting up a **soft release Boma** at **Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve (VDTR)**, marking India's third cheetah site.
- A **boma** is a **fenced enclosure used to temporarily hold and acclimatize wild animals** before releasing them into the wild.
- Located in the **upper Vindhyan range**, the reserve lies on a plateau and connects to forests extending toward **Bandhavgarh National Park**.
- It is the **7th tiger reserve in Madhya Pradesh**, named after **Rani Durgavati**, spans parts of the **Narmada and Yamuna basins**, and includes **Singorghar Fort**.
- The vegetation is mainly **dry deciduous**, with species like **teak, saja, dhaora, ber, and amla**.

- **Kharg Island** is a vital Iranian coral island in the northern Persian Gulf that acts as the nation's primary oil export terminal, handling ~90% of its crude exports.

➤ Measuring ~8x4 km, its deep waters allow supertankers to dock, supported by large storage facilities.

➤ It is unique for having natural freshwater.

- Ras Laffan is the **world's largest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export hub**, housing major liquefaction plants and export terminals and is **located in Northeastern Qatar, along the Persian Gulf coast**.

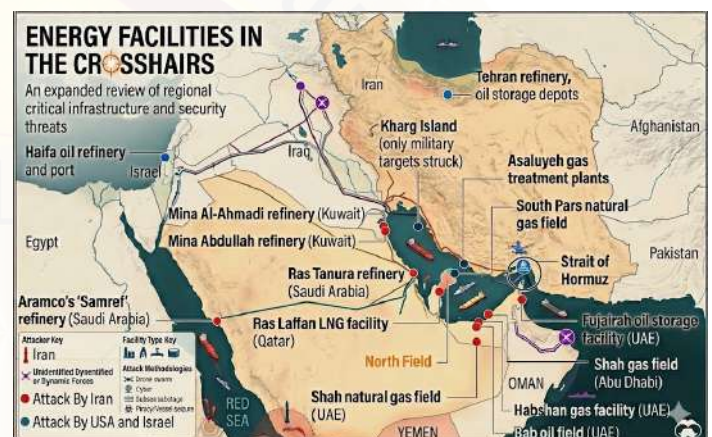
- South Pars Gas Field is the **world's largest natural gas field, shared between Iran (South Pars) and Qatar (North Field)** located beneath the Persian Gulf.

➤ It is one of the **world's biggest proven natural gas reserves** and consists of **multiple offshore platforms and processing units** for extraction.

### Lviv's Historic Architectural Ensemble



- A Russian drone strike damaged a residential building in the **UNESCO-listed historic centre of Lviv**, near the Bernardine Monastery.
- **Lviv**, in western **Ukraine** on the **Roztochchya Upland**, has historically been the cultural centre of **Galicia**.
- The city features **distinct ethnic quarters** (Armenian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Polish) and a unique blend of **Eastern European styles with Italian Renaissance and Austrian Baroque influences**, earning UNESCO World Heritage status in **1998**.



### Roopkund Lake



### Energy Facilities in Middle East

- Critical **energy infrastructure** across the Middle East in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE, and Bahrain is under intense attack with drone and missile strikes

- **Roopkund Lake (Skeleton Lake)** in Uttarakhand is famous for **hundreds of human skeletons** visible when the ice melts, first reported in **1942**.
- Research shows the remains belong to **over 300 people from different time periods and ancestries**, not a single event.
- Some date to around **800 CE (likely linked to a deadly hailstorm during a pilgrimage)**, while others are from later periods, including groups with **Mediterranean origins**, making the mystery more complex.
- The site combines **science, legend (Nanda Devi pilgrimage story), and mystery**, and remains an important **trekking and cultural location** in the Himalayas

## India's 99th Ramsar Site



- **Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary** in **Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh** has been declared India's **99th Ramsar Wetland Site**.
- It is a freshwater lake located about 17 km from Aligarh and supports around **249 bird species**, including several wetland-dependent and migratory birds along the **Central Asian Flyway**, such as the bar-headed goose and painted stork.
- The wetland was formed in the 19th century due to the construction of the **Upper Ganga Canal (1852)** by the British.
- Other important Ramsar wetlands in Uttar Pradesh include **Patna Bird Sanctuary, Bakhira Bird Sanctuary, Haiderpur Wetland, and the Upper Ganga River**.

## Solomon Islands



- Recently, a 6.7-Magnitude earthquake hit Kirakira in Solomon Islands.
- Solomon Islands is an **archipelagic state situated in the south-west Pacific Ocean**, approximately 2,000 kms to the northeast of Australia.
- Once a British protectorate, it **achieved independence as a republic in 1978** and it **extends over nearly 1000 islands comprising nine main island groups** with the **capital, Honiara** located on Guadalcanal, the largest island.
- The country is **mainly mountainous and covered in forests**, although it has some extensive plains and has **ethnic groups such as Melanesian 93%, Polynesian 4%, Micronesian 1.5%, other 1.5%**.

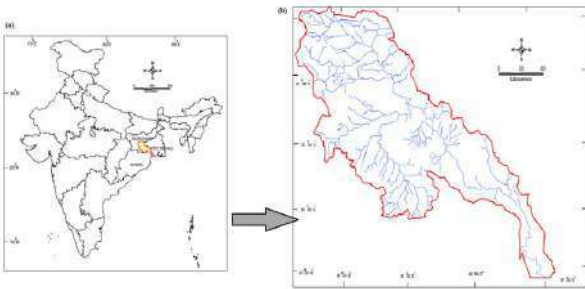
## Druzhba pipeline



- The **Druzhba Pipeline**, one of Europe's largest oil transport networks, recently came into focus after Ukraine resumed pumping Russian oil to **Hungary and Slovakia**, ending a months-

- long disruption linked to geopolitical tensions.
- The Druzhba pipeline (meaning “Friendship” in Russian) is about **5,500 km long** with a capacity of **1.2–2 million barrels per day**.
- It begins in **Almetyevsk (Russia)**, carrying crude oil from Siberia, the Urals, and the Caspian region, and runs through **Belarus**, where it splits into northern and southern branches supplying countries like **Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Hungary**.

### Subarnarekha River



- The **Subarnarekha River** (“Streak of Gold”) recently made news after the Indian Army defused a **World War II-era bomb (200–227 kg)** recovered from its bed near Baharagora in **East Singhbhum, Jharkhand**.
- The Subarnarekha **originates near Ranchi, capital of Jharkhand** and flows eastward through Jharkhand and **West Bengal** before entering the **Bay of Bengal**.
- Its main tributaries are the **Kanchi and Karkari rivers**.
- The basin is bounded by the **Chhotanagpur Plateau** in the north and west, the **Baitarani basin** in the south, and the **Bay of Bengal** in the southeast.
- It passes through a copper-mining region and descends the plateau via the **Hundru Falls**, with the basin broadly divided into the **northern plateau and coastal plains**, sloping generally from northwest to southeast.

### Catamarca province

- State-owned **Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL)** has received environmental clearance from the **Argentine government** to begin deep exploration of **five brine lithium blocks in Catamarca province**.

- Catamarca province is in **northwestern Argentina**, separated from Chile by the Andes Mountains.
- The province is generally **mountainous** with **intermontane tablelands and valleys**.
- The sandy desert on the west side of the Aconquija Mountains is referred to as the **Argentine Sahara**.
- As of 2026, the “Lithium Triangle” countries hold the largest lithium reserves led by **Bolivia** (23 million tonnes), **Argentina** (22 million tonnes), and **Chile** (9.3 million tonnes).

### Sijimali Bauxite Mine



- Tribal communities are **opposing mining** at the Sijimali bauxite reserve in **Odisha**, which holds about 311 million tonnes of high-grade bauxite, citing threats to perennial water sources and livelihoods.
- Sijimali, located in the **Eastern Ghats across Rayagada and Kalahandi districts**, covers about 1,500 hectares and lies near Vedanta’s Lanjigarh alumina refinery (capacity: 5 million tonnes per annum).
- **Bauxite** is refined into alumina, which is used to produce **aluminium**—widely used due to its strength, light weight, and conductivity.
- Odisha is **India’s largest bauxite hub**, accounting for ~41% of reserves and ~73% of production (2021–22).
- The **state is also rich** in iron ore, coal, nickel, graphite, and gemstones, contributing significantly to India’s mineral base.

## Elephanta Island



- The **Archaeological Survey of India** recently unearthed a 1,500-year-old **T-shaped stepped reservoir** on Elephanta Island, showcasing advanced ancient water management.
- Located in **Mumbai Harbour** in the Arabian Sea, Elephanta Island—locally called **Gharapuri** (“Fortress City”)—was named by 16th-century Portuguese sailors after a stone elephant statue later moved to Jijamata Udyan.
- The island had **maritime trade links with Rome and West Asia** during the Early Historic period.
- Its cave monuments were declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1987.
- While the island’s cave shows early Buddhist evidence, the most famous sculpture is the **20-foot three-headed bust of Shiva** called **Trimurti** or **Maheshamurti**, symbolizing Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer.

## Eswatini



- **Taiwan’s** President Lai Ching-te recently visited Eswatini, one of the few countries that **officially recognize sovereign Taiwan** and its only diplomatic ally in Africa.
- Eswatini is a small, landlocked country in **Southern Africa**, bordered by South Africa and Mozambique.
- It is one of the world’s few **absolute monarchies**.
- It has a **dual-capital system**: **Mbabane** (administrative and judicial capital) and **Lobamba** (traditional and legislative capital, seat of the monarchy).
- Formerly called **Swaziland**, the country was renamed Eswatini in 2018 after King Mswati II.

## Port-au-Prince

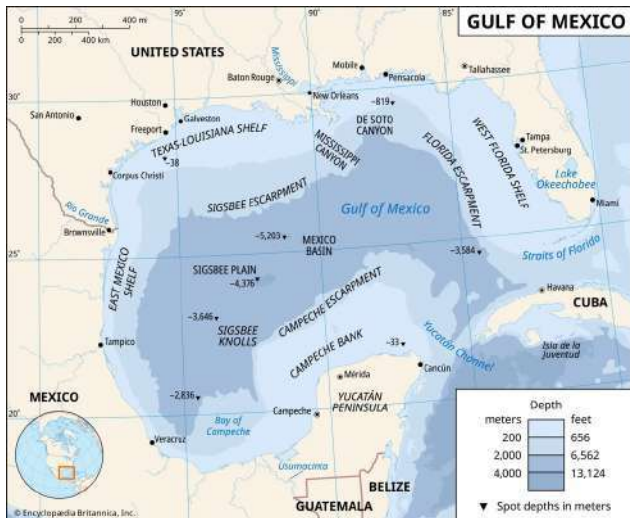


- A new **UN-backed international force** was recently deployed in **Port-au-Prince**, the capital of **Haiti**, to help combat violent gangs and restore security.
- Port-au-Prince is Haiti’s largest city and is located on the **Gulf of Gonâve** in the Caribbean region.
- Founded by the French in **1749**, the city has frequently suffered from fires, civil unrest, and earthquakes, including the devastating **7.0 magnitude earthquake of 2010**.

## Gulf of Mexico

- The **Gulf of Mexico (Gulf of America)** has recently come into focus due to a major oil spill and renewed US tensions with Cuba.
- The Gulf of Mexico is a large water body bordered mainly by the **United States and Mexico**, with **Cuba** lying to the east.
- It is connected to the **Atlantic Ocean** through the **Straits of Florida** (between Florida and Cuba) and to the **Caribbean Sea** through

- the **Yucatán Channel** (between the Yucatán Peninsula and Cuba).
- Both straits are about **160 km wide**.



## Luzon Island



- China recently conducted military drills, including live-fire exercises, in waters east of **Luzon Island** in the Philippines.
- **Luzon**, meaning “big light,” is the **largest island of the Philippines** and lies in the northern part of the archipelago.
- It is bordered by the **Philippine Sea** to the east, the **South China Sea** to the west, and the **Sibuyan Sea** to the south, while the **Luzon Strait** to the north separates it from Taiwan.
- The Philippine capital, **Manila**, is located on Luzon along the eastern shore of **Manila Bay**.