



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

INSIGHTS MAPS IN NEWS

APRIL 2025

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Mapping: India

1. Pahalgam

Context: In Jammu and Kashmir, security across the Kashmir Valley has been increased manifold after the killing of several tourists in a terrorist attack in Pahalgam.

About Pahalgam:

- Pahalgam is a town in Anantnag district, Jammu & Kashmir (Union Territory).
- Situated at 2,200 metres altitude in the Lidder Valley along the Lidder River.

Geographical Features:

- Lies in the **Vale of Kashmir**, a sub-valley of the Jhelum River system.
- The Lidder River, a tributary of Jhelum, flows through it and splits into East and West Lidder near the town.
- Flanked by the **Himalayan ranges** and rich in volcanic and limestone rock formations.

Key Attractions:

- Base for the annual **Amarnath Yatra**.
- Offers trekking to Aru Valley and Baisaran Hills.
- Known for winter snowfall and pristine river landscapes.

About Kashmir Valley:

- An intermontane valley in northern Jammu and Kashmir, between 33°–35° N and 73°–76° E.
- **Geographical Features:**
- Enclosed by **Pir Panjal (southwest)** and **Greater Himalayas (northeast)**.
- The **Jhelum River**, originating from Verinag, is the main waterway; its tributaries include **Lidder** and **Sindh**
- Fertile alluvial plains make it one of the most **densely populated regions** in Jammu and Kashmir.

Tourism Importance:

- Known for destinations like **Gulmarg, Sonmarg, Srinagar, and Pahalgam**.
- Famous for **houseboats, shikara rides**, saffron fields, and winter sports.

Ecological & Strategic Importance:

- A biodiversity hotspot in the Western Himalayas.
- Crucial for India's climate-sensitive security and water resources.
- Plays a vital role in **socio-political stability** and **cultural heritage** of the region.



2. North Sentinel Island

Context: A 24-year-old U.S. citizen, was arrested for illegally entering the restricted tribal zone of North Sentinel Island, a protected territory in the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#).

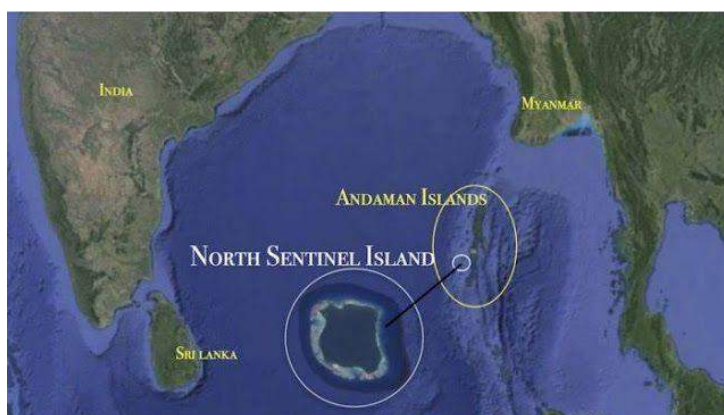
About North Sentinel Island:

Location:

- Located in the **Bay of Bengal**, part of the **South Andaman administrative district**
- Lies about **50 km west of Port Blair**, covering an area of **~60 sq. km**

Key Geographic Features:

- Surrounded by **coral reefs** and lacks natural harbours.
- Enclosed by **white-sand beaches, mangroves**, and dense tropical forests
- Uplifted by the **2004 Indian Ocean earthquake**, expanding land mass due to exposed reefs



Flora and Fauna:

- **Vegetation:** Dense forests with species like Malabar silk cotton and bulletwood trees.
- **Wildlife:** Includes Indian wild boar, coconut crabs, sea turtles, sharks, and diverse birdlife.

Indigenous Inhabitants – The Sentinelese:

- Known for **hostility towards outsiders**, they reject any contact with the outside world
- Likely to be descendants of the first human migrations out of Africa
- Dependent on hunting, fishing, and gathering; use **bows, arrows, and spears**
- Culture, language, and population estimates remain **unknown and unstudied**

Historical Encounters: Maurice Vidal Portman's expeditions forcibly brought natives to Port Blair, resulting in deaths due to lack of immunity

Governance of Island:

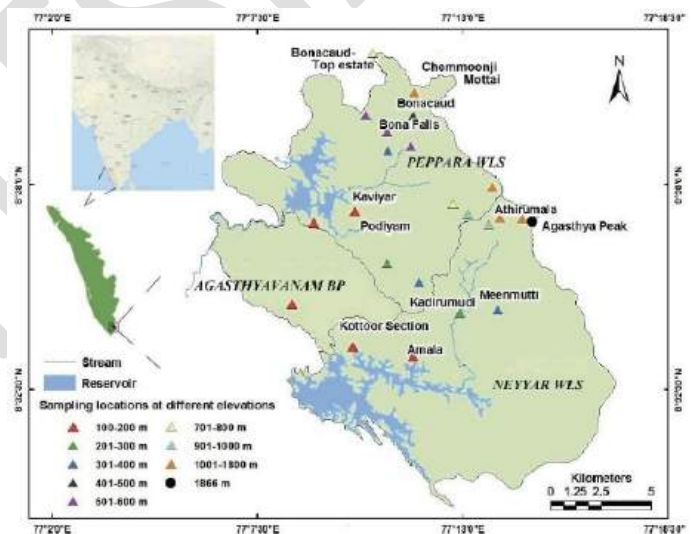
- **Andaman & Nicobar (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956:**
 - Prohibits entry within **5 nautical miles (9 km)**.
 - No prosecution of Sentinelese for hostile acts (self-defence).
- **Restricted Area Permit (RAP):** Removed in 2018, but contact remains banned.
 - Indian Navy patrol the island.

3. Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve

Context: The Supreme Court has ordered the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to conduct a comprehensive survey of the Agasthyamalai biosphere reserve to identify encroachments and non-forestry activities.

About Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve:

- **What is Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve?**
 - It is a UNESCO-designated tropical forest biosphere known for its exceptional ecological, cultural, and medicinal value.
 - Recognized under **UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves** in March 2016.
- **Location:**
 - Located at the **southernmost end of the Western Ghats**.
 - Spreads across **Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram & Kollam)** and **Tamil Nadu (Tirunelveli & Kanniyakumari)**.
 - Covers an area of approximately **3,500 km²**.
- **Biodiversity & Ecology:**
 - **Flora:** Over **2,254 plant species**, including **405 endemics** and rare medicinal herbs.
 - **Fauna:**
 - **Mammals:** 79 species (20 endemic), including tigers, elephants, and the **grizzled giant squirrel**.
 - **Birds:** 337 species (20 endemic).
 - **Reptiles & Amphibians:** 88 and 45 species respectively, with high endemism.
- **Protected Areas:**
 - Periyar Tiger Reserve (Kerala).
 - Srivilliputhur Grizzled Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary (TN).
 - Kalakkad-Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (TN).
 - Neyyar, Peppara, and Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuaries.
- **Indigenous Tribes & Cultural Significance:**
 - Inhabited by the Kani tribe (~30,000 people), who practice sustainable resource use.
 - Linked to **Hindu mythology** (Ramayana) and **Ayurveda** (Sage Agastya's contributions).



4. [Bandipur National Park](#)

Context: Environmentalists and citizens launched the '[Save Bandipur protest](#)' in Karnataka after reports emerged that the state government may lift the night traffic ban on NH-766, which cuts through the Bandipur National Park.

About Bandipur National Park:

What it is? Bandipur is a **national park and tiger reserve**, part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**, and one of India's oldest and most ecologically significant protected areas.

Location: Situated in **Chamarajanagar district**, Karnataka.

Establishment & History:

- First created in 1931 as **Venugopala Wildlife Park** (90 km²) by the Maharaja of Mysore.
- Declared a **Tiger Reserve in 1973** under **Project Tiger**.
- Became part of the [Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve](#) in 1986.

Geographic Features:

Area: ~868.63 km²

Terrain: Dry deciduous forests, scrublands, and moist deciduous woodlands.

Flora: Teak, rosewood, sandalwood, Indian kino tree, giant clumping bamboo.

Fauna:

Flagship species: Bengal tiger.

Other mammals: Elephants, leopards, gaurs, sambar, chital, sloth bear

Endemic species: Black-naped hare, Malabar squirrel



About Highway – NH-766:

Route: NH-766 cuts through the **core area of Bandipur**. National Highway 766 (NH 766), formerly known as NH 212, is a national highway in Southern India connecting **Kozhikode in Kerala to Kollegal in Karnataka**.

Traffic Ban: Night traffic between **9 PM to 6 AM** was banned in **2009** due to high wildlife mortality.

Impact:

- **Pre-ban deaths (2004–2009):** 286 animals killed
- **Post-ban deaths (2010–2018):** Only 34 reported

Supreme Court: In **2019**, upheld the ban, recognizing it as a conservation success story.

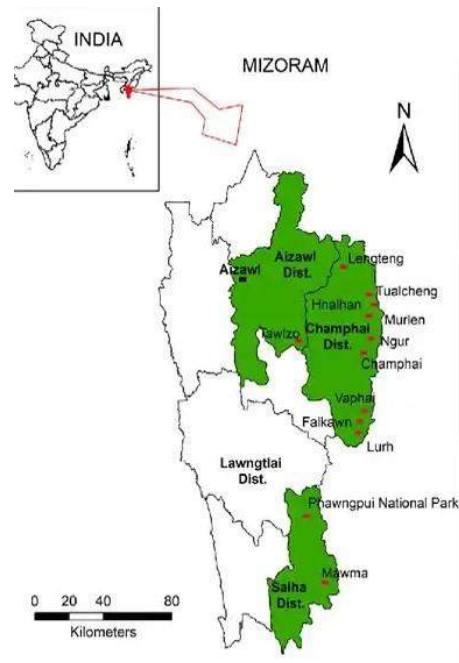
5. [Phawngpui National Park](#)

Context: Nearly one-ninth of Mizoram's Phawngpui [National Park](#) was affected by forest fires that originated from a jhum cultivation site in March 2025.

About Phawngpui National Park:

- **Location:**
 - Situated in **southeastern Mizoram**, near the **Myanmar border**.
 - Known as the **Blue Mountain**, it is the **highest peak** in the state at **2,157 metres**.
 - Covers an area of approximately 50 sq. km and features a 10 km-long ridge with steep cliffs and grassy glades.

- **Biodiversity:**
 - Hosts diverse **Montane Sub-tropical forests** with rhododendrons, and rare bamboo species.
 - Critical habitat for **endangered fauna** such as the **Hume's Pheasant** (State Bird), Slow Loris, Tiger, Leopard, Asiatic Black Bear, and Capped Langur.
- **Ecological Uniqueness:**
 - Only known habitat in India for **Mount Victoria Babax**, shared with Myanmar.
 - Cliff ecosystems support rare birdlife like the **Dark-rumped Swift**, **Blyth's Tragopan**, and Peregrine Falcon.
- **Conservation Challenges:**
 - Popular for **trekking and eco-tourism**, especially **Far Pak glade**.
 - Increasing frequency of **forest fires due to jhum cultivation** threatens habitat integrity and wildlife breeding cycles.



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6. [Bandhavgarh National Park](#)

Context: The Supreme Court dismissed a plea alleging illegal mining in Bandhavgarh National Park, Madhya Pradesh, calling it a frivolous abuse of law and imposed a ₹1 lakh penalty on the petitioner.

About Bandhavgarh National Park:

Located in: Umaria district, Madhya Pradesh, nestled within the **Vindhya ranges**.

Declared a **national park in 1968**, and designated a **Tiger Reserve in 1993** under **Project Tiger**.

Historical Significance:

The **Bandhavgarh Fort**, believed to date back to **Treta Yuga**, contains ancient **inscriptions, rock art**, and references to **Vakataka, Sengar, Kalchuri, and Baghel dynasties**.

Once the **hunting grounds of the Maharaja of Rewa**, the region is rich in archaeological remains and legends from the **Ramayana**.

Flora:

Dominated by **dry deciduous forests**, especially **Sal (*Shorea robusta*)** in valleys.



Other species include: Bamboo, Tendu, Saj (*Terminalia tomentosa*), Dhaora, Arjun, Amla, Palas (*Butea monosperma*).

Fauna:

- Known for the **highest density of Royal Bengal Tigers** in the world.
- **Key prey species:** Chital, Sambhar, Barking Deer, Nilgai, Chinkara, Wild Pig, Chowsingha.
- **Major predators:** Tiger, Leopard, Wild Dog, Wolf, Jackal. It is also home to **Langurs and Rhesus Macaques**.

Topography:

- No major rivers flow through the park, but **seasonal streams and rivulets** support local biodiversity.
- It forms part of the **central [Indian highland ecosystem](#)** and plays a key role in **tiger conservation corridors**.

7. [Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

Context: [Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary](#) (GSWS) in Madhya Pradesh will become the second home for African cheetahs after Kuno National Park (KNP).

- Two South African male cheetahs, **Prabhas and Pavak**, will be relocated from KNP to GSWS as part of India's ongoing cheetah reintroduction project.

About [Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary](#):

- **Location:**

- Situated in northwestern Madhya Pradesh along the Madhya Pradesh–Rajasthan border.
- Falls within the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests**

- **Key Features:**

- Declared a wildlife sanctuary in **1974** and expanded in **1983** to cover **62 sq km**.
- The **Chambal River** bisects the sanctuary into two parts — western side in Nimach district and eastern side in Mandsaur district.
- Recognized as an **[Important Bird and Biodiversity Area \(IBA\)](#)** by BirdLife International.

- **Flora:**

- **Forest types:**

- Northern tropical dry deciduous forests.
- Dry mixed deciduous forests.
- Dry deciduous scrub.

- Principal tree species include **Khair (*Acacia catechu*)**, **Salai**, **Kardhai**, **Dhawda**, **Tendu**, and **Palash**.

- **Fauna:**

- **Herbivores:** Chinkara (Indian Gazelle), Nilgai, and Spotted Deer.
- **Carnivores:** Indian Leopard, Striped Hyena, and Jackal.
- **Aquatic species:** Muggar Crocodile, Otters, Fish species, and Turtles.

- **Rivers:** The **[Chambal River](#)** flows through the sanctuary, enhancing aquatic biodiversity and dividing the forest landscape.



8. [Naini Lake](#)

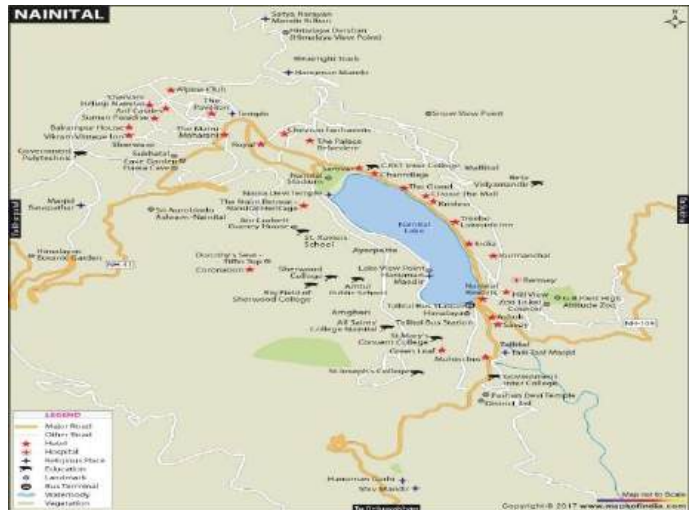
Context: Naini Lake in Nainital has recorded a five-year low water level at 4.7 feet, raising fears of water scarcity ahead of summer.

- Experts attribute this to reduced winter snowfall, unregulated construction, and climate change-induced hydrological shifts.

About [Naini Lake](#):

- **What is it?**

- **Naini Lake** is a **natural freshwater lake**, tectonic in origin, and crescent-shaped due to repeated landslides.
- Located in the heart of **Nainital town**, Uttarakhand, it is the **third largest lake in the state by surface area**.
- **Location:**
 - Situated in **Kumaon region**, surrounded by seven hills including Naina Peak, Tiffin Top, and Snow View.
 - Lies between **Mallital (north)** and **Tallital (south)** ends, connected by a bridge that houses the **world's only post office on a lake bridge**.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - First recorded by British businessman **P. Barron in 1839**, leading to the development of Nainital as a **colonial hill station**.
 - Has inspired **cultural and literary references**, forming a key part of **Kumaoni heritage and tourism**.
- **Key Features:**
 - Fed by **26 major drains** including **Balia Nala**, its main perennial stream.
 - **Subsurface inflows and outflows** account for nearly **50%** of the lake's hydrological balance.
 - Lake supplies **~76%** of **Nainital's drinking water demand**.
 - It also supports **boating, tourism, and recreation**.



9. Mahadayi River

Context: Karnataka farmers and Goa activists are protesting against the Kalasa-Banduri project, which aims to divert Mhadei (**Mahadayi**) river water, citing ecological and livelihood concerns.

About Mahadayi River:

Origin: Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi district, Karnataka.

Flows Through: Karnataka (35 km), Maharashtra (1 km), and Goa (45 km).

Termination: Merges with the Arabian Sea in Goa after joining the **Zuari River**.

Other Names: Mandovi (Goa), Gomati (in some stretches).

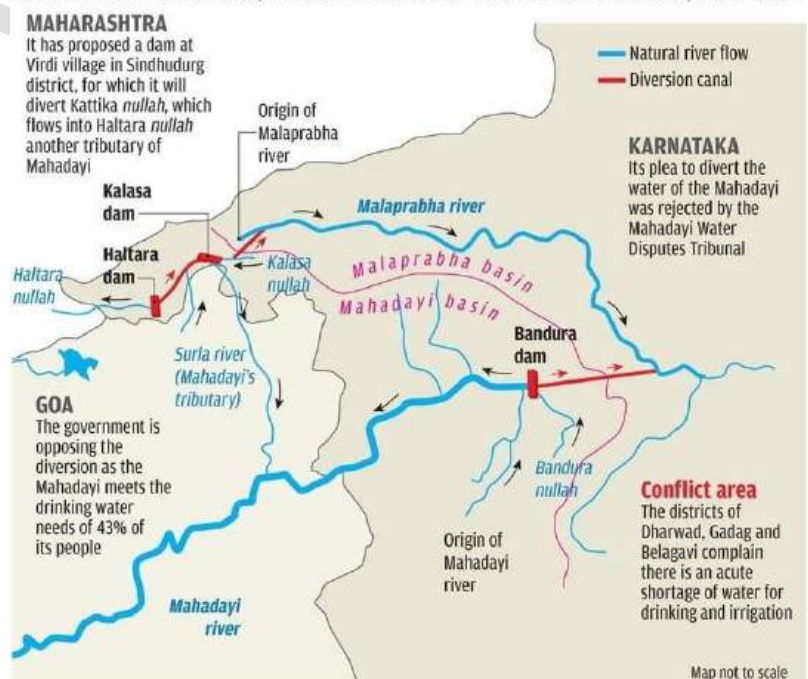
Key Tributaries: Nerul River, St. Inez Creek, Mapusa River, Valvanti River, Dudhsagar River, Udnai River.

Key Facts:

- **Basin Area:** 2,032 sq. km (Goa: 1,580 sq. km, Karnataka: 375 sq. km, Maharashtra: 77 sq. km).
- **Lifeline of Goa:** Critical for drinking water, agriculture, and biodiversity.
- **Major Projects:** Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project (Karnataka) proposes diversion to Malaprabha River.

Controversial water diversion plan

Under the Kalasa Bandura project, the Karnataka government has proposed dams and canals to divert the Mahadayi's water to address the water deficit in the Malaprabha basin



About Mahadayi Water Dispute:

- **Parties Involved:** Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra.
- **Karnataka's Demand:** Divert water to Malaprabha basin for drought-prone regions (Hubballi-Dharwad, Gadag).
- **Goa's Opposition:** Argues diversion harms ecology, water security, and violates tribunal orders.
- **Mahadayi Tribunal (2018):** Allocated 13.42 TMC to Karnataka, 24 TMC to Goa, 1.33 TMC to Maharashtra.
- **Current Status:** Both states challenged the award in Supreme Court.

10. Krishna River

Context: Due to extreme heat, the Krishna River has dried up earlier than usual, severely affecting irrigation in Karnataka's Bagalkot, Vijayapura, and Yadgir districts.

About Krishna River:

Origin: Rises near Mahabaleshwar in the Western Ghats, Satara district, Maharashtra.

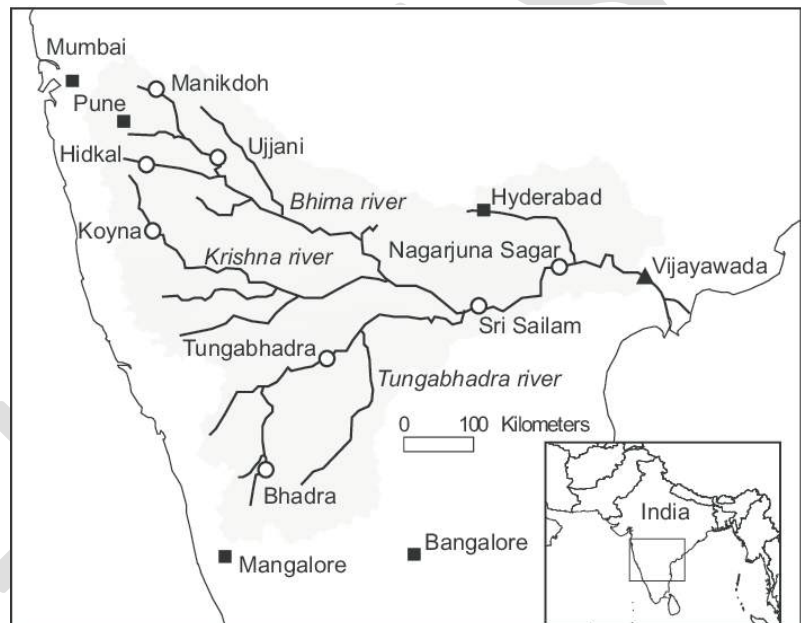
States Flowing Through: Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh.

Course and Length: Flows ~1,400 km eastward and drains into the [Bay of Bengal](#) near Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh.

Tributaries:

Right Bank: Venna, Koyna, Panchganga, Dudhganga, Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Tungabhadra.

Left Bank: Bhima, Musi, Munneru.



Unique Features of Krishna River: **Second Largest East-Flowing River** in Peninsular India (after [Godavari](#)).

Seasonal Dependence: Largely rain-fed, resulting in highly variable water flow.

Hydroelectric Projects: Major installations at Srisaillam, Nagarjuna Sagar, and Tungabhadra.

Key Projects on Krishna River:

Tungabhadra Project (Karnataka): Irrigation and hydroelectricity.

Srisaillam Dam (AP): Hydropower and irrigation.

Nagarjuna Sagar Dam (AP/Telangana): Key part of Green Revolution infrastructure.

Prakasam Barrage (AP): Canal irrigation across Krishna delta.

Ghataprabha & Bhima Projects (Maharashtra): Regional irrigation support.

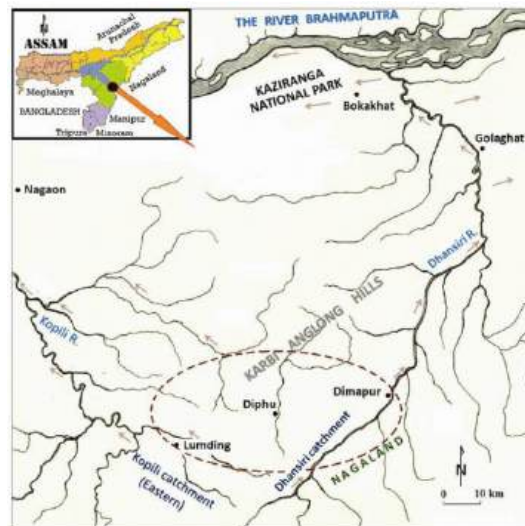
11. Dhansiri River

Context: An environmentalist from Assam has raised alarm over **alleged hazardous effluent discharge** by Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) into the [Dhansiri River](#), prompting calls for CPCB investigation due to risks to aquatic life.

About Dhansiri River:

- **What it is?**
 - Dhansiri is a **perennial river** and a major **south bank tributary of the Brahmaputra River**, flowing through the northeastern states of **Nagaland and Assam**.

- It sustains **aquatic biodiversity**, supports local livelihoods, and shapes **forest ecosystems** like Dhansiri Reserve Forest and Intanki National Park.
- **Origin and Course:**
 - The river **originates from the Laisang Peak** in Nagaland at an altitude of **~800 meters above mean sea level**.
 - It flows **352 km south to north**, finally merging into the Brahmaputra at **Dhansirimukh** in Assam.
- **States Flow Through:**
 - Passes through **Chümoukedima and Dimapur districts in Nagaland** and **Golaghat district in Assam**.
 - Forms a **natural boundary** between [Karbi Anglong](#) and Nagaland in parts of its course.
- **Length and Catchment Area:**
 - **Total length:** 352 km.
 - **Catchment area:** ~12,584 sq km, making it crucial for the region's hydrology and agriculture.
- **Major Tributaries:** Fed by several important tributaries including: Dayang, Diphupani, Khora, Langlong, and Beopani
- **Tributary Of:** Brahmaputra River
- **Unique Ecological Features:**
 - **High fish diversity:** A survey reported **34 species**, including **mahseer and catfish**, vital for local fishery.
 - Supports **wetlands (bils)** and **dense forests**—crucial for migratory birds and wildlife corridors.



12. Thangjing Hills

Context: Meitei pilgrims were forced to abandon their annual pilgrimage to Thangjing Hills in Manipur due to opposition from the Kuki-Zo community.

About Thangjing Hills:

- **Situated in:** Churachandpur district, western Manipur.
- **Elevation:** Around **2,100 meters** (6,900 ft) above sea level.
- Lies along the **Thangjing Hill Range**, forming the **western boundary of the Imphal Valley**.
- Encompasses **thick forests, high ridges, and steep terrains**.
- Watered by rivers like Leimatak, Tuila, Lanva, and Khuga, with tributaries nourishing both hill and valley villages.
- Lies in a **sensitive buffer zone** between **Meitei-dominated valley** and Kuki-Zo-dominated hills.
- **Religious Significance:**
 - Considered **sacred by Meiteis** as the abode of **deity Eputhou Thangjing**, protector of southern Manipur.
 - Pilgrimage occurs annually during the Meitei lunar month **Sajibu** (April), especially on and after the **full moon day**.
 - The site is integrally linked to **Meitei cosmology** and cultural legends like the love tale of **Khamba Thoibi**.



13. Majuli Island and Sivasagar

Context: Following Charaideo Maidams' [UNESCO World Heritage](#) status in 2024, Assam is now pushing for **Majuli Island** and **Sivasagar** to achieve UNESCO recognition.

About Majuli Island:

- **Location:** Majuli is located in the Brahmaputra River in Assam, about 40 km from Jorhat city.
- **Formation:** Formed by the dynamic shifting of [Brahmaputra's river channels](#) over centuries, Majuli emerged as the world's largest river island.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Area:** Once spread across 880 sq km, currently reduced due to severe erosion.
 - **Biodiversity:** Known for lush landscapes, paddy fields, wetlands, and monsoon submergence enriching the soil.
 - **Culture:** Home to vibrant Assamese traditions, Satras (Vaishnavite monasteries), and tribes like the Mising, Deori, and Assamese.
 - **Status:** Declared a district in 2016, it is being proposed under the *mixed* category (cultural and natural) for UNESCO recognition.

About Sivasagar:

- **Location:**
 - **Sivasagar** is a historical city and district headquarters in Upper Assam, known for its Ahom-era monuments.
- **History:**
 - Formerly known as **Rangpur**, it was the capital of the **Ahom Kingdom** from 1699–1788.
 - It witnessed key events like the [Battle of Dhai Ali](#) and later British annexation post-1826.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Heritage:** Hosts iconic Ahom monuments like Talatal Ghar, Rang Ghar, and Sivasagar Tank.
 - **Architecture:** Medieval techniques like lime plastering were used in restoration, preserving authenticity.
 - **Culture:** Rich in history tied to the [Ahom dynasty's](#) six-century-long reign over Assam.
 - **Economy:** A major hub today for Assam's tea and oil industries.

Assam, India



Syllabus: World Mapping

1. Tuti Island

Context: After two years of violent civil war, Sudan's [Tuti Island](#) has been reclaimed by the national army, but lies devastated and depopulated.

About Tuti Island:

- **Location:** Tuti Island lies at the confluence of the Blue Nile and White Nile rivers.
- **Bordering Urban Centres:** It is surrounded by the "Three Towns" – Khartoum, Omdurman, and Bahri (Khartoum North).
- **Agricultural Significance:** Known as "Khartoum's Garden", it supplied a major portion of the capital's fruits and vegetables, with manual farming practices still in use.

About Sudan:

- **Location:** Sudan is situated in **Northeast Africa**, south of Egypt, with a strategic position along the **Red Sea coast**.
- **Capital:** Khartoum
- **Neighbouring Countries:** Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Red Sea, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, and Libya.



Geological Features:

- **River System:** Dominated by the **Nile River**, formed by the **Blue Nile** and **White Nile** merging at Khartoum.
- **Mountains:** Includes **Nuba Mountains**, **Marrah Mountains**, and **Red Sea Hills**.

2. **Red Sea**

Context: Environmentalists have raised alarms as Egypt plans large-scale tourism development at Ras Hankorab Beach, part of the **Red Sea's** fragile marine ecosystem, risking biodiversity loss amid efforts to boost tourism revenue.

About the Red Sea:

- **What is the Red Sea?**
 - A **semi-enclosed tropical sea**, part of the Indian Ocean, stretching **1,930 km** from the Suez Canal to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
 - **Connects** to the Mediterranean Sea via the **Suez Canal** and to the Arabian Sea via the **Gulf of Aden**.
 - **Surface Area:** ~438,000 sq km.
- **Neighbouring Countries:** Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti.
- **Key Features & Facts:**



- **Geological Significance:**
 - Formed by the **rift between African & Arabian tectonic plates** (still widening at ~15 mm/year).
 - Contains **hot brine pools** and **active volcanic zones** (e.g., Jabal Al-Ṭā'ir Island).
- **Unique Marine Ecosystem:**
 - Home to **coral reefs resistant to climate change**, vital for global marine biodiversity.
 - Supports **endangered species** like hawksbill turtles and dugongs.
- **Economic & Strategic Importance:**

- **Major Shipping Route:** 12% of global trade passes through, linking Europe & Asia.
- **Tourism Hub:** Famous for diving (e.g., Blue Hole), generating billions in revenue.
- **Climate & Salinity:**
 - One of the **warmest and saltiest seas**(up to 41°C in summer).
 - Named for occasional **red algal blooms**(*Trichodesmium erythraeum*).
- **Environmental Threats:**
 - **Over-tourism**, coastal development, and oil spills endanger marine life.
 - **Coral bleaching** risks due to rising sea temperatures.

3. Nigeria

Context: Nigeria has seized and destroyed counterfeit medicines worth \$645 million amid a worsening fake drug crisis linked to rising living costs, weak regulation, and pharmaceutical firm exits.

About Nigeria:

- **Location:** Nigeria is located in West Africa.
- **Capital:** Abuja (since 1991).
- **Neighbouring Nations:** Niger, Chad, Cameroon, Benin, and Atlantic Ocean (Gulf of Guinea)

Geographical Features:

- **Mountains:** Chappal Waddi (2,419 m, highest peak), Mount Dimlang (2,042 m), located in southeastern Nigeria near the Cameroon Highlands.
- **Plateaus & Hills:** Jos Plateau (volcanic origin), Udi-Nsukka Escarpment.
- **Plains:** Important plains such as Sokoto Plains and Borno Plains are located here.

o Rivers:

- Niger River – major river, gives Nigeria its name.
- Benue River – largest tributary of the Niger.
- Coastal rivers draining into the Gulf of Guinea.

Unique Features:

- **Niger Delta:** One of the world's largest deltas with freshwater swamps and mangroves.
- Rich in petroleum and natural gas, contributing to economic potential but also conflict.



4. Taiwan Strait

Context: China has launched its largest military drills in the [Taiwan Strait](#), with the PLA's Shandong aircraft carrier conducting operations east of Taiwan, escalating regional tensions.

About Taiwan Strait:

- **What is the Taiwan Strait?**
 - A narrow sea passage separating Taiwan Island from mainland China's Fujian Province.
 - Considered a geopolitical hotspot due to cross-strait tensions and international naval presence.
- **Location:** Connects the South China Sea (south) with the East China Sea (north).
- **Bordering Nations:** People's Republic of China (PRC) and
- **Major Geographic Features:**
 - Part of the **continental shelf** of Asia.
 - Rivers like the **Min and Jiulong drain** into the Strait from China's Fujian Province.



- Major underwater bank lies **north of Penghu Islands**.
- **Strategic and Geopolitical Importance:**
 - A key flashpoint in US-China-Taiwan relations
 - Vital sea route for global trade and naval operations
 - Frequent site of military exercises, surveillance, and naval deterrence activities

5. Ionian Islands

Context: The first-ever ancient [Greek theater](#) in the Ionian Islands was discovered in Lefkada, Greece, revealing significant insights into the region's historical and cultural legacy.

About Ionian Islands:

- **What are the Ionian Islands?**
 - A **group of islands** off the **west coast of Greece**, often referred to as **Heptanesos** (meaning "Seven Islands").
- **Location:**
 - Located between **mainland Greece and Italy**, extending south from the **Albanian coast** to the **Peloponnese**.
 - Currently a **peripheral region of Greece**, fully integrated into the **Hellenic Republic**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Main Islands:** Corfu (Kerkyra), Lefkada (Leucas), Cephallenia (Kefalonia), Zacynthos (Zakynthos), Ithaca, Cythera, and Paxos.
 - Noted for **fertile land, strategic maritime location**, and **natural harbors** ideal for trade.
 - Subject to frequent **seismic activity**, including a devastating earthquake in **1953**.
- **Significant Discovery in Lefkada:**
 - **Archaeological Highlights:**
 - Discovered on **Koulmos Hill**, near modern Lefkada, after excavations led by **Dr. Olympia Vikatou**.
 - Dating back to the **4th century BCE**, during Lefkada's peak as a city-state.
- **Architectural Details:**
 - Featured a **koilon** with **21 rows of seats**, originally accommodating **3,500 spectators**, with plans for expansion to **11,000**.
 - Emphasized **acoustics and sightlines**, showcasing classical Greek design expertise.
- **Cultural and Historical Value:**
 - Highlights **Lefkada's strategic and cultural role** in the Acarnanian region.
 - Theatre fell into disuse after **Roman colonization of Nikopolis (31 BCE)**, with materials repurposed in later eras.



6. Mount Kanlaon

Context: [Mount Kanlaon](#), a stratovolcano in the Philippines, erupted, spewing a 4,000-meter ash plume, triggering school closures and evacuation protocols.

- It is the second major eruption in recent months, reaffirming the region's vulnerability due to its location in the **Pacific Ring of Fire**.

About Mount Kanlaon:

- **What it is:** Mount Kanlaon is an **active andesitic stratovolcano**.
- **Location:** It lies on the island of **Negros**, straddling the provinces of **Negros Occidental** and **Negros Oriental, Philippines**.
- **Elevation:** At **2,465 meters**, it is the **highest peak in the Visayas** and 42nd tallest island peak globally.
- **Governing Nation:** The **Republic of the Philippines** manages the volcano and surrounding protected zones.
- **Key Features:**
 - Contains the **Lugud crater** and the **Margaja caldera**, with a seasonal crater lake.
 - Part of **Kanlaon Natural Park**, spanning over **24,500 hectares**.
 - Hosts geothermal features like **Mambukal Hot Springs**.

About Pacific Ring of Fire:

- **What it is:** The **Pacific Ring of Fire**, or **Circum-Pacific Belt**, is a seismically active zone encircling the Pacific Ocean, home to **75% of the world's active volcanoes**.
- **Why More Volcanoes Here?**
 - Caused by **plate subduction**, where **denser oceanic plates sink** beneath lighter continental or oceanic plates.
 - **Includes key plates:** Pacific, Philippine, Nazca, Cocos, Indian-Australian, North American.
 - High incidence of **earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and tsunamis** makes it the world's most disaster-prone region.



7. Tanzania

Context: India launched its **first Africa-India maritime exercise (AIKEYME-2025)** in Tanzania to strengthen naval cooperation. The exercise involves **9 African nations** focusing on anti-piracy and maritime security operations.

About Tanzania:

- **Located in:** East Africa, **south of the Equator**.
- **Capital:** Dodoma (official).
- **Neighbouring Nations:**
 - **Borders:** Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Rwanda, Burundi, DR Congo.
 - **Maritime Borders:** Comoros, Seychelles.
- **Key Geological Features:**
 - **Mountains:**
 - **Mount Kilimanjaro** (Africa's highest peak, 5,895 m), **Mount Meru** & **Ngorongoro Crater** (world's largest volcanic caldera).
 - **Rivers:**
 - **Rufiji** (largest river, drains into Indian Ocean) and **Kagera** (feeds Lake Victoria, Nile's source).
 - **Lakes:**
 - **Lake Tanganyika** (world's 2nd deepest, 1,436 m) and **Lake Victoria** (Africa's largest lake, shared with Kenya/Uganda).
 - **UNESCO Sites:**



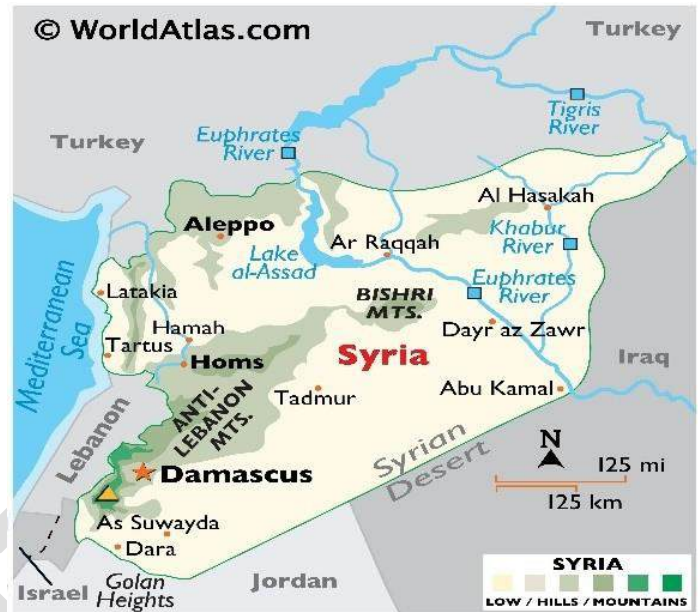
- **Serengeti National Park**(wildlife migration).
- **Kilimanjaro NP& Selous Game Reserve.**

8. [Syria](#)

Context: Syria received its first wheat shipment at [Latakia port](#) since the ouster of former President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, signaling efforts to rebuild its food security amidst economic recovery.

About [Syria](#):

- **Location:** Southwest Asia, eastern Mediterranean coast.
- **Capital:**
- **Neighbouring Nations:** Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon.
- **Geological Features**
 - **Mountains:**
 - **Al-Ansariyyah Mountains:** Border the coastal plain, highest point ~1,562 meters.
 - **Other notable ranges:** Mount Al-Durūz, Abū Rujmayn, Bishrī Mountains.
 - **Rivers:**
 - **Euphrates River:** Originates in Turkey, [Syria's](#) principal water source; Lake Al-Asad formed by Euphrates Dam.
 - **Orontes River:** Flows northward through Ghāb Depression into the Mediterranean.
 - **Yarmouk River:** Forms part of Syria-Jordan border.
 - **Plains and Deserts:**
 - **Syrian Desert:** Dominates the southeastern region; primarily rocky and gravelly terrain.
 - **Lakes:**
 - **Al-Jabbūl Lake:** Largest seasonal Salt Lake.
 - **Other lakes:** Lake Qattinah, Lake Muzayrīb, Lake Khātūniyyah



9. [Botswana](#)

Context: Jwaneng Diamond Mine in Botswana, known as the “Prince of Mines,” recorded a historic production of 13.3 million carats in 2023, reinforcing Botswana’s status as a leading diamond producer globally.

Recent Developments in [Botswana's Mining Sector](#):

- **Jwaneng Diamond Mine Expansion:** The Cut-9 Project aims to extend the mine’s operational life to 2035, with an expected output of 53 million additional carats.
- **Technological Advancements:** Jwaneng uses cutting-edge techniques like X-ray fluorescence and laser sorting in its Completely Automated Recovery Plant (CARP) and Fully Integrated Sort House (FISH).

About [Botswana](#):

- **Landlocked** country in **Southern Africa**, bordered by **Namibia**, **Zambia**, **Zimbabwe**, and **South Africa**.
- **Capital:** Gaborone.



- **Neighbouring Nations:** Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.
- **Geological Features:**
- **Major Rivers:** Okavango River (north), Chobe River (north), Limpopo River (east).
- **Key Terrain:**
 - **Sandveld** (deep [Kalahari](#) sand cover) dominates most of Botswana.
 - **Hardveld** (rocky hill areas) in the east.
- **Mountains and Highlands:** Hills north of Lobatse at **1,490 meters** are the highest point.
- **Natural Resources:** Diamonds (**world's top producer by value**), copper, nickel, soda ash, and coal.
- **Unique Features:**

Okavango Delta—a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) and one of the world's largest inland deltas.

Makgadikgadi Pans—vast salt flats and ancient lake beds.

10. [Vatican City](#)

Context: Vatican City is in global focus following the death of Pope Francis at the age of 88, prompting preparations for his funeral at [St. Peter's Basilica](#) and the upcoming conclave to elect his successor.

About [Vatican City](#):

- **Situated in:** Western part of Rome, Italy (on the **west bank of the Tiber River.**)
- **Surrounded by:** Rome (Italy).
 - It is an **enclave** with no borders with any other country.
- **Population:** Approx. 882 (2024 estimate) – Least populous sovereign state.
- **Capital:** Vatican City (same as country name – a city-state).
- **Form of Government:** Ecclesiastical absolute monarchy under the Pope.
- **Administered by:** The **Holy See**, headed by the Pope ([Bishop of Rome](#)), who holds executive, legislative, and judicial powers.
- **Historical Context:**
- **Early roots:** Traces its Christian heritage to **Peter**, regarded as the first Pope.
- **Land control:** Papal States governed parts of Italy until 1870.
- **Modern formation:** Gained sovereignty via the **Lateran Treaty of 1929**, signed with Fascist Italy.
- **Unique Features:**
 - **Architecture and Art:**
 - Home to **Peter's Basilica**, **Sistine Chapel**, **Raphael Rooms**, and **Vatican Museums**.
 - Renowned for frescoes by **Michelangelo** and **Raphael**.
 - **No taxation:** Income via global Catholic donations, museum entry, stamp and souvenir sales.
 - **Heritage site:** [UNESCO World Heritage](#) Site since 1984.



11. [Sea of Marmara](#)

Context: A powerful 6.2 magnitude [earthquake](#) struck Istanbul with its epicenter in the Sea of Marmara, sparking panic across the region and injuring over 230 people due to stampedes and falls.

About the [Sea of Marmara](#):

- **What is the Sea of Marmara?**
 - It is a **small inland sea** in northwestern Turkey, connecting the **Black Sea** to the **Aegean Sea** through the **Bosphorus and Dardanelles Straits**, respectively.

- It is an integral part of the **Turkish Straits System**, acting as a gateway between Asia and Europe.
- **Location and Surrounding Nations:**
 - Entirely within **Turkey's borders**, the Sea separates **European Turkey** (Thrace) from **Asian Turkey** (Anatolia).
 - Major coastal cities include **Istanbul, Izmit, Bursa, Balikesir, Yalova, Tekirdag, and Çanakkale**.
- **Key Geographical Features:**
 - **Important river inflows:** Biga, Gonen, and Susurluk, which help reduce surface salinity.
 - Formed ~2.5 million years ago due to **tectonic shifts**, lying directly above the **North Anatolian Fault Line**—a major seismic zone.
 - **Islands:** Marmara Island (rich in marble), Prince Islands, Avşa, Imrali, and Paşalimani.

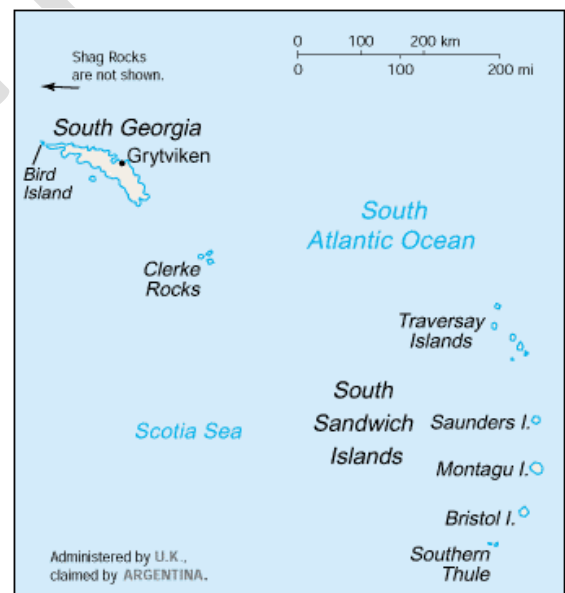


12. South Sandwich Islands

Context: A rare video captured near South Sandwich Islands shows pig-tailed parasites (copepods *Lophoura szidati*) clinging to a deep-sea rattail fish, intriguing scientists about deep-sea parasitic biodiversity.

About Copepods:

- **What are Copepods?**
 - Copepods are tiny **aquatic crustaceans** forming one of the most abundant multicellular groups in both marine and freshwater ecosystems.
 - They are crucial links in aquatic food webs, connecting phytoplankton to fish, whales, and other predators.
- **Habitat:**
 - Found from polar ice caps to hydrothermal vents and deep ocean trenches.
 - Live in freshwater, saltwater, underground caves, leaf litter, and moist soil.
- **Characteristics**
- **Physical:**
 - **Size:** Usually 1–2 mm; parasitic species can grow up to 20 cm.
 - **Appearance:** Transparent, teardrop-shaped body, long antennae, and a single red eye.
- **Biological:**
 - No heart or blood vessels (except in Calanoida order).
 - Breathe by absorbing oxygen through the body surface.
 - Some species glow (**bioluminescence**) to escape predators.
- **Behavioural:**
 - Move by using oar-like antennae, can make quick “jumps” to avoid threats.
 - Use pheromone trails to find mates.
- **Feeding:** Can filter up to a million times their body volume in water daily, mainly feeding on phytoplankton.



About South Sandwich Islands:

- **Location:**

- Located in the South Atlantic Ocean, north of the Weddell Sea.
- Situated about **470 miles (760 km)** southeast of **South Georgia**.
- **Key Features:**
 - Group of **actively volcanic islets** extending over **190 miles (305 km)**.
 - Entirely **glacier-covered** with harsh, uninhabitable conditions.
 - Originally included with the **Falkland Islands** until 1985; now a **British Overseas Territory** along with South Georgia.
 - Briefly occupied by Argentine military in 1976; retaken by Britain during the **Falklands War** in 1982.

13. [Iran](#)

Context: A suspected chemical blast at Iran's Bandar Abbas Port killed at least 18 people and injured over 700, triggering concerns about industrial safety in Iran.

About Bandar Abbas Port:

What it is: Bandar Abbas is Iran's largest and most significant port, located near the vital Strait of Hormuz.

Key Features:

- Home to Shahid Rajaee Port, the biggest container terminal of Iran.
- Connected to Iran's national rail and road networks, offering logistical access across the region.



About Iran:

- **Located in:** Southwestern Asia, bordered by multiple land and maritime neighbors.
- **Capital:** Tehran.
- **Neighbouring Nations:** Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, **Caspian Sea**, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and Iraq, Turkey.
- **Geological Features:**
- **Deserts:** Dasht-e Kavir (Great Salt Desert) and Dasht-e Lut, among the hottest and driest deserts globally.

Mountain Ranges:

- **Zagros Mountains:** Barrier between Mesopotamia and Iran's plateau.
- **Elburz Mountains:** Home to Mount Damavand (highest peak, 5,671 meters).
- **Major Rivers:**
 - Karun River (navigable, south to Persian Gulf).
 - Sefid River (north, into Caspian Sea).
 - Zayandeh River (central Iran, seasonal flow).
- **Strategic Location:**
 - Controls key access to the **Strait of Hormuz**, a critical chokepoint through which 20% of global oil trade passes.
 - Central to energy, trade, and geopolitical equations in West Asia.

14. [Sandy Cay Reef Dispute](#)

Context: China and the Philippines traded accusations over the Sandy Cay reef dispute in the South China Sea, escalating maritime tensions as both nations assert sovereignty.

About Sandy Cay Reef:

- **Located in:** Sandy Cay Reef lies in the **northern Thitu Reefs**, within the **Spratly Islands**, South China Sea.
 - It is situated approximately northwest of Thitu Island and northeast of Subi Reef.
- **Disputed Between:**

- China, Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.
- In 2025, China claimed to have implemented “maritime control” over Sandy Cay, while the Philippines strongly rejected the claim.
- **Other Location in News:**
 - **Thitu Island (Pag-asa):** Administered by the Philippines, with a military base and a Coast Guard station.
 - **Subi Reef:** Heavily militarized by China and located near Sandy Cay.

About South China Sea:

- **Located in:** An arm of the western Pacific Ocean, bordered by Southeast Asia and East Asia.
- **Nations Bordering:** China, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, and Indonesia.
- **Disputed Islands and Claimants:**
 - **Spratly Islands:** Disputed among China, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei.
 - **Paracel Islands:** Claimed by China, Taiwan, and Vietnam.
 - **Scarborough Shoal:** Contested between China and the Philippines.
- **Rivers Flowing into South China Sea:** Mekong River (Vietnam), Red River (Vietnam) and Pearl (Zhu) River (China).
- **Other Features:**
 - **China Sea Basin:** Deepest part, with depths reaching up to **5,016 meters**.
 - **Sunda Shelf:** Broad, shallow shelf connecting South China Sea to the Gulf of Thailand and Java Sea.
 - **Key Straits:** [Taiwan Strait](#), Luzon Strait, Strait of Malacca.

