

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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LA NINA AND ITS IMPACTS

Context

- The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** has forecasted **above-normal rain in the upcoming monsoon season in India**, with “favourable” **La Nina conditions** expected to set in by August-September.

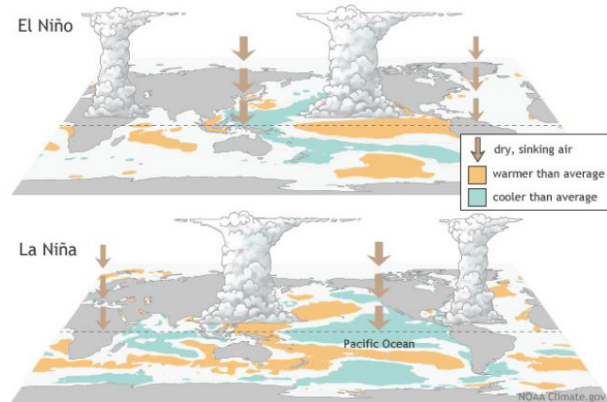
About

- El Niño and La Nina are climate phenomena that are **a result of ocean-atmosphere interactions**, which impact the temperature of waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- El Niño events are far more frequent** than La Nina ones. **Once every two to seven years**, neutral ENSO conditions get interrupted by either El Niño or La Nina.
- Coriolis Effect:** The **Earth’s east-west rotation** causes all winds blowing between 30 degrees to the north and south of the equator to slant in their trajectory.
 - As a result, winds in the region flow towards a southwesterly direction in the northern hemisphere and a northwesterly direction in the southern hemisphere. This is known as the Coriolis Effect.
 - Due to this, winds in this belt **called trade winds blow westwards on either side of the equator.**
- Normal Conditions:** During normal conditions in the Pacific ocean, **trade winds** blow west along the equator, **taking warm water from South America towards Asia.**
 - To replace that warm water, cold water rises from the depths — a process called **upwelling.**
 - The warmer surface waters **near Indonesia create a region of low-pressure area**, causing the air to rise upwards. This also results in **formation of clouds and heavy rainfall.**
 - The air flow also helps in building up the monsoon system which brings **rainfall over India.**

La Niña:

- It means **Little Girl** in Spanish. La Niña is also sometimes called El Viejo, anti-El Niño, or simply “a cold event.” La Niña has the opposite effect of El Niño.

- The **trade winds become stronger than usual**, pushing more **warmer waters towards the Indonesian coast**, and making the **eastern Pacific Ocean colder than normal.**



Impacts

- Increased rainfall:** Regions such as Southeast Asia, northern Australia, and parts of South America often experience above-average rainfall during La Niña events.
 - Except in **east and northeast India**, all remaining regions are expected to receive normal or above seasonal rainfall during La Niña.
 - Similar to India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and their neighbouring countries receive good rainfall during a La Niña year.
- Drier conditions in some areas:** Conversely, regions like the southwestern United States and parts of Africa experience below-average rainfall, leading to drought conditions.
- Stronger Atlantic hurricanes:** La Niña tends to reduce wind shear in the Atlantic, creating conditions that are more conducive to the development of hurricanes.
 - For instance, the Atlantic Ocean churned out a record 30 hurricanes during the La Niña year 2021.
- Cooler temperatures:** Some areas experience cooler temperatures than normal, particularly in the Pacific Northwest of the United States and parts of South America.

What is El Nino?

- El Niño means **Little Boy** in Spanish. South American fishermen first noticed periods of unusually warm water in the Pacific Ocean in the 1600s.

- ♦ It is a climate phenomenon characterized by the periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- ♦ During El Niño, **trade winds weaken**. Warm water is pushed back east, toward the west coast of the Americas and as a result **cold water is pushed towards Asia**.

Impact of El Nino

- **Low Rainfall:** El Niño often correlates with below-average monsoon rainfall in India, leading to droughts in many parts of the country. This can have severe consequences for agriculture, water resources, and the economy.
- **Increased Temperature:** El Niño also lead to an increase in temperatures across various parts of India.
- **Forest Fires:** The drier conditions associated with El Niño increase the risk of forest fires, particularly in regions with dense vegetation. These fires cause environmental damage, loss of biodiversity, and air pollution.
- **Water Scarcity:** Decreased rainfall during El Niño events lead to water scarcity in many parts of India. This affect drinking water supplies, irrigation for agriculture, and hydropower generation.
- **Impact on Fisheries:** El Niño also affect marine ecosystems and fisheries along India's coastline. Changes in sea surface temperatures and ocean currents disrupt fish migration patterns and lead to fluctuations in fish populations.

Conclusion

- Scientists say that climate change is **set to impact the ENSO cycle**. Many studies suggest that global warming tends to change the mean oceanic conditions over the Pacific Ocean and **trigger more El Niño events**.
- The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has also said that climate change is likely to affect the **intensity and frequency of extreme weather and climate events linked to El Niño and La Nina**.

Source: IE

IRELAND, SPAIN, NORWAY TO FORMALLY RECOGNISE PALESTINE

Context

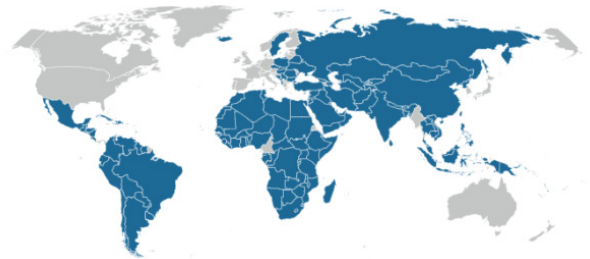
- Norway, Ireland and Spain announced that they will formally recognise the state of Palestine.

About

- A total of **143 out of 193** member-states of the UN have recognised a Palestinian state. The UK and the US are among nations that do not formally recognise a Palestinian state.
- **Israel does not recognise Palestinian statehood** and opposes the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. It argues such a state would be a threat to Israel's existence.

Countries that recognise Palestine

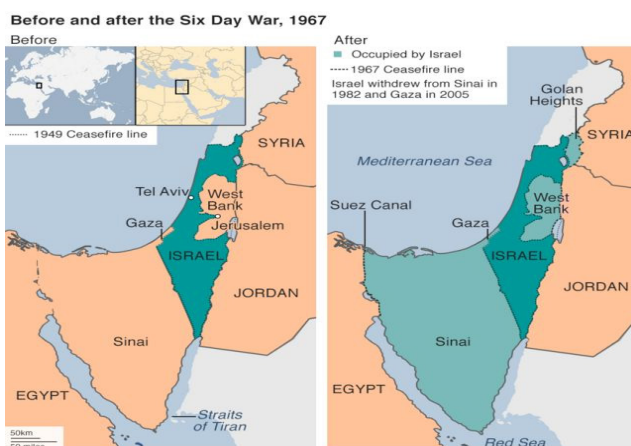
As of May 22, 2024



Israel-Palestine Conflict

- **Inception of Conflict:** The United Nations (UN) proposed an **Arab-Jewish partition of Palestine** between Palestine and the new state of Israel.
 - ♦ This partition plan mandated **53 percent** of the land to the Jewish-majority state (Israel) and **47 percent** to the Palestinian-majority state (Palestine).
 - ♦ This idea didn't receive well by the Arab countries in the Middle East.
- **First Arab-Israeli war:** Jewish paramilitary groups, however, formed the state of Israel by force in 1948. This prompted a deadly war with its Arab neighbors – Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan in 1948. This was the first Arab-Israeli war.
 - ♦ Israel won this war and ended up occupying more land than previously envisaged in the 1947 UN partition plan.
 - ♦ The Palestinians were forced out of their homes when the State of Israel was created in historical Palestine in **1948** (the Palestinians call the events '**Nakba**', or catastrophe).
 - ♦ Twenty-eight of those Palestinian families moved to Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem to settle there.
- **Six-Day War of 1967:** In 1967, the Arab countries again refused to recognise Israel as a state, which led to another war, known as the Six-Day War.
 - ♦ Israel won this war too and occupied even more parts of Palestine.

- ◆ The **West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem**, which houses the holy Old City, came under Israel's control.
- ◆ It also occupied **Syrian Golan Heights and Egypt's Sinai Peninsula**.
- ◆ By the early 1970s, Jewish agencies started demanding the families leave the land.
- **Oslo Accords:** It was **backed by the United Nations (UN)** and signed between the Israeli government and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993.
 - ◆ Under this, a part of the West Bank came under the control of the Palestinian Authority.
- **Abraham Accords:** Abraham Accords are a **series of agreements** to normalize relations between **Israel and several Arab states**.
 - ◆ The accords are named after the **patriarch Abraham** regarded as a prophet in Judaism and Islam.
 - ◆ The accords, all of which were **signed in the latter half of 2020**, consist of a general declaration alongside bilateral agreements between Israel and the **United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco**.
 - ◆ The accord has normalized the relations between many West Asian countries and Israel.
- **11 days war:** In May 2021, Israeli police raided Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third-holiest site in Islam, which set off an 11-day war between Israel and Hamas that killed more than 200 Palestinians and more than 10 Israelis.



Way Ahead

- Peace based on a **“two-state solution”** is much needed with the help of international organizations and can only be achieved from Israel-Palestine talks.

Source: TH

BIMSTEC CHARTER CAME INTO FORCE

Context

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) will now be open to new members and observers after a historic first charter of the grouping came into force.

Background

- The seven members of BIMSTEC first signed the charter in **2022** at the fifth BIMSTEC summit held virtually in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- However, it could come into force only after every country ratified the document, which finally happened in April 2024.

What is BIMSTEC?

- BIMSTEC is a regional organization that was **established in 1997** with the signing of the **Bangkok Declaration**.
- **Permanent Secretariat:** Dhaka, Bangladesh
- **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Myanmar and India.
- **Significance:** The BIMSTEC countries are home to **22 percent** of the total world population and have a combined gross domestic product (GDP) of about **\$3.6 trillion**.

About Charter

- The charter establishes a **legal and institutional framework for cooperation** among the seven countries surrounding the Bay of Bengal.
- The document also gives the organization a **legal personality**, establishes a mechanism for admitting new members and observers, and enables negotiations and agreements with countries and other regional and international groupings.

Significant aspects of charter

- According to the charter **all decisions will be taken by consensus** among current members.
- The charter gives the institution a clear process for the **admission of new members**, including adding the criteria of geographical contiguity or “primary” dependence on the Bay of Bengal for trade and transport purposes.

- The charter also highlights that the **leaders' summit will be held every two years** and indicates the procedure for the rotational chairmanship of the organization.
- It also empowers the BIMSTEC ministerial meeting to set up any further criteria as required.

BIMSTEC and SAARC

- The idea of BIMSTEC also gained prominence after the **2016 Uri attack** when India was able to get **SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)** nations on its side to boycott the organizations' summit, which was to be held in Pakistan.
- SAARC and BIMSTEC focus on geographically overlapping regions. But, they are not equal alternatives.
 - ♦ SAARC is a purely regional organization, whereas BIMSTEC is inter-regional and connects both South Asia and ASEAN.
 - ♦ Unlike SAARC, which is burdened by India-Pakistan hostilities, BIMSTEC is relatively free of sharp bilateral disagreements and promises to provide India with a co-operative sphere of its own.
- India is often accused by Nepal for deactivating SAARC in favor of BIMSTEC due to the membership of Pakistan in the former organization.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- **SAARC was established** in 1985.
- **Secretariat:** It was set up in **Kathmandu, Nepal**, in 1987.
- **It aims** to accelerate the process of economic and social development in its member states through increased intra-regional cooperation.
- **SAARC has eight member countries:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka.

Way Ahead

- The BIMSTEC Charter is a **testament to the shared commitment of the Member States** to promote regional cooperation in key sectors such as security, connectivity, trade, agriculture, environment, science and technology, agriculture and people to people contact.
- It is an important step towards **promoting regional cooperation** and allowing for agreements to be signed with other countries and regional organizations.

Source: TH

STUDY FINDS PRESENCE OF MICROPLASTICS IN TESTICLES OF HUMANS & CANINES

Context

- Study finds **pervasive presence of microplastics in testicles** of humans & canines.

Findings of Study

- Humans are potentially exposed to microplastics **through oral intake, inhalation and skin contact.**
- The effects of microplastics consist of **oxidative stress, DNA damage, organ dysfunction, metabolic disorder, immune response, neurotoxicity, as well as reproductive and developmental toxicity.**

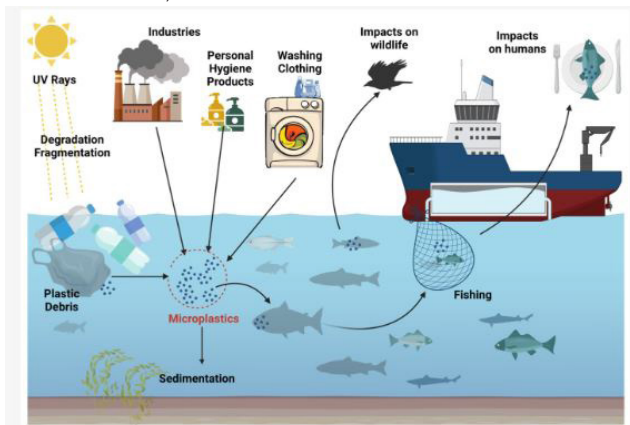
Menace of Plastic Pollution

- In 2024, the **global Plastic Overshoot Day (POD)** was projected to occur on September 5.
 - ♦ POD marks the point in time when the amount of plastic waste generated exceeds the world's capacity to manage it, resulting in environmental pollution.
- **China, India, the United States and Japan** will account for **51 percent** of this volume, according to the 2024 POD Report by EA Earth Action.
- **India** will be the **second leading polluter of the water bodies, after China in the world.**
- A 2023 report by the **Nordic Council of Ministers** indicated that without global action, the annual levels of mismanaged plastics would continue to rise and could almost double from **110 million tonnes (Mt) in 2019 to 205 Mt by 2040.**

What is Plastic and Microplastics?

- The word plastic is derived from the Greek word **plastikos**, meaning "**capable of being shaped or moulded.**"
- Plastic refers to a **wide range of synthetic or semi-synthetic materials** that use **polymers** as a main ingredient with their defining quality being their **plasticity** – the ability of a solid material to undergo permanent deformation in response to applied forces.
 - ♦ This makes them extremely **adaptable, capable of being shaped as per requirement.**

- The basic building blocks of plastics are **monomers**, which are small molecules that can join together to form long chains called **polymers through a process called polymerization**.
- **Microplastics:** Plastics break down into their smaller units called **microplastics** – officially defined as plastics **less than five millimetres in diameter**.
 - ♦ These microplastics find their way across the planet, from the depths of the Pacific Ocean to the heights of the Himalayas.
 - ♦ According to the most recent global estimates, **an average human consumes at least 50,000 microplastic particles annually** due to contamination of the food chain, potable water, and air.
- **Habitat Degradation:** Microplastics presence interfere with nutrient cycling, sediment stability, and the behavior of organisms.
 - ♦ In some cases, microplastics create microenvironments that favor the growth of harmful bacteria or invasive species, further disrupting ecosystem dynamics.
- **Global Distribution:** Microplastics have been detected in diverse environments worldwide, including remote and pristine locations far from major sources of plastic pollution.
 - ♦ Their global distribution highlights the pervasive nature of plastic contamination and underscores the need for coordinated international efforts to address this issue.
- **Effect on Human Health:** Notably, microplastics contain a number of toxic chemicals which pose severe risks to human health. The biggest health risk associated is with the **chemical BPA or Bisphenol A**, which is **used to harden the plastic**.



- ♦ BPA contaminates food and drinks, causing **alterations in liver function, insulin resistance, fetal development in pregnant women, the reproductive system and brain function**.

India's Efforts In Tackling Plastic Waste

Environmental Concerns of Microplastics

- **Marine Pollution:** Microplastics enter oceans through various pathways, including direct disposal, runoff from land, and fragmentation of larger plastic debris.
 - ♦ Marine organisms ingest microplastics, leading to physical harm, blockages in digestive systems, and potential transfer of toxins up the food chain.
- **Freshwater Contamination:** Microplastics are also found in freshwater environments, such as rivers, lakes, and streams.
- **Bioaccumulation and Biomagnification:** Microplastics have the potential to accumulate in the tissues of organisms through processes like ingestion and adsorption.
 - ♦ As predators consume prey containing microplastics, these contaminants biomagnify, reaching higher concentrations in organisms at the top of the food chain, including humans.
- **Ban on single-use plastics:** India has banned the production, use, and sale of single-use plastics such as bags, cups, plates, cutlery, and straws in many states.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** The Indian government has implemented EPR, making plastic manufacturers responsible for managing and disposing of the waste generated by their products.
- **Plastic Waste Management Rules:** India introduced the Plastic Waste Management Rules in 2016, which provide a framework for managing plastic waste through various measures, including recycling and waste-to-energy initiatives.
- Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022:
 - ♦ The guidelines on EPR(Extended Producer Responsibility) coupled with the prohibition of identified single-use plastic items.
 - ♦ It banned the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic less than seventy-five micrometers.

- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** The Indian government launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, a national cleanliness campaign, which includes the collection and disposal of plastic waste.
- **Plastic Parks:** Government has set up Plastic Parks, which are specialized industrial zones for recycling and processing plastic waste.
- **Beach clean-up drives:** The Indian government and various non-governmental organizations have organized beach clean-up drives to collect and dispose of plastic waste from beaches.
- **India is a signatory to MARPOL (International Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution).**
- **The “India Plastic Challenge – Hackathon 2021**
 - ♦ It is a unique competition calling upon start-ups /entrepreneurs and students of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop innovative solutions to mitigate plastic pollution and develop alternatives to single-use plastics.

Source: DTE

NEWS IN SHORT

15TH FOUNDATION DAY OF COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA (CCI)

Context

- Recently, the **Attorney General for India** highlighted the need for new ideas of coexistence between the engine of free market and the umbrella of social benefit on 15th Annual Day commemoration of Competition Commission of India (CCI).

About the Competition Commission of India (CCI)

- It was established as a **statutory body** in 2009 by the Government under the **Competition Act, 2002**.
- It comes under the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**. It is a **quasi-judicial body**.
- It consists of a **Chairperson and not more than 6 Members** appointed by the Central Government.
- It aims to establish a robust competitive environment through proactive engagement with stakeholders and enforcing professionalism, transparency, resolve, and wisdom in its operations.

Objectives:

- To eliminate practices that have an adverse effect on competition;
- To promote and sustain competition;
- To protect the interests of consumers, and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

Powers and Responsibilities:

- The CCI has been entrusted with the enforcement and implementation of the Competition Act (2002).
- It has the authority to investigate anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position, and regulate combinations (acquisitions, mergers, and amalgamations) to ensure they do not have an adverse effect on competition in India.

Source: PIB

PROJECT UDBHAV

Context:

- Recently, the Indian Army said that it is exploring **India’s military heritage under ‘Project UDBHAV’**.

About

- Project UDBHAV (translates as ‘origin’ or ‘genesis’) is a collaboration between the **Indian Army** and the **United Service Institution of India (USI)**, which aims to revisit the roots of India’s ancient military thoughts.

Objectives

- To synthesise ancient wisdom with contemporary military practices;
- Forging a unique and holistic approach to address modern security challenges;
- To integrate age-old wisdom with contemporary military pedagogy through interdisciplinary research, workshops and leadership seminars;
- To facilitate in-depth understanding of our knowledge systems and philosophies;

Embracing Ancient Texts and Narratives

- Project Udbhav has embraced ancient texts from the **4th century BCE to the 8th century CE**, with a focus on **Kautilya, Kamandaka, and the Kural**.
- **Arthashastra of Chanakya:** It underscores the importance of strategic partnerships, alliances and diplomacy, aligning with modern military practices such as international cooperation and soft power projection.

- **Thirukkural of Thiruvalluvar:** It advocates **ethical conduct** in all endeavours, including warfare, that aligns with modern military codes of ethics of just war and **principles of Geneva Convention**.
- The **Naval Battle of Saraighat in 1671, led by Lachit Borphukan**, stands as a stellar example of the use of clever diplomatic negotiations to buy time, employ psychological warfare, focus on military intelligence and exploiting the strategic weakness of the Mughals.

Source: BS

JUVENILE JUSTICE BOARD (JJB)

Context

- Recently, the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) cancelled the bail of accused minors and issued a notice to appear before it.

About Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)

- **Juvenile Justice Board** (earlier Juvenile Court) was established after the enactment of the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000**.
- **Section 4 (1) of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015** deals with the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB).
- It consists of a **metropolitan magistrate or a judicial magistrate** of the first class (**with at least three years' experience**), along with **two social workers**, one of whom is mandated to be a woman.
- **The State Government** needs to constitute for **every district, one or more JJBs** for exercising the powers and discharging its functions relating to children in conflict with law under the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**.
 - ♦ The **primary responsibility** of setting up the JJBs vests with the **State Governments/UT Administrations** concerned.

Child under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- A child is defined under **Section 2(12) of the Act** as a person who has **not completed eighteen years of age**.
- The Act recognises **two kinds of Children**:
 - ♦ **Child in Conflict with Law** (who has committed some offence);
 - ♦ **Child in Need of Care and Protection** (who is a victim of crime or circumstances).

Functions

- To deal with cases of juveniles in conflict with the law, ensuring their rights, protection, and rehabilitation.
- To ensure that the child's rights are protected throughout the process of apprehending the child, inquiry, aftercare and rehabilitation.
- To ensure the availability of legal aid for the child through the legal services institutions.
- Board conducts **at least one inspection visit every month** of residential facilities for children in conflict with law and recommends action for improvement in quality of services to the **District Child Protection Unit** and the state government.
 - ♦ Children in conflict with the law are facilitated in **Observation Homes and Special Homes**.

Source: TH

ECONOMIC CAPITAL FRAMEWORK (ECF)

Context

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the transfer of Rs 2.11 lakh crores as surplus to the Union government for the FY-2023-24, based on the Economic Capital Framework (ECF).

About

- The announcement came along with an increase in the **Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB)** to 6.50 percent for fiscal year **2023-24**.
- The Board decided to increase the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) to **6.50% for 2023-24**, from 6% in the previous year
- The Committee had recommended that the risk provisioning under the CRB be maintained within a range of **6.5-5.5%** of the RBI's balance sheet.

Economic Capital Framework (ECF)

- **The Economic Capital Framework (ECF)** adopted by the RBI in 2019 as per recommendations of the **Bimal Jalan committee**.
- The economic capital framework provides a methodology for determining the appropriate level of risk provisions and profit distribution to be made under **Section 47 of the RBI Act, 1934**.
- As per this provision, the central bank is required to pay the balance of its profits to the central government after making provision for bad and doubtful debts, depreciation in assets, and contributions to staff.

Source: TH

SURVEY ON AGNIPATH SCHEME

Context

- The Army is conducting an **internal survey on the Agnipath scheme** to assess its impact on its recruitment process so far, based on which it is likely to draw up recommendations for possible changes to the scheme.

About

- Introduced in **2022**, the Agnipath scheme — also called the **Tour of Duty scheme** is a **short-term recruitment scheme for the Indian Army**.
- Under the policy, soldiers — called **'Agniveers'** — are recruited for **four years**, at the end of which **only 25 percent** of recruits from a batch are retained for regular service.
- Age Limit** : Candidates between the **age of 17.5 years to 21 years** will be eligible for enrolling in the Agnipath scheme.
- The scheme provides an avenue to Indian youth, desirous of serving the country to get recruited in the Armed Forces for a short duration.
 - The scheme enhances the youth profile of the Armed Forces.

Source: IE

BALTIC SEA

Context

- Leaders around the **Baltic Sea** reacted to reports that Russia could revise the **borders of its territorial waters in the region**.

About

- The Baltic Sea is the **youngest sea on the planet**, emerging some 10,000-15,000 years ago as the glaciers retreated at the end of the last Ice Age.
- It is located in **Northern Europe**, enclosed by **Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Sweden**.
- It is one of the **planet's largest bodies of brackish water**, where salt water from the North-East Atlantic blends with fresh water from the surrounding rivers and streams.



Source: IE

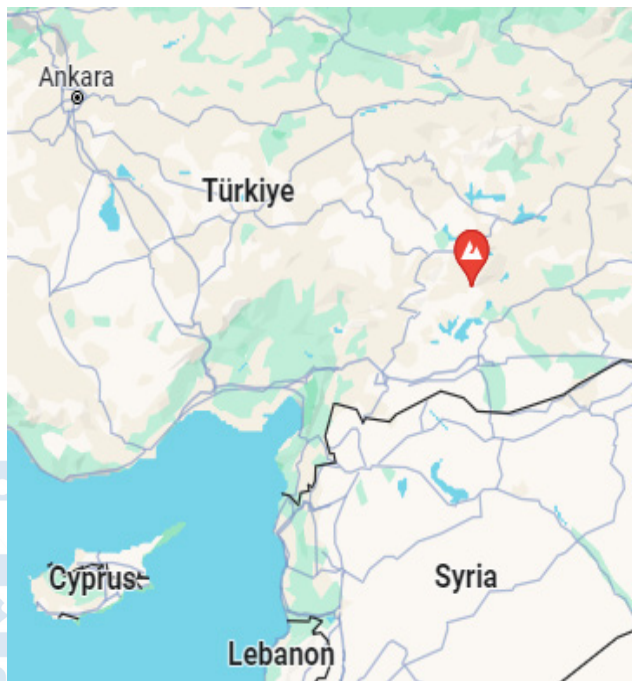
MOUNT NEMRUT

In News

- NASA's International Space Station captured a rare image of an unusual crater on Mount Nemrut.

About Mount Nemrut(Nemrut Dağı)

- It is one of the highest peaks of the Eastern Taurus mountain range in south-east Türkiye.



- It was named after the biblical figure King Nimrod, standing 9,672 feet (2,948 meters) tall at the intersection between the **Arabian and Eurasian tectonic plates**.
- It is a geologically young stratovolcano and last erupted in 1650 C.E.
- It is the **Hiero Theseion** (temple-tomb and house of the gods) built by the late Hellenistic King Antiochos I
- It has been designated a World Cultural Heritage site by UNESCO, and is one of the most important National Parks in the country

Source: TH

SPAIN BECOMES MEMBER OF INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE

Context

- Spain has become the **99th member** of the International Solar Alliance.

About

- **India and France jointly launched** the International Solar Alliance (ISA) during 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** held in Paris in 2015.
- **The ISA aims** to contribute to the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the rapid and massive deployment of solar energy.

- **Members:** At present, **119 countries** are signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement, of which **98 countries** have submitted the necessary instruments of ratification to become full members of the ISA.

Source: AIR

