

North Macedonia

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In news— Protests are going on in North Macedonia related to its long-running quest to join the European Union, a process that has faced one hurdle after the other.

What is the dispute?

- North Macedonia has been an EU candidate for 17 years.
- But in a region where **borders and ethnicities have shifted and overlapped** over centuries, it was beset by problems from the start.
- **The country's chosen name, Macedonia, sparked outrage in neighboring Greece**, which said the term harbored expansionist aims against its own province of the same name and was an attempt to usurp Greek history and culture.
- **Athens held up N. Macedonia's EU and NATO membership bids for years**, until a 2019 deal was reached that included the smaller country changing its name to North Macedonia.
- **But the following year, neighboring Bulgaria blocked the renamed nation's attempts to join the EU**, accusing N. Macedonia of disrespecting shared cultural and historic ties.
- Among Bulgaria's key demands were acknowledgment that the language of North Macedonia derived from Bulgarian, and the recognition of a Bulgarian minority.
- The size of the Bulgarian community in North Macedonia is a matter of contention.

About North Macedonia-

- North Macedonia, officially the **Republic of North Macedonia**, is a country in Southeast Europe.
- It gained **independence in 1991** as one of the **successor states of Yugoslavia**.
- It is a **landlocked country bordering Kosovo to the**

northwest, Serbia to the north, Bulgaria to the east, Greece to the south, and Albania to the west.



- It is **part of the larger region of Macedonia**, which **also includes Greek Macedonia and the Blagoevgrad Province** in southwestern **Bulgaria**.
- **Skopje, the capital and largest city**, is home to a quarter of the country's population.
- **The majority of the residents are ethnic Macedonians, a South Slavic people.**
- **Albanians form a significant minority** at around 25%, **followed by Turks, Romani, Serbs**, Bosniaks, Aromanians and a few other minorities.
- The region's history begins with the **kingdom of Paeonia, a mixed Thracian-Illyrian polity.**
- A unitary parliamentary constitutional republic, North Macedonia is a member of the UN, NATO, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, OSCE, CEFTA, BSEC and the WTO.
- **Since 2005, it has also been a candidate for joining the European Union**
- It is **geographically clearly defined by a central valley** formed by the **Vardar river** and framed along its borders by mountain ranges.
- The **terrain is mostly rugged, located between the Šar**

Mountains and Osogovo, which frame the valley of the Vardar river.

- **Three large lakes**—Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa and Dojran Lake—lie on the southern borders, bisected by the frontiers with Albania and Greece.
- **Ohrid is considered to be one of the oldest lakes and biotopes in the world.**
- The region is **seismically active** and has been the site of destructive earthquakes in the past, most recently in 1963.
- Four different seasons are found in the country with warm and dry summers and moderately cold and snowy winters.
- There are **three main climatic zones in the country:** mildly continental in the north, temperate Mediterranean in the south and mountainous in the zones with high altitude.