

What is 'Gateway to Hell'?

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In news— Recently, the Turkmenistan President has ordered experts to find a way to extinguish a fire in a huge natural gas crater, the Darvaza gas crater also known as the 'Gateway to Hell'.

About Gateway to Hell (Darvaza gas crater)-

- It is a 69 meters wide and 30 meters deep crater located in the Karakum desert and has been burning for the last 50 years.
- In 1971, Soviet geologists were drilling for oil in the Karakum desert when they hit a pocket of natural gas by mistake, which caused the earth to collapse and ended up forming three huge sinkholes.
- This pocket of natural gas contained methane, hence to stop that methane from leaking into the atmosphere, the scientists lit it with fire, assuming the gas present in the pit would burn out within a few weeks.
- In 2018, the country's president Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov officially renamed it as the **"Shining of Karakum"**.

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Note: A volcanic crater is an approximately circular depression in the ground caused by volcanic activity. It is typically a bowl-shaped feature within which contains either multiple vents or a singular vent.

About Turkmenistan-

- Known for its autocratic government and large gas reserves, Turkmenistan also has a reputation as an island of stability in restive Central Asia.
- It is the **second largest state in Central Asia, after Kazakhstan**, and is the southernmost of the region's five republics.

- **It is bordered by** Kazakhstan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north and east, Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south, and the Caspian Sea to the west.
- It got its **independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.**
- **Its Capital is Ashgabat & the Currency is Turkmen manat.**



- Turkmen, Russian are major languages of the country.
- **For centuries the Turkmens were divided into numerous tribes and clans, the largest being the Tekke, Ersari, and Yomut.**
- About 70% of the country is covered by the uninhabited Karakum, a desert with a barren flat-to-rolling landscape and sand dunes, the terrain is rising to the Turkmen-Khorasan Mountain Range (Kopet Dag) in south west, the mountains separate the country from Iran.
- **Turkmenistan's main rivers are Amu Darya (ancient Oxus River),** which flows along its northeastern border toward the Aral Sea, and **the Tejen, Morghāb (Murgab, or Murgap), and Atrek;** there are also numerous small mountain rivers.