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## Chora Museum and New Gas Field: Turkey

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### Why in News

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Recently, the Turkish President reconverted the **Chora museum into a mosque**. This is the second museum after **Hagia Sophia** to be converted into a mosque. Turkey has also found a new gas field in Black Sea.



### Key Points

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- **Chora Museum:**
  - It was **built initially as a church in 534 AD**, during the early **Byzantine period**.
  - In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, its **internal walls, pillars and domes were covered with mosaics and frescoes** showing scenes from **biblical stories**.
  - After the conquest of **Constantinople (capital city of the Roman Empire) by the Ottomans (1453)**, the church was seized and **turned into a mosque** in 1511.
  - In 1945, it was **converted into a museum**.
  - Chora is also known as **Kariye in Turkish** and the mediaeval **Church of the Holy Saviour in Chora**.
- **Reason:**
  - The reconversion can be seen as **Turkish President's pro islamic policies**, where he **emphasises Turkey's Ottoman history** and domestic achievements over Western ideas and influences.
  - By adopting pro Islamic policies the Turkish President **aims to become leader of the Muslim world**.
    - The Turkish President has also **taken anti-India positions** especially on **Kashmir** to bolster its own position in the Muslim world.
  - It can also be seen as a counter to **USA's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel**.
    - Jerusalem which has a significant population of Arab-muslims who are becoming more and more hostile because of the **USA's recent stand on Israel-Palestine issue**. This step of conversion of mosques would gain support of Arab countries for Turkey.
- **Gas Field in Black Sea:**
  - Recently, Turkey has found its **biggest ever** (a 320 billion cubic metre) natural gas field discovery in **Black Sea**. The gas field will become functional in 2023.
  - Turkey is determined to become a **net energy exporter**. The discovery has a **potential to transform Turkey's dependence on** Russia, Iran and Azerbaijan for **energy imports**.
  - Currently Turkey is having a **chronic current account deficit**, any reduction in Turkey's energy import bill would boost its finances. It will also help the **Lira (Currency of Turkey)** to recover against the dollar.
  - Currently **Turkey is also having strained relations with its neighbour Greece** over exploration of natural resources in Mediterranean sea.



**Source: IE**