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SCIENCE FOR ALL

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Physical Geography of Europe incl. important Geopolitical regions

Map showing Balkanatolia 40 million years ago and at the present day. | Photo Credit: Alexis Licht & Grégoire Métais/CNRS

Forgotten for centuries, Balkanatolia is a speculative, 'third' Eurasian continent, wedged between Europe, Africa and Asia. The continent likely came into existence 50 million years ago and lost its independent identity, because of a major glaciation event 34 million years ago, that led to the formation of the Antarctic ice sheet and lowering sea levels, connecting Balkanatolia to Western Europe.

Why such a continent ought to have existed results from palaeontological evidence from centuries that posed a puzzle. During the Eocene Epoch (55 to 34 million years ago), Western Europe and Eastern Asia formed two distinct land masses with very different mammalian faunas: European forests were home to endemic fauna such as Palaeotheres (an extinct group distantly related to present-day horses, but more like today's tapirs), whereas Asia had a more diverse fauna including the mammal families found today on both continents.

Western Europe was known to be colonised by Asian species around 34 million years ago, leading to a major renewal of vertebrate fauna and the extinction of its endemic mammals, a sudden event called the 'Grande Coupure'. Surprisingly, fossils found in the Balkans point to the presence of Asian mammals in southern Europe long before the Grande Coupure. This was best explained by the existence of a landmass, prior to the Eocene, that was disconnected and a continent of its own.

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NMDC RECEIVES 1ST PRIZE IN ISPAT RAJBHASHA AWARD FOR 2018-19 AND 2020-21 AND ISPAT RAJBHASHA PRERNA AWARD FOR 2019-20

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Distribution of key Natural Resources - Mineral & Oil Resources of India

National Mineral Development Corporation Ltd. (NMDC), Country's largest Iron Ore producer, a CPSE under Ministry of Steel received 1st prize in the *Ispat Rajbhasha Award* for 2018-19 and 2020-21 and the *Ispat Rajbhasha Prerna Award* for 2019-20 in the meeting of the Hindi Salahakar Committee of the Ministry of Steel held in Madurai on 3rd March 2022. The Union Minister of Steel, Shri Ram Chandra Prasad Singh, presented the accolades to Shri Sumit Deb, Chairman and Managing Director, NMDC. He appreciated the efforts of all the Steel PSEs in putting into practice the official language of India and congratulated NMDC for winning the awards.



The Minister of State for Steel Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste presented the Citation for a period of three years to the Deputy General Manager (Official Language), NMDC on the occasion. NMDC presented a short film on the status of Hindi language implementation in the company. This innovative effort of NMDC was highly appreciated by the members of the Committee.

The meeting was attended by the senior officials of the Ministry of Steel, Members of the Hindi Salahakar Committee, Chairman and Managing Directors of all Steel PSUs.

On this occasion, Shri Sumit Deb said, "I take pride in NMDC's contribution in implementing and celebrating the Hindi language. At NMDC, we foster original writing in Hindi on technical subjects and encourage the use of this language in daily interactions."

MV/AKN/SK

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CYCLONE ASANI, FIRST IN 2022, TO FORM OVER BAY OF BENGAL NEXT WEEK, IMD WARNS

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Important Geophysical Phenomenon - Tropical Cyclones

Asani is unlikely to cross the Indian coast but heavy rain and strong winds are expected over Andaman and Nicobar Islands

The [Indian Metrological Department \(IMD\)](#) had last week warned that a low pressure area was brewing over southwest Indian Ocean and was expected intensify into a cyclone by early next week. This week IMD has warned that the cyclone is likely to have landfall in Andaman and Nicobar islands, most likely on 21 March.

Authorities of the south [Indian islands](#) have put Andaman and Nicobar on alert. The cyclone is unlikely to cross the Indian coast but heavy rain and strong winds are expected over Andaman and Nicobar Islands

This is the first cyclone to hit India this year. The cyclone is likely to form over Bay of Bengal.

Predictions

IMD had last week predicted that the cyclone may move towards Bangladesh and adjoining north Myanmar. However, the cyclone's latest movement suggests that east and northeast India remain vulnerable to its impact throughout next week.

The low pressure area (LPA), which was formed on Tuesday, was expected to move east-northeastwards and become a well marked LPA by Saturday and subsequently move along and off Andaman & Nicobar islands before intensifying into a depression, the India Meteorological Department said.

On 19 March, light to moderate rainfall/thundershowers are likely in the south Andaman Sea. Heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected at a few places and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The weather system was expected to further intensify into a cyclonic storm on March 21 and continue to move north-northwestwards till March 22.

Wind prediction

Strong winds reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph are very likely over the Bay of Bengal and the equatorial Indian Ocean till 18 March. Wind speed is gradually expected to increase by 21 March. Gale winds speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph are very likely over Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Bay of Bengal. On 23 March, gale winds speed reaching 70-80 kmph gusting to 90 kmph are very likely over the Bay of Bengal and Bangladesh and Myanmar coasts.

Nomenclature

The cyclone has been named Asani by Sri Lanka.

Areas likely to be affected

Sea condition is very likely to become rough over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining south Andaman Sea on Thursday and Friday.

"For now, it does not seem like it will affect the Indian coast. Our models indicate Asani may cross Bangladesh or adjoining north Myanmar coasts. But it is also too early to say what will be the trajectory. All conditions are favourable for formation and intensification of the cyclone," said an IMD official.

"Thereafter, it will move north-northeastwards and reach near Bangladesh and adjoining north Myanmar coast by morning of 23 March," the weather office said.

Warnings issued

The weather office has advised fishermen not to venture into central parts of south Bay of Bengal and adjoining Equatorial Indian Ocean on Wednesday and into southeast Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea area on Thursday and Friday.

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CENTRE PUTS PAR-TAPI-NARMADA LINKING PROJECT ON HOLD

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Indian River System Including Lakes, and HEPs

After a strong protest by tribal people of south Gujarat, the Centre has decided to put the Par Tapi Narmada river-linking project on hold. The decision to put the brakes on the project came after a meeting in Delhi with Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Water Resources Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Gujarat's tribal MPs and MLAs. According to sources, Mr. Shekhawat has promised that the consent of both Gujarat and Maharashtra was required to launch the project and if any State was not in agreement, the project cannot be launched.

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