Chora Museum

Context

- 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.

Chora Museum:

- It was built initially as a church in 534 AD, during the early Byzantine period.
- In the 11th 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.