

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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5 NEW LANGUAGES GRANTED THE CLASSICAL LANGUAGE STATUS

Context

- The Union Cabinet has granted classical language status to **Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali**, increasing recognized classical languages to **eleven**.
 - The Cabinet also **updated the eligibility criteria** for classical languages under the Centre's Language Expert Committee.

Classical Languages

- India had six classical languages** — Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia.
 - Tamil was declared a classical language in **2004**, Sanskrit in **2005**, Kannada in **2008**, Telugu in **2008**, Malayalam in **2013**, and Odia in **2014**.
 - All the Classical Languages are listed in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**.
- Criteria:** It should have **high antiquity** of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1,500-2,000 years,
 - a body of ancient literature or texts that is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers,
 - the presence of "knowledge texts", especially prose texts in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence,
 - the said language and literature should be distinct from its modern format.
- Benefits:** The Education Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it such as:
 - two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in the said languages,
 - a Centre of Excellence for Studies in the classical language is set up,
 - and the University Grants Commission is requested to start with a certain number of Chairs for the classical language at least in the Central Universities.

Source: HT

CASTE BIAS AND SEGREGATION IN PRISONS

Context

- The Supreme Court declared that **caste-based discrimination of prisoners** oppressive to **fundamental human dignity and personality**.

About

- The SC had found that **prison manuals in more than 10 States**, including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, contained **provisions which sanction discrimination** and forced labour in prisons on the grounds of caste.
- The existing prejudices in prison rules are** with respect to division of manual labour, segregation of barracks and provisions that discriminate against prisoners belonging to denotified tribes and habitual offenders.
 - Menial jobs** in jails are not allotted to prisoners, who belong to a specific caste that is not accustomed to them.
 - The separation of Thevars, Nadars, and Pallars in different sections of the Palayamkottai Central Jail in Tamil Nadu was one such instance of caste-based segregation of barracks.
- Even the Union government's Modern Prison Manual of 2016 and the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act of 2023 variously **rate "habitual offenders"** who are mostly members of denotified tribes.
 - These laws assign **kitchen duties and cooking in prisons** on a caste and religious basis. They continue to allow caste-based privileges in prisons.

Key Highlights of the Judgement

- SC referred to **Article 15(1)** of the Constitution which enshrines the **fundamental right against discrimination**.

Removing bias

The Bench says "everyone is born equal" and cannot suffer lifelong due to stigma attached to their caste.

The directions include:

- States and UTs should revise their Prison Manuals/Rules in three months
- Centre should address caste-based discrimination in the Model Prison Manual 2016 and the Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act 2023 in

three months

- "Caste columns" and references to caste in prisoners' registers should be removed

- SC mentioned that if the state itself discriminates against a citizen, then it is **discrimination of the highest form**.
- SC held that discrimination among prisoners and distribution of work on the basis of caste **amounted to untouchability**, which is forbidden under **Article 17 of the Constitution**.

- Degrading labour and oppressive practices violate the **right against forced labour under Article 23 of the Constitution**.
- Prison manuals, by treating members of the denotified and wandering tribes as “born criminals” and habitual offenders, re-affirm **colonial caste-based discrimination**.
 - ♦ The court declared all loose references, not statutorily backed, to ‘habitual offenders’ in prison manuals as **unconstitutional**.
- It also ordered the **district legal services authority** and the **board of visitors** formed under the central model prison manual to **jointly conduct regular inspections** to identify discriminatory practices prevailing in jails.
- **Article 14 of Indian Constitution:** Indian women deserve to be treated equally under article 14 and an individual’s human rights do not deserve to be ignored by anyone, including by their spouse.
- **Human Rights Perspective:** International human rights treaties like **CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women)**, to which India is a signatory, advocate for the criminalization of all forms of sexual violence, including within marriage.
- **Global Precedent:** Many countries have already criminalized marital rape, recognizing it as a form of sexual violence. India, being a progressive democracy, should align with global standards on protecting women’s rights.

Source: TH

UNION GOVERNMENT OPPOSES CRIMINALISATION OF MARITAL RAPE

Context

- The Union Government told the Supreme Court that criminalizing non-consensual sexual acts within marriage as ‘rape’ could disrupt conjugal relationships and destabilize the institution of marriage.

Background

- The Union government was responding to several public interest litigation petitions seeking to strike down **Exception 2 of Section 375** of Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- The provision **excludes non-consensual sexual intercourse** by a husband with his wife, if the latter is over 15 years of age, **from the definition of ‘rape’**.

Arguments For Criminalising Marital Rape

- **Marriage is not a license:** A marriage should not be viewed as a license for a husband to forcibly rape his wife with impunity.
- **Article 21 of Indian Constitution:** A woman is entitled to refuse sexual relations with her husband as the right to bodily integrity and privacy is an intrinsic part of Article 21 of the Constitution.
 - ♦ **In the State of Karnataka v. Krishnappa,** the Supreme Court held that sexual violence apart from being a dehumanizing act is an unlawful intrusion of the right to privacy and sanctity of a female.

Stance of Verma Committee on marital rape

- The Verma Committee recommended that the **exception to marital rape be removed**, pointing out that “a marital or other relationship between the perpetrator or victim is not a valid defence against the crimes of rape or sexual violation.”
- Concurring with the judgment of the European Commission of Human Rights, the Committee endorsed the conclusion that a **rapist remains a rapist regardless of his relationship with the victim**.

Arguments Against Criminalising Marital Rape

- **Destabilize marriage as an institution:** It may create absolutely anarchy in families and destabilize the institution of marriage.
- **Misuse of law:** It may become an easy tool for harassing the husbands by misusing the law similar to the growing misuse of section 498A (harassment caused to a married woman by her husband and in-laws) of the IPC.
- **Implementation issues:** Criminalizing marital rape will create issues like veracity of testimony, evidences in the courts etc.
- **The Ministry of Home Affairs** argued that being married does not take away a woman’s right to give or refuse consent. There are other laws in place to protect a woman’s consent within marriage under **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**.
 - ♦ **Section 354:** Punishes assault or force used to outrage a woman’s modesty.
 - ♦ **Section 354A:** Deals with sexual harassment.
 - ♦ **Section 354B:** Punishes assault or force used with the intent to disrobe a woman.

- ◆ **Section 498A:** Addresses cruelty by a husband or his relatives.

Way Ahead

- The continuous exemption of marital rape from the purview of criminal law sustains the assumption of the **wife as exclusive property of the husband**.
- While protecting the institution of marriage is important, laws must also ensure that **women's autonomy and consent are upheld**.
- However merely criminalizing marital rape may not stop it as **"moral and social awareness"** plays a vital role in stopping such an act.
- India could look to global examples where marital rape has been criminalized, and learn from their approaches to implementing the law while minimizing misuse and ensuring justice.

Source: TH

FIVE-YEAR CRUISE BHARAT MISSION

Context

- The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, launched the five-year Cruise Bharat Mission from Mumbai port.

About

- **The mission aims** to excel India's vision to become a global hub for cruise tourism and promote the country as the leading global cruise destination.
- **It includes** increasing sea cruise passengers from **0.5 million in Phase 1 to 1 million** and river cruise passengers from **0.5 million in Phase 1 to 1.5 million** by Phase 3.
- It also includes developing 10 Sea Cruise Terminals, 100 River Cruise Terminals, and five Marinas under the mission.

Implementation Phases of Mission

- The implementation of the Mission is spread across three phases, running from **1 October 2024, to 31 March 2029:**
 - ◆ **Phase 1:** Focuses on research activities, master planning, and building cruise alliances with neighboring nations along with work on modernizing existing cruise ports, marinas, and destinations.
 - ◆ **Phase 2:** Aims to develop additional marinas, cruise terminals, and destinations to engage high-potential cruise circuits and sites.

- ◆ **Phase 3:** Continues expanding cruise terminals, marinas, and destinations, while integrating all cruise circuits across the Indian Subcontinent to signify the ecosystem's maturity.

Three Segments of Cruise Tourism

- **Ocean & Harbour Cruise:** Includes ocean cruises, coastal and deep-sea excursions, as well as sailing and yachting trips from various harbors.
- **River & Inland Cruise:** Focuses on river and inland cruises, exploring canals, backwaters, creeks, and lakes.
- **Island Cruise:** Offers live-aboard excursions, boutique cruises to lesser-known locations, lighthouse tours, and inter-island cruises.

Significance of the Mission

- **Promotion of Tourism:** The mission will transform India's maritime landscape and harness the potential of vast coastline and waterways through cruise tourism.
- **Economic Growth and Employment Generation:** It aims to boost cruise tourism in India to **1 million** passengers and create **400,000 jobs by 2029**.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** The mission also aims to develop eco-friendly tourism infrastructure by promoting cruises in rivers and coastal areas.

Source: BS

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN AI-DRIVEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION

In Context

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is celebrated as a transformative equalizer, enhancing how individuals access, interpret, and share knowledge.
 - ◆ However, concerns regarding bias, transparency, and accountability persist.

About Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- AI is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human learning, comprehension, problem solving, decision making, creativity and autonomy.
- It results from decades of advancements in data processing and machine learning.
- It has diverse applications, including translation tools, chatbots, content filtering, and censorship.

Transformative Potential of AI

- **Democratising Information:** AI overcomes historical barriers to information shaped by geography, language, and literacy.
- **Access to Healthcare Information:** AI tools like a signing avatar and the digital health worker Florence improved healthcare access during the pandemic.
 - ♦ S.A.R.A.H. Launch: The AI-powered digital health promoter helps users understand health risks and make informed decisions.
- **Access to Education :** Platforms like Khan Academy and Byju's use AI to tailor education to individual needs.
 - ♦ Coursera translated courses into Hindi, increasing accessibility.
 - ♦ Language Proficiency Programs like EBS's AI-Pengtalk program improved English skills for students in Korea.
- **Access to Government Services : Chatbot Jugalbandi Developed** by Microsoft and AI4Bharat, this chatbot provides government service information in 10 Indian languages.
- **Enhanced Information Discovery :** National Digital Library Launched in 2019, it provides access to millions of digital resources with AI features.
 - ♦ Mission Bhashini aims to build an Indian language tech ecosystem for multilingual access to digital services.

Ethical Challenges in AI Development

- AI is viewed as a great equaliser with applications in translation, chatbots, and content filtering, it also raises critical concerns regarding
 - ♦ **Algorithmic Bias:** AI can replicate or amplify biases present in training datasets, leading to unequal information access.
 - ♦ **Privacy Concerns:** AI relies on personal data, raising issues of misuse and unauthorized access.
 - ♦ **Accountability:** Unclear responsibility for AI system failures complicates accountability.
 - ♦ **Transparency and Explainability:** AI often operates as a "black box," making it difficult for users to understand decision-making processes.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- AI-driven information access presents immense opportunities for improving how people find and consume information.

- However, these opportunities come with ethical challenges that must be addressed to ensure that AI systems truly align with the spirit of universal access to information.
- Inclusivity, transparency, privacy, and accountability must be at the centre of every stage of development and deployment to ensure that we create an equitable and reliable information ecosystem for all.
- It is only by prioritising ethical AI that can we realise its full promise as a tool for universal information access.

Source :ORF

NEWS IN SHORT

RAJA RAVI VARMA

In Context

- Renowned modern Indian artist Raja Ravi Varma was commemorated on the occasion of his death anniversary on October 2.

Raja Ravi Varma (1848-1906)

About:

- ♦ Ravi Varma (1848–1906) was one of the **first Indian painters** to successfully adopt **Western painting techniques** and adapt academic realism to the visual interpretation of Indian mythology.

Background and History:

- ♦ He was born into aristocracy at Kilimanoor in the erstwhile Travancore state of present-day Kerala.
- ♦ At the age of 14, Varma was patronised by Ayilyam Thirunal, the then ruler of Travancore.
- ♦ Later, Varma studied oil painting from British painter Theodore Jensen.

His work:

- ♦ Raja Ravi Varma, also known as '**The Father of Modern Indian Art**' was an Indian painter of the 18th century who attained fame and recognition for **portraying scenes from the epics of the Mahabharata and Ramayana**.
- ♦ He painted the **picture of God and Goddess** that helped Dalits, who were prohibited from entering temples to know about the Gods.
- ♦ He used **oil paint colours rather than watercolours**.

- ◆ His works are the best examples for the fusion of European techniques with Indian sensibility.
- ◆ As a prolific artist, Raja Ravi Varma is believed to have made around 7,000 paintings before his death at the age of 58. His most **famous works** include **Damayanti Talking to a Swan, Shakuntala Looking for Dushyanta, Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair, and Shantanu and Matsyagandha.**
- **Awards and honours:**
 - ◆ His 1873 painting, **Nair Lady Adorning Her Hair**, won Varma prestigious awards including the Governor's Gold Medal when it was presented in the Madras Presidency.
 - ◆ He won the **first prize in the Vienna Art Exhibition** in 1873.
 - ◆ In 1904, the British colonial government awarded Varma with the **Kaiser-i-Hind Gold Medal**. In 2013, a crater on the planet **Mercury** was named in his honour.
 - ◆ According to the Guinness World Records, the most expensive **saree named 'Vivah Patu'** in the world is an 8-kg sari priced at Rs 40 lakh and pays tribute to his paintings.

Source: IE

LITTLE PRESPA LAKE

In News

- Little Prespa Lake is facing severe ecological decline with approximately 430 out of 450 hectares transformed into swamps or dried up.

About Little Prespa Lake

- It is also known as **Small Lake Prespa**.
- The majority of Little Prespa Lake sits in Greek territory, with just its southern tip crossing into Albania.
- **Importance** : The region is home to over 2,000 species of fish, birds, mammals, and plants, many of which are unique.
- **Threats** :Originally 450 hectares, with 430 hectares now transformed into swamps or dried up.
 - ◆ The decline began in the 1970s when communist authorities diverted the Devoll River for irrigation purposes around the city of Korca.
- **Impact on Inhabitants:** This diversion has led to significant environmental changes affecting local communities.

Source :TH

UNION CABINET APPROVED PM RASHTRIYA KRISHI VIKAS YOJANA AND KRISHONNATI YOJANA

In News

- The Union Cabinet merged all Central schemes in the agriculture sector into two new schemes, Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) and Krishonnati Yojana (KY).
 - ◆ PM-RKVY will promote sustainable agriculture, while KY will address food security and agricultural self-sufficiency.

The rationalisation of Various Schemes has been undertaken to:

- To avoid duplication, ensure convergence and provide flexibility to States.
- Focus on emergent challenges of Agriculture - Nutrition security, Sustainability, Climate resilience, value chain development & private sector participation.
- State governments will be able to draw a comprehensive strategic plan suiting their requirements for the agriculture sector.
- Annual Action Plan (AAP) of States can be approved in one go rather than approving individual scheme-wise AAPs.

Source: TH

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERNSHIP SCHEME

In News

- The Union government has launched the Prime Minister's Internship Scheme.

About

- **Objective:** To provide internship opportunities to youth in leading companies, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical skills.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- **Duration:** The internship lasts for 12 months.
- **Stipend:** Interns will receive a monthly stipend of ₹ 5,000 for the entire year.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Must be an Indian citizen.
 - ◆ Must be aged between 21-24 years.
 - ◆ Should not be employed full-time or engaged in full-time education.

Source: PIB

ITALY AND SWITZERLAND REDRAWING THEIR ALPINE BORDER

Context

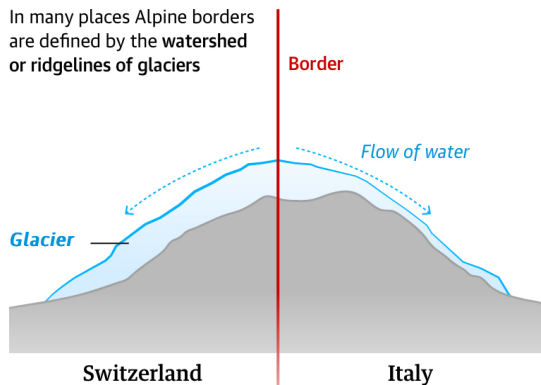
- Switzerland and Italy have agreed to redraw a part of their national boundary, as melting Alpine glaciers shift the historically defined frontier.

About

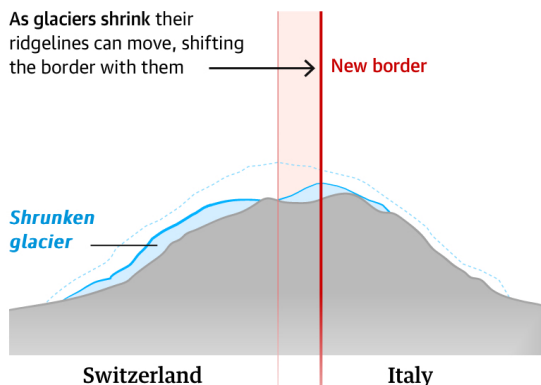
- Switzerland and Italy have agreed to changes along the landmarks of **Plateau Rosa, the Carrel refuge, and the Gobba di Rollin**.
 - In this area the **Zermatt region of Switzerland** meets the **Aosta valley of Italy**.
- The region is home to several **ski resorts** that fuel the economy of both countries.

Redefining Alpine borders

In many places Alpine borders are defined by the watershed or ridgelines of glaciers



As glaciers shrink their ridgelines can move, shifting the border with them



Alps Mountains

- The Alps Mountains are one of the most significant mountain ranges in Europe, stretching across eight countries—**France, Switzerland, Italy, Monaco, Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany, and Slovenia**.
- The Alps were formed millions of years ago as a result of the **collision between the African and Eurasian tectonic plates**.
- Highest Peak:** Mont Blanc
- Rivers** like **Rhine, Rhone, and Po** originate in the Alps.

Source: IE

PRODUCTS USED BY ASSAM TRIBE GRANTED GI TAG

In News

The Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai has granted GI tags to eight products from Assam, including traditional food items and rice beer varieties.

Products granted GI tag

- Rice Beer Varieties:**
 - Bodo Jou Gwran:** Highest alcohol content (about 16.11%); unique to the Bodo community.
 - Maibra Jou Bidwi:** Known as a welcome drink, made from half-cooked rice and yeast (amao).
 - Bodo Jou Gishi:** Another traditionally fermented rice beer with historical significance.
- Traditional Food Products:**
 - Bodo Napham:** Fermented fish dish prepared anaerobically over two to three months; includes preservation techniques like smoking and drying.
 - Bodo Ondla:** Rice powder curry flavored with garlic, ginger, salt, and alkali.
 - Bodo Gwkha:** Dish prepared during the Bwisagu festival, known locally as 'Gwka Gwkhi'.
 - Bodo Narzi:** Semi-fermented food made with jute leaves, rich in Omega 3 fatty acids and essential minerals.
- Bodo Aronai:** A traditional cloth (1.5-2.5 meters long and 0.5 meter wide) receives a GI tag through the Association of Traditional Bodo Weavers.

Do you know ?

- A GI is a name or sign for products linked to a specific geographical location, indicating traditional methods, specific qualities, or reputation tied to that origin.
 - It is used for various products, including spirit drinks, foodstuffs, agricultural products, handicrafts, and industrial products.
- Regulatory Framework :** It is governed by the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property.

- ◆ In India, it is administered under the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999, effective from September 15, 2003.
- ◆ First GI Tag in India awarded to Darjeeling tea in 2004-05.
- **Benefits of GI Tags :**
 - ◆ It provides legal rights to products with GI tags.
 - ◆ It guards against misuse of the GI tag by others.
 - ◆ It helps consumers access quality products with guaranteed authenticity.
 - ◆ It enhances demand for GI-tagged goods in national and international markets, benefiting producers.

Source: TH

MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE (MPC)

In News

- The Union government appointed new monetary policy committee members with immediate effect.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** was established after a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between the **Government of India** and the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** concerning the implementation of the new **inflation-targeting monetary policy framework**.
- The framework focuses on keeping inflation within a specified target range.
- The **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934** was amended by the **Finance Act, 2016** to provide a statutory and institutional framework for the constitution of the MPC.

Key Provisions:

- **Section 45ZB** of the amended **RBI Act, 1934** empowers the **central government** to constitute a six-member **MPC**.
- **Function:** The MPC is tasked with fixing the **benchmark policy rate** (i.e., the repo rate) to ensure that inflation is contained within the target level.
 - ◆ The decisions made by the MPC are **binding** on the RBI.

- The **MPC** replaced the previous arrangement of the **Technical Advisory Committee**.

Composition:

- The MPC consists of **six members**:
 - ◆ **RBI Governor** (Chairperson)
 - ◆ **RBI Deputy Governor** in charge of monetary policy
 - ◆ **One official** nominated by the **RBI Board**
 - ◆ **Three external members** representing the **Government of India**
- **Tenure:** The external members serve for a term of **four years**.

Source: TH

ENVISTATS INDIA 2024: ENVIRONMENT ACCOUNTS

Context

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) released the 7th consecutive issue of the publication "EnviStats India 2024: Environment Accounts".

About

- EnviStats includes information on the country's natural resources, environmental degradation, and government efforts to manage these issues.
- It is prepared in accordance with the **SEEA (System of Environmental-Economic Accounting) Framework** which is an agreed international framework for the compilation of the Environment Economic accounts.

Key Highlights

- **The coverage of Mangroves**, which is an important sub ecosystem of the ocean ecosystem, has **increased around 8%** over the years 2013 to 2021.
- There has been around **72% increase** in the number and around **16% increase** in area for the **Total Protected Area** during the period 2000 to 2023.
- **Ocean Accounts:** This edition introduces Ocean Accounts, marking a new area of environmental reporting.
 - ◆ The framework for Ocean Accounts has been developed with technical assistance from the Expert Group on Ocean Ecosystem Accounts.

- **Soil Nutrient Index:** The report provides updated values of the Soil Nutrient Index, compiled using data from the Soil Health Card initiative for 2023-24.

Source: PIB

NEW STUDY MAPPING THE FRUIT FLY'S BRAIN

Context

- Scientists have successfully mapped the brain of a **fruit fly (*Drosophila melanogaster*)** after a decade-long effort, revealing how **140,000 neurons** are connected.

About

- The fruit fly brain is tiny, less than **1 mm wide**. Using this brain map, called a "**connectome**," researchers traced different types of neurons to understand their functions.
- They also created a **virtual fly brain** based on this map.

Significance of the Study

- This study helps us **understand how sensory information travels** through the brain to trigger actions, like movement.
- The research also provides insight into how healthy brains work and could lead to similar mappings of other species' brains.

Source: TH

AKASHTER SYSTEMS

In News

- In response to escalating global security concerns, the Indian Army has significantly boosted its air defence capabilities by acquiring 100 **Akashteer Air Defence Control and Reporting Systems (ADCRS)**.

About

- Developed by **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**
- These systems will play a vital role in protecting India from aerial threats, including missile and rocket attacks.
- Akashteer integrates radars, sensors, and communication technologies to provide a real-time battlefield view, allowing the military to swiftly detect, track, and neutralize aerial threats.

Source: FE

IRON DOME ANTI-MISSILE SYSTEM

Context

- **Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system** has intercepted rockets after Iran fired a series of ballistic missiles.

Iron Dome

- Iron Dome was developed with Israel Aerospace Industries and was deployed in **2011**.
- It is a **short-range**, ground-to-air, air defence system that includes a radar and interceptor missiles, which **track and neutralise rockets or missiles** aimed at Israeli targets.
 - ♦ It is used for countering rockets, artillery & mortars (C-RAM) as well as aircraft, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.
 - ♦ The defense system has a range of **70 kilometers**.

Air defense systems Around the Globe

- **United States: Patriot:** A long-range, all-weather system designed to intercept tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and advanced aircraft.
 - ♦ **Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD):** A system designed to intercept short, medium, and intermediate-range ballistic missiles during their terminal phase.
- **Russia: S-400:** A long-range air defense system capable of engaging various aerial threats, including aircraft and ballistic missiles.
 - ♦ **S-500:** An advanced system designed to target hypersonic missiles and aircraft.
- **India: S-400:** Recently acquired from Russia, providing long-range air defense capabilities.
- **France: SAMP/T:** A medium-range air defense system that integrates with various radar and missile systems.
- **South Korea: KAMD (Korea Air and Missile Defense):** A comprehensive system incorporating various layers of air defense, including the THAAD and PAC-3 systems.

Source: IE

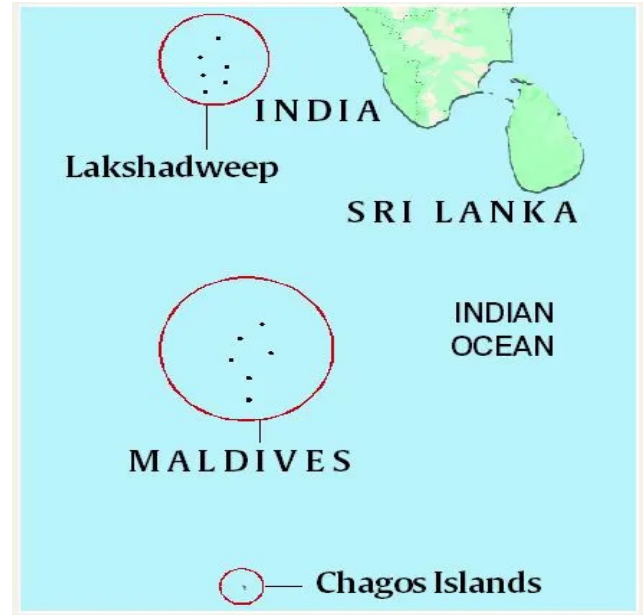
CHAGOS ISLAND

Context

- The United Kingdom (UK) announced that an agreement has been reached to hand over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius, ending decades of dispute and negotiation over Britain's last African colony.

Chagos Archipelago

- The Chagos archipelago, **comprising 58 islands**, lies roughly 500 km to the south of the **Maldives archipelago** in the Indian Ocean.
- These islands were uninhabited until the late **18th century**, when the French brought in slave labour from Africa and India to work in newly-established coconut plantations. In 1814, **France ceded the islands to the British**.
- In 1965, the UK constituted the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**, of which the Chagos Islands were a central part. A few other BIOT islands were later ceded to the Seychelles in 1976 after it gained independence from Britain.
- **Chagos was attached to Mauritius**, another British colony in the Indian Ocean, for administrative purposes. But when Mauritius gained independence in 1968, Chagos remained with Britain.



Source: IE

