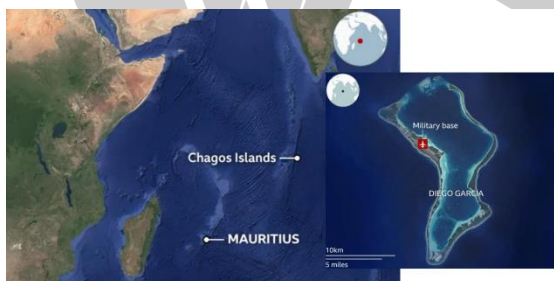


United Kingdom agrees to hand over the Chagos Islands to Mauritius



Key Points:

- ❖ The United Kingdom and Mauritius have reached an agreement under which the United Kingdom will return the Chagos Islands and the atoll of Diego Garcia to Mauritius.
- ❖ This agreement marks the end of British colonialism on the African continent. The agreement was announced in a joint statement issued by the United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth on 3 October 2024.



- ❖ Under the agreement, the natives displaced from the Chagos Islands will have the right to return and settle on the Chagos Islands, except Diego Garcia.
- ❖ The United Kingdom will retain a 99-year lease of the Diego Garcia islands, where an important United States Military base is located.

Dispute about the Chagos Archipelago

- ❖ The Chagos Archipelago comprises around 60 islands situated in the central Indian Ocean. It is about 500 kilometres south of Maldives.

- ❖ The island, part of Mauritius, was occupied by the United Kingdom in 1810.
- ❖ Before giving independence to Mauritius in 1968, the United Kingdom separated the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius and made it a British Indian Ocean Territory.
- ❖ The main reason the United Kingdom refused to hand over the Chagos archipelago to Mauritius is the Diego Garcia atoll's military significance.

Increasing isolation of the United Kingdom

- ❖ Mauritius took the dispute between the United Kingdom and Mauritius to the International Court of Justice. The court ruled in favour of Mauritius and asked the United Kingdom to return the Chagos island to Mauritius.
- ❖ The United Nations General Assembly has passed resolutions in support of Mauritius and asked the United Kingdom government to hand over the Chagos archipelago to Mauritius.
- ❖ The increasing diplomatic isolation on the issue has been one of the major factors in the United Kingdom government's decision to hand over the Chagos archipelago to Mauritius.

Importance of Diego Garcia



- ❖ Diego Garcia is an atoll in the Indian Ocean, situated along the major international trade routes between Africa and Asia. It is a military base of the United Kingdom and the United States.
- ❖ It is a United States Navy Support facility base that also provides a base to the long-range bomber of the United States Air Force.

- ❖ The base provides logistic support to the American operational forces deployed in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf region.
- ❖ The base played a crucial role during the Gulf War and the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan
- ❖ In the 1970s, during the cold war period, the United States sought a military base in the Indian Ocean to counter the Soviet Union.
- ❖ The United Kingdom agreed to allow the United States to build and operate a military base in Diego Garcia.
- ❖ In the 1970s, during the construction of the military base, the United States and the United Kingdom forcibly removed all the inhabitants from the archipelago and sent them to the Seychelles and Mauritius.

India 4th country in the world to have \$700 billion Forex Reserves



Key Points:

- ❖ India has become the fourth country in the world, after China, Switzerland, and Japan, with a foreign exchange (forex) reserve of more than \$700 billion.
- ❖ The Indian foreign exchange has been increasing for the past seven consecutive weeks due to valuation gains and the Reserve Bank of India's continuous purchase of the US dollar from the market.
- ❖ China is the largest foreign exchange holder in the world, followed by Japan, Switzerland and India.
- ❖ According to the latest figure released by the Reserve Bank of India, the country's total foreign exchange reserves were \$704.89 billion as of 27 September 2024.

- ❖ India's foreign exchange reserves have increased by \$87.6 billion in 2024 so far. Last year, the Indian foreign exchange reserve increased by around \$62 billion.
- ❖ One of the major reasons for the increase in Indian foreign exchange reserves has been continuous foreign investment in the Indian equity and bond market.
- ❖ It has reached around \$30 billion so far. Foreign investment in the Indian debt market has increased after the inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Emerging Market Bond Index.

Statutory Status of Foreign Exchange in India

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India Act 1934 provides for the composition of India's foreign exchange. The Act also makes the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) the sole custodian and manager of foreign exchange reserves.

Composition of India's Foreign Exchange Reserves

- ❖ According to the RBI Act 1934, the Indian foreign exchange reserves include foreign currency assets, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), a Reserve Tranche Position (RTP) with the IMF, and Gold.
- ❖ **The Foreign Currency Assets include**
- ❖ investment in government securities of foreign countries,
- ❖ RBI's deposits with the other country's central banks and the Bank for International Settlement (BIS) and
- ❖ deposits with overseas commercial banks. Gold Reserves of RBI keeps part of its gold reserve outside India with the Bank of England and the Bank for International Settlement (BIS) and part within India.

SDR (Special Drawing Rights)

- ❖ Special Drawing Rights (SDR), created in 1969, are an accounting unit of the International Monetary Fund(IMF). They are also known as paper gold.

- ❖ Countries which are members of the IMF are allotted SDR
- ❖ SDR is not a currency; however, the member countries can exchange their SDR holdings with other members for freely convertible currency.
- ❖ The value of the SDR is linked to a basket of currencies, namely the US dollar, Euro, Chinese Yuan, Japanese Yen, and the United Kingdom's Pound sterling.
- ❖ The SDR cannot be held by individuals or private entities; it can only be held by the IMF, its member countries' central banks, and multilateral development banks.

DRDO successfully test the 4th Gen VSHORADS Air defence system



Key Points:

- ❖ Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully tested the 4th generation Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) at the Pokhran Field Firing Ranges in Rajasthan on 03 and 04 October 2024.
- ❖ According to the Union Ministry of Defence, the VSHORADS trial has been successful, and the early user trials and production of the system will start soon.

Developer of the VSHORADS

- ❖ The VSHORADS has been designed and developed indigenously by Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and private companies.

About the VSHORADS System

- ❖ VSHORADS is a Man-Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS) being developed for the Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy. It is

a surface-to-air missile system with a range of up to six kilometres.

- ❖ The VSHORADS is an air defence system that can neutralise aerial threats such as lowflying aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles flying at a low altitude.
- ❖ The VSHORADS being developed by DRDO has an imaging infrared (IIR) homing system.
- ❖ The homing system has the capability to image the heat source (of the aircraft) in addition to detecting and tracking it. It is resilient to the Infrared jamming system of the enemy aircraft and can easily discriminate between Infrared flares released by the enemy's aircraft defensive suite and the aircraft itself.
- ❖ Due to its weight of around 21 kg, the VSHORADS missile can be launched through a tripod. The Indian Army currently has the Russian-made Igla-S MANPADS.

About the MANPADS system

- ❖ MANPADS are considered to be the country's last missile-based air defence system. They can be fired by an individual or a group of people.
- ❖ It is also often called shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. However, the present VSHORADS being developed by DRDO does not have the capability to shoulder-fire anti-aircraft missiles.
- ❖ The DRDO is working on MANPADS, which can be fired by a single soldier through a launcher.
- ❖ The world-famous Stinger missiles of the United States are a type of MANPADS that can be fired by a single soldier.
- ❖ At present around 30 countries are the major producing countries of the MANPADS system, with the United States, Russia, China, France, Russia, Sweden, the United Kingdom being the leading ones.
- ❖ **Chairman of DRDO: Dr Samir V Kamat**

Coco Gauff beats Czech player Karolina Muchova to win the China Open



Key Points:

- ❖ 20-year-old American tennis star Coco Gauff defeated Karolina Muchová of the Czech Republic to win the 2024 WTA China Open Tennis tournament.
- ❖ The China Open was a WTA 1000 event held in Beijing, China. The final was played on 6 October 2024.
- ❖ The Women's Tennis Association (WTA) is the world's governing body of professional women's tennis tournaments. In a calendar year, it organises around 50 tournaments in 30 countries.

Coco Gauff, youngest China Open winner

- ❖ The 2023 US Open Champion, Coco Gauff, became the youngest China Open champion in 14 years by defeating the 2023 French Open finalist Karolina Muchova 6-1, 6-3 in straight sets.
- ❖ Coco Gauff is the second American to win the China Open after Serena Williams did so in 2004 and 2013.
- ❖ The China Open was the eighth WTA title for Coco Gauff, and she is the first woman in the Open era to win her first seven hard-court finals.

Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini win the Doubles Title

- ❖ The Italian pair Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini defeated Chan Hao-Ching of Taiwan and Russian Veronika Kudermetova pair in the doubles final 6-4, 6-4 to win the China Open doubles title.
- ❖ This was the fifth WTA tour team title for the Italian pair of Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini.

Carlos Alcaraz wins the ATP China Open 2024

- ❖ Carlos Alcaraz of Spain defeated world No.1 Jannik Sinner of Italy in the final of the 2024 ATP China Open Tennis tournament. In a marathon final lasting three hours and 21 minutes, Alcaraz defeated Sinner 6-7 (6), 6-4, 7-6(3).
- ❖ The ATP 500 China Open was held in Beijing from 26 September -2 October 2024.
- ❖ The world's governing body of professional men's tennis Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), organises more than 60 tournaments around the world in 30 countries in a calendar year.

Shigeru Ishiba appointed as the 102nd Prime Minister of Japan



Key Points:

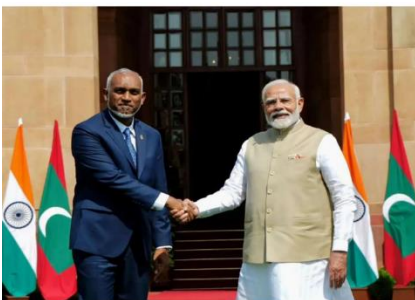
- ❖ The Japanese emperor Naruhito appointed Shigeru Ishiba as the new Prime Minister of Japan. Shigeru Ishiba was appointed by the Japanese emperor after the lower house of the Japanese Parliament, the House of Representatives, approved Shigeru Ishiba as the 102nd Prime Minister of Japan.
- ❖ The 67-year-old Shigeru Ishiba replaces Fumio Kishida, who was also from the same political party - the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) The LDP has ruled Japan almost continuously since its formation in 1955
- ❖ Former Prime Minister Fumio Kishida resigned as the Prime Minister of Japan in September this year due to a series of political scandals.

- ❖ In a meeting held on 27 October, the ruling LDP elected former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba as its leader. According to the Japanese constitution of 1946, the Emperor appoints a person as the country's Prime Minister after he is approved by the lower house of the Japanese parliament, the House of Representatives.
- ❖ The House of Representatives approved Shigeru Ishiba as the new Prime Minister of Japan, with 291 out of the 461 votes cast in his favour. Shigeru Ishiba has appointed Takeshi Iwaya as the new Foreign Minister of Japan.
- ❖ Shigeru Ishiba has also called for a new general election in the country to elect a new House of Representatives on 27 October 2024.

Parliament of Japan

- ❖ The Japanese Parliament is known as the Diet. The Diet is bicameral, with the upper house called the House of Councillors and the lower house called the House of Representatives.
- ❖ The Upper House has 250 members, while the House of Representatives consists of 467 members.
- ❖ The Japanese government is responsible to the lower house and if the house passes a no-confidence motion against the government, then the government has to resign.

India to Provide \$400 Million Credit Swap Facility to Maldives



Key Points:

- ❖ President of Maldives, Dr Mohamed Muizzu, was on his first official bilateral visit to India from 6-10 October 2024.
- ❖ He had earlier visited India in June 2024 to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Dr Muizzu first visited New Delhi on 7 October 2024, where he met President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ❖ President Muizzu will visit Mumbai and then Bengaluru to attend business events.
- ❖ Dr. Mohamed Muizzu's visit to India follows the visit of External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar to the Maldives from 9 to 11 August 2024.
- ❖ India has agreed to help Maldives manage its external debt by extending a \$ 400 million credit swap facility.



A Vision for Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership

- ❖ After Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Dr Mohamed Muizzu's meeting, the leaders issued a joint statement titled "India Maldives: A Vision for Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership."
- ❖ Prime Minister Modi reiterated India's commitment to helping the Maldives develop under its 'Neighbourhood First' Policy and Vision SAGAR
- ❖ President Dr Mohamed Muizzu thanked India for helping prevent the Maldives from defaulting on debt repayment. Both the leaders jointly launched /inaugurated a number of projects in Maldives financed by India.

Projects launched/inaugurated by both the leaders

- ❖ Both leaders launched RuPay Cards developed by the National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) in Maldives.
- ❖ Inaugurated the new runway of the Hanimaadhoo International Airport in Maldives.
- ❖ Over 700 social housing units were built in the Maldives under the Export-Import Bank of India (EXIM) Bank's Buyers' Credit Facilities.

Renewal/Signing of 5 MoUs

- ❖ The Reserve Bank of India will extend a \$400 million currency swap facility to the Maldives Monetary Authority (Central Bank of Maldives).
- ❖ Rashtriya Raksha University India and the National College of Policing and Law Enforcement of Maldives
- ❖ Indian Central Bureau of Investigation and the Anti-Corruption Commission of Maldives to cooperate in preventing and combating corruption
- ❖ Renewal of MoU between the National Judicial Academy of India and the Judicial Service Commission of the Maldives on Training and Capacity Building Programs for Maldivian judicial officers
- ❖ Sports and Youth Affairs.
- ❖ **India will help the Maldives develop a modern commercial port at Thilafushi island to de-congest the Malé port.**
- ❖ **India will establish a new consulate in Addu City, and the Maldives will open its consulate in Bengaluru.**

India's Help to Maldives in Avoiding Debt Default

- ❖ **India recently provided financial assistance to help Maldives avoid default on its external debt and Sukuk debt. Sukuk debt is a bond issued per Islamic Sharia law and does not carry interest rates.**
- ❖ In May 2024, the State Bank of India subscribed to the Maldivian government's \$50 million Treasury Bills (short-term debt instrument) to provide liquidity to the Maldivian government.
- ❖ In September 2024, the Indian government again bought \$50 million Maldivian Treasury Bills at the Maldivian government's request.
- ❖ During Dr Mohamed Muizzu's visit to India, the Indian government extended a \$400 million currency swap facility to the Maldives so that it could repay its external debts.
- ❖ Maldives' external debt is estimated to be 110% of its gross domestic product.
- ❖ China and India are the top two lenders to the Maldives.

