

Maldives govt suspends three ministers

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What's in today's article?

- Why in news?
- Background:
- Lakshadweep
- Significance of Lakshadweep for India
- Dependency of Maldives on tourism
- Anti-India sentiments among a section of the Maldives' population

Why in news?

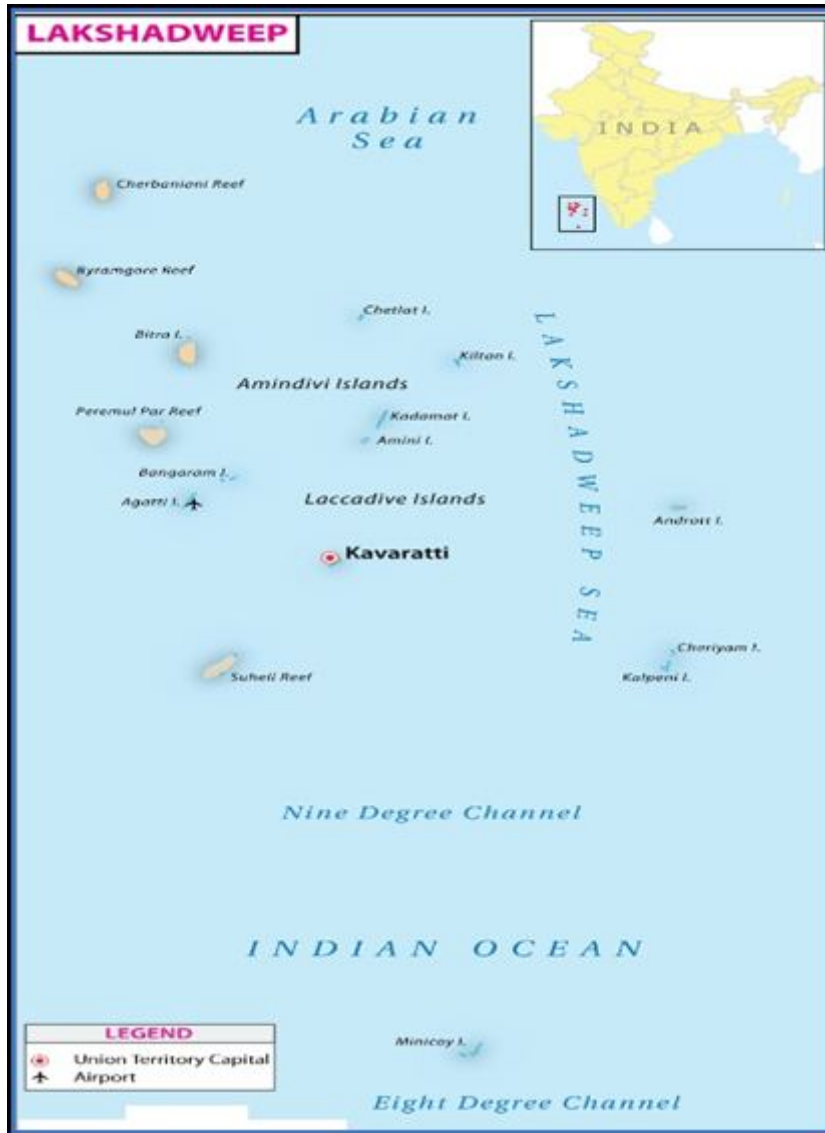
- The Maldives government suspended three deputy ministers after they took to social media to make derogatory remarks against PM Modi.

Background

- Social media war
 - It all started with a series of posts on X from Indian Prime Minister, promoting tourism in Lakshadweep islands.
 - Soon after PM Modi's post, some prominent Maldivian social media users responded to it with offensive, racist, xenophobic and derogatory comments.
 - These comments were targeted at Indians at large, as well as the Indian PM.

- Among them were the three Maldivian Ministers
- Accusation against India by the social media users of Maldives
 - Some Maldivian social media users began levelling accusations against India of attempting to compete with their country as a choice for a tropical vacation for travellers.
 - These posts also instigated other social media users into posting a wide range of racist remarks against Indians and Indian tourists who travel to the Maldives.

Lakshadweep



- About
 - India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km.
 - It is a uni-district UT and is comprised of 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks and ten inhabited islands.
 - The capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town of the UT.
- Geographical location
 - It is located between 8° – 12° 13" North latitude and 71° – 74° East longitude, 220 to 440 Kms. away from the coastal city of Kochi in Kerala.

- The maritime boundary between the Maldives and Minicoy (India) runs through the Eight Degree Channel.
 - Nine Degree Channel separates the island of Minicoy from the main Lakshadweep archipelago.
- Coral Atolls
 - The islands are predominantly coral atolls, formed by coral reefs that surround a lagoon.
- Demography
 - According to the 2011 Census, Lakshadweep has a population of 64429 persons.
 - More than 93% of the population who are indigenous, are Muslims and majority of them belong to the Shafi School of the Sunni Sect.
 - Malayalam is spoken in all the islands except Minicoy where people speak Mahl which is written in Divehi script and is spoken in Maldives also.
 - The entire indigenous population has been classified as Scheduled Tribes.
 - There are no Scheduled Castes in this Union Territory.
- Climate
 - The climate of Lakshadweep is tropical, with a warm and humid climate throughout the year.

Significance of Lakshadweep for India

- Strategic Location
 - Its proximity to major international shipping routes enhances India's strategic maritime influence.
 - Nine Degree Channel is the important passage for shipping between Middle East, Europe and Western Asia with Southeast Asia.
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
 - The islands contribute to India's EEZ, granting the country rights over the exploration and use of marine resources in the surrounding waters.
 - Due to Maldives, India gets access to 20000 square kilometres of sea.
 - This includes fisheries, oil and gas exploration, and other economic activities.
- Maritime Security
 - The Indian Navy and Coast Guard use the islands as a base.
- Economic significance
 - The picturesque beauty of Lakshadweep makes it a significant tourist destination.
 - The islands contribute to India's overall fishery resources.
- Biodiversity and Marine Life
 - The coral atolls and surrounding waters of Lakshadweep are home to diverse marine life, including coral reefs and various fish species.

Dependency of Maldives on tourism

- The Maldives is heavily dependent on tourism and the industry accounts for over 28 percent of its GDP.
- According to official figures by the Maldives' government, Indian tourists have consistently remained among the top ten nationalities who travel to the island every year.

- In 2023 alone, among the tourists who travelled to the Maldives, Indians formed the largest group of tourists with over 200,000 travellers.
 - This was followed by tourists from Russia and China.

Anti-India sentiments among a section of the Maldives' population

- Sometime in 2020, the India Out campaign started as on-ground protests in the Maldives which later spread widely across social media platforms.
 - By the second half of 2021, it had developed into an active and visible political campaign.
 - The supporters of the campaign had claimed that it had been started to protest against what they called Indian military presence in the country.
 - They had actively targeted all aspects of India-Maldives bilateral relations.
 - In December 2023, on the sidelines of the COP28 climate summit, the President Muizzu said that India's government has agreed to withdraw its soldiers from the Maldives
 - These soldiers were in the country to operate and manage two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft given to the Maldives by India.
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Q1) What is India Out campaign?

The "India Out" campaign is a foreign policy shift in the Maldives. The campaign comes after the Maldives formally requested India to withdraw its military presence from the country's shores in December 2023.

Q2) What is atoll?

An atoll is a ring-shaped coral reef, island, or series of islets that surrounds a lagoon. Atolls can be made up of coral islands or cays.

Source: [Maldives govt suspends three ministers over derogatory remarks on PM Modi](#) | [UT Administration of Lakshadweep](#) | [The Hindu](#) | [Indian Express](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/maldives-ministers-suspended/>

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