

Kuril Islands Dispute

Prelims: Current events of national and international relations | International relations

Why in News?

Recently, Russian President visited Iturup Island in August, 2026. Japan strongly protested the visit.

- It was the first visit by a Russian President to the disputed islands since 2010.

Geographical features

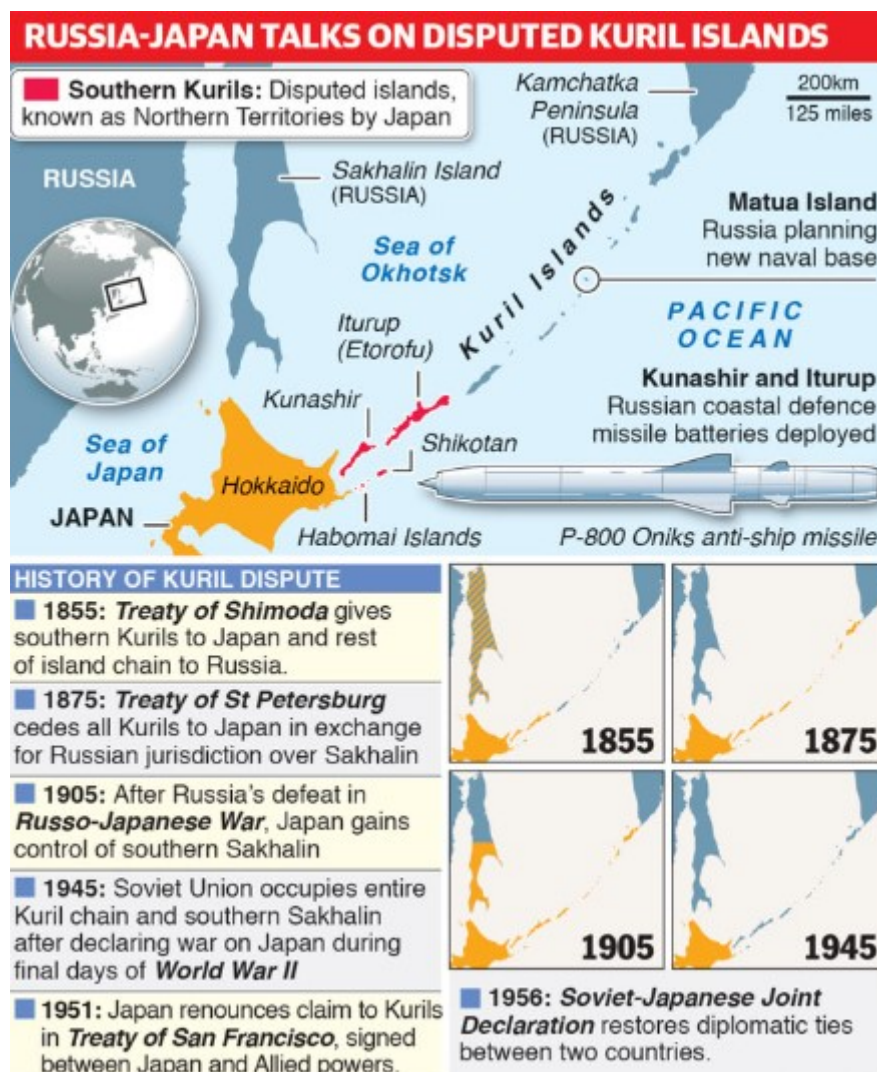
- The ***Kuril Islands*** are a volcanic island chain in the North Pacific Ocean.
- They stretch for about 1,200 km between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean, close to Japan's Hokkaido.
- Russia currently administers the islands as part of the ***Sakhalin Region***.
- Japan claims four islands — ***Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan and Habomai***.
 - Japan calls these islands the Northern Territories.
 - Russia calls them the Southern Kurils.

Iturup is the largest of the four islands claimed by Japan.

Historical background of dispute

- The dispute began after the Soviet Union occupied the islands at the end of World War II and Japanese residents were expelled.

- Japan uses treaties such as the Shimoda Treaty (1855), St. Petersburg Treaty (1875) and Portsmouth Treaty (1905) to support its claim.
- Russia refers to the *Yalta Agreement* and *Potsdam Declaration* (1945) to support its control over the islands.
- Russia also argues that Japan gave up its claims to the Kuril Islands under the *San Francisco Treaty* (1951).
- Japan rejects this argument because the Soviet Union did not sign the San Francisco Treaty.
- The dispute has prevented Russia and Japan from signing a formal post-World War II peace treaty.
- **Strategic importance** – The islands are important because of their strategic location, fishing resources and military significance.



Reference

[The Hindu| Kuril Islands Dispute](#)

