



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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U.K.'s Chagos Islands deal with Mauritius risk entrenching exile of some islanders

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Context

- In 2024, the **UK agreed to transfer sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius while retaining control of the military base on Diego Garcia under a 99-year lease.**
- This followed the **2019 International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling supporting Mauritius' sovereignty claims.**
- The base, which plays a **central role in UK-US defence operations** in the Indian Ocean, will now be leased from Mauritius under a new 99-year lease.
- Under the deal, the UK will pay Mauritius an average of £101 million (\$129m) per year — amounting to a total of £3.4 billion (\$4.35 billion) over the course of the lease.
- The US, which co-operates the Diego Garcia base with the UK, will shoulder the base's operational costs — which Starmer said exceed the UK's financial contribution. Former US President Donald Trump has publicly welcomed the deal.

Mapping

- Location: It is situated 500 km south of the Maldives in the **Indian Ocean**, and consists of **58 islands.**
- History: It was inhabited in the late 18th century when the **French brought enslaved African and Indian laborers to work on coconut plantations.**
- Under the **1814 Treaty of Paris, France ceded the Chagos Archipelago, along with Mauritius, to Britain,** marking the beginning of British control over the region.
- In 1965, Britain detached the Chagos Islands from Mauritius to create the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), compensating Mauritius with a 3 million-pound grant.
- Despite Mauritius gaining independence in 1968, the **Chagos Archipelago remained under British control.**

Diego Garcia

- It is **coral atoll and the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago**, located 7 degree south of the equator. It became a **military base for the US and UK in 1986.**
- Diego Garcia has played a pivotal role in military operations, including US-UK strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen (2024 2025), humanitarian missions to Gaza, and earlier, bombing campaigns against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2001

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