

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

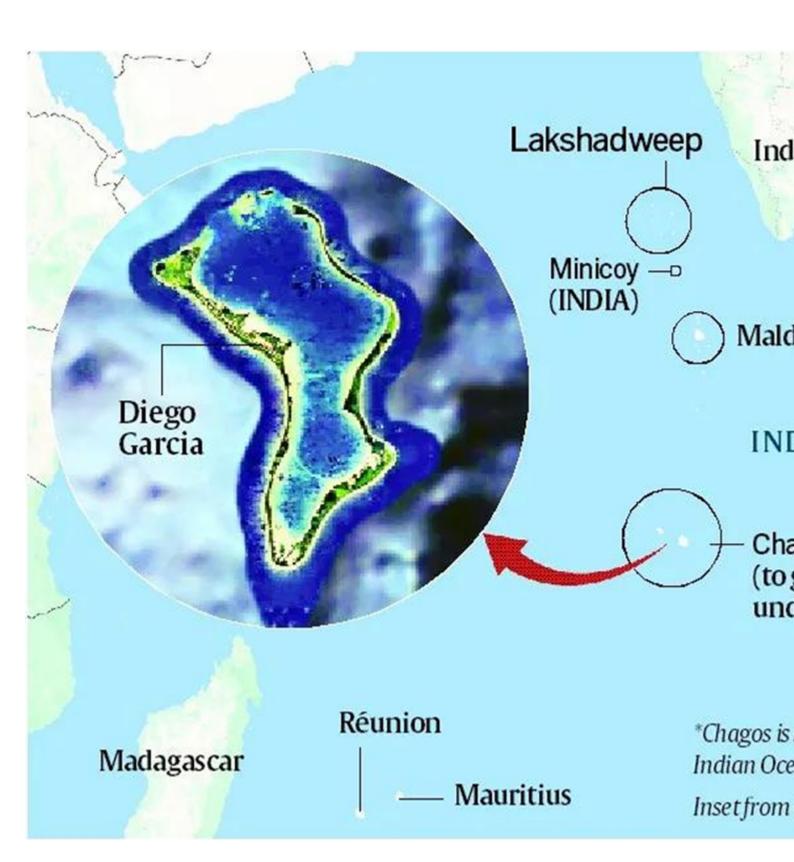
- It is **coral atoll and the largest island of the Chagos Archipelago**, located 7 degree south of the equator. It became a **military base for the US and UK in 1986.**
- Diego Garcia has played a pivotal role in military operations, including US-UK strikes on Houthi targets in Yemen (2024 2025), humanitarian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

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