



# Chagos Archipelago and Diego Garcia Island

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## Why in News?

Recently, the [United Kingdom \(UK\)](#) agreed to cede **sovereignty** of the strategically important [Chagos Archipelago](#) to Mauritius.

- However, the UK will continue to exercise **sovereign rights** over [Diego Garcia](#) island.

## What are the Key Facts Regarding the Chagos Archipelago?

- **Geography of the Chagos Archipelago:** It consists of **58 islands** and is located approximately **500 km south** of the Maldives in the [Indian Ocean](#).
- **History of the Chagos Archipelago:** The **French** were the **first to colonize** Mauritius along with the **Chagos Islands** in **1715**.
  - In the late **18th century**, the French brought in [slave labour](#) from **Africa and India** to work in newly established [coconut plantations](#).
  - However, the **UK** took control of the region in **1814** after the fall of France's [Napoleon Bonaparte](#).
  - In **1965**, the UK constituted the [British Indian Ocean Territory \(BIOT\)](#), of which the Chagos Islands were a central part.
- **Mauritius' Claims Over Chagos:** Chagos was attached to **Mauritius**, another British colony in the Indian Ocean, for **administrative purposes**.
  - When **Mauritius gained independence** in 1968, **Chagos** remained with **Britain**, which gave **Mauritius a 3 million pound grant** for the "**detachment**."
- **Strategic Importance of Chagos and Diego Garcia:** In **1966**, Britain signed an agreement with the **United States** to use the BIOT for military purposes.
  - Subsequently, the **plantation** on Diego Garcia was **shut down** and it became unlawful for a person to enter or remain in Diego Garcia without a permit.
  - Diego Garcia, the largest in the archipelago, became a fully operational military base in **1986**.
  - It was a key location in the US overseas "**war on terror**" operations following **al-Qaeda's September 11 attacks** on the US in 2001.
- **International Pressure on the UK:** In 2019, the [International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) issued an **advisory opinion** that asked the United Kingdom to **unconditionally withdraw** its colonial administration from the area within **six months**.
  - The ICJ ruled that the **1965 detachment** of Chagos from Mauritius before its independence was **illegal**.

## What are the Key Details of the UK-Mauritius Agreement?

- **Sovereignty Over Chagos:** The deal grants Mauritius **full sovereignty** over the archipelago except [Diego Garcia](#) island.
- **Resettlement of Chagossians:** Mauritius can now **resettle people** on the Chagos Archipelago, except Diego Garcia, where **Britain evicted 2,000 islanders** for a US naval base.
- **Trust Fund:** The UK has also promised to create a **new trust fund** for the benefit of the people of

Chagos.



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