

Chagos island dispute

August 30, 2021

In news- The Universal Postal Union (UPU), a UN agency in charge of the world's postal policies recently voted to block the use of UK stamps from Chagos archipelago. All posts from the Chagos Islands must now bear stamps from Mauritius.

More information-

- Although **Mauritius became independent in 1968**, the Chagos archipelago remained under British control.
- In 2019, the International Court of Justice ruled that Britain should give up control of the islands.
- Later that year, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising that “the Chagos Archipelago forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius” and urged UN agencies “to support the decolonisation of Mauritius”.
- However, Britain insists the archipelago belongs to London and has renewed a lease agreement with the U.S. to use **Diego Garcia, the largest of the islands**, until 2036.
- The US currently uses Diego Garcia for a **military air base** and the UK describes it as the **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)**.



About Chagos Archipelago-

- The Chagos Archipelago or Chagos Islands is a group of seven atolls comprising more than 60 islands in the Indian Ocean about 500 kilometres south of the Maldives archipelago.
- This chain of islands is the southernmost archipelago of the Chagos-Laccadive Ridge, a long submarine mountain range in the Indian Ocean.
- Diego Garcia is the largest and lies in the southeast part of the Archipelago.
- The Chagos was home to the Chagossians, until the United Kingdom evicted them between 1967 and 1973 to allow the United States to build a military base on Diego Garcia.
- Since 1971, only the atoll of Diego Garcia has been inhabited, and only by military and civilian contracted personnel.
- When Mauritius was a French colony, the Chagos Islands were administered as a dependency of Mauritius.
- With the **Treaty of Paris of 1814, France ceded Mauritius and its dependencies to the United Kingdom.**
- In 1965, the United Kingdom separated the administration of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).
- Mauritius gained independence from the United Kingdom in

1968, and has since claimed the Chagos Archipelago, still administered by the British, as Mauritian territory.

- The Chagos contain the **world's largest coral atoll, The Great Chagos Bank**, which supports half the total area of good quality reefs in the Indian Ocean.
- 10 of the islands have received formal designation as **Important Bird Areas**, by BirdLife International.
- Dugongs, being locally extinct today, once thrived in the archipelago and the Sea Cow Island was named after the presences of the species.
- The remote islands are undisturbed nursery sites for nests of **green turtle (endangered) and hawksbill turtles (critically endangered)**.

Coconut crabs are the world's largest terrestrial arthropod and live in one of the most undisturbed populations in the Chagos.