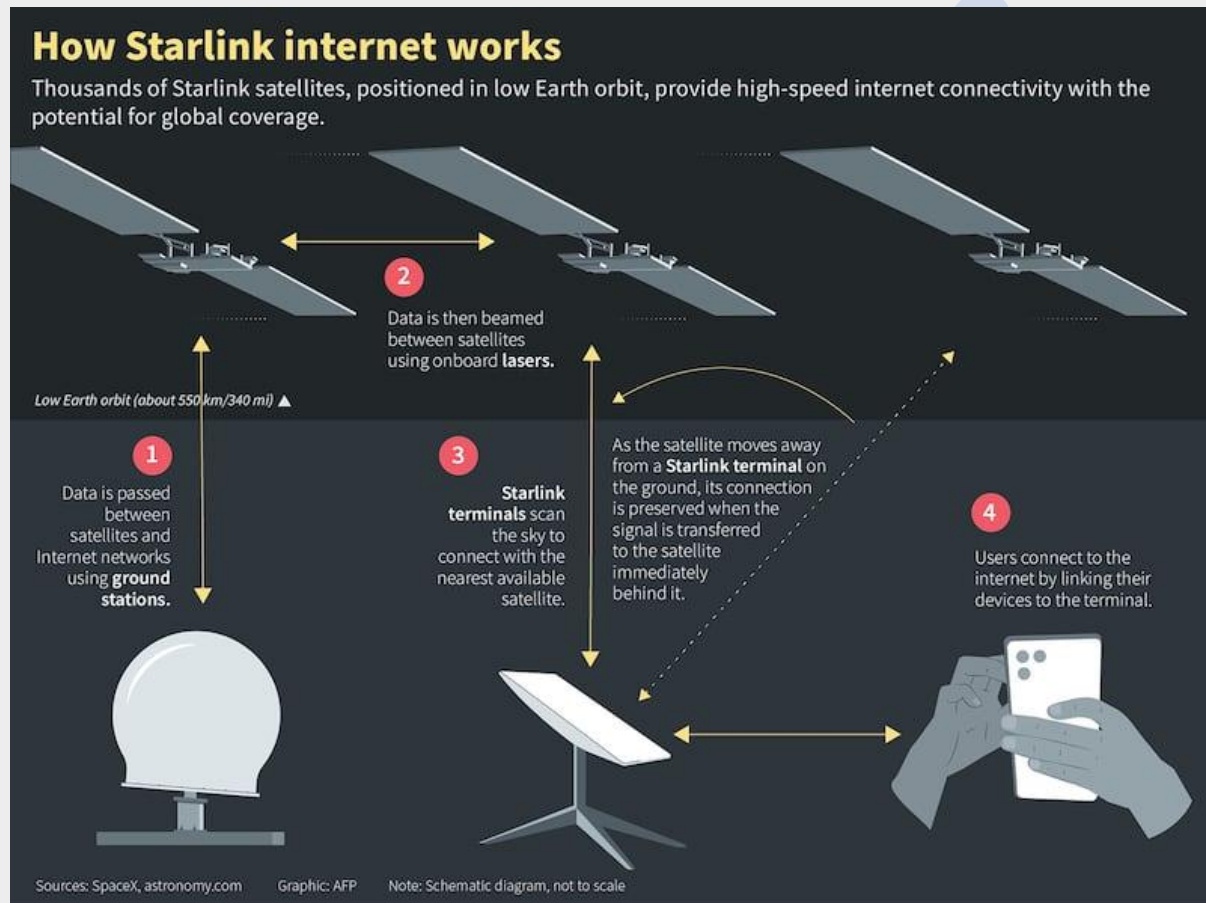


## 1. Starlink internet service in India

### Why now?

Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio have signed separate deals with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring the Starlink internet service to India. SpaceX has applied for a security clearance with the Indian government, but its application is currently undergoing review at the Home Ministry.



### What is it?

Starlink is a network of satellites that provides internet. It is operated by SpaceX, which is Musk's aerospace company. Launched in 2019, Starlink aims to shoot 42,000 small satellites into space, forming a globe-encircling ring just 547 km overhead. Currently, the telecommunication project has around 7,000 mass-produced small satellites in low Earth orbit (LEO) — an orbit that is under altitudes of 2,000 km. By the end of 2024, Starlink had more than 4.6 million users in over 100 countries.

In the United States, Starlink offers speeds up to 220 Mbps. However, the service is quite expensive. It starts with "\$120 monthly for the standard home internet service, plus \$349, give or take a hundred bucks, for the equipment needed to get started. The monthly rate on mobile service is cheaper but the expected speeds are slower.

### How does satellite Internet work?

Satellite Internet operates by sending signals from the user's device to a satellite in space, which then passes on the data to a ground station connected to the Internet. The ground station retrieves the requested data and sends it back through the satellite to the user's dish, completing the connection.

This whole process does not require cable, fibre or phone lines. The user just needs a modem and a satellite dish. The modem needs to be connected to that dish to translate the incoming signal into a workable internet connection.

### Why are the Starlink deals significant?

Starlink can provide a practical solution for broadband in underserved areas in India, where the traditional ways to deliver the Internet — fibre-optic cables or wireless networks — are scarce or unavailable. It can help bridge the digital divide by bringing high-speed Internet to the remotest corners of the country.

Although India is the world's second-largest Internet market, more than 670 million of its 1.4 billion people have no access to the Internet.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 2. Behind train hijacking in Pakistan, history of Baloch insurgency and a spate of recent attacks

### What happened on Tuesday?



The Jaffar Express runs from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, to Peshawar in the north. The train comprised nine coaches and had around 500 passengers on board. The train was stopped by armed men, insurgents of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

The BLA has claimed that civilian passengers, particularly women, children, the elderly, and Baloch people, "were released safely". Those taken hostage include active-duty personnel from the Pakistani Army, the Inter-Services Intelligence and Anti-Terrorism Force, all of whom were travelling on leave.

### What is the BLA?

The BLA emerged in the early 2000s, aimed at achieving Baloch independence. Pakistan banned the organisation in 2006 and the US designated it as a global terrorist organisation in 2019. The State Department then described it as “an armed group that targets security forces and civilians, mainly in Baloch areas of Pakistan.”

### **What is behind the Baloch insurgency?**

**Lack of Economic Development:** Balochistan is the largest but least populated of Pakistan’s four provinces – Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It has substantial oil and gas reserves, alongside gold and copper deposits, but has lagged in terms of economic growth compared to other regions.

Many members of the ethnic Baloch minority have long criticised the central government for the region’s economic backwardness, as well as the domination of Punjab over the country’s resources. Punjabis are also overrepresented in the military, the bureaucracy and in industries.

**Demand for Autonomy:** Some have also questioned the terms of the province’s inclusion in the State of Pakistan, following independence from colonial rule. Balochistan remained independent until March 1948 under a friendship treaty with Pakistan, but the local ruler faced great political pressure. For one, the British were wary of the Russians extending their geopolitical influence if it remained independent. Further, there were demands in some parts to accede to Pakistan. He thus signed the instrument of accession, but demands for independence have continued in Balochistan.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

## **3. The story of Chagos, the Indian Ocean archipelago that Mauritius claims, UK controls**

### **Introduction**

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s two-day visit to Mauritius this week, India affirmed its support for the island country’s claim over the Chagos archipelago.

Chagos has long been the subject of a dispute between Mauritius and the UK, which held on to these islands for decades after granting independence to Mauritius in 1968.

It was only last year that London officially recognised Mauritius’ sovereign rights over all of Chagos, although it retained control over Diego Garcia, the largest island in the archipelago and home to a strategically important joint UK-US military base.

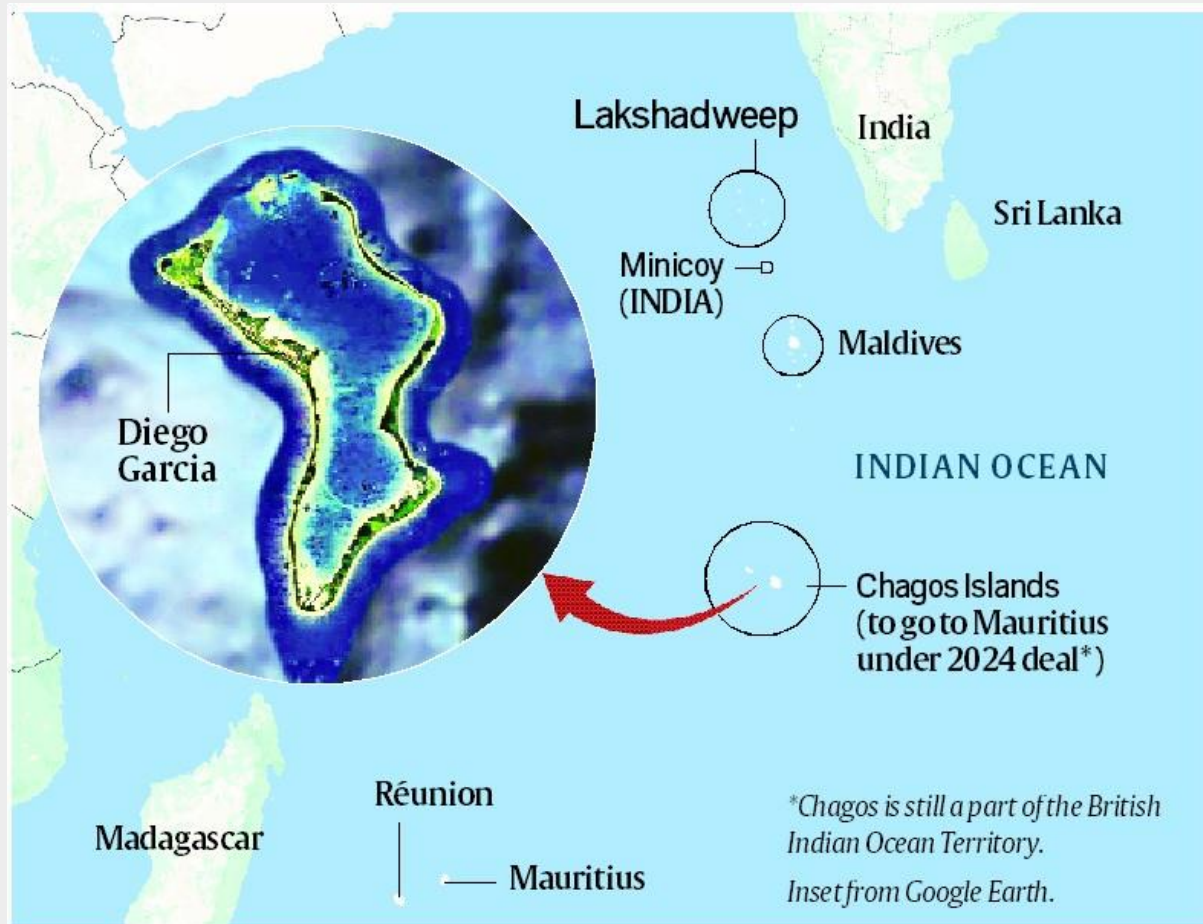
The deal — which awaits final confirmation from Washington — has its critics not only in the US and the UK, but also in Mauritius, and among native Chagossians.

### **Chagos & Chagossians**

The Chagos archipelago comprises more than 60 low-lying islands in the Indian about 500 kilometres (310 mi) south of the Maldives archipelago.

Chagos has a land area of only 56.1 sq km, with Diego Garcia alone spread over 32.5 sq km — which is about the same as the land area of Lakshadweep.

Chagos was uninhabited for most of its history. But it was only in the 18th century that the first permanent settlements emerged on the islands. The Chagossian population today traces its origins to freed African slaves, and the Indian and Malayan labourers who arrived in the 18th and 19th centuries. Under international law, they are the indigenous people of the Chagos archipelago.



### **BIOT & Diego Garcia base**

After a decades-long struggle for self-determination, Mauritius became independent on March 12, 1968. But Britain kept control of Chagos, which had administratively been under the government in Port Louis for more than a century.

In 1965, the UK had created a new administrative entity — the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) — which included the Chagos islands from Mauritius. The BIOT was meant to provide the British (and by extension their Cold War allies, the Americans) with an overseas base in the Indian Ocean. Mauritius was paid a settlement of 3 million pounds for the detachment of Chagos.

In 1966, the UK and the US signed a secret agreement to establish a military base in Diego Garcia. The agreement included a provision that barred civilians from staying on the islands.

The Diego Garcia base became fully operational in 1986, in time to serve as a hub for American air operations in the Gulf War of 1990-91. It also served this purpose in the subsequent American wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Today, it is a crucial British-American outpost from which the two countries project power across Asia and the Indian Ocean, where China has become increasingly assertive.

### **The 2024 agreement**

Mauritius had long claimed sovereignty over the Chagos islands, and raised the “illegal” British occupation at various international fora.

In 2017, the UN General Assembly voted to ask the International Court of Justice to examine the legal status of the archipelago. In 2019, the ICJ concluded that “the UK is under an obligation to bring to an end its administration of the Chagos Archipelago as rapidly as possible”.

The UNGA subsequently adopted a resolution welcoming the ICJ’s ruling, and demanded that the UK “unconditionally withdraw its colonial administration from the area within six months”.

But negotiations between the UK and Mauritius began only in 2022. A deal was struck in October 2024. Britain recognised Mauritius’ claim over all of Chagos, including Diego Garcia — however, the deal said that the UK would, for a 99-year initial period, exercise “the sovereign rights [over Diego Garcia] and authorities of Mauritius are required to ensure the continued operation of the base well into the next century”.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

### **‘Sharing is Caring’**

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