



THE HINDU



GS Paper 2-Health

‘A.P. govt. to consider giving pension to all thalassemia patients’

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Health Minister Y. Satya Kumar stated in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday that a proposal to increase the monthly pension for thalassemia patients from the current ₹10,000 would be

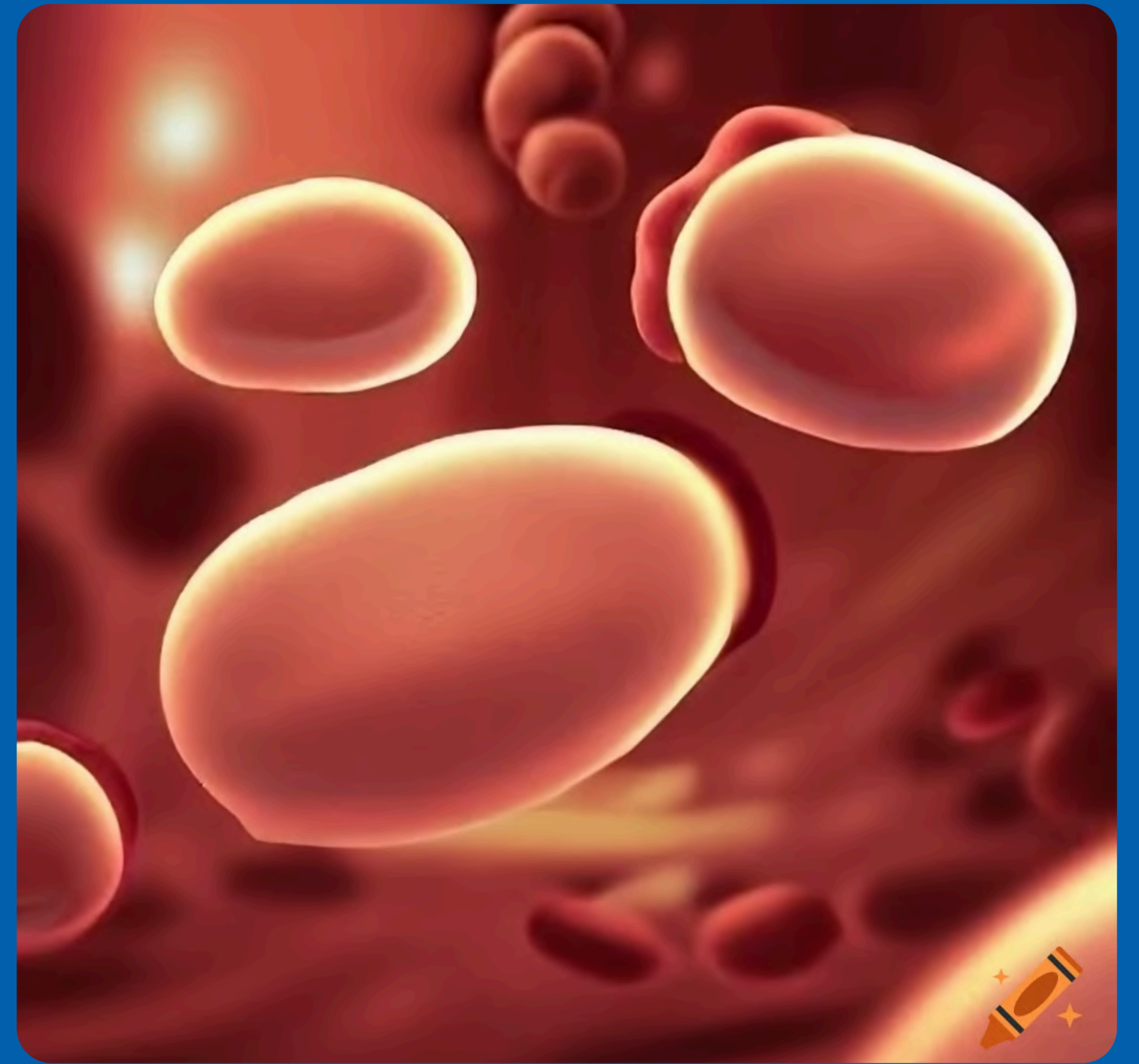


Y. Satya Kumar

KEY POINTS

The Andhra Pradesh Health Minister announced in the Legislative Assembly that the government is considering a proposal to increase the monthly pension for thalassemia patients from ₹10,000.

Thalassemia is an inherited blood disorder that causes anemia due to insufficient hemoglobin, requiring frequent blood transfusions.





THE HINDU



GS Paper 3-Economy

Parliamentary panel asks Centre to spend more on agriculture, rename Ministry

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Standing Committee of Parliament on Agriculture, headed by former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, has recommended a change in the name of the Union Agriculture Ministry to reflect the importance of farm workers, too.

The panel, in its report



The committee has demanded

schemes," the committee said, recommending the establishment of a 'National Commission for Minimum Living Wages for Farm Labourers' to address wage disparities and improve living standards.

The panel requested the Ministry to put in place required processes and mechanisms to monitor the usage of funds at regular intervals, and to address



KEY POINTS

The Standing Committee on Agriculture, led by Charanjit Singh Channi, recommended renaming the Union Agriculture Ministry to include farm labourers, called for a comprehensive crop insurance plan for small farmers, and proposed establishing a National Commission for Minimum Living Wages for farm labourers





THE HINDU



GS Paper 2-Governance

Lok Sabha passes Bill to boost investments in oil and gas sector

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

A Bill that seeks to amend the existing law governing exploration and production of oil and gas as well as delink petroleum operations from mining operations was passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

It aims at resolving grievances of global firms interested in investing by ensuring stability in operation

"The oil Bill aims to resolve one of the biggest grievances of global oil



KEY POINTS

The Lok Sabha passed the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024, which aims to amend laws governing oil and gas exploration and separate petroleum operations from mining activities to attract more investment. The Bill was previously passed by the Rajya Sabha in December.





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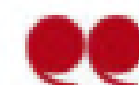
GS Paper 3-Science and Tech

'Design stage of small modular nuclear reactor completed'

It will take 60 to 72 months for the reactor to be constructed after the project is sanctioned, Union Minister Jitendra Singh tells Lok Sabha

Jacob Koshy
NEW DELHI

The "concept design" stage of India's proposed Bharat Small Modular Reactor (BSMR) has been completed and is in the process of being approved. Once the project is sanctioned, it will take 60 to 72 months for the reactor to be constructed, Union Minister



The BSMR was based on the 'globally proven' pressurised water reactor technology. It was equipped with passive safety features

JITENDRA SINGH
Union Minister

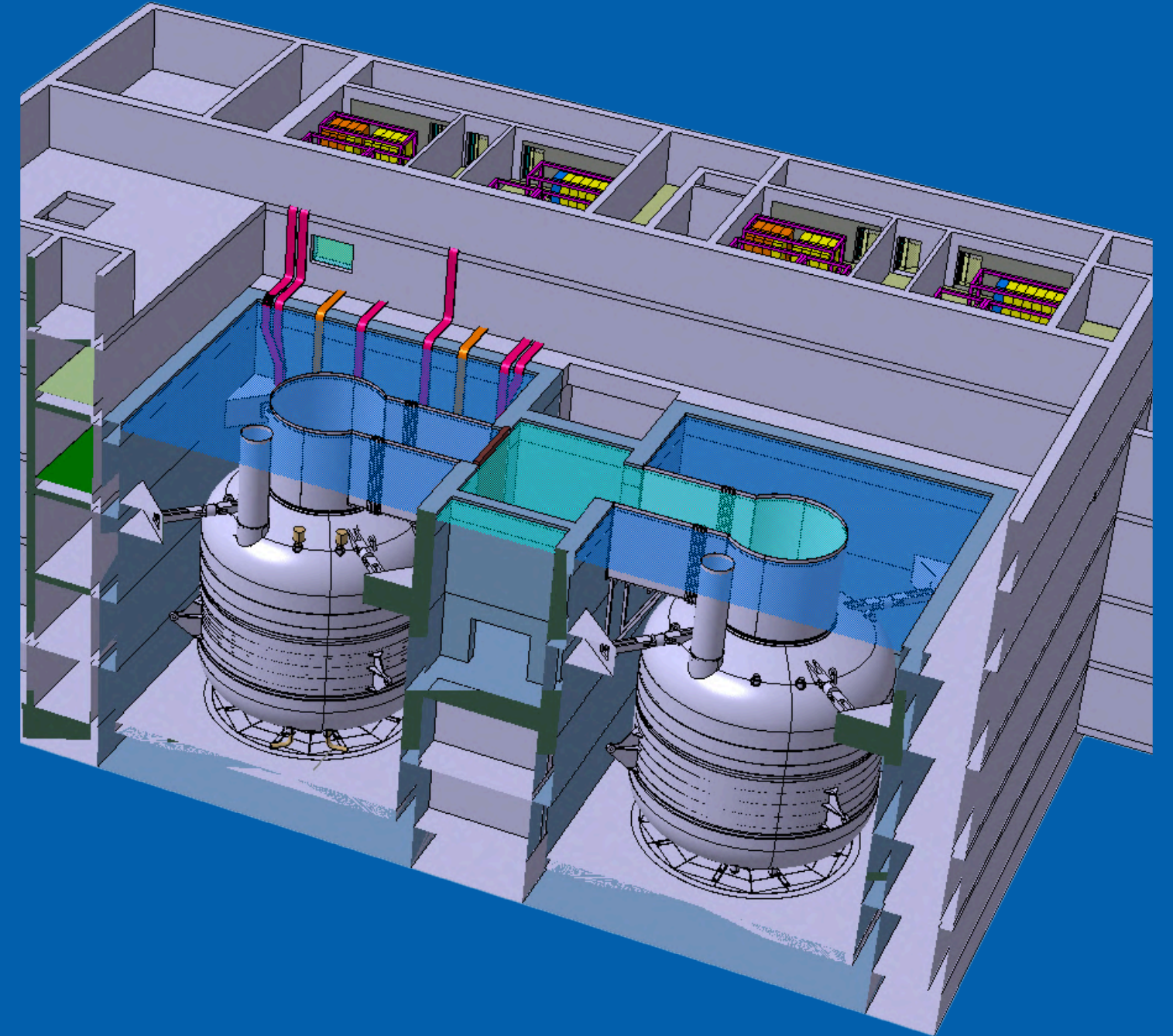
partment Of Atomic Energy (DAE). "Critical items",

ensure nuclear safety during accidents. Systems



KEY POINTS

India has completed the concept design for the Bharat Small Modular Reactor (BSMR), a 200 MW reactor using slightly enriched uranium. Developed by BARC and NPCIL, it will serve energy-intensive industries and remote areas. Construction will take 60–72 months after approval, with ₹20,000 crore allocated for the first reactor by 2033. India aims for 100 GW of nuclear power by 2047.





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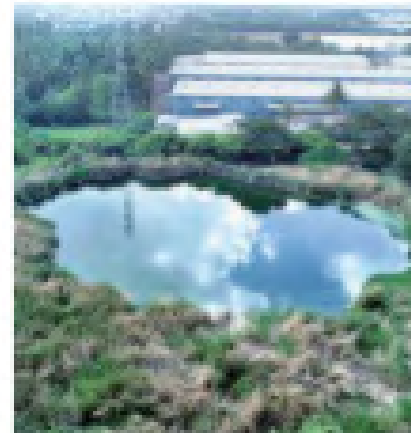
GS Paper 3-Environment

Indian Railways to dig ponds under govt's Mission Amrit Sarovar

S. Vijay Kumar
CHENNAI

The Indian Railways will dig ponds as part of the Union government's Mission Amrit Sarovar that aims to address the critical issue of water scarcity in the country.

Amrit Sarovar was launched in April 2022 with the ambitious goal of constructing or rejuvenating 75 ponds in each district of the country. The project made significant progress and as of October 2024, more than 68,000 ponds have been completed, rejuvenating surface and groundwater availability in various regions. These ponds have not only addressed immediate water



The mission was launched with goal of constructing 75 ponds in each district of the country.

ble sites in the vicinity of railway lines.

Railway authorities were told to request the respective district authorities to identify possible sites for the creation of new waterbodies near railway worksites.

The constructed material



KEY POINTS

Indian Railways is supporting Mission Amrit Sarovar, launched in 2022 to address water scarcity. The mission aims to rejuvenate and construct ponds, with over 68,000 completed by October 2024. Railways will help by excavating and desilting ponds near railway lines, with materials used for embankments



The Indian **EXPRESS**

GS Paper 2-IR

ENHANCED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

India, Mauritius sign eight pacts as PMs decide to elevate ties

India to build new Mauritius Parliament building, train 500 civil servants

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 12

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi and Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Chandra Ramgoolam decided Wednesday to elevate the status of the India-Mauritius



KEY POINTS

1. PM Modi held talks with Mauritian PM Ramgoolam, signing 8 MoUs on various areas.

He launched the MAHASAGAR initiative for trade and security in the Global South, strengthening India-Mauritius ties.



GS Paper 3-Space

\$488-MN SPHEREX MISSION AIMS TO EXPLAIN HOW GALAXIES EVOLVED AND HOW UNIVERSE EXPANDED SO FAST IN ITS FIRST MOMENTS

NASA's newest space telescope blasts off to map the entire sky and millions of galaxies

MARCIA DUNN
MARCH 12

NASA'S NEWEST space telescope rocketed into orbit Tuesday to map the entire sky like never before — a sweeping look at hundreds of millions of galaxies and their shared cosmic glow since the beginning of time.

SpaceX launched the Spherex observatory from California, putting it on course to fly over Earth's poles. Tagging along were four suitcase-size satellites to study the sun. Spherex popped off the rocket's upper stage first, drifting

into the blackness of space with a blue Earth in the background. The \$488-mn Spherex mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded so fast in its first moments.

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, Spherex will hunt for water and other ingredients of life in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems emerge.

The cone-shaped Spherex — at 1,110 pounds (500 kilograms) or the heft of a grand piano — will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes

and wide field of view. Four full-sky surveys are planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 400 miles (650 kilometers) up.

Spherex won't see galaxies in exquisite detail like NASA's larger and more elaborate Hubble and Webb space telescopes, with their narrow fields of view.

Instead of counting galaxies or focusing on them, Spherex will observe the total glow produced by the whole lot, including the earliest ones formed in the wake of the universe-creating Big Bang.

"This cosmological glow cap-



SpaceX's Falcon rocket carrying the space telescope lifts off from Vandenberg Space Force Base, California on Tuesday. AP

tures all light emitted over cosmic history," said the mission's chief scientist Jamie Bock of the California Institute of Technology.

"It's a very different way of looking at the universe," enabling scientists to see what sources of light may have been missed in the past.

By observing the collective glow, scientists hope to tease out the light from the earliest galaxies and learn how they came to be, Bock said. "We won't see the Big Bang. But we'll see the aftermath from it and learn about the beginning of the universe that

way," he said.

The telescope's infrared detectors will be able to distinguish 102 colors invisible to the human eye, yielding the most colorful, inclusive map ever made of the cosmos.

It's like "looking at the universe through a set of rainbow-colored glasses," said deputy project manager Beth Fabinsky of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

To keep the infrared detectors super cold — minus 350 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 210 degrees Celsius) — Spherex has a unique look. It sports three alu-

minum-honeycomb cones, one inside the other, to protect from the sun and Earth's heat, resembling a 10-foot (3-meter) shield collar for an ailing dog.

Besides the telescope, SpaceX's Falcon rocket provided a lift from Vandenberg Space Force Base for a quartet of NASA satellites called Punch. From their own separate polar orbit, the satellites will observe the sun's corona, or outer atmosphere, and the resulting solar wind.

The evening launch was delayed two weeks because of rocket and other issues. **AP**

KEY POINTS

NASA launched the SPHEREx and PUNCH missions to map the universe's history and study the solar corona and solar wind. Both missions have a two-year lifespan.



The Indian EXPRESS

GS Paper 1-Places

The story of Chagos

Ahead of PM Modi's visit, India backed Mauritius' claims over Chagos, a strategically located Indian Ocean archipelago that has long been at the centre of a dispute between Mauritius and the UK. Here's its story

ARJUN SENGUPTA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 12

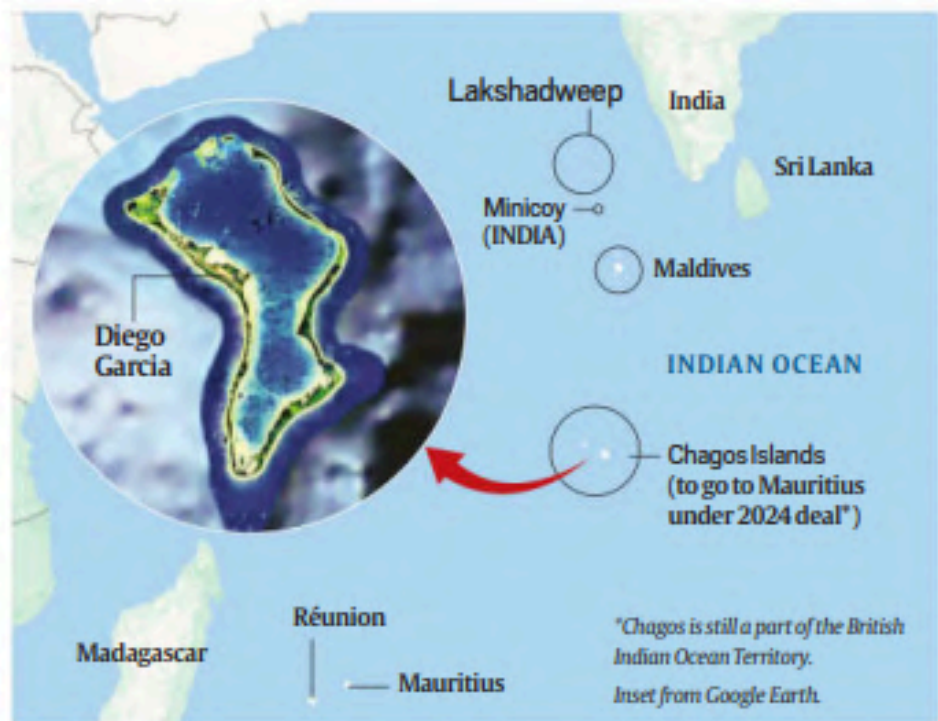
AHEAD OF Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Mauritius this week, India affirmed its support for the island country's claim over the Chagos archipelago.

"We support Mauritius in its stance on its sovereignty over Chagos, and this is obviously keeping with our long-standing position with regard to decolonisation and support for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misra said last week.

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



claimed the Peros Banhos island in 1744. The French had earlier set up Indian Ocean

with the UK in 1960 — this was a time when Britain was fast shedding its once-mighty

by 1973. The roughly 2,000-strong native population had been fully expelled by then.

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 with

KEY POINTS

India has reaffirmed its support for Mauritius' sovereignty over the Chagos Islands, aligning with its long-standing stance on decolonization and territorial integrity. Despite Mauritius gaining independence in 1968, the UK retained control over the islands, forcibly expelling the Chagossians for a US airbase. In October 2023, the UK agreed to return the islands, though US concerns about strategic interests remain.

