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India-Mauritius Relations

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Why in News: India and Mauritius are not just partners but a family, says PM Modi.

Introduction

India and Mauritius share a multifaceted relationship encompassing strategic, economic, cultural, and people-to-people dimensions. India was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Mauritius in 1948, two decades before Mauritius gained independence in 1968. Over the decades, the bilateral ties have evolved into an Enhanced Strategic Partnership (2025), reflecting shared interests in development, security, and regional cooperation.



Outcomes of Mauritius?

Prime Minister's 2025 Visit to India

1Economic and Infrastructure Support: India announced a Special Economic Package for Port Louis development, infrastructure projects, and surveillance of the Chagos Marine Protected Area. Launch of the first Jan Aushadhi Kendra outside India and plans for an AYUSH Centre of Excellence.

2Community Development and Governance Cooperation: MOU for Phase 2 High Impact Community Development Projects. Civil service capacity building using Mission Karmayog as a reference platform.

3Energy Collaboration: MOU on energy and power sector, including a 17.5 MW floating solar power plant to meet Mauritius' energy needs.

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4Space and Technology Cooperation:MOU covering satellite telemetry, navigation, remote sensing, and related capacity building.

Historical and Cultural Links

1Indentured Labour and Girmitiyas Legacy:Indians were brought to Mauritius under French (1729) and British rule (1834–early 1900s) as artisans and labourers. The first batch of 36 Indians arrived on 2 November 1834, commemorated as Aapravasi Diwas.

2Mahatma Gandhi's Visit:Gandhi stayed in Mauritius in 1901, emphasizing education, political empowerment, and connection with India.

3Cultural Institutions

•Mahatma Gandhi Institute (1976), Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture (1987) – India's largest cultural centre abroad.

•World Hindi Secretariat, Rabindranath Tagore Institute, and ICCR Chairs in Sanskrit and Hindi.

•Over 2,500 Mauritian students benefit annually from Indian cultural programs.

4People-to-People Links

•Indian nationals: 17,403; OCI cardholders: 11,600.

•OCI eligibility extended to Mauritians with Indian ancestry up to 6–7 generations.

•Visa-free regime for Indians and gratis e-tourist visas for Mauritians.

Strategic and Security Significance

1Geopolitical Location:Mauritius, in the Western Indian Ocean, is vital for maritime security and countering piracy, terrorism, trafficking, and illegal fishing. Known as the “Star and Key of the Indian Ocean,” it is a focus of global powers like China, Europe, and the Gulf.

2Maritime Security Cooperation:

•India participates with Mauritius in the Colombo Security Conclave (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh).

•Infrastructure on Agaléga Island, coastal radar stations, and access to Naval Information Fusion Centre enhance surveillance. Upgraded Agaléga airstrip allows deployment of large carriers.

3MAHASAGAR Initiative:Expanded version of SAGAR (2015), covering Global South Focus areas: Trade for Development, Mutual Security, Technology Sharing, Financial Assistance.

•Key initiatives:

•IOS Sagar: Maritime cooperation with IOR nations.

•AIKEYME (Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement): Joint naval exercises for interoperability and security.

Economic and Trade Relations

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1 Bilateral Trade:

- FY 2022–23: Total trade USD 554.19mn; Indian exports: petroleum, pharmaceuticals, cereals, cotton, shrimp, bovine meat; Mauritian exports: vanilla, medical devices, aluminium alloys, refined copper, apparel.
- Trade has grown 132% since 2005 (USD 206.76mn–USD 554.19mn).

2 Investment and FDI:

- Mauritius is a major FDI source for India (~USD 161 bn, 2000–2022; 26% of total inflows).
- Decline in FDI post-2016 DTAA amendment; India-Mauritius DTAA remains a key investment conduit.
- Indian companies invested over USD 200mn in Mauritius in last 5 years.

3 CECPA Agreement (2021):

- India-Mauritius Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement, India's first trade pact with an African country.
- Includes General Economic Cooperation and Auto-Trigger Safeguard Mechanism.
- Facilitates trade in textiles, quartz slabs, spices, medical devices, and apparel.

Development Cooperation and Projects

1 Special Economic Packages and LoCs:

- USD 500mn LoC (2017), USD 190mn LoC + USD 10mn grant (2021), USD 300mn LoC + USD 25mn grant (2022).

2 Infrastructure Projects: Completed: Upadhyay Training Centre, Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Subramania Bharati Eye Centre, Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre.

3 Indian Public Sector Enterprises in Mauritius: 11 PSUs including Bank of Baroda, LIC, Indian Oil, RITES, HSCC, EdCIL actively participating in economic and technical cooperation.

Healthcare, Disaster Relief, and Crisis Response

1 COVID-19 Assistance:

- Supplied 3 lakh vaccine doses, 13 tonnes of medicines including HCQ and Ayurvedic medicines, and deployed medical teams
- Technical support continued with knowledge sharing and best practices.
- Mauritius reciprocated by donating 200 oxygen concentrators to India in April 2021.

2 Wakashio Oil Spill: India deployed IAF aircraft with 30 tonnes of equipment and INS Nireekshak for salvage operations of Mauritian vessels.

Education, Capacity Building, and Scholarships

1 Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Training: Mauritius receives ~400 annual slots; 4,000 trained since 2002–03 under civilian and defence programs.

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2 Scholarships and Distance Learning:

- ICCR Africa Scholarship Scheme: 65 slots annually.
- e-Vidya Bharti Arogya Bharti program (2020–2023) with hundreds of enrollments annually.

3 Youth and Exchange Programs:

- Know India Programme (KIP): 261 Mauritian youth participated since 2004.
- NCC exchange programs for youth and Republic Day participation.

Challenges in India-Mauritius Relations

Economic and FDI Concerns

1 Post-DTAA Amendment Impact:

- The 2016 revision of the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Mauritius led to a sharp decline in FDI inflows from Mauritius to India.
- Annual FDI from Mauritius fell from USD 15.72 billion in 2016–17 to USD 6.13 billion in 2022–23, reducing Mauritius' role as India's preferred investment conduit.
- Mauritius seeks parity with Singapore and other financial hubs to remain attractive for Indian investors targeting Africa and the Global South.

2 Limited Private Sector Engagement:

- Indian economic presence in Mauritius is dominated by public sector enterprises (PSUs) such as Bank of Baroda, LIC, Indian Oil, and RITES.
- Limited private sector participation reduces innovation, competitiveness, and diversification in trade and investment, leaving bilateral economic cooperation vulnerable to shifts in global markets.

3 Trade and Logistics Barriers: High shipping costs, limited direct maritime connectivity, and regulatory constraints restrict the growth of bilateral trade beyond core sectors like petroleum, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and medical devices.

Geopolitical Competition

1 China's Growing Influence: China has invested heavily in Mauritius, funding key infrastructure projects including:

- o Airport terminal upgrades
- o Bagatelle Dam
- o Sports complex
- o Cruise ship terminal

- These projects strengthen China's strategic presence in the Indian Ocean, creating competition for India's traditional influence in Mauritius.

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2Global Power Interest:

- Apart from China, Mauritius is a target for European Union and Gulf nation engagement due to its strategic location in the Western Indian Ocean and its status as a financial hub.
- India faces the challenge of maintaining strategic primacy while balancing Mauritius' growing multi-polar partnerships.

Security Risks

1Maritime Security Threats:The Western Indian Ocean is vulnerable to piracy, illegal fishing, and trafficking of narcotics and armsMauritius' location makes it a potential hub for transnational criminal networks, which could have spillover effects on India's maritime security.

2Limited Local Enforcement:India provides maritime patrols, coastal radar support, and capacity building, Mauritius' own limited enforcement capabilities make it reliant on India, creating a strategic dependency and potential security gaps.

Environmental Vulnerabilities

1Climate Change and Sea-Level Rise:Mauritius, as a low-lying island nation, faces rising sea levels, which threaten urban settlements, infrastructure, and tourism.

2Natural Disasters:Frequent cyclones, coastal erosion, and flooding disrupt economic activity and strain disaster-response mechanisms.

3Pollution and Coastal Degradation:Incidents such as theWakashiooil spill (2020) highlight the vulnerability of Mauritius' marine ecosystems and the need for ongoing environmental monitoring and intervention.

Way Forward: Strengthening India-Mauritius Bilateral Ties

Economic and Trade Expansion

1Broaden CECPA Coverage:The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) can be expanded beyond traditional goods to include services, fintech, digital trade, and e-commerce, fostering diversified bilateral trade.

2Financial Integration:Introducing a Rupee–Mauritian Rupee payment system can simplify transactions, reduce dependence on third currencies, and encourage trade and investment flows.

3Private Sector Participation:India should incentivize private sector investments in technology, renewable energy, and financial services to complement the existing public sector-led engagement, thereby improving competitiveness and innovation.

Sustainable Development and Climate Action

1Green and Blue Economy Projects:Joint initiatives in solar, wind, and floating solar energy can enhance energy security and promote sustainable growth.Investment in marine conservation, fisheries management, and coastal protection supports both environmental sustainability and economic resilience.

2Disaster Preparedness and Climate Adaptation:India can collaborate with Mauritius on early warning systems, cyclone mitigation, coastal infrastructure reinforcement, and disaster response training, leveraging past experiences like theWakashiooil spill and cyclones.

Strategic and Maritime Cooperation

1AgalégaIsland Development:Upgrading infrastructure and surveillance capabilities onAgalégaIsland will strengthen India’s regional maritime security presence and support MAHASAGAR objectives.

2Maritime Security Partnerships:Enhanced joint naval exercises, information sharing, and capacity building with Mauritian forces can secure the Western Indian Ocean, combat piracy, and protect sea lanes vital for India’s trade and strategic interests.

Cultural, Educational, and Diaspora Engagement

1Promotion of Indian Culture and Language:Expanding cultural programs through institutions like the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, World Hindi Secretariat, and Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture will deepen historical and people-to-people connections.

2Educational and Technical Cooperation:Increase scholarships, ITEC training, and youth exchange programs, including e-learning platforms like e-Vidya Bharti, to strengthen human capital in Mauritius.

3Diaspora Engagement:Establish a PravasiBharatiyaKendra in Mauritius to engage the Indian-origin community, facilitate entrepreneurship, and maintain socio-cultural bonds across generations.

Conclusion

?India-Mauritius relations are a comprehensive partnership encompassing strategic, economic, and cultural dimensions. India has been a trusted development partner and first responder in crises, while Mauritius plays a strategic role in the Western Indian Ocean, enhancing India’s maritime and regional security under MAHASAGARChallenges like geopolitical competition, FDI decline, environmental threats, and limited private sector engagement exist, but can be addressed through expanded trade, investment, sustainable development projects, maritime cooperation, and diaspora engagementThe partnership reflects mutual trust, shared history, and long-term strategic alignment, making it resilient, forward-looking, and beneficial for both nations.