



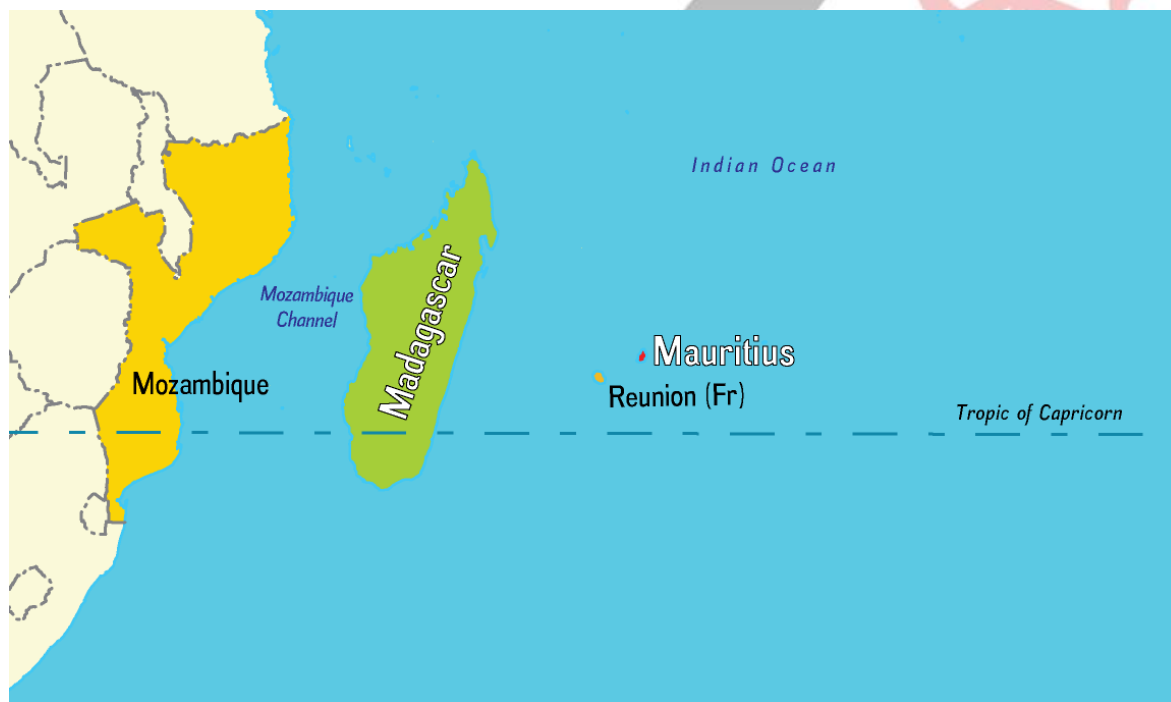
## Social Housing Units Project in Mauritius

**For Prelims:** Location of Mauritius, SAGAR Mission, India-assisted Development Projects in Mauritius.

**For Mains:** Importance of Mauritius for India and related challenges, India-Mauritius Relations.

### Why in News

Recently, the Prime Minister of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated **India-assisted social housing units project in Mauritius virtually** as part of India's development support.



### Key Points

#### ▪ About:

- In May 2016, India had extended a grant of USD 353 mn to Mauritius as **Special Economic Package (SEP)** to execute **five priority projects** identified by Mauritius, among others.
- These were: the Metro Express Project, **Supreme Court Building**, New ENT Hospital, Supply of Digital Tablets to Primary School Children, and the Social Housing Project.
- With the inauguration of the Social Housing Project, all the high profile projects under the SEP have been implemented.

#### ▪ Foundation Stone for Two Other Projects:

- **Construction of a State-of-the-Art Civil Service College:**
  - It is being financed through a grant support of USD 4.74 million, under an MoU

- signed in 2017 during the visit of Prime Minister of Mauritius to India.
- Once constructed, this will **provide a fully equipped and functional facility for the civil servants of Mauritius** to undertake various training and skill development programmes.
- It will further strengthen institutional linkages with India.
  - The Prime Minister of India also acknowledged the importance of the Civil Service College project in nation building and offered to share learnings of [Mission Karmayogi](#).
- **8 MW Solar PV Farm.**
  - It involves the **installation of 25,000 PV cells** to generate approximately 14 GWh of green energy annually, to electrify approximately 10,000 Mauritian households.
  - It will help mitigate the climate challenges that Mauritius faces through avoidance of 13,000 tons of CO2 emissions.
    - The idea for the [One Sun One World One Grid \(OSOWOG\) initiative](#) was put forth by the Indian Prime Minister at the **First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA)** in October 2018.
- **Exchange of Two Key Bilateral Pacts:**
  - Agreement for the extension of USD 190 million Line of Credit from India to Mauritius for the Metro Express and other infrastructure projects.
  - MoU on the Implementation of Small Development Projects.

## India-Mauritius Relations

### ▪ About:

- Connections between **India and Mauritius date back to 1730** and diplomatic relations were **established in 1948** before Mauritius became an independent state (1968).
- India has viewed Mauritius through the **prism of the diaspora**. This was, perhaps, natural since communities of Indian origin constitute a significant majority in the island.
  - Indian-origin people constitute **nearly 70% of the population of Mauritius**.
- It is a significant partner of India in celebrating [Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas](#) which is a forum for issues concerning the [Indian Diaspora](#).

### ▪ Significance for India:

- **Geo-strategic:** India has begun to see the strategic significance of Mauritius to the renewed great power contestation in the [Indian Ocean](#).
  - In 2015, India unveiled its strategic vision for the Indian Ocean called the [SAGAR](#) (Security And Growth for All in the Region).
  - In 2015, India and Mauritius signed an agreement that allows India to develop infrastructure in terms of establishing [military bases on the Mauritian islands](#).
- **Geo-Economic:**
  - As a “central geographic point” Mauritius holds importance for commerce and connectivity in the Indian Ocean.
  - As a member of the [African Union, Indian Ocean Rim Association](#) and the [Indian Ocean Commission](#), Mauritius is a stepping stone to multiple geographies.
  - As a founding-member of the [‘Small Island Developing States’](#) (SIDS) it has been seen as a significant neighbour.
  - India is Mauritius’s largest trading partner and has been the largest exporter of goods and services to the Indian Ocean island nation since 2007.
- **Regional Hub:** As new investments pour into Mauritius from Africa, Mauritius can be the fulcrum for India’s own African economic outreach.
  - India could also contribute to the evolution of Mauritius as a regional centre for technological innovation.
  - Mauritius could also become a valuable place for regional and international maritime scientific research.
- **Pivot of Island Policy:** Until now India has tended to deal with the so-called [Vanilla islands](#) of the south western Indian Ocean — Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mayotte, Reunion and Seychelles — on a bilateral basis.
  - If the Indian establishment thinks of them as a collective, it could make Mauritius the pivot of Delhi’s island policy.

- It can facilitate a number of Indian commercial activities in the south western Indian ocean — as a banking gateway and hub for tourism.
- **Keeping Pace with China:** In its “string of pearls” policy, China has built significant relations across the Indian Ocean, from Gwadar (Pakistan) to Hambantota (Sri Lanka) to Kyaukpyu (Myanmar).
  - Therefore, India should help Indian Ocean littoral states like Mauritius, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Seychelles as part of capacity and capability enhancement in strengthening their maritime domain awareness capabilities.
- **Important Developments:**
  - In 2021, India approved signing of the [Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement \(CECPA\)](#) between India and Mauritius.
  - India has signed a contract with Mauritius for the export of an [Advanced Light Helicopter Mk III](#). The helicopter will be used by the Mauritius Police Force.

## Way Forward

- While India and Mauritius share cultural contiguity dating back to colonial times and a special partnership in recent years, **India cannot take its influence in Mauritius for granted and should continue to enhance its engagement** with this important island country.
- As India takes an integrated view of its security cooperation in the south western Indian Ocean, Mauritius is the natural node for it. Therefore, it is important to take course-corrections in **India’s Neighbourhood First policy**.

**Source: PIB**

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