



India-Mauritius Partnership for Stability & Prosperity

This editorial is based on “[India and the geopolitics of Mauritius: The ‘Star and Key’ to the Indian Ocean](#)” which was published in The Indian Express on 12/03/2025. The article highlights how the Indian Prime Minister’s Mauritius visit strengthens India’s strategic, economic, and maritime ties amid rising geopolitical competition.

For Prelims: [Indian Ocean](#), [India’s SAGAR vision](#), [Puducherry](#), [Top FDI source for India](#), [Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement \(DTAA\)](#), [Jan Aushadi Kendra](#), [Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement \(CECPA\)](#), [Exclusive Economic Zone](#), [Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region \(IFC-IOR\)](#), [Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation \(ITEC\) program](#), [Wakashio oil spill](#), [Cyclone Chido](#), [Agaléga Island](#).

For Mains: Significance of India-Mauritius Relations in the changing Indo-Pacific dynamics.

[India and Mauritius](#) share a **historical, economic, and strategic bond**, shaped by **shared heritage, geopolitical interests, and economic cooperation**. Indian Prime Minister’s **March 2025 visit** highlights **India’s commitment to reinforcing bilateral ties amid shifting global dynamics**. As China’s influence expands in the [Indian Ocean](#), India’s role in **maritime security, trade, and infrastructure development** is crucial. Strengthening defence collaboration, economic engagement, and cultural partnerships will ensure Mauritius remains a key pillar in [India’s SAGAR vision](#) for regional stability and prosperity.

What is the History of India-Mauritius Relations?

- **Colonial Era and Indentured Labor System:** Mauritius was colonized by **French (1715-1810)** and later by **British (1810-1968)** rule.
 - French settlers first brought **Indian artisans and masons** from [Puducherry](#) in the 1700s.
 - The British introduced **Indian indentured laborers (1834-early 1900s)** for sugar plantations.
 - Nearly **500,000 Indians** arrived, with **two-thirds settling permanently** in Mauritius.
- **Indian Diaspora and Cultural Retention:** Today, **70% of Mauritius’ population** is of [Indian origin](#), with significant **Bhojpuri, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi-speaking communities**.
 - Many Mauritians of Indian descent, primarily from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, have preserved their **languages, cultural festivals, and traditions**.
- **Freedom Struggle and Diplomatic Ties:** Mauritius gained **independence in 1968**, led by a movement influenced by **India’s independence struggle**.
 - Mahatma Gandhi briefly **visited Mauritius in 1901**, inspiring workers towards **education and political empowerment**.

- Indian leaders played a role in **supporting the Mauritian freedom movement**, and established **diplomatic relations in 1948**.
- **Deepening Cultural Ties:** India inaugurated the **Mahatma Gandhi Institute (1976)**, **Rabindranath Tagore Institute (2000)**, and **World Hindi Secretariat (2018)**.
 - The **Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture (1987)** is India's largest cultural center abroad.
 - These institutions promote **Indian languages, traditions, and heritage**.
- **India-Mauritius in Modern Diplomacy:** Relations have evolved beyond **historical and cultural ties**, expanding into **economic, security, and strategic partnerships**.
 - Mauritius' **geopolitical position** in the **Western Indian Ocean** enhances India's [maritime security interests](#).



What is the Significance and Present Status of India-Mauritius Bilateral Relations?

- **Commercial Relations:** Mauritius is a **key economic partner** and a **gateway for Indian**

businesses into Africa.

- Bilateral trade **reached \$851.13 million in FY 2023-24**, with India exporting **\$778.03 million worth of goods**.
- Key **exports include petroleum products, [pharmaceuticals](#), and [textiles](#)**, while Mauritius exports **vanilla, medical devices, and aluminium alloys**.
- Mauritius remains a **[top FDI source for India](#)**, investing **\$177 billion since 2000**, accounting for **25% of India's total FDI inflows**.
- The **[Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement \(DTAA\)](#)** has enhanced Mauritius' role as a **financial hub**.
- **India-Assisted Projects:** India has funded **numerous infrastructure and socio-economic projects**, with **\$1.1 billion in development assistance**.
 - Major projects include the **Metro Express, Supreme Court Building, ENT Hospital, and Social Housing initiatives**.
 - Recently, 20 India-funded projects, including the **Civil Services College (\$4.75 million)** and community-linked infrastructure worth **₹7 crores** has been inaugurated.
 - A **\$500 million [Line of Credit](#) (2017)** supports **critical infrastructure development**.
 - India also provided **digital tablets for Mauritian students** and launched its **first overseas [Jan Aushadi Kendra](#) (2024)**.
 - Under the **[Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement \(CECPA\)](#) 2021**, Indian exports to Mauritius increased significantly.
- **First Responder in Crises:** India has consistently **assisted Mauritius in crises**, including the **COVID-19 pandemic, [Wakashio oil spill](#) (2020) and [Cyclone Chido](#) (2024)**.
 - India provided **vaccines([Vaccine Maitri](#))**, **oxygen concentrators**, and **medical aid**, reinforcing its **humanitarian role**.
- **Geopolitical Significance:** Mauritius is **strategically crucial** for India's **maritime security and balancing external powers in the Indian Ocean**, given its **[Exclusive Economic Zone](#) (2.3 million sq. km)**.
 - India developed **Agaléga Island** for **maritime surveillance** and **set up coastal radar stations** to enhance security.
 - India's support for **Mauritius' sovereignty over [Chagos](#)** ensures **regional security against external pressures**.
 - Mauritius is integrated into India's **[Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region \(IFC-IOR\)](#)** and actively participates in the **[Colombo Security Conclave](#) (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Mauritius)**.
 - Also, Mauritius is a vital partner in **India's SAGAR vision**.

STRATEGIC OUTPOSTS IN INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD



India has upgraded the airstrip and jetty at Agaléga Island, a strategically located Mauritian dependency in the Indian Ocean

- **A Bridge Between India and the Global South:** Mauritius acts as a **gateway for India's economic and diplomatic outreach to Africa and the [Global South](#)**.
 - Its **bilingual advantage** (English and French) facilitates **engagement with Francophone Africa and trade expansion**.
 - The island's **preferential trade agreements** with African nations enhance **India's global trade presence**.
- **Cultural Relations and People-to-People Ties:** Mauritius is a **major beneficiary of India's [Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation \(ITEC\) program](#)**, with **4,940 Mauritians trained since 2002**.
 - Mauritius hosts **26,357 Indian nationals**, 13,198 OCI cardholders, and around 2,316 Indian students.
 - The **[e-Vidya Bharti & e-Arogya Bharti \(e-VBAB\)](#)** online learning program had **229 enrollments in 2022** and **53 in 2023**.
 - Visa-free travel, shared religious practices, and growing **[tourism](#)** strengthen ties, while India supports **Mauritian Hindi, Bhojpuri, and Tamil** cultural preservation.

What Are the Challenges in India and Mauritius Bilateral Relations?

- **Geopolitical Competition:** Mauritius balances relations with **India, China, Europe, Gulf states, and Russia**, creating a **competitive diplomatic landscape** in the Indian Ocean.
 - China has **increased [infrastructure investments](#)**, including **port development and economic projects** in the region.
- **Dependency on Indian Assistance:** Mauritius benefits significantly from **India's development assistance, concessional credit, and grants**, raising concerns of over-reliance.
 - India has provided **\$1.1 billion in aid**, including **Metro Express, Social Housing, and Supreme Court projects**.
 - Mauritius wants to **diversify partnerships** to avoid excessive dependence on a single country for economic and security needs.
- **Economic and Trade Barriers:** Despite **CECPA (2021)**, bilateral trade is **relatively low** compared to India's trade with other African nations.
 - Mauritius is India's **second-largest FDI source**, but investment **flows are declining** due to **revised tax treaties and global regulatory changes**.

- **Balancing Ethnic and Diplomatic Engagement:** Mauritius has a **diverse population**, including **Indian-origin, African, and European communities**.
 - While India shares strong ties with **Indian-origin Mauritians (70% of the population)**, it must engage **all ethnic groups** to maintain diplomatic balance.
- **Environmental and Climate Risks:** Mauritius faces **severe climate vulnerabilities**, including **rising sea levels, cyclones, and coastal degradation**.
 - The **Wakashio oil spill (2020)** and **Cyclone Chido (2024)** highlighted the **ecological risks** to Mauritius' **marine economy and tourism sector**.
- **Concerns Over Maritime Security and External Influence:** Mauritius' **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 2.3 million sq. km** requires **enhanced security cooperation**.
 - India has developed **Agaléga Island** for joint **maritime surveillance** and **coastal radar stations**, but external actors, including **China, Gulf states, and Russia**, are also **expanding their naval presence**.
- **Need for Enhanced Private Sector Engagement:** Indian **public sector enterprises (PSUs)** **dominate economic engagement** in Mauritius, with **Bank of Baroda, LIC, SBI, and Indian Oil** having strong operations.
 - However, **Indian private sector participation remains low**, limiting business innovation and trade diversification.

What Should be the Way Forward to Strengthen Ties Between India and Mauritius?

- **Expanding Economic Partnership for Sustainable Growth:** India and Mauritius should **broaden the CECPA agreement**, incorporating **services, fintech, and digital trade** to maximize trade potential.
 - Mauritius is seeking **amendments to the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) and CECPA** to boost **FDI inflows**, which should be addressed bilaterally.
 - Strengthening **Mauritius' role as India's financial gateway to Africa** will attract **greater investments and economic collaboration**.
- **Deepening Maritime Security and Defence Cooperation:** India should **expand naval exercises** with Mauritius, reinforcing coastal security and anti-piracy operations.
 - The **Agaléga facility** must be further integrated into **regional security frameworks** like the **Colombo Security Conclave** to **counter growing foreign naval activity**.
- **Strengthening Resilience Against Climate Change:** Mauritius and India should **collaborate on climate adaptation programs**, particularly in **coastal resilience, green energy, and disaster management**.
 - Expanding India's support for **marine conservation and sustainable fisheries** will ensure **Mauritius' long-term economic stability**.
- **Encouraging Private Sector Investments and Digital Connectivity:** India should **encourage private sector involvement**, particularly in **technology, AI, and financial services**.
 - A **special economic zone (SEZ)** for Indian startups in Mauritius could create a regional innovation hub.
 - Expanding **digital connectivity and e-commerce** partnerships will further strengthen economic ties.
- **Boosting Bilateral Tourism and People-to-People Engagement:** Strengthening **air connectivity and tourism promotion** between India and Mauritius will enhance **cultural exchanges and economic opportunities**.
 - India should facilitate **heritage tourism initiatives**, highlighting **Mauritius' Indian-origin historical connections**.
 - India should increase scholarships under the ITEC program, promoting **higher education exchange and technical training**.
- **Promoting Mauritius as a Key Diplomatic Partner in Africa:** Mauritius' **strategic location** makes it an **ideal partner for India's Africa outreach**.
 - Strengthening **Mauritius' role in African Union engagements and Indo-Pacific security dialogues** will enhance **regional stability**.

Conclusion

India and Mauritius share **historical, economic, and strategic ties** that require **continuous adaptation to evolving global dynamics**. Strengthening **trade, security, environmental cooperation, and digital connectivity** will ensure **a robust, future-ready partnership**. As global geopolitical challenges grow, **India must reinforce its commitment to Mauritius as a stable and strategic ally**.

Drishti Mains Question:

India-Mauritius relations have evolved beyond historical and cultural ties to strategic and economic cooperation. Analyze the key areas of engagement and challenges in this partnership.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. A great deal of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to India comes from Mauritius than from many major and mature economies like UK and France. Why? (2010)

- (a) India has preference for certain countries as regards receiving FDI
- (b) India has double taxation avoidance agreement with Mauritius
- (c) Most citizens of Mauritius have ethnic identity with India and so they feel secure to invest in India
- (d) Impending dangers of global climatic change prompt Mauritius to make huge investments in India.

Ans: (b)

Mains:

Q. Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of Indian government to improve relationships with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss. (2015)