



# New Supreme Court Building of Mauritius

## Why in News

The **Prime Minister of India** and the **Prime Minister of Mauritius** will jointly inaugurate the new **Supreme Court building of Mauritius** on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2020.

- It will be the **first India assisted infrastructure project** within the capital city of **Port Louis, Mauritius**.

## Key Points



- The new Supreme Court Building is expected to become an important landmark in the city center symbolizing the strong bilateral partnership between the two countries.
- It is one of the five projects being implemented under the **'Special Economic Package'** of 353 million USD extended by the Government of India to Mauritius in 2016.

## India-Mauritius Relationship

- **Indo-Mauritian relations** refers to the **historical, political, economic, military, social and cultural connections** between the two countries.

- 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 diaspora**. This was, perhaps, natural since communities of Indian origin constitute a significant majority in the island. More than **68% of the Mauritian population are of Indian origin**, most commonly known as Indo-Mauritians.
- It is a significant partner of India in celebrating [Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas](#) which is a forum for issues concerning the [Indian Diaspora](#).
- **Significance:**
  - **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 signed an agreement to set up eight Indian-controlled coastal surveillance radar stations.
    - Mauritius is part of **India's security grid including Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR)** station of Indian Navy's National Command Control Communication Intelligence network.
    - In 2015 India unveiled an ambitious policy called the [SAGAR \(security and growth for all\)](#).
      - It was India's first significant policy statement on the Indian Ocean in many decades.
      - Through **SAGAR**, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.
    - In 2015, India and Mauritius signed an agreement that allows India to develop infrastructure in terms of **establishing military bases** on the Mauritian islands.
      - The agreement covers within its purview our shared efforts in **anti-piracy operations**, and enhanced **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)** surveillance to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders including those indulging in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking.
  - **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.
    - Mauritius is the **second largest source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** for India after Singapore.
  - **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**. Therefore, India must respond to the demands from Mauritius for higher education facilities.
    - 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.
- **Challenges:**
  - **Deep Rooted Perception:** There is an urgent need to discard the deep-rooted perception that Mauritius is **simply an extension of India**.
    - Mauritius is a sovereign entity with an international identity of its own due to the island's special place in the Indian Ocean as a **thriving economic hub and an attractive strategic location**.
  - **China Centric Policies:** China's rapidly growing presence in the northern part of the Indian Ocean along with the deployment of Chinese submarines and ships in the region is a challenge for India.
    - However, India has often been accused of being self-centred in its relations with its smaller neighbours.
    - Much of India's move of reaching out to its littoral neighbours has been driven by China's increasing involvement in this region mainly through large and ambitious infrastructure projects.
  - **Obsessive Security Policy:** An obsessively security-driven policy of India towards its neighbours has not helped in the past.
    - Certain common challenges like **climate change, sustainable development and the blue economy** should be reconsidered in India's approach to Mauritius.
  - **Global Integration:** Mauritius being an island nation, has been physically cut off from the rest of the world despite the fact anything that happens in the world affects Mauritius e.g, world economic crisis, declining FDIs, trade wars etc.
    - Therefore, it is important for India to broaden its perspective beyond just the maritime security of IOR.
  - **Indian Ocean Region:** As the power dynamic in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** is changing, world has started to view **Mauritius as an integral part of the new security architecture**.
    - Increased presence of China and efforts of countries like the USA, Australia, France and the U.K. to take advantage of small nations is a growing concern for India.

## Way Forward

- Companies registered in Mauritius are the largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India, making it crucial for India to upgrade its bilateral tax treaty, adopting the latest international practices that prevent multinational companies from artificially shifting profits to low tax countries.
- 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**

