



## 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)**