

## INDIAN – MAURITIUS RELATIONS – INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

NEWS: The Prime Minister paid a state visit to Mauritius, his second since 2015.

- He was the **Chief Guest at Mauritius' National Day Celebrations on March 12.**

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

#### MOUs Signed

1. **Training & Capacity Building:** Agreements were signed to train civil servants and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), enhancing administrative efficiency and economic development in Mauritius.
2. **Blue Economy Development:** India and Mauritius agreed to collaborate on sustainable development of marine resources, ensuring long-term benefits from the blue economy.
3. **Combating Financial Crimes:** A memorandum was signed to strengthen financial intelligence cooperation and combat illicit financial activities like money laundering.
4. **Local Currency Settlement for Trade:** Both countries agreed to facilitate bilateral trade using their respective local currencies, reducing dependence on external currencies and transaction costs.

#### Indian Rupee Credit Line

1. **Project Scope:** India extended a ₹487.6 crore (INR) credit line to Mauritius for replacing its aging water pipeline infrastructure, improving water supply and management.
2. **First INR-Based Credit Line:** This marks the first-ever Indian Rupee-denominated credit line to a foreign country, enhancing India's financial engagement with Mauritius.

#### White-Shipping Agreement

1. **Purpose:** A technical agreement was signed to enhance maritime security through the exchange of white-shipping data (information on non-military merchant vessels).
2. **Information Sharing:** This facilitates real-time data exchange between India and Mauritius, improving maritime domain awareness and security in the Indian Ocean.

#### Award Conferred

1. **Highest Civilian Honour:** Mauritius conferred the **Grand Commander of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean** upon PM Narendra Modi.
2. **Significance:** He became the first Indian to receive this prestigious award, recognizing India's strong and enduring relationship with Mauritius.

## Vision for the Global South

1. **Vision MAHASAGAR:** PM Modi introduced **MAHASAGAR (Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions)** as a strategic initiative for strengthening regional maritime cooperation.
2. **Building on Vision SAGAR:** This initiative expands on India's 2015 **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** policy, reinforcing India's leadership in the Indo-Pacific.

## About Mauritius

### Geographical & Strategic Importance

1. **Location:** Mauritius is a strategically positioned island nation in the western Indian Ocean, enhancing its significance in maritime trade routes and security.
2. **Proximity to India:** The island is geographically close to India, making it a natural partner for regional cooperation.

### Demographics & Colonial History

1. **Population Composition:** Nearly **70% of Mauritius' 1.2 million population** is of Indian origin, fostering strong cultural and historical ties with India.
2. **Colonial Past:**
  - Initially a **French colony**, Mauritius later became a **British possession** before achieving independence.
  - The colonial past influences its legal, economic, and administrative systems.

### National Day Significance

1. **Celebration on March 12:** Mauritius celebrates **National Day on March 12**, commemorating its independence and symbolizing its connection to India's freedom struggle.
2. **Gandhian Connection:** The date coincides with **Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March**, reinforcing Indo-Mauritian ties.



## India-Mauritius Bilateral Relations

### Diplomatic & Economic Engagement

1. **Established Relations:** India and Mauritius formalized diplomatic relations in **1948**, leading to deep economic and cultural ties.
2. **Trade Statistics (FY 2022-2023):**
  - Indian exports to Mauritius: USD 462.69 million
  - Mauritian exports to India: USD 91.50 million
  - Total bilateral trade: USD 554.19 million

### Key Economic Agreements

1. **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) (1982):** A treaty to prevent double taxation for non-resident investors, though concerns exist about its misuse.

2. **CECPA (2021):** The **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)**, India's **first trade agreement with an African country**, boosts economic integration.

### **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**

1. **Major FDI Source:** Mauritius is the **second-largest source of FDI** into India (FY 2023-24), following Singapore, reflecting its role as a key financial hub.

### **Defence & Security Cooperation**

1. **Defence Partnership:** India is Mauritius' **preferred defence partner**, supporting its maritime security, capacity building, and equipment acquisition.
2. **Major Defence Agreements:**
  - **First Agreement:** Transfer of a **Dornier aircraft** and an **Advanced Light Helicopter (Dhruv)** to Mauritius on lease.
  - **Second Agreement:** India extended a **\$100 million Line of Credit (LoC)** to Mauritius for defence equipment procurement.

### **Space Cooperation**

1. **Joint Satellite Project:** India and Mauritius signed an **MoU in November 2023** to develop a **joint satellite**, strengthening collaboration in space research and technology.

### **Indian Migration to Mauritius**

#### **Under French Rule (1700s)**

1. **Early Migration:** Indian artisans and masons from Puducherry were brought to Mauritius by the French colonial administration.

#### **Under British Rule (1834 – Early 1900s)**

1. **Indentured Labor System:**
  - Around **500,000 Indian workers** were sent to Mauritius as indentured laborers after slavery was abolished.
  - The majority **settled permanently**, shaping Mauritius' demographic and cultural landscape.

### **Development & Humanitarian Assistance**

#### **Infrastructure Projects**

1. **Metro Express & Hospitals:** India has supported key projects like the **Mauritius Metro Express, new hospitals, and infrastructure in Agaléga Island.**

#### **Humanitarian Aid**

1. **Disaster Relief:** India provided assistance during **Cyclone Chido (2023)**, reinforcing its role as Mauritius' **"First Responder"** in crises.

#### **Strategic Importance of Mauritius for India**

##### **Maritime Security & Trade**

1. **Strategic Location:** Mauritius' location is crucial for **India's maritime security, trade routes, and influence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).**

##### **Agaléga Island's Importance**

1. **Geographical Position:** The **Agaléga Islands**, located **1,100 km north of Mauritius**, hold strategic importance for India's defence and surveillance operations.
2. **Infrastructure Development:** In **2024**, India and Mauritius **jointly inaugurated the airstrip and jetty projects** on the island, further enhancing bilateral security cooperation.

##### **Countering China's Influence**

1. **Chinese Presence in IOR:** Strengthening Mauritius-India ties is vital for countering **China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean**, particularly through its **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).**
2. **China-Mauritius Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** In **2021**, Mauritius signed an FTA with China, providing China greater economic access and strategic leverage.

##### **Economic Diversification & Trade Expansion**

1. **Trade Imbalances:** While bilateral trade remains strong, there is a need to **diversify trade baskets** and reduce dependence on a few key commodities.

#### **Way Forward**

1. **Strengthening Defence & Security Cooperation:**
  - Expand **joint military exercises, counterterrorism operations, and maritime security collaborations.**
2. **Deepening Economic Engagement:**
  - Explore **new trade avenues** and reduce trade imbalances through policy adjustments.

### 3. Enhancing People-to-People Ties:

- Promote **cultural exchanges, education programs, and tourism growth** to reinforce long-term ties.

By adopting a **comprehensive and strategic approach**, India and Mauritius can further consolidate their **longstanding partnership** and ensure **mutual growth and regional stability**.

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