

AIR Spotlight - India - Mauritius Ties

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, India – Mauritius Ties are discussed.

Participants:

- Ashok Sajjanhar, Former diplomat
- Manish Anand, Journalist

Context:

- Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is in India on an eight-day visit.
- Pravind Kumar Jugnauth will participate in the ground-breaking ceremony of the WHO-Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar and also take part in the Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit in Gandhinagar along with the Indian Prime Minister.

India-Mauritius ties:

Shared history, culture and heritage:

- With 68% of the Mauritius population being people of Indian Origin, India and Mauritius enjoy uniquely close ties, bound by shared history, common ancestry and rich cultural heritage.
- The British brought Indians to Mauritius to work as indentured labour starting from 1834 to work in plantations.
- The National Day of Mauritius on March 12, celebrates the launch of the salt satyagraha by Mahatma Gandhi 85 years ago, a revolutionary step that culminated in the freedom of India in 1947 and provided inspiration to Mauritius that became independent in 1968.
- After 1968, India was accorded centrality in Mauritius's global affairs.

Developmental partnership:

- Development partnership between the two countries has been a highlight of the relationship.
- India has been extending several lines of credit to Mauritius for infrastructure, skills development and capacity building. India has offered concessional Line of Credit to Mauritius for critical infrastructural projects such as the Metro Express (named after Mahatma Gandhi).
- Other notable initiatives include the Social Housing Project, Civil Service College, 8 MW Solar PV Farm project, Supreme Court building, health centres and digital tablets to school children.
- Unlike the initiatives taken by China in countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India's initiatives in Mauritius is driven by the people's needs and development. India's approach stands in stark contrast to the Chinese developmental aid.
- Given the vulnerability of a small island country like Mauritius to economic shocks by the COVID-19 pandemic, India has been helping Mauritius through concessional lines of credit.

Trade:

- India has been one of the largest trading partners and exporter of goods and services to Mauritius.
- India and Mauritius have signed the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA). CECPA is the first trade Agreement signed by India with a country in Africa. The Agreement is a limited agreement, which will cover Trade in Goods, Rules of Origin, Trade in Services, Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures, Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons, Telecom, Financial services, Customs Procedures and Cooperation in other Areas.

Defence and Security relationship:

- India has forged extensive defence relations with Mauritius to safeguard critical sea lanes of communication.
- The Indian Navy has been proactively cooperating with the National Coast Guard of Mauritius. Indian naval ships regularly conduct surveillance and joint patrolling of the vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Mauritius. India has gifted Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv, a Coastal Radar Surveillance System (CSRS) and an Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) to the government of Mauritius to bolster its counter-piracy capabilities. Personnel from the Mauritian Police Force are trained annually in Indian Defence Training institutes.
- Recently, Mauritius became a member of the Colombo Security Conclave, a grouping of India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. This will see Mauritius working with India in the domain of regional security by focusing on areas such as maritime security, countering terrorism, combating trans-national crime and cyber security.

Small Islands Developing States:

- India has been working with Mauritius under the small islands developing states. Mauritius faces huge risks from climate change and India is collaborating on climate change adaptation projects with Mauritius.

Strategic importance of Mauritius for India:

- With its strategic location, Mauritius forms the lynchpin of India's vision of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, security and prosperity. A substantial amount of India's imports pass through Mauritius Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). India Mauritius relationship is critical for maritime security, anti-piracy operations and the joint development of blue economy of the Indian Ocean.
- Mauritius EEZ covers a large area in the Indian Ocean region (2.3 million square Km) and houses huge marine resources which might be of
- India also sees Mauritius as a gateway to the vibrant continent of Africa. Mauritius, with membership of regional African economic communities would be a key plank for accelerating India's economic and strategic engagement with Africa.
- Notably, the then Mauritius Prime Minister was the only non-SAARC leader to be invited for the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister in May 2014 and the only non-BIMSTEC leader to be invited for the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister in 2019.

Conclusion:

- India-Mauritius is a very critical relationship for both the countries and the current visit is very significant. The visit if meant to strengthen ties between the two countries in both economic as well as strategic sectors.
- The upcoming visit will only further strengthen the vibrant bilateral ties.

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