

## **India-Mauritius Bilateral Relations**

### **Mauritius Overview**

India has close, longstanding relations with Mauritius, an island nation in the Western Indian Ocean, owing to historic, demographic and cultural reasons. A key reason for the special ties is the fact that Indian origin people comprise nearly 70% of the island's population of 1.2 million (28% Creole, 3% Sino-Mauritian, 1% Franco-Mauritian).

2. Mauritius is a former British and French colony that gained independence from British rule in 1968. Under the French rule, in the year 1729, the first Indians were brought to Mauritius from the Puducherry region, to work as artisans and masons. Under British rule, about half a million Indian indentured workers were brought to Mauritius between 1834 and the early 1900's. About two-thirds of these workers permanently settled down in Mauritius. The first batch of these workers, comprising 36 persons, arrived in Mauritius on November 2, 1834 onboard the ship 'Atlas'. This day is now observed in Mauritius as 'Aapravasi Diwas'.

3. On his way to India from South Africa, Mahatma Gandhi briefly stopped over in Mauritius from October 29-November 15, 1901 and steered the destiny of Indian labourers with his three transformative messages – the importance of education, political empowerment and staying connected with India. In his homage, the National Day of Mauritius is celebrated on March 12 (the date of Gandhiji's Dandi Salt March).

### **Bilateral Relations**

4. Mauritius was one of the handful of important countries with which independent India established diplomatic relations in 1948, even before the independence of Mauritius. India was represented by an Indian Commissioner in British-ruled Mauritius between 1948 and 1968 and thereafter, by a High Commissioner after Mauritius became independent in 1968.

5. The leadership of the two countries enjoys a high level of trust and mutual understanding, which is reflected in the continued high-level political engagement. These special ties have also resulted in uniquely close cooperation in maritime security, development partnership, capacity-building, cooperation in international fora and bilateral technical assistance through deputation of Indian experts to GOM.

6. The close bonds are also evident in the numerous India-assisted development projects that dot the Mauritian landscape. The enduring cultural and people-to-people ties between India and Mauritius are nurtured by the Indian Cultural Centre in Mauritius (India's biggest in the world) and the World Hindi Secretariat, a bilateral organization for the global promotion of Hindi.

### **Covid-19 assistance**

7. India has traditionally been the 'first responder' for Mauritius in times of crisis, including during the recent Covid-19 and Wakashio oil-spill crises. On Mauritius' request, India supplied

13 tonnes of medicines (including 0.5 million tablets of HCQ), 10 tonnes of Ayurvedic medicines and an Indian Rapid Response Medical Team to help combat Covid in April-May 2020.

8. India was also the first country to supply Covid-19 vaccines to Mauritius, with 1 lakh doses of Covishield vaccines gifted to Mauritius on 22 January 2021. Subsequently, we supplied an additional 1 lakh doses of Covishield and 2 lakh doses of COVAXIN on commercial basis. A ten-member Indian medical team visited Mauritius in March 2022 to share best practices in COVID management

9. Mauritius donated 200 oxygen concentrators to India on April 28, 2021, during the second wave of Covid-19 in India.

### **Wakashio Accident**

10. In the wake of a massive oil spill following the grounding of the Japanese vessel Wakashio off the Mauritian coast on July 25, 2020, India was again the first responder. An IAF aircraft brought 30 tonnes of technical equipment, material and a 10-member Technical Response Team on August 16, 2020. INS Nireekshak joined the Mauritian National Coast Guard (NCG) in salvaging the Mauritian Tug 'Sir Gaetan Duval', which sunk following an accidental collision during the Wakashio salvage operations.

### **Commercial Relations**

11. Since 2005, India has been among the largest trading partners of Mauritius. For the FY 2022-2023, Indian exports to Mauritius was USD 462.69 mn, Mauritian exports to India was USD 91.50 mn and Total trade was USD 554.19 mn. Trade has grown by 132% in the last 17 years, from USD 206.76 million in 2005-06 to USD 554.19 million in 2022-23.

12. Petroleum products have been the largest export item for India between 2007 to 2019 until MRPL supply contract was terminated in mid-2019. Other Indian exports to Mauritius include pharmaceuticals, cereals, cotton, shrimps, prawns and bovine meat. Main Mauritian exports to India are vanilla, medical devices, needles, aluminium alloys, scrap paper, refined copper, men's cotton shirts, etc.

13. **FDI:** Cumulative FDI worth USD 161 billion came from Mauritius to India in the two decades from 2000 - 2022 (26% of total FDI inflows into India), thanks largely to the Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC). Since the signing of the DTAC amendment in 2016, FDI inflows from Mauritius have dropped from USD 15.72 bn in 2016-17 to USD 6.13 bn in 2022-23, with Mauritius becoming India's third largest source of FDI. In Mauritius, Indian companies have invested over USD 200 mn in the last five years.

14. **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA):** Mauritius and India signed the CECPA on 22 February 2021, during the visit of EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar after nearly 15 years of negotiations. It came into force on 1 April 2021 and is the first trade agreement signed by India with an African country. In August 2022, both sides added a chapter on General Economic Cooperation (GEC) and provisions related to Auto-Trigger Safeguard Mechanism (ATSM) to the CECPA. Under the CECPA, India's exports to Mauritius amounted to USD 1.1 mn in 2021, USD 1.8 mn in 2022 and USD 1.7 million in

2023 (Jan-Aug) comprising mainly textiles, quartz slabs and spices. Mauritian exports to India under CECPA stood at USD 1 mn in 2022 and USD 3.7 million in 2023 (Jan-Aug), comprising mainly medical devices and apparel.

15. **Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in Mauritius:** At present, 11 Indian PSUs are in Mauritius: Bank of Baroda, Life Insurance Corporation, New India Assurance Corporation, Telecommunications Consultant India Ltd, Indian Oil (Mauritius) Limited, Mahanagar Telephone (Mauritius) Ltd., State Bank of India (Mauritius), National Building and Construction Company Ltd (NBCC), Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES), Hospital Services Consultancy Corporation Ltd. (HSCC) and EdCIL (India) Ltd.

### **India-assisted Projects**

16. In May 2016, India provided a grant of USD 353 million to Mauritius as a Special Economic Package for five priority projects: (i) Metro Express Project; (ii) Supreme Court Building; (iii) New ENT Hospital; (iv) Social Housing project; (v) Digital Tablets for school children.

17. India extended a USD 500 mn Line of Credit (LoC) in 2017 to Mauritius to finance social/infrastructure projects. In October 2021, an LoC of USD 190 mn and USD 10 mn grant was approved by India for Phase III of the Metro Project. In August 2022, another LoC worth USD 300mn and a grant of USD 25 mn was announced. A MoU on Community Development Projects was signed in January 2022 to undertake around 100 small, people-oriented projects in Mauritius.

18. Other completed India-assisted projects, include the Upadhyay Training Centre, the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, the Subramania Bharati Eye Centre, the Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre, the Swami Vivekananda International Conference Centre and the World Hindi Secretariat.

### **Other institutions built with India's assistance**

19. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) was established in 1976 as a joint venture between India and Mauritius for promoting Indian culture. It also hosts the ICCR Chairs in Sanskrit & Indian Philosophy (currently Mr. JM Mishra) and Hindi (currently vacant). The Rabindranath Tagore Institute (RTI) was established with Indian assistance in 2000 as a Centre of Studies on Indian culture and traditions.

20. Mauritius also hosts the World Hindi Secretariat, an India-Mauritius bilateral organization which was constructed with Indian funding and inaugurated during the visit of President Kovind in March 2018.

### **Cultural Relations and people-to-people ties**

21. In 1987, India established the Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture (IGCIC), which is India's largest cultural centre abroad. IGCIC holds classes in Hindustani music, Kathak, Tabla and Yoga for over 2,500 Mauritian students every year.

22. Since 2004, approximately 261 youngsters from Mauritius have participated in 52 batches of the Know India Programme (KIP) of the Ministry of External Affairs. As part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', for the very first time in August 2022, the National Cadet Corps (NCC) of India invited a 10-member Mauritian youth delegation to India for a special youth exchange programme. Another 10-member delegation participated in the NCC Republic Day Camp held in January 2023. A reciprocal visit by Indian NCC cadets to Mauritius is on the cards.

### **ITEC and other scholarships**

23. Mauritius is one of the largest beneficiaries of the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme and receives about 400 training slots every year for various courses. Since 2002-03, we have trained around 4000 Mauritians under civilian & defence slots of our ITEC program.

24. Under ICCR's Africa Scholarship Scheme, 65 scholarships slots are extended annually to Mauritian students for higher education in India. About 200 Mauritian students also enroll themselves in Indian Universities every year on a self-financing basis. Since 2020, India has also started offering scholarships to Mauritians under the e-Vidya Bharti Arogya Bharti (e-VBAB) distance learning project, with about 86, 192, 250 and 25 enrollments for the 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 sessions respectively.

### **Indian Community & OCI Card**

25. There are approximately 17,403 Indian nationals and 11,600 OCI card holders currently in Mauritius. A special carve-out for OCI Cards for Mauritian nationals, with Indian lineage traceable upto the 6th generation, was announced during the 14th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas in January 2017. Mauritius introduced a visa-free regime in 2004 for Indian tourists visiting Mauritius for a month. Mauritians are entitled to *gratis* E-tourist visa for visiting India. In pre-Covid times, annually about 80,000 Indian tourists visited Mauritius and 30,000 Mauritian tourists visited India. About 3,100 Indian students are currently pursuing their higher education and internship in Mauritius in various streams, including medicine, hotel management and catering, business studies, etc.

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