

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

Time: 45 Min

Date: 01-03-2024

Table of Content

- India - Mauritius Relations
- Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP)
- President gives nod to Kerala's LokAyukta Bill
- Lancet study: Rise in obesity rates
- Hydrogen Fuel Cell Ferry
- Global Waste Management Outlook 2024

NEWS IN SHORTS

- Juice Jacking
- International Intellectual Property Index
- 2nd Critical Minerals Auction Launched
- Sea Slug
- Status of Leopards in India
- Early Jacaranda Bloom Acharya Shri Satya Narayana Goenka

INDIA - MAURITIUS RELATIONS

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated **an airstrip, jetty, and 6 other projects** to ensure maritime security and connectivity to **Mauritius' Agalega islands**.

Current Development

- Background:** India and Mauritius signed MoU in 2015 to upgrade the airstrip and the Set James Jetty in the island country.
- The **Agalega island of Mauritius** is seen as important as they are expected to **boost connectivity** as well as maritime security and surveillance of **Mauritius' vast EEZ of 2.3 million square kilometres** in the **strategic Indian Ocean region**.
 - It helps in 'emergency responses, including search and rescue, marine pollution and humanitarian assistance'.
- It checks counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics actions, combat human trafficking, combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

About the India and Mauritius Relations



- India and Mauritius share a deep and historical bond, with Indian origin people comprising nearly 70% of the island's population.
- The relationship between the two nations is rooted in shared history, culture, and democratic values.

Historical Ties:

- The first Indians were brought to Mauritius from the Puducherry region in 1729 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 1900s.

- About two-thirds of these workers permanently settled down in Mauritius.

Diplomatic Relations:

- India established diplomatic relations with Mauritius 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.

Economic Cooperation:

- India and Mauritius signed a **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)** in 2021.
 - Under the CECPA, India and Mauritius would provide preferential access to a number of items like surgical equipment, medicine, and textile products that would cater to market requirements on both sides.
- Bilateral trade** has been **disproportionately in favour of India**. (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).

- It 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.
- 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).
 - 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.
- Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) in Mauritius:** At present, 11 Indian PSUs are in Mauritius which include Life Insurance Corporation, Indian Oil (Mauritius) Limited, State Bank of India (Mauritius), Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) etc.

Defence Cooperation:

- India is the preferred defence partner of Mauritius for acquiring platforms/equipment, capacity building, joint patrolling, hydrological services, etc.
- Indian defence officers are deputed to the Mauritian Defence Forces. An Indian Navy officer heads the Mauritian National Coast Guard; an Indian Air Force officer commands the Police Helicopter Squadron and an Indian Naval Officer heads the Mauritius Hydrography Services.

- In February 2021, India extended a **Line of Credit** of USD 100 mn to Mauritius for procuring defence products, under which Mauritius has already sourced a **Passenger Variant Dornier aircraft** and an **Advanced Light Helicopter Dhruv**.
- **SAGAR:** India recalled that it was in Mauritius, during 2015 that India's maritime cooperation vision of SAGAR – '**Security and Growth for All in the Region**' was outlined.

Others:

- India has traditionally been the '**first responder**' for Mauritius in times of crisis, including during the recent Covid-19 and **Wakashio oil-spill crisis**.
- **Mauritius** has become the **first country to join India's Jan Aushadhi initiative** which will benefit the people of Mauritius by providing better quality Made-in-India generic medicines.
- **RuPay cards and UPI connectivity** between two countries were established.

Associated Challenges and Concerns

- **Tax Treaty Misuse:** The Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Mauritius had been a point of concern due to its potential misuse for illicit activities like money laundering and round-tripping of funds.
 - ♦ It led to amendments in the treaty in 2016 and the implementation of the General Anti-Avoidance Rule (GAAR) in 2017.
- **Chagos Archipelago Dispute:** It is an issue of sovereignty and sustainable development before the United Nations.
 - ♦ In 2019, India voted at the U.N. General Assembly in support of the Mauritian position on the issue.
- **Security Concerns:** With Mauritius emerging as an important maritime entity in the Indo-Pacific region, security concerns are paramount.
 - ♦ India and Mauritius have a strong defence partnership, but maintaining and enhancing this partnership in the face of evolving regional dynamics can be challenging.
- **Logistical and Bureaucratic:** While India and Mauritius have a robust development partnership, the ongoing implementation of various infrastructure projects and the delivery of promised assistance can pose logistical and bureaucratic challenges.

Conclusion

- The relationship between India and Mauritius is multifaceted and has grown stronger over the years. The two nations continue to work together in various fields, including infrastructure, FinTech, culture, and more.
- The special ties between India and Mauritius are a testament to their shared history, cultural affinities, and mutual respect.

Source: *IE*

PANCHESHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT (PMP)

In Context

- Despite the recently held high meeting between India and Nepal, the consensus over sharing benefits of the **Pancheshwar project** is not resolved.

About Pancheshwar Project

- PMP is a **bi-national hydropower project** to be developed in **Mahakali River** bordering Nepal and India.
- Development of PMP, is a mutual interest project between two countries, and is covered under integrated **Mahakali Treaty** signed between Nepal and India in 1996.
- The project is aimed at generating around 6,480 MW energy (to be divided equally between two sides), along with water for irrigation of 130,000 hectares of land in Nepal and 240,000 hectares of Indian territory, respectively.

Areas of Differences

- While electricity is divided equally, India gets the lion's share of irrigation and flood control benefits.
- On the other hand, Nepal feels water is 'white gold' and India should pay Nepal for it.
- India cannot accept this claim as it challenges India's understanding of other water-based treaties, including the Indus Waters Treaty with Pakistan.

Overview of India - Nepal Relations

- **Shared Border:** The country shares a border of over **1,850 km with five Indian states - Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.

- ◆ Land-locked Nepal relies heavily on India for the transportation of goods and services and access to the sea is through India.
- **The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship:** Signed in 1950, it forms the **bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.**
 - ◆ Nepalese citizens **avail facilities and opportunities on par with Indian citizens** in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty.
- **Defence Cooperation:** India has been assisting the Nepal Army (NA) in its **modernisation by supplying equipment and providing training.**
 - ◆ Both countries conduct **Joint Military Exercise SURYA KIRAN'** alternately in India and in Nepal.
 - ◆ Since 1950, India and Nepal have been awarding each other's Army Chief with the **honorary rank of General.**
 - ◆ **The Gorkha regiments** of the Indian Army are raised partly by recruitment from **hill districts of Nepal.**
- **Connectivity and Development Partnership:** India has been assisting Nepal in development of border infrastructure through **upgradation of 10 roads in the Terai area;** development of cross-border rail links and establishment of **Integrated Check Posts.**
- **Water Resources Cooperation:** Cooperation in water resources from the **common rivers** is among the important areas of bilateral relations.
 - ◆ **A three-tier bilateral mechanism established in 2008,** to discuss issues relating to cooperation in water resources has been working well.
- **Energy Cooperation:** India and Nepal have had a **Power Exchange Agreement since 1971** for meeting the power requirements in the border.
 - ◆ India is currently supplying a total of about **600 MW of power to Nepal.**
- **Trade and Economic:** India remains **Nepal's largest trade partner,** Nepal is India's 11th largest export destination.
 - ◆ In FY 2021-22, it constituted 2.34% of India's exports. Infact exports from India constitute almost 22% of Nepal's GDP.
- **Mahakali River bridge:** A MoU was signed between India and Nepal for the **construction of a motorable bridge** across the Mahakali River

connecting Dharchula (India) with Darchula (Nepal), under Indian grant assistance.

- **Operation Maitri & post-earthquake reconstruction assistance:** In the wake of the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, Gol was the first responder and carried out its **largest disaster relief operation abroad (Operation Maitri).**
- **Cultural Ties:** The leaders of the two countries have often noted the **age-old 'roti beti' relationship,** which refers to **cross-border marriages** between people of the two countries.

Issues between India & Nepal

- **Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950:** It was an effort to **"strengthen and develop these ties and to perpetuate peace between the two countries"**.
 - ◆ As time passed, Nepal believed the treaty was **"incompatible with national self-respect"**.
- **Kalapani dispute:** The area is in India's control but Nepal claims the region because of **historical and cartographic reasons.** The area is the largest territorial dispute between Nepal and India consisting of at least 37,000 hectares of land in the High Himalayas.
- **Susta Border dispute:** Susta is a disputed territory between Nepal and India. It is administered by India as part of West Champaran district of Bihar.
 - ◆ Nepal claims the area a part of West Nawalparasi District under Susta rural municipality, alleging that over 14,860 hectares of Nepali land in Susta has been encroached upon by India.
- **Political Interference:** Nepal has at times accused India of interference in its internal political affairs, particularly during periods of political instability or transition.
- **Security Concerns:** Both India and Nepal have shared security concerns, including issues related to cross-border terrorism, trafficking, and border security.
- **Perception of Unequal Relationship:** Some segments of Nepalese society have expressed concerns about what they perceive as an unequal relationship with India, with allegations of economic dependence and a lack of reciprocity in the bilateral relationship.