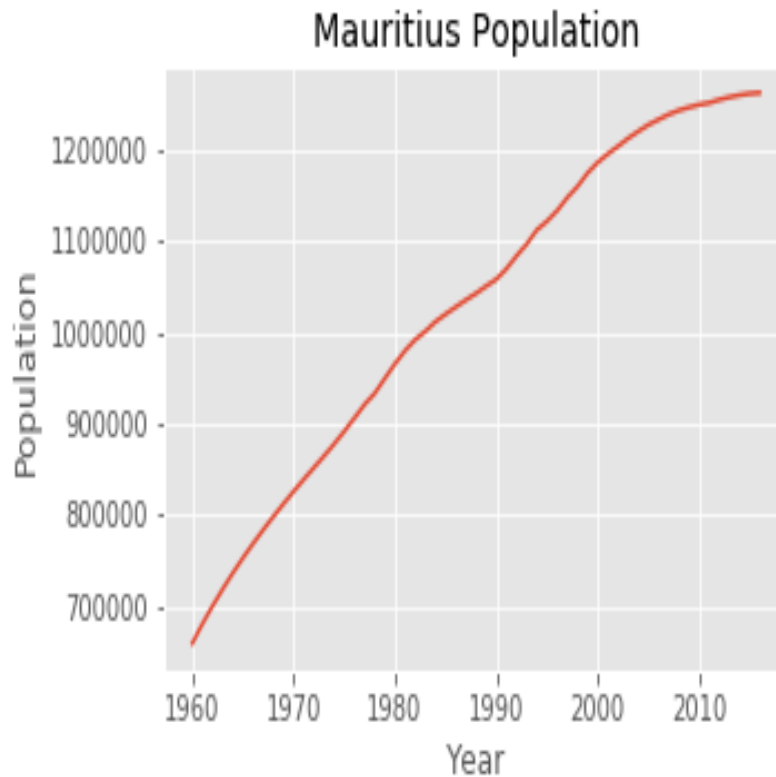


Mauritius



Mauritius ([listen](#)) or ; French: Maurice), officially the Republic of Mauritius (French: République de Maurice), is an island nation in the Indian Ocean about 2,000 kilometres (1,200 mi) off the southeast coast of the African continent. The country includes the islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, 560 kilometres (350 mi) east of Mauritius, and the outer islands (Agaléga, St. Brandon and two disputed territories). The islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues form part of the Mascarene Islands, along with nearby Réunion, a French overseas department. The area of the country is 2,040 km² (790 sq mi). The capital and largest city is Port Louis. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the African Union. Formerly a Dutch colony (1638–1710) and a French colony (1715–1810), Mauritius became a British colonial possession in 1810 and remained so until 1968, the year in which it attained independence. The British Crown colony of Mauritius once included the current territories of Mauritius, Rodrigues, the outer islands of Agaléga, St. Brandon, Chagos Archipelago, and Seychelles. The Mauritian territories gradually devolved with the creation of a separate colony of Seychelles in 1903 and the excision of the Chagos Archipelago in 1965. The sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago is disputed between Mauritius and the United Kingdom (UK). The UK excised the archipelago from Mauritian territory in 1965, three years prior to Mauritian independence. The UK gradually depopulated the archipelago's local population and leased its biggest island, Diego Garcia, to the United States. Access to the archipelago is prohibited to casual tourists, the media, and its former inhabitants. Mauritius also claims sovereignty over Tromelin Island from France. The people of Mauritius are multiethnic, multi-religious, multicultural and multilingual. The island's government is closely modelled on the Westminster parliamentary system, and Mauritius is highly ranked for democracy and for economic and political freedom. The Human Development Index of Mauritius is the highest in Africa. Along with the other Mascarene Islands, Mauritius is known for its varied flora and fauna, with many species endemic to the island. The island is widely known as the only known home of the dodo, which, along with several other avian species, was made extinct by human activities relatively shortly after the island's settlement. Mauritius is the only country in Africa where Hinduism is the largest religion. The

administration uses English as its main language. == Geography == The total land area of the country is 2,040 km² (790 sq mi) (about 80% the size of Luxembourg). It is the 169th largest nation in the world by size. The Republic of Mauritius is constituted of the main island of Mauritius and several outlying islands. The second-largest island is Rodrigues with an area of 108 km² (42 sq mi) and situated 560 km (350 mi) to the east of Mauritius; the twin islands of Agalega with a total land area of 2,600 hectares (26 km²; 10 sq mi) are situated some 1,000 km (620 mi) north of Mauritius. Saint Brandon is an archipelago comprising a number of sand-banks, shoals and islets. It is situated some 430 km (270 mi) northeast of Mauritius and is mostly used as a fishing base by the Raphael Fishing Company Limited. The nation's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) covers about 2.3 million square kilometres (890,000 sq mi) of the Indian Ocean, including approximately 400,000 km² (150,000 sq mi) jointly managed with the Seychelles. === Mauritius Island === Mauritius is 2,000 km (1,200 mi) off the southeast coast of Africa, between latitudes 19°58.8' and 20°31.7' south and longitudes 57°18.0' and 57°46.5' east. It is 65 km (40 mi) long and 45 km (30 mi) wide. Its land area is 1,864.8 km² (720.0 sq mi). The island is surrounded by more than 150 km (100 mi) of white sandy beaches, and the lagoons are protected from the open sea by the world's third-largest coral reef, which surrounds the island. Just off the Mauritian coast lie some 49 uninhabited islands and islets, several used as natural reserves for endangered species. The island of Mauritius is relatively young geologically, having been created by volcanic activity some 8 million years ago. Together with Saint Brandon, Réunion, and Rodrigues, the island is part of the Mascarene Islands. These islands have emerged as a result of gigantic underwater volcanic eruptions that happened thousands of kilometres to the east of the continental block made up of Africa and Madagascar. They are no longer volcanically active and the hotspot now rests under Réunion Island. Mauritius is encircled by a broken ring of mountain ranges, varying in height from 300–800 m (1,000–2,600 ft) above sea level. The land rises from coastal plains to a central plateau where it reaches a height of 670 m (2,200 ft); the highest peak is in the southwest, Piton de la Petite Rivière Noire at 828 metres (2,717 ft). Streams and rivers speckle the island, many formed in the cracks created by lava flows. == Etymology == The first historical evidence of the existence of an island now known as Mauritius is on a map produced by the Italian cartographer Alberto Cantino in 1502. From this, it appears that Mauritius was first named Dina Arobi around 975 by Arab sailors, the first people to visit the island. In 1507, Portuguese sailors visited the uninhabited island. The island appears with a Portuguese name Cirne on early Portuguese maps, probably from the name of a ship in the 1507 expedition. Another Portuguese sailor, Dom Pedro Mascarenhas, gave the name Mascarenes to the Archipelago. In 1598, a Dutch squadron under Admiral Wybrand van Warwyck landed at Grand Port and named the island Mauritius, in honour of Prince Maurice van Nassau, stadholder of the Dutch Republic. Later the island became a French colony and was renamed Isle de France. On 3 December 1810, the French surrendered the island to Great Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. Under British rule, the island's name reverted to Mauritius (listen). Mauritius is also commonly known as Maurice (pronounced [m^uʁⁱˈsɪs]) and Île Maurice in French, Moris in Mauritian Creole. == History == The island of Mauritius was uninhabited before its first recorded visit during the Middle Ages by Arab sailors, who named it Dina Arobi. However, the island might have been visited well before by sailors of ancient times; wax tablets were found on the shores of Mauritius by the Dutch, but since the tablets were not preserved, it cannot be said whether they were of Greek, Phoenician or Arab origin. In 1507, Portuguese sailors came to the uninhabited island and established a visiting base. Diogo Fernandes Pereira, a Portuguese navigator, was the first European known to land in Mauritius. He named the island "Ilha do Cirne". The Portuguese did not stay long as they were not interested in these islands. === Dutch Mauritius (1638–1710) === In 1598 a Dutch squadron under Admiral Wybrand Van Warwyck landed at Grand Port and named the island "Mauritius" after Prince Maurice van Nassau of the Dutch Republic, the ruler of his country. The Dutch established a small colony on the island in 1638, from which they exploited ebony trees and introduced sugar cane, domestic animals and deer. It was from here that Dutch navigator Abel Tasman set out to discover the western part of Australia. The first Dutch settlement lasted twenty years. Several attempts were subsequently made, but the settlements never developed enough to produce dividends, causing the Dutch to abandon Mauritius in 1710. === French Mauritius (1715–1810) === France, which already controlled neighbouring Île Bourbon (now Réunion), took control of Mauritius in 1715 and renamed it Isle de France. In 1723, the Code Noir was established to categorise one group of human beings as "goods", in order for the owner of these goods to be able to obtain insurance money and compensation in case of loss of his "goods". The 1735 arrival of French governor Bertrand-François Mahé de La Bourdonnais coincided with development of a prosperous economy based on sugar production. Mahé de La Bourdonnais established Port Louis as a

naval base and a shipbuilding centre. Under his governorship, numerous buildings were erected, a number of which are still standing. These include part of Government House, the Château de Mon Plaisir, and the Line Barracks, the headquarters of the police force. The island was under the administration of the French East India Company which maintained its presence until 1767. From 1767 to 1810, except for a brief period during the French Revolution when the inhabitants set up a government virtually independent of France, the island was controlled by officials appointed by the French Government. Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre lived on the island from 1768 to 1771, then went back to France, where he wrote *Paul et Virginie*, a love story, which made the Isle de France famous wherever the French language was spoken. Two famous French governors were the Vicomte de Souillac (who constructed the Chaussée in Port Louis and encouraged farmers to settle in the district of Savanne), and Antoine Bruni d'Entrecasteaux (who saw to it that the French in the Indian Ocean should have their headquarters in Mauritius instead of Pondicherry in India). Charles Mathieu Isidore Decaen was a successful general in the French Revolutionary Wars and, in some ways, a rival of Napoléon I. He ruled as Governor of Isle de France and Réunion from 1803 to 1810. British naval cartographer and explorer Matthew Flinders was arrested and detained by General Decaen on the island, in contravention of an order from Napoléon. During the Napoleonic Wars, Mauritius became a base from which French corsairs organised successful raids on British commercial ships. The raids continued until 1810, when a Royal Navy expedition led by Commodore Josias Rowley, R.N., an Anglo-Irish aristocrat, was sent to capture the island. Despite winning the Battle of Grand Port, the only French naval victory over the British during these wars, the French could not prevent the British from landing at Cap Malheureux three months later. They formally surrendered the island on the fifth day of the invasion, 3 December 1810, on terms allowing settlers to keep their land and property and to use the French language and law of France in criminal and civil matters. Under British rule, the island's name reverted to Mauritius. === British Mauritius (1810–1968) === The British administration, which began with Sir Robert Farquhar as Governor, led to rapid social and economic changes. However, it was tainted by the Ratsitane episode. Ratsitane, nephew of King Radama of Madagascar, was brought to Mauritius as a political prisoner. He managed to escape from prison and plotted a rebellion that would free the island's slaves. He was betrayed by an associate and was caught by the British forces, summarily judged, and condemned to death. He was beheaded at Plaine Verte on 15 April 1822, and his head was displayed as a deterrent against future uprisings among the slaves. In 1832, Adrien d'Épinay launched the first Mauritian newspaper (*Le Cernéen*) which was not controlled by the government. In the same year, there was a move by the procureur-general to abolish slavery without compensation to the slave owners. This gave rise to discontent, and, to check an eventual rebellion, the government ordered all the inhabitants to surrender their arms. Furthermore, a stone fortress, Fort Adelaide, was built on a hill (now known as the Citadel hill) in the centre of Port Louis to quell any uprising. Slavery was abolished in 1835, and the planters ultimately received two million pounds sterling in compensation for the loss of their slaves who had been imported from Africa and Madagascar during the French occupation. The abolition of slavery had important impacts on Mauritius's society, economy and population. The planters brought a large number of indentured labourers from India to work in the sugar cane fields. Between 1834 and 1921, around half a million indentured labourers were present on the island. They worked on sugar estates, factories, in transport and on construction sites. Additionally, the British brought 8,740 Indian soldiers to the island. Apravasi Ghat, in the bay at Port Louis and now a UNESCO site, was the first British colony to serve as a major reception centre for slaves and indentured servants for British plantation labour. An important figure of the 19th century was Rémy Ollier, a journalist of mixed origin. In 1828, the colour bar was officially abolished in Mauritius, but British governors gave little power to coloured persons, and appointed only whites as leading officials. Rémy Ollier petitioned to Queen Victoria to allow coloureds in the council of government, and this became possible a few years later. He also made Port Louis become a municipality so that the citizens could administer the town through their own elected representatives. A street has been named after him in Port Louis, and his bust was erected in the Jardin de la Compagnie in 1906. In 1885 a new constitution was introduced to Mauritius. It created elected positions on the governing council, but the franchise was restricted mainly to the French and Creole classes. The labourers brought from India were not always fairly treated, and a German, Adolph von Plevitz, made himself the unofficial protector of these immigrants. He mixed with many of the labourers, and in 1871 helped them to write a petition which was sent to Governor Gordon. A commission was appointed to look into the complaints made by the Indian immigrants, and in 1872 two lawyers, appointed by the British Crown, were sent from England to make an inquiry. This Royal Commission recommended

several measures that would affect the lives of Indian labourers during the next fifty years. In November 1901, Mahatma Gandhi visited Mauritius, on his way from South Africa to India. He stayed on the island for two weeks, and urged the Indo-Mauritian community to take an interest in education and to play a more active role in politics. Back in India, he sent over a young lawyer, Manilal Doctor, to improve the plight of the Indo-Mauritians. During the same year, faster links were established with the island of Rodrigues thanks to the wireless. In 1903, motorcars were introduced in Mauritius, and in 1910 the first taxis, operated by Joseph Merven, came into service. The electrification of Port Louis took place in 1909, and in the same decade the Mauritius Hydro Electric Company (managed by the Atchia Brothers) was authorised to provide power to the towns of upper Plaines Wilhems. The 1910s were a period of political agitation. The rising middle class (made up of doctors, lawyers, and teachers) began to challenge the political power of the sugar cane landowners. Dr. Eugène Laurent, mayor of Port Louis, was the leader of this new group; his party, Action Libérale, demanded that more people should be allowed to vote in the elections. Action Libérale was opposed by the Parti de l'Ordre, led by Henri Leclézio, the most influential of the sugar magnates. In 1911 there were riots in Port Louis due to a false rumour that Dr. Eugène Laurent had been murdered by the oligarchs in Curepipe. Shops and offices were damaged in the capital, and one person was killed. In the same year, 1911, the first public cinema shows took place in Curepipe, and, in the same town, a stone building was erected to house the Royal College. In 1912, a wider telephone network came into service, and it was used by the government, business firms, and a few private households. World War I broke out in August 1914. Many Mauritians volunteered to fight in Europe against the Germans and in Mesopotamia against the Turks. But the war affected Mauritius much less than the wars of the eighteenth century. On the contrary, the 1914–18 war was a period of great prosperity because of a boom in sugar prices. In 1919 the Mauritius Sugar Syndicate came into being, and it included 70% of all sugar producers. The 1920s saw the rise of a "retrocessionism" movement which favoured the retrocession of Mauritius to France. The movement rapidly collapsed because none of the candidates who wanted Mauritius to be given back to France was elected in the 1921 elections. Due to the post-war recession, there was a sharp drop in sugar prices. Many sugar estates closed down, and it marked the end of an era for the sugar magnates who had not only controlled the economy, but also the political life of the country. Raoul Rivet, the editor of *Le Mauricien* newspaper, campaigned for a revision of the constitution that would give the emerging middle class a greater role in the running of the country. The principles of Arya Samaj began to infiltrate the Hindu community, who clamoured for more social justice. The 1930s saw the birth of the Labour Party, launched by Dr. Maurice Curé. Emmanuel Anquetil rallied the urban workers while Pandit Sahadeo concentrated on the rural working class. Labour Day was celebrated for the first time in 1938. More than 30,000 workers sacrificed a day's wage and came from all over the island to attend a giant meeting at the Champ de Mars. At the outbreak of World War II in 1939, many Mauritians volunteered to serve under the British flag in Africa and the Near East, fighting against the German and Italian armies. Some went to England to become pilots and ground staff in the Royal Air Force. Mauritius was never really threatened, but several British ships were sunk outside Port Louis by German submarines in 1943. During World War II, conditions were hard in the country; the prices of commodities doubled, but the salaries of workers increased only by 10 to 20 percent. There was civil unrest, and the colonial government crushed all trade union activities. However, the labourers of Belle Vue Harel Sugar Estate went on strike on 27 September 1943. Police officers eventually fired on the crowd, and killed three labourers including a boy of ten and a pregnant woman, Anjaly Coopen. The first general elections were held on 9 August 1948 and were won by the Labour Party. This party, led by Guy Rozemont, bettered its position in 1953, and, on the strength of the election results, demanded universal suffrage. Constitutional conferences were held in London in 1955 and 1957, and the ministerial system was introduced. Voting took place for the first time on the basis of universal adult suffrage on 9 March 1959. The general election was again won by the Labour Party, led this time by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. A Constitutional Review Conference was held in London in 1961, and a programme of further constitutional advance was established. The 1963 election was won by the Labour Party and its allies. The Colonial Office noted that politics of a communal nature was gaining ground in Mauritius and that the choice of candidates (by parties) and the voting behaviour (of electors) were governed by ethnic and caste considerations. Around that time, two eminent British academics, Richard Titmuss and James Meade, published a report of the island's social problems caused by overpopulation and the monoculture of sugar cane. This led to an intense campaign to halt the population explosion, and the decade registered a sharp decline in population growth. === Independence (since 1968) === At the Lancaster Conference of 1965, it became clear that Britain

wanted to relieve itself of the colony of Mauritius. In 1959, Harold Macmillan had made his famous Winds of Change Speech where he acknowledged that the best option for Britain was to give complete independence to its colonies. Thus, since the late Fifties, the way was paved for independence. Later in 1965, after the Lancaster Conference, the Chagos Archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). A general election took place on 7 August 1967, and the Labour Party and its two allies obtained the majority of seats. Mauritius adopted a new constitution and independence was proclaimed on 12 March 1968. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam became the first prime minister of an independent Mauritius with Queen Elizabeth II remaining head of state as Queen of Mauritius. In 1969, the opposition party Mauritian Militant Movement (MMM) led by Paul Bérenger was founded. Later in 1971, the MMM, backed by unions, called a series of strikes in the port which caused a state of emergency in the country. The coalition government of the Labour Party and the PMSD (Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate) reacted by curtailing civil liberties and curbing freedom of the press. Two unsuccessful assassination attempts were made against Paul Bérenger. The second one led to the death of Azor Adélaïde, a dock worker and activist, on 25 November 1971. General elections were postponed and public meetings were prohibited. Members of the MMM including Paul Bérenger were imprisoned on 23 December 1971. The MMM leader was released a year later. In May 1975, a student revolt that started at the University of Mauritius swept across the country. The students were unsatisfied with an education system that did not meet their aspirations and gave limited prospects for future employment. On 20 May, thousands of students tried to enter Port-Louis over the Grand River North West bridge and clashed with police. An act of Parliament was passed on 16 December 1975 to extend the right to vote to 18-year-olds. This was seen as an attempt to appease the frustration of the younger generation. The next general election took place on 20 December 1976. The Labour Party won 28 seats out of 62 but Prime Minister Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam managed to remain in office, with a two-seat majority, after striking an alliance with the PMSD of Gaetan Duval. In 1982 an MMM government led by Prime Minister Anerood Jugnauth and Paul Bérenger as Minister of Finance was elected. However, ideological and personality differences emerged within the MMM leadership. The power struggle between Bérenger and Jugnauth peaked in March 1983. Jugnauth travelled to New Delhi to attend a Non-Aligned Movement summit; on his return, Bérenger proposed constitutional changes that would strip power from the Prime Minister. At Jugnauth's request, PM Indira Gandhi of India planned an armed intervention involving the Indian Navy and Indian Army to prevent a coup under the code name Operation Lal Dora. The MMM government split up nine months after the June 1982 election. According to an Information Ministry official the nine months was a "socialist experiment". The new MSM party, led by Anerood Jugnauth, was elected in 1983. Gaëtan Duval became the vice-prime minister. Throughout the decade, Anerood Jugnauth ruled the country with the help of the PMSD and the Labour Party. That period saw a growth in the EPZ (Export Processing Zone) sector. Industrialisation began to spread to villages as well, and attracted young workers from all ethnic communities. As a result, the sugar industry began to lose its hold on the economy. Large retail chains began opening stores opened in 1985 and offered credit facilities to low income earners, thus allowing them to afford basic household appliances. There was also a boom in the tourism industry, and new hotels sprang up throughout the island. In 1989 the stock exchange opened its doors and in 1992 the freeport began operation. In 1990, the Prime Minister lost the vote on changing the Constitution to make the country a republic with Bérenger as President. === Republic (since 1992) === On 12 March 1992, twenty-four years after independence, Mauritius was proclaimed a republic within the Commonwealth of Nations. The last Governor General, Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo became the first President. This was under a transitional arrangement, in which he was replaced by Cassam Uteem later that year. Political power remained with the Prime Minister. Despite an improvement in the economy, which coincided with a fall in the price of petrol and a favourable dollar exchange rate, the government did not enjoy full popularity. As early as 1984, there was discontent. Through the Newspapers and Periodicals Amendment Act, the government tried to make every newspaper provide a bank guarantee of half a million rupees. Forty-three journalists protested by participating in a public demonstration in Port Louis, in front of Parliament. They were arrested and freed on bail. This caused a public outcry and the government had to review its policy. There was also dissatisfaction in the education sector. There were not enough high-quality secondary colleges to answer the growing demand of primary school leavers who had got through their CPE (Certificate of Primary Education). In 1991, a master plan for education failed to get national support and contributed to the government's downfall. Dr Navin Chandra Ramgoolam was elected as Prime Minister in the 1995 election. The landslide victory of 60–0 was a repeat of the 1982 score, but this time it was on the side of the

Labour–MMM alliance. In February 1999, the country experienced a brief period of civil unrest. Riots flared after the popular singer Kaya, arrested for smoking marijuana at a public concert, was found dead in his prison cell. President Cassam Uteem and Cardinal Jean Margéot toured the country and, after four days of turmoil, calm was restored. A commission of enquiry was set up to investigate the root causes of the social disturbance. The resulting report delved into the cause of poverty and qualified many tenacious beliefs as perceptions. Anerood Jugnauth of the MSM returned to power in 2000 after making an alliance with the MMM, which included prominent figures such as Anil Bachoo, Pravind Jugnauth and Sangeet Fowdar amongst others. In 2002, the island of Rodrigues became an autonomous entity within the republic and was thus able to elect its own representatives to administer the island. In 2003, the prime ministership was transferred to Paul Bérenger of the MMM, and Anerood Jugnauth went to Le Réduit to serve as president. In the 2005 election, Navin Ramgoolam, leader of the Labour Party, was brought to power after making an alliance with the Parti Mauricien Xavier-Luc Duval (PMXD) and other minor parties. Navin Ramgoolam was again elected in May 2010. This time the Labour Party joined forces with the PMSD and the MSM. Under the new government, the country continued with its MID (Maurice Ile Durable) project, started in 2008, to make the economy less dependent on fossil fuels. The political landscape stayed rather confused. The Labour Party did away with the MSM, and then with the PMSD, whose leader had acted as Finance minister. The MMM made an alliance (known as Remake) with the MSM but broke off with the latter to become the ally of Labour Party. Parliament remained closed for most of 2014. A second republic was proposed (by the leaders of Labour and MMM) whereby a president, elected by the population, would hold more power and rule the country in joint collaboration with the PM. Nomination day took place on 24 November 2014 and, for the first time, electoral candidates had the option of not proclaiming their ethnic group. Only a few chose to do so. General elections were held on 10 December 2014, and the Lepep alliance made up of the MSM, PMSD, and Mouvement Libérateur (led by an MMM dissident) was elected to power by reaping 47 seats out of 60. The Westminster system was thus maintained and Anerood Jugnauth became the PM for the sixth time. Shortly after the new government took office, the ex-PM was lengthily interrogated by the police on charges related to money laundering. The license of the Bramer Bank was revoked due to alleged lack of liquidity, and the BAI (British-American Insurance) was suspended from trading and placed in receivership. A United Nations tribunal ruled that Britain had acted illegally when it created a marine protected area around the Chagos without the consent of Mauritius, thereby depriving this country of its fishing rights. Fresh negotiations began with Jin Fei in view of reviving the project started in 2006. Mauritius will henceforth retain 80% of the shares while the rest would go to the Chinese promoters. Tourism continued to be the main source for foreign exchange, and the number of visitors to the island reached 1.1 million in 2015. Despite this boom in the tourism industry, Tourism Minister Xavier-Luc Duval placed a two-year moratorium on the construction of new hotels. In December 2016, the PMSD left the coalition government in protest against the government's decision to introduce a prosecution commission bill. The bill was intended to transfer the power to prosecute from the DPP (Director of Public Prosecutions) to an appointed commission made up of three judges. Because of the PMSD exit, the bill did not pass and the PMSD leader, Xavier Luc Duval, replaced Paul Bérenger as leader of the opposition. On 21 January 2017, Anerood Jugnauth announced that in two days time he would resign in favour of his son, Finance Minister Pravind Jugnauth, who would assume the office of prime minister. The transition took place as planned on 23 January.

=== Truth and Justice Commission ===

Operating from 2009 to 2011 the Truth and Justice Commission was established to explore the impact of slavery and indentured servitude in Mauritius. The Commission was tasked to investigate the dispossession of land and "determine appropriate measures to be extended to descendants of slaves and indentured laborers." It was "unique in that it [dealt] with socio-economic class abuses" and explored the possibility of reparations. The Commission attempted to cover more than 370 years, the longest period of time that a truth commission has ever covered. Published on 25 November 2011, the report outlined over 300 recommendations detailing ways to bring those affected by slavery and indentured labour out of poverty.

== Districts of Mauritius ==

Mauritius is subdivided into nine Districts, they consist of different cities, towns and villages.

== Politics ==

The politics of Mauritius take place in a framework of a parliamentary representative democratic republic, in which the President is the head of state and the Prime Minister is the head of government, assisted by a Council of Ministers. Mauritius has a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the Government. Legislative power is vested in both the Government and the National Assembly.

=== Parliament ===

The National Assembly is Mauritius's unicameral legislature, which was called the Legislative Assembly until 1992, when the country became a republic. It consists of 70 members, 62 elected for four-year terms in multi-member

constituencies and eight additional members, known as "best losers", appointed by the Supreme Court to ensure that ethnic and religious minorities are equitably represented. The UN Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), which monitors member states' compliance with the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights (ICCPR), has criticised the country's Best Loser System following a complaint by a local youth and trade union movement. The president is elected for a five-year term by the Parliament. The island of Mauritius is divided into 20 constituencies that return three members each, while Rodrigues is a single constituency that returns two members. After a general election, the Electoral Supervisory Commission may nominate up to eight additional members with a view to correct any imbalance in the representation of ethnic minorities in Parliament. This system of nominating members is commonly called the best loser system. The political party or party alliance that wins the majority of seats in Parliament forms the government. Its leader becomes the Prime Minister, who selects the Cabinet from elected members of the Assembly, except for the Attorney General, who may not be an elected member of the Assembly. The political party or alliance which has the second largest majority forms the Official Opposition and its leader is normally nominated by the President of the Republic as the Leader of the Opposition. The Assembly elects a Speaker, a Deputy Speaker and a Deputy Chairman of Committees as some of its first tasks. === Government === Mauritius is a democracy with a government elected every five years. The most recent National Assembly Election was held on 10 December 2014 in all the 20 mainland constituencies, and in the constituency covering the island of Rodrigues. Elections have tended to be a contest between two major coalitions of parties. The 2006–2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance ranked Mauritius first in good governance. According to the 2017 Democracy Index compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit that measures the state of democracy in 167 countries, Mauritius ranks 16th worldwide and is the only African-related country with "full democracy". === Rule of law === Laws governing the Mauritian penal system are derived partly from French civil law and British common law. The crime rate reduced from 4.3 per 1,000 population in 2009 to 3.6 per 1,000 population in 2010. The Constitution of Mauritius states that for purposes of separation of powers, the judiciary is independent. According to Justice E. Balancy, public opinion is characterised by excessive emotional reaction to crimes arousing the moral indignation of the community. The result is a reluctance to give due weight to the liberty of the citizen and the presumption of innocence. The provisional charge, part of criminal procedure law since 1852, is a practice that allows anyone suspected of a crime to be detained – sometimes for up to two years – before being charged. In 1994, the police detained the editor-in-chief and a journalist of a weekly magazine for having "unlawfully published secret news". The chairman of the company was also arrested. In 1995, the Supreme Court found the provisional charge to be null and void, as the offence set out on the provisional charge "publishing secret news" was not known to the law. Male homosexuality and same-sex anal and oral sex are illegal in Mauritius, punishable by 5 years in prison. === Foreign relations === Mauritius has strong and friendly relations with various African, American, Asian, European and Oceania countries. Considered part of Africa geographically, Mauritius has friendly relations with African states in the region, particularly South Africa, by far its largest continental trading partner. Mauritian investors are gradually entering African markets, notably Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The country's political heritage and dependence on Western markets have led to close ties with the European Union and its member states, particularly France. It also depends on the United Kingdom as a trading partner. Relations with China and India are strong for both historical and commercial reasons. Mauritius is a member of the World Trade Organization, the Commonwealth of Nations, La Francophonie, the African Union, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Indian Ocean Commission, COMESA, and formed the Indian Ocean Rim Association. === Military === All military, police, and security functions in Mauritius are carried out by 10,000 active-duty personnel under the Commissioner of Police. The 8,000-member National Police Force is responsible for domestic law enforcement. The 1,400-member Special Mobile Force (SMF) and the 688-member National Coast Guard are the only two paramilitary units in Mauritius. Both units are composed of police officers on lengthy rotations to those services. == Territorial dispute == === Chagos Archipelago === Mauritius has long sought sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, located 1,287 kilometres (800 mi) to the northeast. Chagos was administratively part of Mauritius from the 18th century when the French first settled the islands. All of the islands forming part of the French colonial territory of Isle de France (as Mauritius was then known) were ceded to the British in 1810 under the Act of Capitulation signed between the two powers. In 1965, three years before the independence of Mauritius, the United Kingdom split the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and the islands of Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches from the Seychelles to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The

islands were formally established as an overseas territory of the United Kingdom on 8 November 1965. On 23 June 1976, Aldabra, Farquhar and Desroches were returned to Seychelles as a result of its attaining independence. The BIOT now comprises the Chagos Archipelago only. The UK leased the main island of the archipelago Diego Garcia to the United States under a 50-year lease (which expires in 2016) to establish a military base. Mauritius has repeatedly asserted that the separation of its territories is a violation of United Nations resolutions banning the dismemberment of colonial territories before independence and claims that the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, forms an integral part of the territory of Mauritius under both Mauritian law and international law. After initially denying that the islands were inhabited, British officials forcibly expelled to the mainland approximately 2,000 Chagossians who had lived on those islands for a century. Since 1971, only the atoll of Diego Garcia is inhabited, home to some 3,000 UK and US military and civilian contracted personnel. Chagossians have since engaged in activism to return to the archipelago, claiming that their forced expulsion and dispossession were illegal. ===== MPA ruling ===== On 20 December 2010, Mauritius initiated proceedings against the United Kingdom (UK) under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to challenge the legality of the Chagos Marine Protected Area (MPA), which the UK purported to declare around the Chagos Archipelago in April 2010. The dispute was arbitrated by the Permanent Court of Arbitration. After lengthy written pleadings by the Parties and a hearing from 22 April to 9 May 2014 in Istanbul, Turkey, the Arbitral Tribunal ruled unanimously on 18 March 2015 that the 'marine protected area' which the United Kingdom had declared around the Chagos Archipelago in April 2010 violates international law. It is the first time that UK's conduct with regard to the Chagos Archipelago has been considered and condemned by any international court or tribunal. The Tribunal held unanimously that, in declaring the 'MPA', UK violated international law. It ruled that UK breached its obligations under Articles 2(3), 56(2), and 194(4) of UNCLOS. In reaching these conclusions, the Tribunal made several findings. It considered the undertakings given by UK to the Mauritian Ministers at the Lancaster House talks in September 1965. UK argued that those undertakings were not binding and had no status in international law. The Tribunal rejected that argument, holding that those undertakings became a binding international agreement upon the independence of Mauritius, and have bound UK since then. It found that UK's commitments to Mauritius in relation to fishing rights and oil and mineral rights in the Chagos Archipelago are legally binding. The Tribunal also found that UK's undertaking to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius when no longer needed for defence purposes is legally binding. The Tribunal held that UK had not respected Mauritius's legal rights over the Chagos Archipelago. It considered the events from February 2009 to April 2010, during which time the 'MPA' proposal came into being and was then imposed on Mauritius. The Tribunal observed that UK's failure to balance its rights and interests with those of Mauritius is to be contrasted with the approach adopted by UK with respect to the United States. It noted that the record demonstrates a conscious balancing of rights and interests, suggestions of compromise and willingness to offer assurances by UK, and an understanding of the United States' concerns in connection with the proposed 'MPA'. Those elements were noticeably absent in UK's approach to Mauritius. Accordingly, the Tribunal found that, in declaring the 'MPA', UK had acted unlawfully and in disregard of Mauritius's rights. The parties differ on the characterization of the dispute. Mauritius states that its case is that the MPA is unlawful under the Convention. UK argued that the dispute concerns sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. Mauritius requested the Tribunal to adjudge and declare that UK is not entitled to declare an "MPA" or other maritime zones because it is not the "coastal State within the meaning of inter alia Articles 2, 55, 56 and 76 of the Convention." The sovereignty of Mauritius was explicitly recognised by two of the arbitrators and denied by none of the other three. Three members of the Tribunal found that they did not have jurisdiction to rule on that question; they expressed no view as to which of the two States has sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. Tribunal Judges Rüdiger Wolfrum and James Kateka held that the Tribunal did have jurisdiction to decide this question, and concluded that UK does not have sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. They found that: Internal United Kingdom documents suggested there was an ulterior motive behind the 'MPA' and noted the disturbing similarities and common pattern between the establishment of the so-called "BIOT" in 1965 and the proclamation of the 'MPA' in 2010; the excision of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 shows a complete disregard for the territorial integrity of Mauritius by UK; UK Prime Minister Harold Wilson's threat to Premier Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam in 1965 that he could return home without independence if he did not consent to the excision of the Chagos Archipelago amounted to duress; Mauritian Ministers were coerced into agreeing to the detachment of the Chagos Archipelago, and that this detachment violated the international law of

self-determination; the 'MPA' is legally invalid. The Tribunal's decision determined that UK's undertaking to return the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius gives Mauritius an interest in significant decisions that bear upon possible future uses of the Archipelago. The result of the Tribunal's decision is that, it is now open to the Parties to enter into the negotiations that the Tribunal would have expected prior to the proclamation of the MPA, with a view to achieving a mutually satisfactory arrangement for protecting the marine environment, to the extent necessary under a "sovereignty umbrella". === Tromelin === Mauritius also claims sovereignty over Tromelin island from France, a small island that lies 430 km northeast of Mauritius. France and Mauritius reached a co-management treaty in 2010. == Environment and climate == The environment in Mauritius is typically tropical in the coastal regions with forests in the mountainous areas. Seasonal cyclones are destructive to its flora and fauna, although they recover quickly. Mauritius ranked second in an air quality index released by the World Health Organization in 2011. Situated near the Tropic of Capricorn, Mauritius has a tropical climate. There are 2 seasons: a warm humid summer from November to April, with a mean temperature of 24.7 °C (76.5 °F) and a relatively cool dry winter from June to September with a mean temperature of 20.4 °C (68.7 °F). The temperature difference between the seasons is only 4.3 °C (7.7 °F). The warmest months are January and February with average day maximum temperature reaching 29.2 °C (84.6 °F) and the coolest months are July and August with average overnight minimum temperatures of 16.4 °C (61.5 °F). Annual rainfall ranges from 900 mm (35 in) on the coast to 1,500 mm (59 in) on the central plateau. Although there is no marked rainy season, most of the rainfall occurs in summer months. Sea temperature in the lagoon varies from 22–27 °C (72–81 °F) The central plateau is much cooler than the surrounding coastal areas and can experience as much as double the rainfall. The prevailing trade winds keep the east side of the island cooler and bring more rain. There can also be a marked difference in temperature and rainfall from one side of the island to the other. Occasional tropical cyclones generally occur between January to March and tend to disrupt the weather for only about three days, bringing heavy rain. == Biodiversity == The country is home to some of the world's rarest plants and animals, but human habitation and the introduction of non-native species have threatened its indigenous flora and fauna. Due to its volcanic origin, age, isolation, and its unique terrain, Mauritius is home to a diversity of flora and fauna not usually found in such a small area. Before the Portuguese arrival in 1507, there were no terrestrial mammals on the island. This allowed the evolution of a number of flightless birds and large reptile species. The arrival of man saw the introduction of invasive alien species and the rapid destruction of habitat and the loss of much of the endemic flora and fauna. Less than 2% of the native forest now remains, concentrated in the Black River Gorges National Park in the southwest, the Bambous Mountain Range in the southeast, and the Moka-Port Louis Ranges in the northwest. There are some isolated mountains, Corps de Garde, Le Morne Brabant, and several offshore islands with remnants of coastal and mainland diversity. Over 100 species of plants and animals have become extinct and many more are threatened. Conservation activities began in the 1980s with the implementation of programmes for the reproduction of threatened bird and plant species as well as habitat restoration in the national parks and nature reserves. In 2011, The Ministry of Environment & Sustainable Development issued the "Mauritius Environment Outlook Report" which recommended that St Brandon be declared a Marine Protected Area. In the President's Report of the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation dated March 2016, St Brandon is declared an official MWF project in order to promote the conservation of the atoll. In April 2016, a seven-day fact-finding mission composed of three highly acclaimed international experts (Professor Henk Bauwman (Ecotoxicology, Environmental Pollution, Bird Ecology); Professor Tony Martin (world's foremost expert on marine mammals) and Dr. Nick Cole (herpetologist; MWF Islands Restoration Manager) inspected the islands to raise awareness about the need to protect the islands and to investigate, for the longer term, the effects of plastic and heavy metal pollution in the Indian Ocean. In 2016, a documentary was made on Conservation on the St Brandon islands held on permanent lease. When it was discovered, Mauritius was the home of a previously unknown species of bird, the dodo, descendants of a type of pigeon which settled in Mauritius over four million years ago. With no predators to attack them, they had lost their ability to fly. Arabs became the first humans to set foot on Mauritius, followed by Portuguese around 1505. The island quickly became a stopover for ships engaged in the spice trade. Weighing up to 50 pounds (23 kg), the dodo was a welcome source of fresh meat for the sailors. Large numbers of dodos were killed for food. Later, when the Dutch used the island as a penal colony, new species were introduced to the island. Rats, pigs, and monkeys ate dodo eggs in the ground nests. The combination of human exploitation and introduced species significantly reduced the dodo population. Within 100 years of the arrival of humans on Mauritius, the once abundant dodo became a rare bird. The last one

was killed in 1681. The dodo is prominently featured as a (heraldic) supporter of the national coat of arms of Mauritius. == Demographics == The estimated resident population of the Republic of Mauritius was 1,264,000 as of December 2016. The female population was 637,032 compared to a male population of 624,176. The population on the island of Mauritius is 1,219,265, and that of Rodrigues island is 41,669; Agalega and Saint Brandon had an estimated total population of 274. Mauritius has the highest population density in Africa. === Ethnic groups === Subsequent to a Constitutional amendment in 1982, there is no need for Mauritians to reveal their ethnic identities for the purpose of population census. Official statistics on ethnicity are not available. The 1972 census was the last one to measure ethnicity. Mauritius is a multiethnic society, drawn from Indian (mostly Bhojpuri and Awadhi), African, Chinese and European (mostly French) origin. === Religion === According to the 2011 census conducted by Statistics Mauritius, Hinduism is the majority religion at 51.9%, followed by Christianity (31.4%), Islam (15.3%) and Buddhism (0.4%). Those of other religions accounted for 0.2% of the population, and 0.7% reported themselves as non-religious and 0.1% did not answer. Mauritius is the only country in Africa to have a Hindu majority. An officially secular state, Mauritius is a religiously diverse nation, with freedom of religion being enshrined as a constitutional right. The culture of the Mauritian people is reflected in the various religious festivities that are celebrated throughout the year, some of which are recognized as public holidays. According to one estimate Mauritians spend an average of more than 700 hours per year engaging in religious activities. === Languages === As both an English-speaking and French-speaking nation, Mauritius is a member of both the Commonwealth of Nations and the Francophonie. The Mauritian constitution makes no mention of an official language. In Parliament, the official language is English; however, any member of the National Assembly can also address the chair in French. Despite this, English and French are generally considered to be de facto national and common languages of Mauritius, as they are the languages of government administration, courts, and business. The constitution of Mauritius is written in English, while some laws, such as the Civil code, are in French. The Mauritian population is multilingual; while Mauritian Creole is the mother tongue of most Mauritians, most people are also fluent in English and French; they tend to switch languages according to the situation. French and English are favoured in educational and professional settings, while Asian languages are used mainly in music, religious and cultural activities. The media and literature are primarily in French. The Creole language, which is French-based with some additional influences, is spoken by the majority of the population as a native language. The Creole languages which are spoken in different islands of the country are more or less similar: Mauritian Creole, Rodriguan Creole, Agalega Creole and Chagossian Creole are spoken by people from the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Agalega and Chagos. Bhojpuri which was widely spoken as mother tongue, has been decreasing over the years. According to the 2011 census, there was a decrease in the use of Bhojpuri at home; it was spoken by 5% of the population compared to 12% in 2000. Some ancestral languages that are also spoken in Mauritius include Bhojpuri, Chinese, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. School students must learn English and French; they also have the option to study Asian languages and Creole. The medium of instruction varies from school to school but is usually Creole, French and English. Although the Dutch were the first to colonise Mauritius and were present for more than 70 years in the 17th and early 18th centuries, today Dutch is no longer spoken in the country, and the only traces of the language can be found in old historical documents and inscriptions. === Health === Mauritius had a life expectancy of 75.17 years in 2014. 39% of Mauritian men smoked in 2014. 12.9% of men and 23% of women were obese in 2008. Heroin use has a high prevalence rate of 0.91% (2011 UN figure). === Education === The government of Mauritius provides free education to its citizens from pre-primary to tertiary level. In 2013 government expenditure on education was estimated at about Rs 13,584 million, representing 13% of total expenditure. The adult literacy rate was estimated at 89.8% in 2011. Male literacy was 92.3% and female literacy 87.3%. The education system in Mauritius consists of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. The education structure consists of two to three years of pre-primary school, six years of primary schooling leading to the Primary School Achievement Certificate, five years of secondary education leading to the School Certificate, and two years of higher secondary ending with the Higher School Certificate. Secondary schools have "college" as part of their title. The O-Level and A-Level examinations are carried out by the University of Cambridge through University of Cambridge International Examinations. The Tertiary Education sector includes universities and other technical institutions in Mauritius. The country's two main public universities are the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology. The Tertiary Education Commission's Strategic Plan envisages Mauritius as a regional knowledge hub and a centre for higher learning and excellence. It promotes open and distance learning to increase access to

post-secondary education and lifelong learning locally and regionally. == Economy == Since independence from Britain in 1968, Mauritius has developed from a low-income, agriculture-based economy to a middle-income diversified economy, based on tourism, textiles, sugar, and financial services. The economic history of Mauritius since independence has been called “the Mauritian Miracle” and the “success of Africa” (Romer, 1992; Frankel, 2010; Stiglitz, 2011). In recent years, information and communication technology, seafood, hospitality and property development, healthcare, renewable energy, and education and training have emerged as important sectors, attracting substantial investment from both local and foreign investors. Mauritius has no exploitable natural resources and therefore depends on imported petroleum products to meet most of its energy requirements. Local and renewable energy sources are biomass, hydro, solar and wind energy. Mauritius has one of the largest exclusive economic zones in the world, and in 2012 the government announced its intention to develop the marine economy. Mauritius is ranked high in terms of economic competitiveness, a friendly investment climate, good governance and a free economy. The Gross Domestic Product (PPP) was estimated at US\$22.025 billion in 2014, and GDP (PPP) per capita was over US\$16,820, one of the highest in Africa. Mauritius has an upper middle income economy, according to the World Bank in 2011. The World Bank's 2018 Ease of Doing Business Index ranks Mauritius 25th worldwide out of 190 economies in terms of ease of doing business. According to the Mauritian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the country's challenges are heavy reliance on a few industry sectors, high brain drain, scarcity of skilled labour, ageing population and inefficient public companies and para-statal bodies. Mauritius has built its success on a free market economy. According to the 2013 Index of Economic Freedom, Mauritius is ranked as having the 8th most free economy in the world, and the highest score in investment freedom. The report's ranking of 183 countries is based on measures of economic openness, regulatory efficiency, rule of law, and competitiveness. === Tourism === Mauritius is a major tourist destination, ranking 3rd in the region and 56th globally. It enjoys a tropical climate with clear warm sea waters, beaches, tropical fauna and flora complemented by a multi-ethnic and cultural population. Mauritius received the World's Leading Island Destination award for the third time and World's Best Beach at the World Travel Awards in January 2012. Tourists can now climb "Le Morne Brabant" mountain, which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Issues often encountered by foreign tourists include scams, overcharging and dual pricing. === Transportation === Since 2005 public bus transport in Mauritius is free of charge for students, people with disabilities and senior citizens. There are currently no railways in Mauritius, former privately owned industrial railways having been abandoned. To cope with increasing road traffic congestion, a Light Rail Transit system has been proposed between Curepipe and Port Louis. The harbour of Port Louis handles international trade as well as a cruise terminal. The sole international airport for civil aviation is Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport, which also serves as the home operating base for the national airline Air Mauritius; the airport authority inaugurated a new passenger terminal in September 2013. Another airport is the Sir Gaëtan Duval Airport in Rodrigues. === Information and Communication Technology Sector === Since 2002, Mauritius has invested heavily into the development of an ICT Hub. The contribution of the ICT Sector accounts for 5.7% of the GDP. The ICT Sector employs 15,390 people. In 2016, Mauritius participated for the first time in the Google Code-in international competition, and was noted for its "strong debut". In 2017, Mauritius made it for the first time as a Grand Prize winner for Google Code-in. Mauritius has also participated in the IETF. It has been noted for its contribution to TLS and currently is ahead of other African countries for RFC development. In 2018, A group of Mauritians known as hackers.mu acted as Champions during IETF 101 for TLS and this would be the first time that Mauritius would lead an international hackathon . == Culture == === Music === The major musical genre of Mauritius is Sega music, other musical genres are its fusion genre, Seggae and Bhojpuri songs. === Cuisine === The cuisine of Mauritius is a combination of Creole, French, Chinese and Indian, with many dishes unique to the island. Spices are also a big part of Mauritian cuisine. === Holidays and festivals === The public holidays of Mauritius involve the blending of several cultures from Mauritius's history. There are Hindu festivals, Chinese festivals, Muslim festivals, as well as Christian festivals. There are 15 annual public holidays in Mauritius. Seven of these are fixed holidays: 1 and 2 January; 1 February; 12 March; 1 May; 2 November; and 25 December. The remaining public holidays are religious festivals with dates that vary from year to year. However these are public holidays, many other festivals such as Holi, Raksha Bandhan, Père Laval Pilgrimage also exist in Mauritius. === Sports === The most popular sport in Mauritius is football and the national team is the Club M. Other popular sports in Mauritius include cycling, table tennis, horse racing, badminton, volleyball, basketball, handball, boxing, judo, karate,

taekwondo, weightlifting, bodybuilding and athletics. Water sports include swimming, sailing, scuba diving, windsurfing and kitesurfing. Horseracing, which dates from 1812 when the Champ de Mars Racecourse was inaugurated, remains popular. The country hosted the second (1985) and fifth editions (2003) of the Indian Ocean Island Games. Mauritius won its first Olympic medal at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing when boxer Bruno Julie won the bronze medal. In golf, the former Mauritius Open and the current AfrAsia Bank Mauritius Open have been part of the European Tour. == See also ==
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