India and France - Indian Ocean Region

What is the issue?

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- With recent bilateral diplomatic meets, India and France have decided to strengthen cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
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- In the context of the developing Indo-Pacific quadrilateral grouping of India, US, Japan and Australia, it is essential for India and France to take forward the bilateral relationship with a new vigour.
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How influential is France in the IOR?

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- France is one of the notable countries with maritime traditions that shaped the contemporary Indo-Pacific power relations.
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- With a colonial inheritance, it has a considerable influence through overseas territories in the Western Indian Ocean and South Pacific.
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- Its military facilities in the Indo-Pacific include those in the Reunion Island, Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates.
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- France also has a variety of coordination mechanisms in the Pacific with the United States, Japan, Australia, Britain and New Zealand.
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- In addition, it plays a lead role in the Indian Ocean Commission.
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- It is an intergovernmental organization that brings together the island states of Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar, Comoros and the French territory of Reunion.
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What lies before India?

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- India and France have long held partnerships in traditional areas of high-technology and defence cooperation and recently, climate change.
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- The overall geopolitical scenario is changing with the rise of China, renewed tensions between Russia and Europe, uncertainty in the US political trajectory and loosening of the old alliances.
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- It becomes essential in this context that India and France started offering a strong regional dimension to their strategic partnership.
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- India and France have a potential scope to work together in the IOR, especially in the Western Indian Ocean.
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- With Indo-Pacific quadrilateral grouping in the developmental stage, it is in India's interests to build its bilateral security cooperation.
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- This should include both the members of the quad as well as other partners in the Indo-Pacific including France.
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- India needs to intensify the exchange of maritime intelligence, negotiate agreements to share naval infrastructure facilities and put in place logistical support arrangements.
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Source: Indian Express

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