

India-Seychelles Relations - Expanding Maritime Partnership to Sustainability and Strategic Cooperation

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India-Seychelles Relations Latest News

- The Indian Prime Minister and Seychelles President (Patrick Herminie) held bilateral talks in **New Delhi**, marking **50 years** of diplomatic relations and coinciding with the 50th anniversary of Seychelles' independence.
- The visit—within 100 days of President Herminie's victory—underscores the strategic weight Seychelles attaches to India amid evolving geopolitics in the Western Indian Ocean Region (WIOR).
- The two countries adopted a Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages (**SESEL**) and signed multiple agreements across sectors.

Strategic and Maritime Cooperation - The Core Pillar

- **Defence and maritime security:**
 - It remains the central pillar of bilateral ties, and collaboration includes –

- Maritime surveillance
 - Defence capacity development
 - Counter-piracy operations
 - Combating international crime and maritime threats
 - Protection of critical Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)
- The cooperation assumes greater importance given **rising piracy** and economic offences in the strategic Indian Ocean Region (IOR), and growing geopolitical contestation in the region.
- **Colombo Security Conclave (CSC):**
 - Seychelles was welcomed as a full member of the CSC.
 - Originally formed in 2011 by India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives; CSC later expanded to include Mauritius and Bangladesh.
 - The inclusion of Seychelles strengthens regional efforts towards –
 - Maritime domain awareness
 - Regional stability
 - Cooperative security architecture in the IOR
 - This aligns with India's broader **SAGAR** doctrine and Vision **MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

Joint Vision (SESEL) – Broadening the Partnership

- The adopted Joint Vision for Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages (SESEL) expands cooperation beyond security into sustainable development.
- **Key areas of cooperation:**
 - **Marine research and ocean governance:** Ocean observation, maritime scientific research, data-sharing mechanisms.
 - **Climate action and renewable energy:** Cooperation in renewable energy solutions, climate resilience initiatives for small island developing states (SIDS).
 - **Health cooperation:** Pharmacopoeial collaboration, strengthening healthcare systems.
 - **Digital transformation:** Support in digital governance and capacity-building, enhancing e-governance frameworks.
 - **Meteorological cooperation:** Technical and scientific collaboration between meteorological authorities.
 - **Capacity-building:** Training programmes for Seychelles civil servants, institutional strengthening initiatives.
 - **Cultural and people-to-people ties:** Cultural Exchange Programme (2026–2030); tourism cooperation, with India emerging as a growing market.

Economic and Developmental Assistance

- **Special economic package:** India announced a \$175 million Special Economic Package, comprising \$125 million Line of Credit (rupee-denominated) – remaining amount as grant assistance.
- **The package will support:**

- Public housing, infrastructure, mobility, maritime security, and capacity-building.
- This reflects India's model of development partnership without conditionalities, especially for small island nations.

Geostrategic Significance

- **WIOR:** Critical for global trade and energy flows. Seychelles' strategic location enhances India's maritime reach.
- **Countering extra-regional influence:** Strengthening ties helps balance growing external powers' presence in the IOR. Reinforces India's role as a net security provider.
- **Blue economy and SIDS diplomacy:** Seychelles, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), is central to climate diplomacy, sustainable ocean governance, and blue economy initiatives.
- **People-centric diplomacy:** Shared democratic values, historical and cultural linkages, and emphasis on inclusive development.

India-Seychelles Relations

- **Overview:**
 - Today, India-Seychelles relations embody close friendship, understanding and cooperation.
 - Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in **1976**.
 - With a significant presence of Indian Diaspora in Seychelles, cultural contacts between the two countries have been primarily **community-driven** with support from the two governments.
- **Key aspects:**
 - **Trade:** India exported goods worth US\$ 64.88 million and imported goods worth US\$ 8.96 million from Seychelles during 2022-23.
 - **Energy and environment:** A Blue Economy Protocol between India and Seychelles was signed in 2015.
 - **Development assistance:** An important aspect of bilateral cooperation revolves around various development assistance programs extended to Seychelles under ITEC, ICCR and IAFS.
 - **Defence and security:** India is a key security partner for Seychelles, helping with coastal surveillance, radar systems, and joint exercises like '**LAMITIYE**'.

Challenges

- **Geopolitical competition in the IOR:** Rising strategic competition may complicate smaller states' balancing strategies.
- **Climate vulnerability of Island States:** Seychelles faces existential risks from climate change, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events.
- **Maritime security threats:** Piracy resurgence; drug trafficking; Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing
- **Economic dependence on tourism:** Seychelles' economy remains vulnerable to global shocks.

Way Forward

- **Institutionalising:** Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) through real-time data-sharing.
- **Deepening:** Blue Economy cooperation, including sustainable fisheries and marine biodiversity protection.
- **Expanding:** Renewable energy partnerships tailored to SIDS needs.
- **Strengthening:** Multilateral maritime frameworks, particularly through the CSC and IORA.
- **Enhancing:** Digital and governance partnerships for resilient institutions.
- **Leveraging:** India's Vision MAHASAGAR and SAGAR doctrine to build a cooperative Indian Ocean architecture.

Conclusion

- The India-Seychelles partnership is evolving from a traditional defence relationship into a **multidimensional** strategic partnership encompassing sustainability, digital transformation, climate action, and economic growth.
- As maritime neighbours in the Indian Ocean, their collaboration contributes not only to bilateral development but also to the broader architecture of peace, stability, and inclusive growth in the WIOR.
- In the emerging geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, Seychelles remains a key pillar of India's maritime vision, reinforcing India's aspiration to be a **credible and responsible** security and development partner in the region.

Source: IE

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