



India–Seychelles Relations: Historical Ties, Maritime Partnership and Strategic Significance

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Recent Developments:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** is on a **three-day visit to Seychelles** as the **Guest of Honour** for the country's **50th Independence Day celebrations (29 June 2026)**.
- The visit marks **50 years of Seychelles' Independence** and reinforces India's long-standing partnership in the **Western Indian Ocean**.
- The Prime Minister is scheduled to hold **bilateral talks**, address the **National Assembly**, interact with the **Indian diaspora**, and participate in the National Day celebrations.

Historical and Demographic Linkages:

- The **India–Seychelles relationship** predates the formation of the modern Seychellois state.
- In **1770, five Indians** arrived on the islands as plantation workers along with African slaves and French settlers, forming part of the earliest recorded inhabitants.
- Today, **Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)** constitute nearly **5%** of Seychelles' population.
- Around **6,000 PIOs** hold Seychellois citizenship, representing a significant community in a country of nearly **1.2 lakh people**.
- The Indian-origin population mainly belongs to the **Gujarati** and **Tamil** communities.
- More than **9,000 Non-Resident Indians (NRIs)** reside in Seychelles under **Gainful Employment Permits**, primarily working in construction, retail services and professional sectors.

Migration and Historical Trade Connections:

- A continuous migration of Indians began during the **20th century**, mainly from **Tamil Nadu, Puducherry** and later **Gujarat**.
- Indian migrants settled as **traders, labourers, entrepreneurs and construction workers**, contributing significantly to Seychelles' economy.
- During **British colonial rule**, Seychelles was administered for some time under the **Bombay Presidency**, creating strong administrative and commercial linkages.
- Regular maritime trade routes between western India and Seychelles facilitated movement of goods, people and capital.
- Indian traders, after commercial expansion in East Africa reached saturation, increasingly shifted towards opportunities in Seychelles.

Diplomatic Relations:

- **India established diplomatic relations with Seychelles in 1976**, immediately after Seychelles gained independence on **29 June 1976**.
- India has maintained uninterrupted high-level political engagement since independence.
- During Seychelles' first Independence Day celebrations, **INS Nilgiri** participated in the ceremonial events.

- The tradition continues with participation of **Indian Armed Forces contingents** and **Indian Navy ships** during the Golden Jubilee celebrations.
- In **February 2026**, India and Seychelles adopted the **SESEL (Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages) Joint Vision**, providing a long-term roadmap for bilateral cooperation across strategic sectors.

People-to-People and Cultural Relations:

- Cultural relations have largely been sustained through the vibrant Indian diaspora.
- In **2022**, a **statue of Mahatma Gandhi** was unveiled at **Peace Park, Victoria**, symbolising shared democratic values and peaceful coexistence.
- India has recognised outstanding members of the diaspora through the **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award**.
- **Justice D. Karunakaran** received the award in **2015**, becoming the second recipient from Seychelles after entrepreneur **V. Ramadoss (2006)**.

Development Partnership:

- India is among Seychelles' most trusted development partners through **grants, Lines of Credit, technical cooperation** and **capacity building**.
- More than **1% of Seychelles' population** has received professional education or specialised training in India.
- Indian assistance supports **infrastructure, healthcare, education, public transport, housing** and **digital capacity building**.
- India announced a **Special Economic Package of US\$175 million** comprising:
 - **US\$125 million** as **Line of Credit**.
 - **US\$50 million** as **grant assistance**.
- The package focuses on **public housing, infrastructure, mobility, renewable energy, maritime security** and **capacity building**.
- India remains a preferred destination for **medical tourism**, with institutional partnerships between hospitals in Seychelles and Indian healthcare institutions, particularly in **Chennai**.

Strategic and Maritime Significance:

- Seychelles occupies a strategically important position in the **Western Indian Ocean** near major international **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs)**.
- Its location connects **Africa, the Middle East** and **Asia**, making it critical for global maritime commerce.
- Seychelles is central to India's vision of becoming a **Net Security Provider** in the Indian Ocean.
- The partnership strengthens cooperation against:
 - **Maritime piracy.**
 - **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.**
 - **Maritime terrorism.**
 - **Drug trafficking.**
 - **Human trafficking.**
- Close maritime cooperation also contributes to **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** operations across the region.
- The partnership supports India's efforts to maintain a **free, open, secure and rules-based Indo-Pacific**.
- Strong engagement with Seychelles also serves as a strategic balance against the expanding influence of **China** in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**.

Defence and Security Cooperation:

- Defence cooperation includes:
 - **Joint maritime surveillance.**
 - **Hydrographic cooperation.**

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- **Capacity building and military training.**
- **Information sharing on maritime security.**
- **Support for the Seychelles Coast Guard.**
- India assists Seychelles through:
 - **Naval asset maintenance.**
 - **Hydrographic surveys.**
 - **Training of defence personnel.**
 - **Supply of defence equipment.**
- India has also supported the establishment of a **Hydrographic Unit** and strengthened maritime domain awareness.

MAHASAGAR Vision:

- Seychelles forms an integral part of India's **MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions)** vision.
- The vision promotes:
 - **Maritime security.**
 - **Economic connectivity.**
 - **Blue Economy cooperation.**
 - **Sustainable development.**
 - **Regional stability.**
 - **Inclusive growth among Indian Ocean countries.**

Importance for India:

- Strengthens India's strategic presence in the **Western Indian Ocean.**
- Enhances protection of vital **Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).**
- Supports India's **Neighbourhood First, Global South** and **Indo-Pacific** policies.
- Expands India's diplomatic influence among **Small Island Developing States (SIDS).**
- Promotes **Blue Economy, climate resilience** and **maritime governance.**
- Reinforces India's role as a reliable development and security partner.

Challenges:

- Growing strategic competition from **China** in the Indian Ocean.
- Climate change and rising sea levels threaten Seychelles as a **Small Island Developing State (SIDS).**
- Maritime crimes, illegal fishing and transnational organised crime continue to pose regional security challenges.
- Limited domestic resources increase Seychelles' dependence on external development partnerships.

Conclusion:

- India–Seychelles relations have evolved from historical migration and trade linkages into a **comprehensive strategic partnership** based on **trust, development cooperation, maritime security** and **shared democratic values.**
- As geopolitical competition intensifies in the **Indian Ocean Region**, Seychelles remains an indispensable partner for India's maritime strategy and regional stability.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Key Facts:

- **Capital:** Victoria

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- **Currency:** Seychellois Rupee (SCR)
- **Official Languages:** English, French and Seychellois Creole
- **Region:** Western Indian Ocean
- **Political System:** Presidential Republic
- **Independence:** 29 June 1976

Diplomatic Relations with India: 1976

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