

India-Seychelles Bilateral Relations

Historical background & Diplomatic Links

India's bilateral engagement with Seychelles is characterized by our historical contacts and continuous support to Seychelles for its security. Today, India-Seychelles relations embody close friendship, understanding and cooperation. It was in the year 1770 that a small group of five Indians landed in Seychelles as plantation workers along with seven African slaves and 15 French colonists, and were recorded as the first inhabitants of the Islands. During the British colonial period, Seychelles was governed from the Bombay Presidency for some time, with regular shipping links and flow of goods and essential commodities from India. These trade links facilitated migration of an Indian trading community looking for greener pastures having reached a saturation point in East Africa.

2. Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in 1976. When Seychelles attained freedom on 29th June 1976, a contingent from the Indian Naval Ship, INS Nilgiri, took part in the Independence Day celebrations. The Indian Mission was established in 1979 in Victoria, with the High Commissioner based in Dar-es-Salaam and concurrently accredited to Seychelles. The first resident High Commissioner was appointed in 1987, while Seychelles opened its resident mission in New Delhi in early 2008.

Visits from India

3. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit (10-11 March 2015) to Seychelles was the first Prime Ministerial level visit from India in 34 years. It was a highly successful visit with substantive outcomes: signing of four Agreements/MoUs, inauguration of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CRS) Project, announcements of gifting of a second Dornier aircraft to Seychelles and 3-month gratis visa for Seychelles nationals for travel to India.

4. Previous high-level visits from India include: Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi (1976 & 1981); President Shri R. Venkataraman (1989); Vice-President Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma (1991); Vice-President Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat (2003); External Affairs Minister Shri S.M. Krishna (July 2010); Defence Minister Shri A.K. Antony (July 2010); President Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil (2012).

5. An 8-member delegation led by Lok Sabha Speaker Hon'ble Sumitra Mahajan attended the 24th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) hosted from 8-13 January 2018 by Seychelles.

6. External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar visited Seychelles in November, 2020. In a virtual ceremony in April 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Wavel Ramkalawan jointly inaugurated various projects built under Government of India's grant assistance in Seychelles. Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar visited Seychelles in April, 2022. Chief Election Commissioner led a delegation to Seychelles in September 2023 to sign an MoU with the Electoral Commission of Seychelles.

Visits from Seychelles

7. The then President France Albert Rene visited India in 1980, 1986 and 1990. Thereafter, Vice-President James Alix Michel visited India in 1994, 1996 and 1999 and later as President in July 2005, June 2010, February 2011, February 2012 and August 2015. Vice President Vincent Meriton visited Chennai (11-14 February 2017) to inaugurate a wing in MIOT hospital, Chennai, where Government of Seychelles (GoS) sends their patients for medical treatment.

8. A 12-member Seychelles National Assembly delegation, led by Speaker Patrick Pillay, visited India from 9-13 August 2017. The delegation interacted with the Lok Sabha Speaker and also called on our President, PM and the Vice-President.

9. While holding the office of leader of opposition in National Assembly, President Wavel Ramkalawan, visited India to attend the PIO (Person of Indian Origin) Parliamentarians Conference in January, 2018.

10. The then President Danny Faure, visited India twice in 2018, in March 2018 to attend the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance and in June 2018, for a State Visit. In his former capacity as Vice President, he attended the 14th edition of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit held in New Delhi in February 2014.

11. In February 2023, Minister of Fisheries and Blue Economy visited Bengaluru to participate in the "India Energy Week 2023". In October 2023, Minister of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment visited New Delhi to participate in the 6th Session of the Assembly of the International Solar Alliance.

12. Minister for Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment of Seychelles Mr. Flavien P. Joubert visited New Delhi from October 30 to November 2, 2023 to participate in the 6th Session of the Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). During the visit Minister also met with Shri R.K. Singh, Minister of Power and New and Renewable Energy in New Delhi. Minister Joubert participated in the 1st Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS) in January 2023 and the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS) on November 17, 2023, in virtual format. He also visited Goa, India to participate in the India Energy Week 2024 from February 6-9, 2024, and met with Shri Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

13. In November 2023, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Seychelles Mr. Sylvestre Radegonde (FMSC) visited India for bilateral discussions. This was his first visit to India as Foreign Minister. Comprehensive discussions were held between EAM and FMSR and two MoUs were signed.

14. The Attorney General of Seychelles Mr. Frank Ally participated in the 1st Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid from November 27-28, 2023 and the Commonwealth Legal Education Association (CLEA) Attorney and Solicitors Generals Conference 2024 (CASGC'24) from February 2-4, 2024 in New Delhi.

15. On the invitation of Dr. S. Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister of India, Minister for Internal Affairs of Seychelles Mr. Errol Fonseka participated in the 7th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC 2024) in Perth, Australia from February 9-10, 2024.

Bilateral Agreements/MOUs

16. Several bilateral agreements/MOUs have been signed between the two countries, notable among which are the following: Air Services Agreement (1981); Agreement on Tourism (1996); Trade Agreement (2000); Joint Business Council (2000); MOU on Healthcare (2003); MOU on Defence Cooperation (2003); MOU on Science and Technology (2003); Cultural Exchange Programme (2003-05); Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA) (June 2010); MOU for setting up of an Information Technology Centre in Seychelles (February 2010); MOU on Police Research & Training (April-May 2012).

17. 4 MOUs/Agreements were signed during the State Visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Seychelles in March 2015, including: Renewable Energy Cooperation; MOU for Cooperation in the field of Hydrography; Protocol on Sale

of Navigational Charts / Electronic Navigational Charts; Agreement on the Development of Facilities on Assumption Island.

18. During the State visit of the then President James Michel in August 2015, the following MOUs/ Agreements were signed: Bilateral Air Services Agreement; MoU for gifting a second Dornier Maritime Aircraft; Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA); MoU between ICAR and Seychelles Agricultural Agency for Cooperation in Agricultural Research and Education; Protocol on Framework of Cooperation in the field of Blue Economy.

19. During the 1st State Visit of then President Danny Faure in June 2018, the following 6 agreements/ MOUs were signed: White Shipping data Agreement; MOU on cyber security (2018); MoU on Small Development Projects, MOU between the Foreign Service Institute India and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Seychelles; Cultural Exchange Program for the years 2018-2022; Twinning Agreement between the Corporation of the City of Panaji (Municipal Corporation) and the City of Victoria of the Republic of Seychelles.

20. In May 2022, both countries signed MoU for reciprocal recognition of COVID-19 Vaccination Certificates.

21. In September 2023, MoU for Cooperation in the field of Electoral Management and Administration was signed between the two countries. In November 2023, MoU on cooperation in the field of Youth and Sports and MoU on Indian Grant Assistance for implementation of Small Development Projects (Phase-II) through local bodies, educational and vocational institutions was signed during the visit of Foreign Minister Radegonde to India.

Trade & Investment

22. Bilateral trade and commerce with Seychelles is rather modest, mostly due to absence of a direct shipping line between India and Seychelles. Presently, Seychelles' main items of import from India are rice, miscellaneous food products, cement, linen, cotton, vehicles & associated transport equipment, medicines, instruments and appliances for medical, surgical & dental use. India exported goods worth US\$ 64.88 million and imported goods worth US\$ 8.96 million from Seychelles during 2022-23.

23. Among the Indian companies present in Seychelles, Bank of Baroda has been maintaining a successful overseas branch in Victoria since 1978. In the private sector, M/s Bharti Airtel Telecom group has invested over US\$ 25 million in setting up the Airtel mobile telephone and internet services in

Seychelles since 1998. TATA has supplied most of the fleet of buses for Seychelles to ply in Mahé and Praslin, with Ashok Leyland a new entrant.

24. In pursuance of a MoU signed in September 2014, Air Seychelles launched thrice-weekly direct flights between Mahé and Mumbai on 2 December 2014. Currently, there is a weekly flight between Mumbai and Mahe.

25. The Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) has been signed during the Presidential visit to India in August 2015

Energy and Environment

26. A Blue Economy Protocol between India and Seychelles was signed in August 2015. The two countries have been supportive of each other's position in the international fora on issues related to climate change. With the ratification of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) Framework Agreement in September 2017, Seychelles has officially become one of the Founding Members of ISA.

27. In pursuance of the bilateral MOU on Renewable Energy Cooperation signed during PM's visit to Seychelles in March 2015, a 3-member delegation from Seychelles attended the first meeting of the Joint Working Group in February 2016 in New Delhi to chart out the roadmap of cooperation.

28. On the sidelines of COP27 in November, 2022, Seychelles signed an agreement with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) for a project to set up 5 metric tonnes solar-powered cold storage on La Digue Island, which was inaugurated during Minister Joubert's visit to New Delhi in October-November 2023.

Cultural Relations & Indian Community

29. 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. At the initiative of prominent PIO associations in Seychelles, several Indian cultural troupes regularly visit Seychelles for performance.

30. In June, 2022, statue of Mahatma Gandhi was erected in the famous Peace Park in Victoria, Seychelles where the statue stands tall amidst those of leaders such as Nelson Mandela, first President of South Africa and Sir James Macham, founding President of Seychelles. During his 5-day visit in June 2018, former President Danny Faure gifted two giant Aldabra tortoises to the Hyderabad Zoo.

31. India has an important link with Seychelles with the first small group of five Indians arriving in Seychelles in 1770. Beginning of the twentieth century onwards, there was a constant flow of Indians, mostly from Tamil Nadu/Puducherry and later from Gujarat, who came in as traders, labourers, construction workers and more recently as professionals.

32. The number of PIOs with Seychelles citizenship is estimated to be around 5000, which is significant in a country with a total population of about 120,000. The PIO community is visible in all walks of life and is well known for its professionalism and hard-work. They dominate the trading and construction sectors. There are also over 7,000 NRIs holding Gainful Employment Permits, who are mostly workers in the construction sector, shop assistants and a few professionals.

33. The prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award was conferred on Justice D. Karunakaran of the Supreme Court of Seychelles in 2015. He is the second recipient of the PBSA from Seychelles after Dr. V. Ramadoss in 2006.

Healthcare

34. Seychelles was one of the first countries to receive Covid-19 vaccine under India's vaccine Maitri initiative. In January, 2021 India shipped a consignment of 50,000 doses of Covishield to Seychelles. India has also been the preferred destination for Seychelles for specialized and quality Medicare.

Defence and Security Cooperation

35. India and Seychelles have an elaborate architecture of defence and security cooperation that has deepened over the years with the growing piracy menace and other economic offences in the strategic Indian Ocean region. In pursuance of the MOU on Hydrography signed during the Prime Minister's visit in Mar 2015, Indian Naval Ship INS Darshak visited Seychelles from 5 Nov to 19 Dec 2015 to conduct hydrographic survey of Victoria Port and adjoining areas. Two patrol boats PS Topaz and PS Constant were gifted by India to Seychelles in 2005 and 2014 respectively. Indian Coast Guard's Fast Interceptor Boat C-405 (rechristened 'PB Hermes') was gifted to Seychelles in 2016. India gifted two Dornier maritime surveillance aircraft to Seychelles, first in 2013 and the second in June 2018. India gifted and installed six coastal surveillance radar systems in Seychelles in 2015 enabling better coastal security for Seychelles. The 9 editions of the India-Seychelles biennial joint military exercise "LAMITYE" have been held and the 10th edition is to be held in 2024. INS Darshak carried out Hydrographic and Bathymetric survey of Port Victoria, Praslin and La Digue from 30th December 2019 to 18th January 2020.

India handed over Fast Patrol Vessel SCG PS Zoroaster to Seychelles Coast Guard in April, 2021. Two ceremonial guns and ammunitions were also gifted on request of the Government of Seychelles in May, 2022. INS Trishul and its marching contingent proudly participated in the National Day celebration of Seychelles in June 2023. INS Sunayna visited Seychelles to participate in the “Operation Southern Readiness” under Combined Maritime Forces in July 2023. INS Sharda visited Seychelles on November 6-14, 2023 to participate in the IONS Maritime Exercise IMEX-23. Seychelles Coast Guard PS Zoroaster participated in MILAN 2024 at Vizag in February 2024 and proceeded for its short refit. INS Tir visited Seychelles from 24 February to 8 March 2024 to participate in Exercise Cutlass Express and to hand over serviced Dornier Engines and spares for SCG.

Development Assistance

36. An important aspect of bilateral cooperation revolves around various development assistance programs extended to Seychelles under ITEC, ICCR and IAFS. Over 1% of the local population form part of ITEC alumni who have benefited from various training courses under the ITEC program.

37. IT Centre for Excellence, set up in Victoria with GOI assistance was inaugurated at Mont Fleuri, Mahé in April 2011. Lines of Credit have been extended since early 1980s. During the Presidential visit in 2012, an LOC of US\$ 50 Million and a Grant of US\$ 25 Million were announced. Ten light vehicles including four TATA Safari Strome and 6 TATA Zest cars worth USD 183,000 were gifted (28 Nov 2017) to the Seychelles People’s Defence Forces (SPDF) under a special grant. Ten more TATA vehicles worth USD 250,000 gifted to Narcotics wing of Seychelles Police under a special grant of GOI in June 2018.

38. Government of India also gave a cash grant amounting to USD 3.5 million for the procurement of 71 buses and 6 light vehicles for Seychelles Public Transport Corporation (SPTC), USD 385,000 for the Procurement of 10 Ambulances project and USD 4,704,135 for the Restoration Project of CRS Station in different islands all across Seychelles. In August, 2021 ICT tools comprising Computers, TV Monitors, High Speed Scanners, Audio systems, Cameras, Furnitures etc at a cost of about USD 72,000 were given to set up a Learning Center under University of Seychelles. A further 60 buses were delivered to Seychelles in February 2023, under Line of Credit assistance.

39. The second Dornier aircraft was handed over to the former President of Seychelles, Mr. Danny Faure by the External Affairs, Smt Sushma Swaraj, at

the Indian Naval Air Station, New Delhi on 26 June 2018. The first Dornier was handed over to Seychelles in 2013.

40. In a joint e-inauguration ceremony by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Wavel Ramkalawan, India handed over 10 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) in addition to Solar PV Systems Project in Seychelles built under GoI grant assistance of USD 3.5 Million. This included (a) Roof-Top Solar Panels on Government Buildings; (b) 300 KW Solar Rooftop System for people in Seychelles; (c) 1 MW ground mounted Solar Power Plant at Romainville Island. India also handed over Magistrates court building built under GoI grant of USD 3.45 Million. In July 2023, India gifted 4 methadone vans to Seychelles to assist in the country's drug mitigation efforts.

41. A total of 28 High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) have been undertaken in Seychelles in Phase-I. The MoU for Phase-II of the project was signed during the visit of Foreign Minister Radegonde to India.

March 2024
