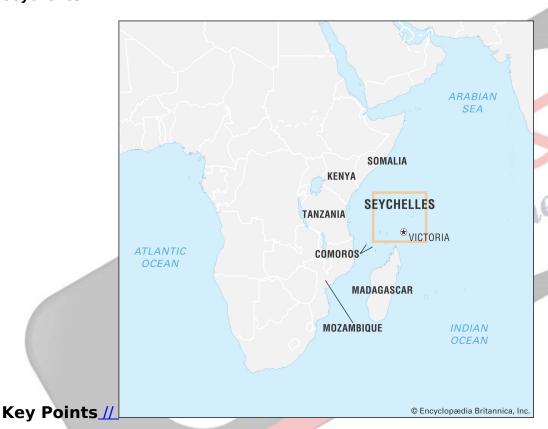


India-Seychelles

Why in News

Recently, a virtual meet was held between the **Prime Minister of India and the President of Seychelles**.



Events at the Meet:

- Joint Inauguration:
 - Inaugurated the new magistrates' court building in Mahé constructed with a
 USD 3.5-million, a 1 MW solar power plant built at a cost of USD3.4 million, and 10
 community development projects in Seychelles.
 - All the projects were built by the **help of India**.
 - India has so far taken up 29 small people-oriented development projects in Seychelles, while the 1MW solar project was built in addition to installing solar systems at 146 government buildings and domestic households.
 - The solar plant will meet the electricity needs of around 400 houses round the year.
- Fast Patrol Vehicle:

- India handed over a fast patrol vessel (PS Zoroaster) to the island nation.
- The 48.9-metre patrol boat was built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineering (under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence) at a cost of Rs. 100 crore and has a top speed of 35 knots and an endurance of 1,500 nautical miles.
- The vessel will be **used for multi-purpose operations**, such as patrolling, antismuggling and anti-poaching operations, and search and rescue.
- India gifted similar vessels to the Seychelles in 2005, 2014 and 2016.

India's Stand:

- Seychelles is central to India's vision of <u>Security and Growth for All in the Region</u> (SAGAR).
- India is **honoured to be a partner of Seychelles** in the development of its security capabilities and in meeting its infrastructural and developmental needs.

Seychelles Stand:

- India is a reliable and trusted partner.
- India's precious donation of 50,000 doses of <u>Covid-19 vaccines</u> had helped Seychelles in moving towards the goals of achieving 70% herd immunity by the end of April 2021 and opening up the economy.
 - Seychelles was the **first country** to receive the Covid vaccine from India.

India-Seychelles Relation

Background:

- Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in 1976.
- When Seychelles attained freedom, a contingent from the Indian Naval Ship, INS Nilgiri, took part in the Independence Day celebrations.
 - Since then the tradition of Indian military participation at the Seychelles National Day celebrations has continued till date.
- An Indian Mission was established in 1979 in Victoria, Seychelles with the High Commissioner based in <u>Dar-es-Salaam</u> (Tanzania) 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.

Economic Relation:

- India exported goods worth USD 84.49 million and imported goods worth USD 5.27 million from Seychelles during the financial year 2018-19.
- <u>Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA)</u> between India and Seychelles was signed in August 2015. Seychelles is also keen to sign the <u>Double Tax Avoidance</u> <u>Agreement (DTAA)</u>.

Energy & Environment:

- <u>Blue Economy</u> Protocol between India and Seychelles was signed in August 2015.
 - Recently, India has been <u>accepted as an observer of the Indian Ocean</u>
 <u>Commission</u>, of which Seychelles is a member.
- 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.
 - ISA is an Indian Initiative.
- Cultural Relations:

- With a significant presence of <u>Indian Diaspora</u> in Seychelles, cultural contacts between the two countries have been primarily community-driven with support from the two governments.
- At the initiative of prominent **Person of Indian Origin (PIO)** associations in Seychelles, several Indian cultural troupes regularly visit Seychelles for performance.
- In June 2018, **Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP)** was signed with Seychelles to mark the friendship and goodwill between the two countries.

Indian Community:

- The number of PIOs with Seychelles citizenship is estimated to be around 10,000 (or 11% of the population), which is significant in a country with a total population of 96,000 (April 2019).
- There are about **10,000 Indian citizens** holding Gainful Employment Permits, who are mostly workers in the construction sector, shop assistants and a few professionals.

Defence:

- 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.
- India gifted and installed six coastal surveillance radar systems in Seychelles in 2015 enabling better coastal security for Seychelles.
- The Seychelles government has leased the Assumption Island to the <u>Indian Navy</u> to build an overseas base of operations there.
 - Developing infrastructure on Assumption Island in Seychelles is a key piece in India's proactive maritime strategy as it counters China's moves in the Indian Ocean region.
 - Developing its infrastructure is being regarded as a "strategic asset" in India's arsenal.

SAGAR

- Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) was launched in 2015. It is India's strategic vision for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Through SAGAR, India seeks to deepen economic and security cooperation with its maritime neighbours and assist in building their maritime security capabilities.
- Further, **India seeks to safeguard its national interests** and ensure Indian Ocean region to become inclusive, collaborative and respect international law.
- The key relevance of SAGAR emerges when seen in conjunction with India's other
 policies impacting the maritime domain like <u>Act East Policy</u>, <u>Project Sagarmala</u>, <u>Project Mausam</u>, India as 'net security provider', focus on Blue Economy etc.

Way Forward

- Seychelles has been a strategic destination for several major powers with vested interests in the region, however India's image and visibility in Seychelles is very high as compared to others.
- The geo-strategic importance of Seychelles's location remains undiminished in contemporary times, and will become enhanced and China is fighting to get an upper hand which India must not allow.
- There is also a need to strengthen shared efforts of both the countries to combat drug trafficking, IUU (Illegal, unreported and unregulated) fishing, piracy and <u>climate change</u> while protecting the ocean ecosystem.

Source: PIB

