

## General Studies-2; Topic: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

### India - Seychelles Relations

#### 1) Introduction

- Seychelles President Danny Faure visited India recently.
- Both countries signed six Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) including in area of infrastructure development in Seychelles, cyber security and white-shipping arrangement.
- India and Seychelles share a special relationship and the strategic convergence between the two countries has been built on the foundation of shared values and common aspirations.

#### 2) India's Assistance

- India handed over the second Dornier aircraft to the island nation which would boost its capacity to conduct maritime surveillance.
- India had delivered the first Dornier aircraft in 2013.
- The aircraft is a "proud testimony of India's devotion and commitment" towards the people of Seychelles.
- In 2016, India gifted a fast interceptor boat to the country.
- India also announced a credit line of \$100 million for Seychelles to purchase defence equipment from India to build its maritime capacity.
- India offered to finance civilian infrastructure including the official buildings.

#### 3) Defence Cooperation

- Defence cooperation has been a major component of relations between the two countries.
- Securing the seas will lead to creating a peaceful environment for the progress and prosperity of the two countries.
- Indian naval ships are regularly deployed to undertake patrol of the extensive Exclusive Economic Zone of Seychelles.
- Both countries have strategic convergence in dealing with maritime challenges.
- They face dangers of international crimes such as piracy, drugs, human trafficking and illegal exploitation of oceanic resources.
- India is committed to augment Seychelles defence capabilities, maritime infrastructure and increase capabilities of its defence personnel.

#### 4) Assumption Island project

- India is keen on developing the Assumption Island in the Indian Ocean and to expand its footprint in the strategically-key region where China has been trying to enhance its military presence.
- Both countries agreed to work together on the stalled Assumption Island project, based on "each other's interests".
- This softer approach adopted by India is in remarkable contrast to the strong-arm tactics it has used in the past with other countries in the IOR, such as the Maldives.
- Therefore Soft diplomacy in the Indian Ocean Region will serve India better.



- It is seen as a major strategic enhancement of India's Indian Ocean Region naval capacities.

### 5) **Bilateral Relations**

- Working together will ensure safety and security in the Indian Ocean.
- Assumption Island project will help enhance maritime security along India's west and south coast.
- India is helping Seychelles patrol the Indian Ocean.
- India is an important source of tourism for the island nation.
- Seychelles provides a link to East African countries with whom India historically had socio-economic ties and at present forms a large market for Indian firms.
- Seychelles has been an important trading partner for India. Tourism, fishing, petroleum exploration, IT, computer education and pharmaceuticals have been identified as areas of economic cooperation.
- Since 2015, India and Seychelles has been collaborating in the field of Blue economy.
- India and Seychelles has coastal surveillance radar project. The project aims at better management and responding to maritime security threats.
- India's good diplomatic ties with Seychelles might help in securing Seychelles vote which will add to India's claim for a permanent seat at the UNSC.

### 6) **China Factor**

- The China factor is certainly an important aspect of Indian outreach in the Indian Ocean region.
- Beijing's involvement in the development of deep-sea ports in a string of littoral states in India's neighbourhood has been a cause of concern for New Delhi.
- India unlike China does not have economic leverage to deploy its resources as been manifested by China through its Belt and Road Initiative.

### 7) **Way Forward**

- India has been engaging diplomatically, economically and strategically with Seychelles and other Island nations to keep its foothold in the Indian Ocean Region intact.
- India can effectively monitor the presence of foreign navies in the Indian Ocean region at a time when the Indian Ocean waters are becoming more contested day by day.
- Indo-French maritime cooperation is growing. France's historical relationship with the Seychelles could make India-France-Seychelles a key maritime partnership in the Indian Ocean region.
- The Indian government has articulated a policy for better cooperation among Indian Ocean nations as part of its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative.
- This policy is embedded in New Delhi's vision "to seek a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime security issues; and increase in maritime cooperation."
- Through various initiatives India will have to keep on persisting in its engagement with its Indian Ocean partners.