STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

Why is Seychelles important to India?

International Relations

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday arrived in Seychelles on a three-day official visit, marking his second trip to the Indian Ocean island nation since taking office.

During the visit, PM Modi will attend the golden jubilee celebrations of Seychelles' National Day and hold bilateral talks with President Patrick Herminie to further strengthen strategic, economic and maritime cooperation between the two countries.

PM Modi is only the second Indian Prime Minister to visit Seychelles, a key maritime partner with which India established diplomatic relations 50 years ago. His visit underscores New Delhi's growing focus on the Indian Ocean Region and its commitment to deepening ties with island nations.

In his departure statement, PM Modi said that he looks forward to the bilateral discussions aimed at further strengthening the enduring friendship. "Together, we will work to advance the progress of our peoples, and promote security and prosperity in the Indian Ocean region," he said.

PM Modi said India-Seychelles diplomatic relations are "rooted in mutual trust, shared democratic values, respect for diversity and deep affinity between our peoples".

In his departure statement, the Prime Minister said Seychelles is a valued maritime neighbour and a key partner in the 'Vision MAHASAGAR' and India's shared commitment to the Global South.

As PM Modi visits Seychelles for the second time in a decade, the island nation has once again come into focus as a key pillar of India's strategic and diplomatic engagement in the Indian Ocean Region.

Despite its small size, Seychelles occupies a critical geopolitical position. Located along major Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), the archipelago sits close to some of the world's busiest maritime trade routes through which a significant share of global commerce and energy supplies passes.

Recognising its strategic importance, India has placed Seychelles at the heart of its maritime vision under MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), an expanded framework aimed at strengthening security, economic cooperation and sustainable development across the Indian Ocean while advancing the interests of the Global South.

Seychelles has emerged as one of India's closest maritime security partners in the Western Indian Ocean. The two countries cooperate extensively to combat piracy, maritime terrorism, narcotics trafficking along the East African corridor, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

India has also supported Seychelles by providing patrol vessels, defence training, and a network of Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR) stations across the islands. These radar systems enhance maritime domain awareness and help monitor shipping movements across the region, contributing to regional security.

During his 2015 visit to Seychelles, Prime Minister Modi unveiled the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine, which became the cornerstone of India's Indian Ocean policy.

The policy has since evolved into MAHASAGAR, reflecting a broader approach that emphasises shared security, economic growth and regional cooperation. Under this framework, Seychelles is no longer viewed merely as a development partner but as a key stakeholder in maintaining stability across the Indian Ocean.

Seychelles is also central to India's efforts to strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean amid increasing strategic competition in the region.

With China expanding its maritime footprint through infrastructure investments and a growing naval presence across the Indian Ocean, India has sought to deepen defence, intelligence and maritime cooperation with trusted regional partners such as Seychelles.

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The partnership enables India to strengthen maritime surveillance, improve regional security coordination and reinforce its strategic presence in the Western Indian Ocean.

Beyond security cooperation, India has emerged as one of Seychelles' most important development partners, steadily expanding its footprint through infrastructure, healthcare, housing and digital governance projects.

During Seychelles President Patrick Herminie's visit to New Delhi in February, India announced a $175 million Special Economic Package to support public housing, healthcare infrastructure and digital governance initiatives in the island nation.

The assistance reflects New Delhi's broader approach of combining strategic cooperation with capacity-building and sustainable development, reinforcing its position as a trusted partner in the Indian Ocean region.