

India-Seychelles Bilateral Relations

Historical background & Diplomatic Links

India's bilateral engagement with Seychelles has evolved over our historical contacts and continuous support to Seychelles for its security, even as our bilateral trade remains modest. Today, India-Seychelles relations are characterized by close friendship, understanding and cooperation. Diplomatic ties were established with Seychelles after its independence in 1976. 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. When Seychelles attained freedom on 29th June 1976, 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, 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. PM'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, which included *inter alia* signing of four Agreements/MoUs, inauguration of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) Project, announcement of gifting of a second Dornier aircraft to Seychelles and 3-month gratis visa for Seychelles nationals for travel to India. Foreign Secretary visited Seychelles in October 2017, January 2018 and May 2018 wherein wide-ranging meetings were held.

4. Previous 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); Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi (2015), Minister for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (Independent Charge) and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to personally deliver invitations to IAFS-III (July 2015); MOS for Culture (Independent Charge) Dr. Mahesh Sharma (4-6 October 2015); and RRM Shri Rao Inderjit Singh (20-24 March 2016).

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

Visits from Seychelles

6. President Danny Faure, visited India twice 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 had attended the 14th edition of the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit held in New Delhi in February 2014.

7. Former 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. Former Seychelles Minister for Natural Resources and Industry Peter Sinon (February 2014); Former Tourism & Culture Minister Alain St. Ange (August 2014 and January 2015); Former Foreign Minister Joel Morgan (October 2015); Agriculture & Fisheries Minister Wallace Cosgrow in February 2016; Former President Sir James Richard Mancham visited India at the Mission's invitation (29 February - 3 March 2016) to address the inaugural Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi. 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. Dr. Peter Larose, Seychelles Minister of Finance, Trade and Economic Planning led a delegation to attend the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the African Development Bank Group (22-26 May) held in Ahmedabad. Leader of the Opposition Hon'ble Wavel Ramkalawan visited India in January 2018 to participate in the PIO Parliamentarians Conference. Mr. Charles Bastienne, Minister for

Agriculture and Fisheries of Seychelles visited Hyderabad from October 23-23, 2018 on an official study tour; the main objective of this visit was to explore mutually beneficial opportunities in the Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and related sectors as well as for training and capacity building.

Bilateral Agreements/MOUs

9. 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 for stationing of an Indian Navy's Dornier aircraft in Seychelles (February 2011); MOU for supply of a new Dornier aircraft to Seychelles (February 2012); MOU for supply of a Coastal Surveillance Radar System in the outer islands (Feb 2012); MOU on Police Research & Training (April-May 2012); MOU for cooperation in youth affairs and sports (April-May 2012); MOU for adoption of a revised Bilateral Air Services Agreement (September 2014);

During the State Visit of Prime Minister Shri. Narendra Modi to Seychelles in March 2015, 4 MOUs/Agreements were signed 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.

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.

During the 1st State Visit of 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 Programme 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.

Trade & Investment

10. Our bilateral trade and commerce with Seychelles is rather modest. 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\$ 42.06 million and imported goods worth US\$ 1.37 million from Seychelles during the financial year 2017-18.

11. 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.

12. In pursuance of a MoU signed in September 2014, Air Seychelles launched thrice-weekly direct flights between Mahé and Mumbai on 2 December 2014 (frequency since being increased to five flights a week). The direct air connectivity has boosted bilateral trade and investment, flow of tourist traffic and people-to-people contact. On 4 October 2018, Air Seychelles signed a code sharing agreement with Air India which shall increase the connectivity further with 8 Indian cities connected to Seychelles over the course of this arrangement.

13. While the Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) has been signed during the Presidential visit to India in August 2015, the Seychelles side is keen to sign the DTAA agreement.

Energy and Environment

14. Following the signing of the Blue Economy Protocol between India and Seychelles in August 2015, a roadmap charting out the framework of cooperation remains to be prepared on our part and implemented. Meanwhile, 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.

15. 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.

Cultural Relations

16. In June 2018, CEP was signed with Seychelles. To mark the friendship and goodwill between the two countries, President of Seychelles gifted two giant Aldabra tortoises to the Hyderabad Zoo.

17. 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.

Indian Community

18. India has an important link with Seychelles with the first small group of five Indians arriving in Seychelles in 1770. It took almost a hundred years thereafter for the next lot of Indians to set foot on Seychelles soil. But once they did, there was no stopping and the 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. 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 (June 2017). 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. 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. Most of the retail business including grocery stores and supermarkets are owned by the Tamil PIO community, while the real estate business and construction industry are dominated by the Gujarati PIO community.

19. The prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award was conferred on Dr. V. Ramadoss in 2006 and Justice D. Karunakaran of the Supreme Court of Seychelles in 2015.

Defence and Security Cooperation

20. 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. A 45-member Indian Army team participated in the 8th India-Seychelles biennial joint military exercise "LAMITYE-8" conducted in Mahé (February 24 to March 3, 2018). These bilateral exercises are being held in Seychelles since 2001. Continuing the historic tradition since 1976, INS Tarkash arrived on 26 June 2018 at Victoria port to participate in National Day Parade (29 June) of Seychelles. The Indian Naval marching contingent took part in the National Day Parade with Rifles and Ceremonial Swords. INS Trikand and INS Mumbai called on Port Victoria on 21 April, 2018. INS Vessels Mhadei and Tarini arrived at Port Victoria on 25 November 2018 as part of the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) from 25 Nov – 04 Dec 2018.

Development Assistance

21. An important aspect of bilateral cooperation revolves around various development assistance programmes extended to Seychelles under ITEC, ICCR and IAFS. Over 1% of the local population (about 1000) form part of ITEC alumni who have so far benefited from various training courses under the ITEC programme. Out of 86 civilian 40 police personal attended ITEC course in different fields. So far 67 candidates have been selected for Military training in India from Seychelles People's Defence Forces.

22. 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. By 2017, almost all of this grant has been utilised by the Government of Seychelles in procuring buses, medicines, medical equipment, police uniform, IT equipment, stationery, police vehicles, etc. Seychelles Health Care Agency (HCA) signed (28 Nov 2017) an agreement with

HLL Infra Tech Services Ltd for purchase of medical equipment worth USD 2.71 million under GOI USD 25 million grant, including anesthesia units, neonatal ventilators, patient monitors, and ultrasound scanners, dental chairs, bet sets etc. from HITES. Ten light vehicles including four TATA Safari Storme 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. India has agreed to construct Magistrate Court building next to Seychelles Supreme Court at a cost of USD 3.45 million and the foundation stone laying ceremony took place on 28 September 2018. 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 CSRS Station in different islands all across Seychelles. India is also in the process of funding the construction of National Priority Projects of Seychelles including Attorney General's Office, Government House & Police Headquarters and also a State of the art Convention Centre for Seychelles, all projects put together costing around USD 68 Million.

23. India offered a second line of credit for the defence and maritime security cooperation of Seychelles for an amount of USD 100million. The second Dornier aircraft was handed over to the President of Seychelles, H.E. Mr. Danny Faure by the External Affairs, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, at the Indian Naval Air Station, New Delhi. The first Dornier was handed over to Seychelles in 2013.

Updated on 14 January 2018