

# Naval Cooperation between India and Seychelles

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**Context-** The Navy's Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), which is located in Gurugram, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Regional Coordination Operations Centre (RCOC), which is in Seychelles, to improve maritime safety and security.

## Key Highlights

- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the two centers seeks to foster cooperation to improve their knowledge and capability in the maritime domain.
- This partnership will enable the centers to work together and develop a shared understanding of the maritime environment, which will help them tackle unconventional maritime security risks, including piracy, theft, trafficking of humans and contraband, unregulated fishing, arms smuggling, poaching, and maritime terrorism.
- The collaboration will have a particular emphasis on addressing these challenges in the western Indian Ocean.

## Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)

- In December 2018, the IFC-IOR was launched at the Navy's Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram, which serves as the central hub for all coastal radar chains.

- The IMAC provides a continuous and real-time view of the approximately 7,500-km coastline, and multiple Indian Ocean coastal states have joined the radar network.
- Since its inception, the IFC-IOR has developed partnerships with numerous international maritime security centers.
- Additionally, the center accommodates International Liaison Officers (ILOs) from twelve countries, including Australia, France, Italy, Japan, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Seychelles, Singapore, the U.K., and the U.S.
- The Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC), the Regional Operations Coordination Centre (RCOC), and the national centers of the seven signatory nations (Comoros, Djibouti, France, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, and Seychelles) provide assistance to the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) in implementing the maritime security architecture in the western Indian Ocean.

## India-Seychelles

- **Background:**
  - After Seychelles gained independence in 1976, diplomatic ties were established.
  - A group from the Indian Naval Ship INS Nilgiri participated in the Independence Day celebrations when Seychelles gained independence.
  - Indian military participation in Seychelles National Day celebrations has been a tradition ever since.
  - The Indian High Commissioner was based in Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania) and concurrently accredited to Seychelles when an Indian Mission was established in Victoria, Seychelles, in 1979.
  - Seychelles opened its resident mission in New Delhi at the beginning of 2008, and the first resident High Commissioner was appointed in 1987.
- **Economic ties:**
  - During the fiscal year 2018-19, India imported goods from Seychelles worth 5.27 million USD and exported goods worth 84.49 million USD.
  - In August of 2015, the Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) between India and Seychelles was signed. Additionally, Seychelles is eager to sign the Double Tax Avoidance Agreement.
- **Environment and energy:**
  - In August of 2015, the Blue Economy Protocol between India and Seychelles was signed.
  - Seychelles is a member of the Indian Ocean Commission, of which India has recently been accepted as an observer.
  - Seychelles has officially joined the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** as one of its Founding Members since the ISA Framework Agreement was ratified in September 2017.
- **Cultural Relations**
  - Cultural exchanges between the two nations have primarily been community-driven and supported by the two governments due to the significant Indian

diaspora presence in Seychelles.

- Numerous Indian cultural troupes regularly perform in Seychelles thanks to the initiative of prominent PIO associations in the country.
  - In honor of their mutual friendship and goodwill, the **Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP)** was signed with Seychelles in June 2018.
  - Indian People:
  - In a nation with a total population of 96,000 (April 2019), there are approximately 10,000 PIOs with Seychelles citizenship, or 11% of the total population.
  - There are approximately 10,000 Indian citizens with Gainful Employment Permits. The majority of these individuals are construction workers, shop assistants, and professional workers.
- **Defence:**
    - With the growing threat of piracy and other economic crimes in the strategic Indian Ocean region, India and Seychelles have developed a complex architecture of defense and security cooperation.
    - In 2015, India provided the Seychelles with six coastal surveillance radar systems, which improved the country's coastal security.
    - The Indian Navy has leased Assumption Island from the Seychelles government in order to construct an overseas base of operations there.
    - India's proactive maritime strategy to counter China's actions in the Indian Ocean includes building infrastructure on Assumption Island in the Seychelles.
    - India's infrastructure development is being viewed as a "strategic asset" in its arsenal.