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India-Seychelles SESEL Vision — Island Diplomacy and the SAGAR Doctrine

15 February 2026

SUBJECTS COVERED**IR SECURITY & DEFENCE****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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WHY IN NEWS

India and Seychelles announced the **SESEL Joint Vision** — Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages — during Seychelles President **Patrick Herminie's** State Visit to New Delhi, marking **50 years of bilateral diplomatic relations** and deepening India's strategic footprint in the Western Indian Ocean.

SESEL — WHAT IT MEANS

SESEL is the new framework governing India-Seychelles relations across five pillars:

| Pillar | Details |
|------------------------|--|
| Maritime Security | Joint coast guard patrols, surveillance sharing, capacity building |
| Digital Infrastructure | Submarine cable connectivity, e-governance support |
| Renewable Energy | Solar and ocean-based energy cooperation |
| Climate Action | Shared vulnerability; climate finance, coastal resilience |
| Trade & Linkages | Bilateral commerce, tourism, fisheries |

Note: “Sesel” is also the Seychellois Creole word for Seychelles — the name is both an acronym and a cultural reference, reflecting India's emphasis on partnership over patronage.

WHY SEYCHELLES MATTERS — STRATEGIC GEOGRAPHY

Seychelles is an archipelago of **115 islands** spread over 1.4 million sq km of the Western Indian Ocean, lying at the confluence of:

East African sea lanes (Mozambique Channel, Aden Gulf traffic)

Persian Gulf shipping routes (critical for India's energy imports)

Indian Ocean–Pacific connectivity (chokepoint between East Africa and South Asia)

Key strategic assets:

Assumption Island — India obtained access to build a military facility here; this gives India a presence ~1,000 km from the Indian mainland coast of Africa — enabling surveillance of Western IOR

India regularly conducts **joint patrol exercises** under the bilateral defence agreement

Seychelles hosts **Indian Coast Guard** and **Indian Navy** outreach activities under Operation Cactus-style frameworks

INDIA'S SAGAR DOCTRINE

SAGAR — Security and Growth for All in the Region — was articulated by PM Modi at Mauritius in **March 2015**. It is India's overarching framework for the Indian Ocean Region:

Five pillars of SAGAR:

- Protecting our maritime interests** — ensuring unhindered access to SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communication)
- Deepening economic and security cooperation** with island nations and littoral states
- Collective action on natural disasters, piracy, terrorism, IUU fishing** in the IOR
- Developing maritime infrastructure** in partner countries (ports, coast guard facilities, radar networks)
- Capacity building** — training coast guards, naval officers, disaster management teams

SAGAR in practice — India's island diplomacy:

| Initiative | Partner Countries |
|---|---|
| Coastal Surveillance Radar Network (CSRN) | Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles, Bangladesh, Myanmar |
| Dornier maritime patrol aircraft supply | Maldives, Sri Lanka, Seychelles |
| Naval base access (bilateral) | Assumption Island (Seychelles), Agalega (Mauritius) |
| MAHASAGAR doctrine | Expanded SAGAR for 2025–30 (Blue Economy + Climate + Security) |

INDIA-SEYCHELLES BILATERAL — KEY FACTS

Diplomatic history:

- Established relations: **1976** (Seychelles independence)
- 50 years** of relations: February 2026 milestone
- India is among Seychelles' largest bilateral development partners

Key cooperation areas:

Dornier aircraft: India provided Dornier-228 maritime patrol aircraft to the Seychelles Coast Guard

Patrol vessel: India gifted a **Coast Guard fast patrol vessel**

Lines of Credit: Multiple Indian LoCs for infrastructure, airport development, fisheries jetties

Indian community: ~6,000 People of Indian Origin (PIO) in Seychelles (~6% of population)

Blue economy:

Seychelles' EEZ: **1.37 million sq km** — one of the largest EEZs relative to land area in the world

India supports Seychelles' fisheries development and participates in joint patrols to control **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**

INDIA-GREECE DEFENCE PACT — SIMULTANEOUS DEVELOPMENTS

On the same day, India signed a **Joint Declaration of Intent for Defence Industrial Cooperation** with **Greece**. Key elements:

5-year roadmap for co-development and co-production

Aligns **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** with Greece's **Defence Industry Agenda 2030**

Greece to deploy a liaison officer to **IFC-IOR** (Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region) at Gurugram

A **Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan for 2026** was exchanged

Greece's significance: A NATO and EU member with a large navy (4th largest in NATO by tonnage), advanced shipbuilding (Athens Hellenic Shipyards), and aerospace industries. The cooperation opens India's access to European-standard naval platforms and European defence export markets.

IFC-IOR: India's maritime domain awareness hub at Gurugram, operational since 2018, covering information from 21 partner countries and 4 multilateral bodies in the IOR.

UPSC RELEVANCE

*SAGAR doctrine (2015, Mauritius), SESEL acronym, India-Seychelles (Assumption Island, Dornier, patrol vessels), IFC-IOR (Gurugram, 2018), Henley Passport Index, CTF-154 (CMF, Bahrain), MAHASAGAR doctrine. **Mains GS-2:** India's neighbourhood-first policy applied to Indian Ocean island states; SAGAR doctrine and maritime security; India-France-Greece axis in IOR; IFC-IOR and maritime domain awareness. **GS-3:** Blue economy; IUU fishing; island vulnerability and climate action.*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

SESEL JOINT VISION:

Full form: **Sustainability, Economic Growth and Security through Enhanced Linkages**

Occasion: 50th anniversary of India-Seychelles relations (1976–2026)

Seychelles President: **Patrick Herminie** (State Visit, February 9, 2026)

Pillars: Maritime security, digital infra, renewable energy, climate action, trade

SAGAR DOCTRINE:

Full form: **Security and Growth for All in the Region**

Announced: PM Modi, **March 2015**, Mauritius

Core idea: India as net security provider in IOR + development partner for island states

Related: MAHASAGAR (expanded 2025–30 framework: Blue Economy + Climate + Security)

INDIA-SEYCHELLES BILATERAL:

Relations established: **1976**

Assumption Island: India's **military access agreement** — strategic surveillance point

Seychelles EEZ: **1.37 million sq km**

Coastal Surveillance Radar: India installed in Seychelles (part of regional CSRN)

People of Indian Origin in Seychelles: **~6,000** (~6% population)

INDIA-GREECE DEFENCE PACT:

Agreement: Joint Declaration of Intent for Defence Industrial Cooperation

Duration: 5-year roadmap

IFC-IOR: Greece to send liaison officer; HQ **Gurugram**; established 2018; 21 partner countries

Greece: NATO member, EU member; 4th largest NATO navy by tonnage

IOR STRATEGIC CONTEXT:

CSRN: Coastal Surveillance Radar Network — India installed in Maldives, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Seychelles, Bangladesh, Myanmar

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF): 44-nation body; HQ Bahrain; India now leads CTF-154

String of Pearls: China's IOR port network (Gwadar, Colombo, Hambantota, Kyaukphyu, Djibouti)

India's counter: SAGAR + QUAD + BIMSTEC + IOR maritime partnerships

Sources: IndiaBix, AffairsCloud, PIB

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