

## India-Seychelles Relations: Issue of Assumption Island

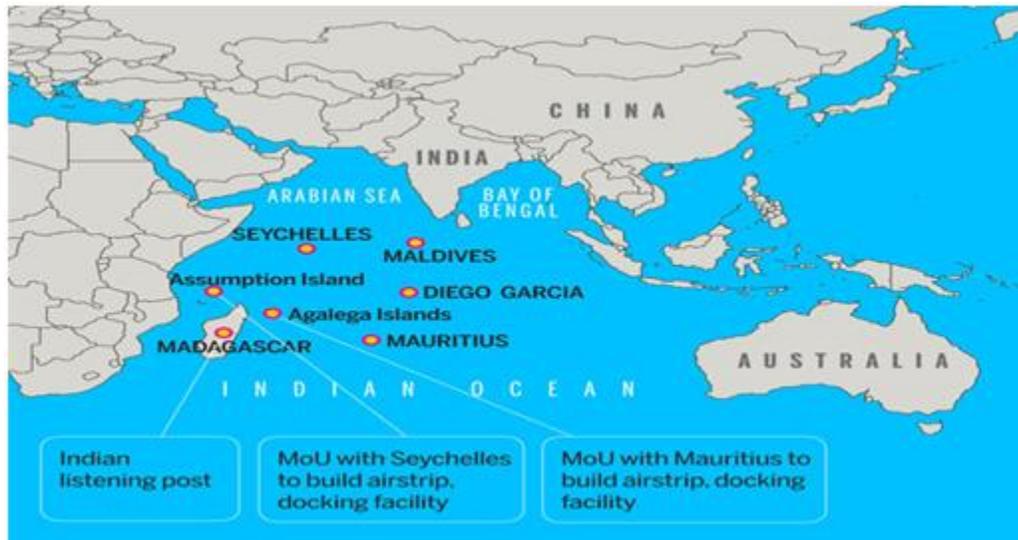
### Why in News?

- Danny Faure, the President of Seychelles, will be on a six-day visit to India from 22-27th June, 2018.
- The discussions will include various sections varying from economic to the fisheries and Indian military.
- Assumption Island is a coral island located on Aldabra Atoll and is part of the Aldabra Group. It measures 11.2 Sq Km.

### Indo-Seychelles relations:

- Indo-Seychelles relations were established in 1976 (when Seychelles got independence), and since then the two countries have set-up relations in various strategic fields like patrolling of Seychelles waters, joint naval exercises etc.
- In 2015, the Seychelles government had leased the Assumption Island to the Indian Navy to build an overseas base of operations there.
- India, in 2015 had proposed to establish a joint naval port in the remote Assumption Islands, which belong to Seychelles.
- But this proposal from India met a heavy opposition from the political parties of Seychelles. The opposing people are of the view that Seychelles should stay away from brewing India-China conflict in Indian Ocean.
- President Danny Faure, ahead of his visit to India, in a press conference on June 4 said that the joint project with New Delhi to develop a naval base at Assumption Island in his country would not move forward.
- Since 2015, India and Seychelles have drawn up a cooperation agenda that covers within its purview shared efforts in anti-piracy operations, and enhanced EEZ surveillance and monitoring to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders indulging in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking.
- In 2016, India-Seychelles cooperation was further exemplified by the operationalisation of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS).
- Recently, two patrol boats, one interceptor and one Dornier Do-228 aircraft were provided to Seychelles' Coast Guard by India to carry out its surveillance and anti-piracy missions. Indian naval ships regularly visit Seychelles as part of their anti-piracy deployment.

## Strategic importance of Assumption Island:



- Safe passage of shipping vessels and containers in the southern IOR (Indian Ocean Region).
- To thwart anti-piracy attempts in the Mozambique Channel, through which bulk of International trade takes place.
- To counter increasing presence of China in the IOR.
- To help patrol 5 Lakh sq miles area of EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) of Seychelles for illegal fishing, drug trafficking and piracy
- With China acquiring its first African naval base in Djibouti and increasing its presence in Seychelles as well, this project is critical to India's strategic foothold in IOR.
- **What are India's shared interests in the IOR?**
- The shared interests relating to the region are essentially five-fold:
  - Preserving freedom of navigation for commercial shipping,
  - Sustainably and equitably harnessing the indian ocean's natural resources,
  - Establishing protocols for enhancing disaster prevention and relief as well as search and rescue operations,
  - Countering piracy, terrorism, smuggling, and illegal weapons proliferation, and
  - Managing international naval competition.
- These interests overlap with India's objectives, as outlined by Indian Prime Minister Modi in 2015 under the banner of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- As per the PM, "Our goal is 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".

