

**TOAST ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 75th REPUBLIC DAY OF INDIA**

**KEMPINSKI SEYCHELLES RESORT
BAIE-LAZARE**

26TH JANUARY 2024 AT 18:30HRS

High Commissioner Kartik Pande

President of the Republic of Seychelles, Mr. Wavel Ramkalawan

Speaker of the National Assembly

Colleague Ministers

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening

It brings me great pleasure to be with you this evening as we celebrate the 75th Republic Day of India. On behalf of President Wavel Ramkalawan, the Government and people of Seychelles, I extend heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Her Excellency President Droupadi Murmu, to His Excellency Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to the Government and the people of India, and to the Indian community in Seychelles on this historic occasion.

This anniversary holds immense significance, marking a milestone since the Indian constitution came into force – an essential juncture in India's journey. The India envisioned by the leaders of Independence has indeed materialized into the vibrant, dynamic country we witness today. India's remarkable progress domestically and its influential role on the international stage are testaments to its commitment to democracy, the rule of law, social justice, and socio-economic development, recognised globally.

I would like at this juncture to congratulate India on its Presidency of the G20 in 2023. A major outcome of Delhi's presidency has been the admission of the African Union, making it the second regional bloc to join the G20 after the EU.

Distinguished guests,

India's Republic Day holds a special place in the hearts of millions, symbolizing the triumph of the collective will of the people and the establishment of a vibrant, diverse, and progressive nation. The democratic ethos that India exemplifies resonates with Seychelles, a nation that cherishes its own democratic values.

The deep-rooted friendship between Seychelles and India goes beyond the vast expanse of our ocean. It is embedded in our shared culture, history, and people-to-people exchanges. India remains a vital partner in the socio-economic development of Seychelles, evident in a robust and multi-faceted collaboration across various domains, including security, education, health, infrastructure development, investment, and trade.

In the maritime domain, both Seychelles and India share a responsibility to collectively address the challenge of illicit maritime activities in the Indian Ocean. Our collaboration is not merely strategic. It's a partnership forged on mutual trust, understanding and shared values. The High-Level Joint Defence Coordination Committee testifies to the importance that Seychelles and India hold for their partnership in security and defence. In the broader regional context, our joint focus on creating a secure and stable region is further extended through our membership of the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

Over the years, our bilateral relations have strengthened and diversified, encompassing multiple sectors. Seychelles-India cooperation stands as a testament to the significance of fostering partnerships built on mutual understanding and shared values. We appreciate India's commitment to supporting Seychelles in areas such as capacity building, healthcare, and sustainable development.

The friendship between our nations is not only confined to the diplomatic and political spheres but extends to the warm and deep-rooted people-to-people ties. The people-to-people engagement between Seychelles and India remains a cornerstone of our diplomatic ties. The vibrant Indian diaspora in Seychelles significantly contributes to our society. Cultural exchanges, such as the Youth Exchange Programme, deepen our ties, and notable events, like the participation of the Indian Naval troop in Seychelles' National Day celebrations, Port calls of Indian Navy ships, and the Anshu Art Dance Group during the Creole Festival, add a special dimension to our shared cultural experiences.

In the health domain, India's contribution, including the donation of 4 vans have contributed to the Ministry of Health's methadone programme, with a vast and positive impact. Likewise, the streamlined medical visa processes initiated by the government of India have facilitated 940 medical visas for Seychellois seeking vital medical treatment.

Furthermore, collaboration between our Electoral Commissions, formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding, strengthens the democratic processes in both our nations.

Our cooperation in capacity building remains robust, with 24 Seychellois from the public service and 22 officers from the Seychelles Defence Forces benefiting from various courses under the ITEC training programme. We are proud of the growing number of Seychellois alumni, exceeding 1000 members – a reflection of India's commitment to supporting human resource development in Seychelles.

Reflecting on the year 2023, the Seychelles-India relationship had several key moments. Our commitment to fostering cooperation has reached new heights. My recent visit to India in November last year reaffirmed this commitment and resulted in the signing of two Memoranda of Understanding, namely in Youth and Sports and the Indian Grant Assistance for the implementation of Small Development Projects, amounting to SR 42 million.

This year, we anticipate the continuation and strengthening of the collaboration between Seychelles and India through the 10th Joint Commission on Cooperation, which is an essential diplomatic tool to further collaboration in vital areas of mutual interests. We equally look forward to our participation in the India-Africa Summit which signifies our active engagement in meaningful exchanges and dialogue.

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we celebrate India's Republic Day, we also look forward to further strengthening the bonds of friendship and cooperation between Seychelles and India. Our shared challenges and aspirations make collaboration imperative, and it is heartening to witness the commitment of both nations to work together for a better future.

I wish also to express my deep appreciation to High Commissioner Pande and his staff for the excellent work they are doing and for hosting us on this memorable evening. Let this be another productive year, as we continue to support each other to further strengthen the bonds of friendship between Seychelles and India.

Thank you, and may the friendship between Seychelles and India continue to flourish for generations to come!

On this note, I invite you to join me in a toast to the good health and well-being of H.E. Ms Droupadi Murmu, President of the Republic of India, to H.E. Mr Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, and to the prosperity and well-being of the people of India.

I thank you.