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Vice President's Visit to Comoros and Sierra Leone

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The Vice President of India recently visited Comoros and Sierra Leone - two African countries.

- The visit was **first-ever visit by such a high-level Indian dignitary** to Comoros, an archipelago situated off the Southeast coast of Africa and to Sierra Leone, the country of Western Africa.
- The agenda was **to deepen ties with African nations**.

India - Comoros

- India and Comoros signed 6 Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) on defence, health (e-Arogya Bharati) and culture (e- Vidya Bharati).
- India announced **Line-of-credit of USD 41.6 mn** for setting up an 18MW power plant in Moroni (capital city) and a vocational training centre.
- The Vice President also called for **enhancing defence ties in maritime domain** between India and the island nation of Comoros as part of a **collaborative security architecture in the Indian Ocean**.

Ties between India and Comoros



- **Comoros supports India's candidature for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC).**

- It is a member of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** as well as the **International Solar Alliance**.
- Comoros avails scholarship/training programmes offered by India under the **Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) scheme**.

India - Sierra Leone

- India announced the decision to establish a **High Commission in Sierra Leone**.
- Both the countries agreed to enhance cooperation in agriculture, food processing, Information Technology, infrastructure development and capacity building.
 - A MoU was signed for Sierra Leone to participate in India's Pan-African tele-Education, tele-Medicine initiatives, **e-VidyaBharati and e-Arogya Bharati**.
 - India will soon initiate steps to set up a **Centre of Excellence in IT in Sierra Leone**.
- An agreement was signed to initiate a **cultural exchange program** between the governments of India and Sierra Leone for the years **2019-23**.
- The Vice President reiterated India's offer to conduct a **"Jaipur Foot" camp** in Sierra Leone under the **"India for Humanity"** initiative for fitting of artificial prosthetic limbs for the disabled.
 - "India for Humanity" is an initiative undertaken in the context of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Ties Between India and Sierra Leone



- India was among the first countries to contribute to the **UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL)** with the deployment of 4000 strong Indian Military contingent.
- India has extended concessional lines of credit to Sierra Leone worth USD 123 million in sectors such as agriculture, water, and transmission line.
- India has also undertaken grant projects through India Brazil South Africa Forum (IBSA) funds and provided **direct humanitarian assistance to Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis in 2014** and during floods in 2017.

- Sierra Leone is also a beneficiary of the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** programme.
- Sierra Leone is one of the **members of the International Solar Alliance**.

Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme

- The Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme was **launched by the Government of India on 15th September 1964** as a programme of **bilateral cooperation and technical assistance**.
- Under ITEC and its sister programme **SCAAP (Special Commonwealth African Assistance Programme)**, 161 countries in Asia, Africa, East Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean as well as Pacific and Small Island countries are invited to share in the Indian developmental experience acquired over six decades of India's existence as a free nation.
- The ITEC programme provides for organizing **training courses** in India, deputation of Indian experts abroad, **aid for disaster relief**, gifting of equipment, study tours and feasibility studies/consultancy services.

Source: PIB