

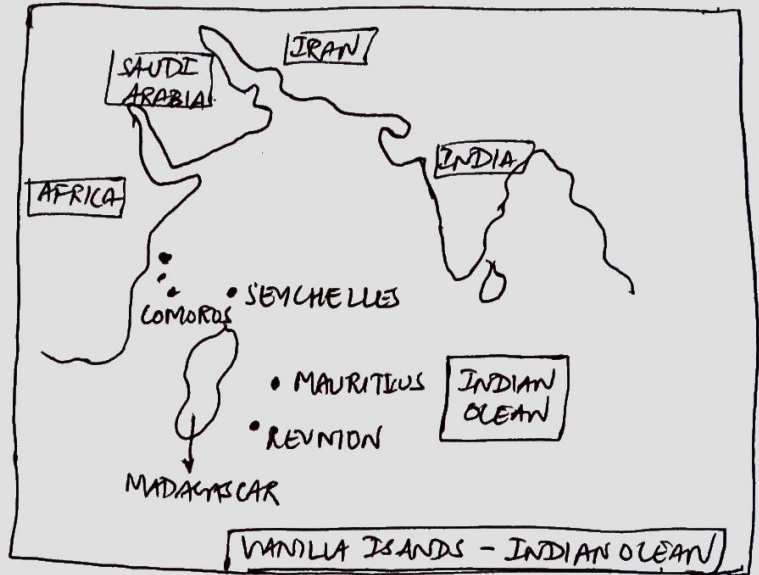
India needs to treat vanilla islands as a single strategic space to have a strong influence in South western part of Indian ocean. (1)
 Discuss.

Vanilla islands are a group of exotic islands in SW-Indian Ocean region which primarily joined to promote tourism in the region. Embracing 'Indo-Pacific' by realm by developed countries, has pushed India to extend its outreach. Subsequent visits by President and vice president have called for strategy to include these islands.

ENGAGEMENTS THROUGH COMMON, STRATEGIC SPACE

1) CLIMATE PARTNERS FOR INDIA'S INITIATIVE

- Rising sea levels have made these islands global champion of climate change
- Nourishing Blue economy concept. eg: 'Blue Bond' by Seychelles.
- India's assistance can bolster it as regional environment power.



2) RESOURCES RICH REGION

- Commonly called as ocean states, their share of entitlement to EEZ under UNCLOS is vast area.
 eg: Seychelles EEZ spans 1.3mn km² whereas its land is 455 km².
- EEZ provides fishing banks, marine resources like Polymetallic nodules that can satisfy India's energy and economy needs.

3) STRATEGIC COOPERATION

- Islands like Comoros have membership in OIC, where India is trying to gain support in the midst of neighbourhood outery.
- Further, tropical countries engagement in ISA, IORA membership accords importance for security.

- Historical sea lines of communication between Europe and Asian region during pre-Suez era still holds relevant, given rising importance of Ocean supremacy in geopolitics
- They can be revived to establish navy cooperation.

4) SECURITY AND ECONOMIC OUTREACH

- In the race to establish naval bases, India can enter into agreements for security establishments, water in South western Indian Ocean
- Vast EEZ gives greater coverage for manning vital chokepoints - Mozambique channel (Comoros Islands at north of this channel) to check piracy and trade routes.
- Africanism sound economic outreach by Asian countries like India, China, Japan benefits island nations.

Further, the Indian diaspora and share of Indian tourism in Mauritius Islands, MADR assistance calls for all encompassing strategy.

Thus, the cooperation can be stepped by

- (i) Framework policy by IOR division of MEA
- (ii) Trade, economic cooperation
- (iii) Logistics sharing
- (iv) IORA, Indian Ocean Conference - security engagements.

Embracing vanilla Islands into Indo Pacific realm, would make India as a net regional security provider.