

Seychelles says no to India's proposal for naval base

A file photo of PM Narendra Modi with Danny Faure, President of Seychelles, in New Delhi.

India's plans to get a foothold in the Indian Ocean islands of Seychelles received a setback after its President Danny Faure told Parliament earlier this week that he will not take up the Assumption island project deal with India for ratification.

This announcement came after Wavell John Charles Ramkalawan, the leader of the Opposition of Seychelles, said that he would oppose the deal.

Significantly, the leader of the Opposition was hosted here in January as India tried to get him on board for the key project, which was rejected by the Indian Ocean country earlier this week.

Outreach failed

The outreach evidently did not succeed as Mr. Ramkalawan remained a staunch opponent of the maritime project of India in the Assumption island, which oversees the main energy route between the major Asian economies and the Gulf region.

Mr. Ramkalawan declared on Tuesday that the Assumption island project, which was expected to host a naval facility, would not take off.

Addressing the media in the capital of Seychelles, he said, "I hope I have made it clear that this is the end of the Assumption agreement and that I don't expect to see it on any agenda between President Faure and the Opposition."

Mr. Ramkalawan visited India in the second week of January and participated in the PIO Parliamentary Conference which was addressed by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The aim of the conference was to firm up ties with individuals of Indian origin who are spread across the world and are playing important role in their host societies.

He also met President Ram Nath Kovind on January 9, when Mr. Kovind said that his visit would help strengthen India-Seychelles ties. Mr. Ramkalawan, who is an ethnic Indian, was earlier in the race to occupy the post of the President of the country.

Mr. Ramkalawan's statement came a week after the Minister of State for External Affairs General (Retd.) V.K. Singh informed Parliament that the project in the Assumption island was coming up as a "joint" project.

"The agreement covers within its purview our shared efforts in anti-piracy operations, and enhanced EEZ surveillance to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders including those indulging in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking," Mr. Singh had told Lok Sabha on March 21.

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