

PLACES IN NEWS: WEEK 4 (22 June- 28 june)

Topic 1: Seychelles

Why in News?

India and Seychelles expanded their strategic **relationship through the "Ocean of Opportunity"** initiative, focusing on maritime security, digital connectivity, and the blue economy.

Geographical Location and Composition

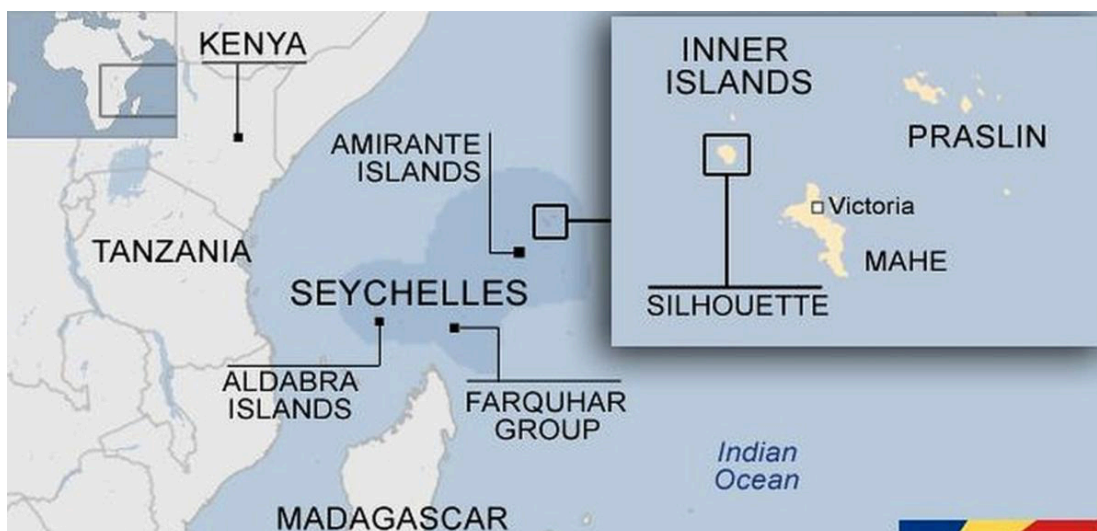
The **Republic** of Seychelles is a **geographically unique** archipelagic state situated in the western Indian Ocean.

- **Proximity to Mainland:** It is located approximately 1,600 km east of Kenya and lies to the northeast of Madagascar.
- **Archipelagic Breakdown:** It is made up of 115 islands, which are geologically divided into two distinct groups based on their topography:
 - **The Inner Islands (Granitic):** It comprises lush, granitic islands. These are the world's only oceanic islands composed of granitic rock. They feature narrow coastal strips and mountainous interiors. The vast majority of the population lives in this group, primarily on the islands of Mahé (home to the capital, Victoria), Praslin, and La Digue.
 - **The Outer Islands (Coralline):** Beyond the granitic core, there are over 70 low-lying Coralline Outer Islands. The Coralline Outer Islands are characterized as flat atolls that notably lack natural water catchments.



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Climate and Ecology

- Tropical Climate:** Seychelles enjoys a tropical rainforest climate. It is warm and humid year-round, heavily influenced by the northwest monsoon and southeast trade winds. Crucially, the archipelago lies largely outside the Indian Ocean's primary cyclone belt, sparing it from severe tropical storms.
- Biodiversity & Endemism:** Due to millions of years of geological isolation, the islands are an ecological hotspot. The Aldabra Atoll (one of the world's largest raised coral atolls and a UNESCO World Heritage site) is famous for its endemic Aldabra giant tortoises. The islands are also home to the Coco de Mer palm, which produces the largest seed in the plant kingdom.

Feature	Granitic Islands (Inner Seychelles)	Coralline Islands (Outer Seychelles)
Origin	Broken off continental landmass (Gondwana)	Built by living coral reefs (atolls/cays)
Topography	Rugged, mountainous, giant boulders	Flat, low-lying, sandy
Water Supply	Abundant natural fresh water streams	Lacks natural water catchments

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Population	Densely populated (most of the population)	Uninhabited or sparsely populated
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TOPIC 2: Venezuela

Context: On **24 June 2026**, northern Venezuela was hit by **twin earthquakes** of about **M 7.2 and M 7.5**, occurring only **~39 seconds apart**, west of Caracas. USGS described them as a pair of major quakes in northern Venezuela, with significant landslide risk.

Most affected areas:

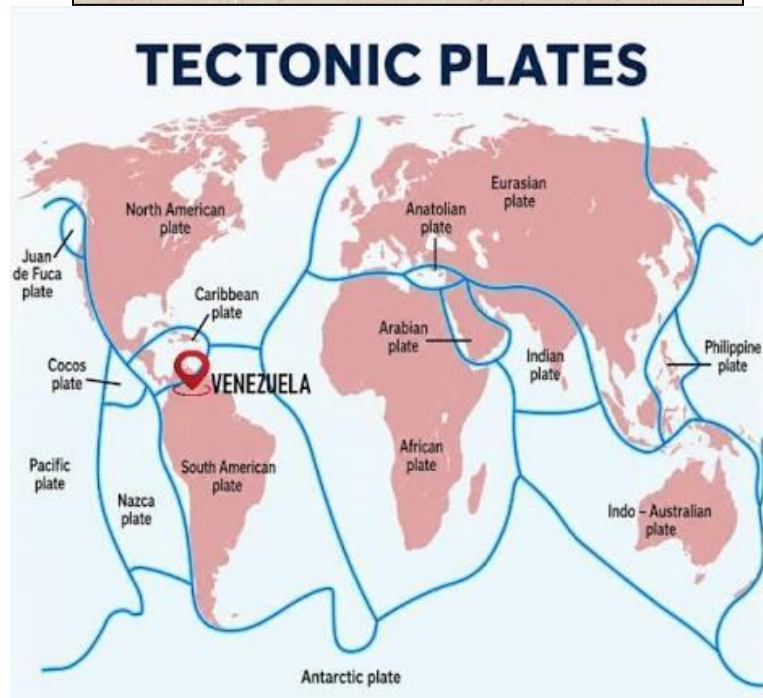
Major damage has been reported around **La Guaira, Caracas, Yaracuy, Morón/Yumare region**. Reuters reported nearly **59,000 buildings damaged or destroyed**, with the official death toll reported at **1,943** and thousands injured/missing as of **30 June 2026**.

Why did it happen?

Venezuela lies near the complex boundary between the **Caribbean Plate** and the **South American Plate**. The event is linked mainly to **strike-slip faulting**, where crustal blocks move horizontally past each other. GEM noted that the June 2026 events were large **strike-slip earthquakes** affecting northwestern and central Venezuela.

Why was damage so high?

The damage was amplified by:



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1. **Shallow depth** of the quake sequence.
2. **Doublet nature** — two strong shocks within seconds.
3. **Dense urban exposure** near Caracas and coastal La Guaira.
4. **Landslides and liquefaction risk**, flagged by USGS.
5. Vulnerable buildings and strained disaster-response capacity.

Relevance: Use this as a case study for **earthquake hazards, plate tectonics, urban vulnerability, disaster management, landslides, liquefaction, humanitarian response, and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction**

Location of Venezuela

Location: Venezuela is situated on the northern coast of South America. It borders the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to the north, Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Colombia to the west.

Geological Uniqueness: Venezuela is home to an incredibly diverse topography, including the northern extremes of the Andes Mountains, the vast Llanos plains, and the Guiana Highlands (home to Angel Falls, the world's highest uninterrupted waterfall).

The Oil Connection: Crucially, Venezuela holds the **world's largest proven oil reserves** (primarily in the Maracaibo Basin and the Orinoco Belt). Geologists believe these massive hydrocarbon deposits are a direct result of the complex tectonic plate interactions—specifically thrust faulting and sedimentary basin formation—along its northern and western boundaries over millions of years.

India:

In the immediate aftermath of this catastrophic natural disaster, India launched a fast-tracked Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission named **Operation Amistad**. To assist the overwhelmed Venezuelan healthcare system, the mission featured the rapid deployment of India's



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indigenous **BHISHM portable hospitals** to provide emergency and trauma care to the survivors.

SYLHET HILLS

Context: Bangladesh officially joined the India-led International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) to protect endangered felines. The focus was placed on its key eco-zones like the Sundarbans and the **Sylhet Hills**(northeastern rolling hills known for heavy rainfall and extensive tea plantations).



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