

## India-Maldives Relations

### Why in news?

*External Affairs Minister of India visited Maldives, at a fraught time for the country's president, Ibrahim Solih, who will run for a second term in the presidential election.*

### What does this mean to India?

- For Delhi, the feuding over the election in the Maldives is bad news.
- Relations between India and the Maldives have improved dramatically since 2018, when Solih defeated Abdulla Yameen, president from 2013 to 2018 who had a pro-China tilt.
- Now Abdulla Yameen is the presidential candidate in the election.

### What are India's involvements in Maldives?

#### Greater Male Connectivity Project

- The \$500-million Greater Male Connectivity project is the biggest infra project that India has begun in Maldives.
- This project aims to link the Maldives capital to 3 neighboring highlands with a 6.74-km bridge and causeway over the sea.

#### Hanimadhoo Airport

- India is developing an international airport at Hanimadhoo in Haa Dhaalu atoll of the Maldivian archipelago.
- The \$ 136.6-million development of the Hanimadhoo airport has been financed by a line of credit to the Maldives from India's Exim Bank.
- It will be executed by the Indian company JMC Projects Ltd.
- It includes the development of a 2.46-km runway, and a terminal with an annual capacity for 1.3 million passengers.
- This is the second biggest infra project that India has begun in recent months after the \$500-million Greater Male Connectivity project.

*Both Greater Male Connectivity project and Hanimadhoo Airport are prestige projects for Delhi that compete in scale with the Chinese built Male-Hulumale-Hulhule bridge and the Hulumale airport.*

#### Other projects

- In the Manadhoo island of Noonu atoll, the two sides signed three MoUs, including

- a proposed collaboration between Cochin University and Maldives National University, and
- a \$100 million grant for “high impact community development” projects.
- In the Foakaidhoo Island in the Shaviyani atoll, India has inaugurated an India-funded community centre.

### **What is the history of India-Maldives relations?**

- India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity and enjoy close, cordial and multi-dimensional relations.
- India was among the first to recognise Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.
- India established its mission at the level of CDA in 1972 and resident High Commissioner in 1980.
- Maldives opened a full-fledged High Commission in New Delhi in 2004, at that time one of its only four diplomatic missions worldwide.

### **What had developed the India-Maldives relationship?**

- Three incidents (in 1988, 2004 and 2014) had established the advantages of India’s proximity and capacity to come to Maldives’ rescue in distress vis-à-vis any other country.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Incident</b>   |
|-------------|---|
| 1988        | India’s prompt assistance during the 1988 coup attempt.                         |
| 2004        | India was the first to assist Maldives during the 2004 Tsunami.                 |
| 2014        | India was the first to assist Maldives during the water crisis in Malé in 2014. |

- India’s rapid and comprehensive assistance to the Maldives since the COVID-19 pandemic began has further reinforced India’s credentials of being the first responder.

### **How do both countries interact on international level?**

- Maldives had consistently supported India in multilateral fora, such as the UN, the Commonwealth, the NAM and the SAARC.
- Maldives co-sponsored the G-4 draft resolutions on UN reforms.
- India has extended support to Maldives candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for the term 2019-20.

*The importance of India’s strategic role in Maldives is well-recognized, with India being seen as a net security provider. ‘India First’ has been a stated policy of the Government of Maldives.*

### **Reference**

1. [Indian Express | Maldives polls, India’s concerns](#)
2. [Ministry of External Affairs | India-Maldives Relations](#)
3. [High Commission of India | India-Maldives Bilateral Relations](#)



**SHANKAR**  
**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*