



## Maldives Election Result

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The joint candidate of Opposition parties led by Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), Mr. Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the presidential election in the Maldives.

Solih defeated the incumbent president Abdullah Yameen, who was president since November 2013.

### Background

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- Maldivian Supreme Court on February 1, 2018, ordered the government to release the nine convicted opposition leaders and also ruled for reinstating 12 parliamentarians who were removed from their seats.
- President Yameen ignored the court order and declared an emergency.
- The judges of the supreme court and former president of the Maldives Abdul Gayoom were arrested in February 2018.
- The Emergency was lifted 45 days later.
- India, EU, and the US criticized the Yameen government for its actions and urged Yameen government to abide by the constitution of Maldives and Supreme Court ruling.
- With a number of prominent opposition figures of the country put behind bars, former President Mohamed Nasheed living in exile, a defunct parliament and a crippled judiciary, there was a big question mark over a free and fair election in the Indian Ocean archipelago nation.
- The election was held on 23rd September 2018.

### International Response

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- The United States and Sri Lanka welcomed the developments in the Maldives.

- The US also said that it looked forward to “a peaceful transition of power,” and pledged cooperation to Mr. Solih’s government.

## Significance for India

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- The winning of opposition candidate is welcomed by India, as India is hoping to gain the ground it lost to China in the Maldives due to the estranged relation with Yameen Government.
- India has always supported the democratic way, thus the successful conduct of the election is seen as a positive development for India.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also called president-elect to congratulate him on his victory. The two leaders agreed to work closely together to further strengthen the close, friendly and good neighborly relations between the two countries.

## India-Maldives Relation

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- India and the Maldives share deep historical, cultural, and economic ties.
- India was among the first to recognize the Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country. India established its mission at Malé in 1972.
- India’s bilateral and financial assistance to the Maldives has been reciprocated through an “India first” policy by the Maldives.
- Importance of the Maldives for India:
  - Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1200 coral Islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan, and India. More than 97% of India’s international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the region.
  - As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a ‘net security provider’ in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with the Maldives in security and defense sectors.
  - India is also a preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation, and business.
  - Maldives is also a member of SAARC. It is important for India to have the Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region. Maldives was reluctant to follow India’s call for the boycott of SAARC summit in Pakistan after the Uri attack.
  - Since China’s naval expansion into the Indian Ocean - Maldives significance has steadily grown and now it’s at the heart of international geopolitics.