



## PM Visit to Maldives

Recently, Prime Minister of India visited Maldives to attend the swearing-in ceremony of newly elected President of Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih.

- It is the **first visit by Mr. Narendra Modi** to Maldives in his four year tenure as PM.
- The visit has given new impetus to the Indian ties with Maldives which were facing a number of challenges in last few years.
- The new government has taken few major steps to ensure India its importance in Maldives Affair.
- The Maldives' new government has decided to **pull out of a free trade agreement (FTA) with China** which was signed in December 2017.
- Maldives government has said that they will follow 'India First Policy'. 2 Indian military choppers, which were gifted by India to Maldives will not be returned to India.
- Maldives strategic return to India and its underlying democratic values could now prevent the economic crisis that Maldives will face when China will ask Maldives to pay back the debt.
- PM also held a brief bilateral talks with newly elected President after the ceremony. Outcome of talks:
  - Both expressed the importance of maintaining peace and security in Indian ocean
  - Both countries decided to be mindful of each other's concerns and aspirations for stability of region
  - Both countries have decided to show commitment and support for increased cooperation in combating terrorism within the region and elsewhere.
  - India ensured Maldives of its commitment in assisting the Maldives to achieve sustainable social and economic development.
  - To work towards easier visa facilities.

## India-Maldives Relation

- 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:
  - Maldives is an important aspect of India's **'Neighbourhood First' policy.**
  - **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.
  - Since China's naval expansion into the Indian Ocean - Maldives significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics.
  - There is **significant Indian diaspora in Maldives.** Innumerable Indians work across the

hospitality, education, and health-care sectors of the Maldives economy.

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