

## High Commission of India

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#### India-Maldives Bilateral Relations

India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links steeped in antiquity. Except for a brief period between Feb 2012 to Nov 2018, relations have been close, cordial and multi-dimensional. India was among the first to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965 and to establish diplomatic relations with the country.

2. Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India (it is barely 70 nautical miles away from Minicoy and 300 nautical miles away from India's West coast), and its situation at the hub of commercial sea-lanes running through Indian Ocean (particularly the 8° N and 1 ½° N channels), and its potential to allow a third nation's naval presence in the area imbues it with significant strategic importance to India.

3. India has a pre-eminent position in the Maldives, with relations extending to virtually most areas. Except for a brief period during former President Waheed's administration and to some extent during former President Yameen's regime, when there was a change in approach towards India, all Maldivian Presidents have recognized the importance of India's strategic role in Maldives and worked towards strengthening bilateral relationship with India, with India being seen as a net security provider. 'India First' has been a stated policy of the Government of Maldives (GoM). President Solih, ever since he assumed office in Nov 2018, has acted on 'India First' in right earnest.

4. India's relationship with the Maldives is free of any politically contentious issues. The one-time claim of Maldives to Minicoy Island was resolved by the Maritime Boundary Treaty of 1976 between the two countries, whereby Maldives has recognized Minicoy as an integral part of India.

5. India's prompt assistance during the 1988 coup attempt, led to development of trust and long-term and friendly bilateral relations with the Maldives. The immediate withdrawal of our troops when they were no longer required assuaged fears of any Indian dominance or territorial aspirations.

6. India was the first to assist Maldives during the 2004 Tsunami as well as the water crisis in Malé in Dec 2014. Under Operation NEER, India immediately rushed bottled drinking water to Malé utilising Air Force aircraft and Navy ships. These 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 and are widely acknowledged by the government and people of Maldives. India's swift dispatch of 30,000 doses of measles vaccine in Jan 2020 to prevent an outbreak in the Maldives, and 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.

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#### Recent high level exchanges

7. Prime Minister Modi attended the inauguration ceremony of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on 17 Nov 2018 as the only HoS/HoG. He also held bilateral discussions with President Solih just after his swearing-in ceremony, in which he conveyed India's desire to work closely for the realization of Maldives' developmental priorities, esp in areas of infrastructure, health care, connectivity and human resource development.

8. Foreign Minister of Maldives Abdulla Shahid paid an Official Visit to India from 24-27 Nov 2018 (also his first overseas visit after assuming office). He was accompanied by Ibrahim Ameer, the Minister of Finance, Fayyaz Ismail, the Minister of Economic Development, Ahmed Khaleel, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Abdul Ghafoor Mohamed, the Foreign Secretary.

9. On his first overseas visit after assuming office, President Solih paid a State Visit to India from 17-18 Dec 2018, during which India announced a financial assistance package of US\$1.4 billion and also offered additional 1000 scholarships over the next 5 years. GoI provided US \$ 50 million as budgetary support to GoM (part of the financial assistance package of US\$1.4 billion) in two equal instalments in Dec 2018 and in Jan 2019. SBI subscribed to the GoM's Treasury bills of US \$ 50 million each in March, June and Oct 2019. The Currency Swap Agreement for US \$ 400 million was signed on 22 July 2019. Projects under the US \$800 million Line of Credit (LoC) have started rolling out. Under a separate GoI's \$ 400 million LoC and \$ 100 million grant, the Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) – a network of bridges and causeways - is under execution.

10. Defence Minister Mariya Didi accompanied by Chief of Defence Force (CDF) Major General Shamaal visited India in Jan 2019, during which 2<sup>nd</sup> Defence Cooperation Dialogue was held. She has since visited India on several occasions including for DEFEXPO in Lucknow in Feb 2020, for AERO India & IOR DM's conclave in Bangalore in Feb 2021 & INA Kochi as Chief Guest at Passing-out-Parade (POP) in Nov 2021. CDF of MNDF Major General Abdulla Shamaal visited India from 03-08 July 2019. During his visit he met Raksha Mantri, NSA, CAS, COAS and CNS and delivered speeches at IDSA and NDC. He also visited AERO India Bengaluru in Feb 2021.

11. Former EAM Late Smt Sushma Swaraj visited Maldives on 17-18 March 2019 and met President, Speaker and various Ministers. The LoC Agreement for US \$ 800 million (part of the financial assistance package of US \$ 1.4 billion) was signed during the visit. The Agreement for Exemption of Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports (came into force from Aug 2019), MoU regarding Indian grant assistance for Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) through Local Bodies and MoU on Cooperation in the field of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy were also signed during the visit. India gifted 2500 LED street lights and 2 lakh LED bulbs to Malé City Council. EAM also announced the grant of INR

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50 crores to Maldives for important bilateral projects related to the socio-economic development, particularly creation of infrastructure in the education, health or community development sectors. Under the grant 18 projects were approved, out of which 15 have been completed and inaugurated.

12. President Solih paid an unofficial visit to Bengaluru on 21-22 April 2019 to discuss broad contours of capacity building of cricket in the Maldives and training of the Maldivian cricket team as well as witnessing the IPL match between Chennai Super Kings (CSK) and Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB). He also toured the Chinnaswamy Stadium and visited the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru.

13. Islamic Affairs Minister Dr. Ahmed Zahir Ali visited Jamia Darussalam Oomerabad, Tamil Nadu on 25-29 April 2019 to invite a religious scholar to visit Maldives to conduct workshops for religious scholars of Maldives.

14. PM Modi, on his first overseas visit after taking oath of the office for his second term, visited Maldives on a state visit on 8-9 June 2019. After getting a ceremonial welcome, he had one on one meeting with President Solih which was followed by delegation level talks. PM Modi also addressed a session of the newly constituted People's Majlis. Vice President Faisal Naseem, Speaker of People's Majlis Mohamed Nasheed, Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid, former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, former speaker Qasim Ibrahim and Minister of Home Affairs Imran Abdulla called on PM. Both sides signed (i) MoU on cooperation in the field of Hydrography, (ii) MoU on cooperation in the field of Health, (iii) MoU on establishment of Passenger cum Cargo service by sea, (iv) MoU for cooperation in Customs' capacity building, (v) MoU between Maldives Civil Service Commission and India's National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), and (vi) Technical Agreement on exchange of White Shipping Information between IN & MNDF. Both the leaders jointly inaugurated CTC facility of MNDF in Maafilafushi and Coastal Radar System (CRS) by remote links. Both sides agreed for resumption of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), a NSA level trilateral mechanism (India-Maldives-Sri Lanka) on marine security and constitution of a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter Terrorism.

15. An inter-ministerial delegation led by Minister of Economic Development Fayyaz Ismail visited New Delhi from 22-24 July 2019. Delegation included representatives of Ministry of Economic Development (MoED), Higher Education, Tourism and Business Centre Corporation. NSDC showed their facilities and gave presentation on their work on skill development in India. During the sidelines of this visit, CII also organized networking and business development sessions for the delegation from MoED to raise Indian investment for newly formed 100% state body - Maldives Fund Management Company (MFMC). Minister Ismail also met Foreign Secretary and attended a meeting with EXIM Bank to expedite project under the LoC.

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16. PM Modi and President Solih had 2 telephone conversations on 20 April 2020 and 14 July 2021 to discuss the pandemic situation and India's developmental assistance to the Maldives.

**Follow up of PM's June 2019 visit**

17. The first meeting of the India-Maldives Joint Commission on Hydrography was held in Maldives from 24-26 Sept 2019. For implementing the MoU on providing capacity building for civil servants, a delegation led by Additional Secretary, Dept of Administrative Reforms took place on 19-20 Sept 2019 to draw a schedule of trainings and finalise the course content. Over 300 Maldivian civil servants have already been trained under this MoU. The MoU on Customs Cooperation is being implemented with several batches of Maldives Customs Services officials being trained in India. Throughout the pandemic, online training courses were also organised under both MoUs. A Cargo Vessel service was launched in Sept 2020 connecting the ports of Tuticorin, Cochin, Kulhudhufushi and Male. The service is run by the Shipping Corporation of India. The CSC, resumed in Nov 2020 in Colombo where Defence Minister Mariya Didi represented Maldives. The 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of CSC was held in Maldives from 9-10 March 2022. The first meeting of the JWG on Counter-Terrorism was held in New Delhi in April 2021.

18. EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Maldives from 3-4 Sept, 2019 to participate in 4<sup>th</sup> Indian Ocean Conference 2019.

19. 6<sup>th</sup> Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) between Maldives and India was held at New Delhi on 13 Dec 2019. EAM and Foreign Minister Shahid co-chaired the JCM which undertook a comprehensive review of the bilateral agenda and charted a way forward. The two Ministers also witnessed the exchange of Instrument of Ratification of Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and signing of the MoUs between the Financial Intelligence Units of Maldives and India, and between the Election Commission of Maldives and the Election Commission of India. Foreign Minister Shahid also visited India in April 2021 & July 2021 (as UNGA President). The revised MoU for HICDPs increasing the outlay to MVR 155 million was signed during the latter visit.

20. EAM Dr S Jaishankar visited Maldives in Feb 2021, during which the a Defence LoC Agreement and Agreement to develop a harbour for MNDF at Uthuru Thila Falhu (UTF) was signed by EAM and Defence Minister Mariya Didi. MoU between PSM and Prasar Bharati was also signed.

21. EAM Dr S Jaishanker visited Addu City in Maldives in March 2022, during which, several agreements related to the bilateral development cooperation were signed viz. (i) Peering agreement between High Education Network of Maldives (HNM) and National Knowledge Network of India (NKN), (ii) MoU between Maldives Police Services (MPS) and SVPNPA, Hyderabad for capacity building & cooperation, (iii) MoU on reciprocal

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recognition of Covid vaccination certificate, (iv) Signing of Contract for Addu Reclamation and Shore-Protection Project, etc. During the visit various joint inauguration / handing over were done viz. (i) Inauguration of National College for Police and Law Enforcement (NCPLE), a grant project executed by India in the Maldives, (ii) Ground-breaking of the Addu Roads Project, (iii) Handing-Over of the Coastal Radar System (CRS) to the MNDF, (iv) Inauguration of the Drug Detoxification and Rehabilitation Centre, Hulhudhoo, (iv) Inauguration of the Eco-Tourism Zone, Meedhoo. EAM also announced 7 new HICDPs. The MoUs for these 7 new HICDPs were signed on 18 April 2022. With this total 25 HICDPs are underway, out of which 02 are completed and inaugurated. EAM also paid call-on President Solih and held meeting & official talk with Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid besides various other interactions.

### **Previous visits**

22. Prime Former President Yameen had visited India thrice during his tenure between 2013-2018. There was no ministerial visit undertaken from Maldives from 2017 onwards.

23. Prior to the visit of PM Modi to Maldives in Nov 2018, the last Indian PM's bilateral visit to Maldives was immediately after the SAARC Summit in Nov 2011, held in Addu. The visit of PM Modi to Maldives in March 2015 was cancelled at the last minute due to sudden arrest and sentencing of former President Mohamed Nasheed. EAM visited Malé in Oct 2015 for the 5th JCM, which was held after a gap of 15 years. MoS for External Affairs, M.J. Akbar visited Maldives in Feb 2017 as Special Envoy of PM.

### **Security & Defence Cooperation:**

24. Since 1988, defence and security has been a major area of cooperation between India and Maldives. India has adopted a very flexible and accommodating approach in meeting Maldivian requirements of defence training and equipment. India provides the largest number of training opportunities for Maldivian National Defence Force (MNDF), meeting around 70% of their defence training requirements. A comprehensive Action Plan for Defence was also signed in April 2016 to consolidate defence partnership.

25. **Capacity Building/Training.** India has trained over 1400 MNDF trainees over the past 10 years and have offered 300 (Including SPG, NSG and MIO training) training vacancies in 2021-22. MNDF has also been participating in various mil-to-mil activities such as joint EEZ patrols, anti-narcotic ops, SAR, sea-rider programme, HADR exercises, adventure camps, sailing regatta, etc. India has also offered to depute Mobile Training Teams (MTT) based on MNDF requirements and to train MNDF personnel for UN peace-keeping operation at CUNPK. Indian Navy has deployed 10-member Marine Commando MTT to Maldives in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021 and also provided MNDF with air assets for air surveillance, MEDEVAC, SAR, Helo-borne vertical insertion capability. Training for

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MNDF fire an repair service has been commenced at NISA in India and work is in progress on Joint CT action plan.

26. Our defence cooperation also extends to the areas of Joint Exercises, Maritime Domain Awareness, gifting of hardware, infrastructure development, etc. Key projects in the defence sector include Composite Training Centre (CTC) for MNDF, Coastal Radar System (CRS) and construction of new Ministry of Defence Headquarters.

27. **Institutional Mechanisms**. Annual Defence Cooperation Dialogue at level of Defence Secretary was initiated in July 2016. However after the first edition in 2016, Government of Maldives cancelled the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in Nov 2017, which was finally held in Jan 2019 after change of government in Maldives. After a brief hiatus due to COVID19 pandemic, the 3rd edition of DCD was conducted at Male on 14 Feb 2022. Annual Joint Mil-to-Mil Staff Talks were started in Feb 2016 and the 4<sup>th</sup> edition was held at New Delhi on 4-5 Jul 2019 and 5th edition was conducted in Sept 2021. MNDF continues to participate in various fora such as IONS, Goa Maritime Conclave and Goa Symposium.

28. **Disaster Management**. GoI had provided large-scale assistance to Maldives in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and during the 2014 Male water crisis. We have previously provided pollution dispersant to MNDF Coast Guard in 2016 and Indian Coast Guard would now be providing oil spill control equipment. India is also undertaking customised training for MNDF Fire and Rescue Service in India.

### 29. **Development Cooperation**

The major completed and ongoing development assistance projects executed by India are:

- **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital**. The hospital was built with Indian Grant Assistance in 1995. Major renovation of IGMH funded by GoI was completed in June 2017 at a cost of INR 52 Cr. EAM dedicated the renovation of IGMH to the people of Maldives during her visit to Malé on 17-18 March 2019.
- **Maldives Institute of Technical Education (now called the Maldives Polytechnic)**: The MoU for setting up Maldives Institute for Technical Education (MITE) was signed in March 1992. MITE was completed at a cost of INR 12 Cr and handed over to GoM in Sept 1996.
- **India-Maldives Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism Studies**: The foundation stone for the Faculty was jointly laid by PM Vajpayee and President Gayoom during the former's visit to Maldives in Sept 2002. The Faculty, built with Indian grant assistance of INR 64.5 Crore, was officially handed over to GoM in Feb 2014.
- **Technology Adoption Programme in Education Sector in Maldives**: The US\$ 5.3 million project fully funded by GoI was launched in June 2011 to provide ICT training to Maldivian teachers and youth and for vocational training. The project concluded in Dec 2013.

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**Economic package of US\$ 1.4 billion:** During State Visit of President Solih to New Delhi on 17-18 Dec 2018, GoI announced US\$ 1.4 billion financial package in the form of budgetary support (US\$50 million), buying of treasury bills (US\$ 150 million), currency swap (US\$ 400 million) and concessional LoC (US\$ 800 million) to fulfill the socio-economic development programme of the Maldives.

- **Budgetary Support (US\$ 50 million) and Treasury Bills for US\$ 150 million**  
Under budgetary support, total US\$ 50 million grant was transferred in two installments of US\$ 25 million each to GoM on 13 Dec 2018 and on 23 Jan 2019. Out of US\$ 150 million T-Bills, first tranche of US\$ 50 million was purchased on 17 March 2019 having a tenure of 351 days and interest of 4.5%; second installment of Treasury Bills for US\$ 50 million of 355 days tenure and interest of 4.5% was purchased on 26 June 2019 and third installment of Treasury Bills for US\$ 50 million of 363 days tenure and interest of 4.5% was purchased on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2019.
- **Currency Swap:** A Bilateral USD Currency Swap Agreement between RBI and Maldives Monetary Authority was signed on 22 July 2019. On the request of GoM, validity of the bilateral swap agreement was extended by one year until July 21, 2021. This agreement allowed MMA to draw a swap facility to a max limit of US\$ 400 million, within the existing 'Framework on Currency Swap Arrangement for SAARC Countries', and its 'Standby Swap Arrangement'.
- **Projects under Exim Bank Line of Credit of US\$ 1.5 billion:** A US\$ 800 million Credit Line Agreement between Ministry of Finance, GoM and EXIM Bank of India was signed on 18 March 2019. The following projects have been included under the LoC:
  - **Water and Sanitation Project in 34 Islands:** The project seeks to improve water supply and sewerage facilities in 34 identified islands by installing proper water supply distribution network, ensuring protection of ground water aquifer and sustainable water source management. The project was awarded as 6 packages to 4 Indian contractors after a tendering process. Work is progressing well on all 34 islands.
  - **Addu Development Project (Roads and Reclamation):** This is a key infrastructure project required for Addu to establish itself as the southern regional hub of Maldives. The scope includes roads, streetlighting, storm water drainage and reclamation for the development of tourism infrastructure. The tender for the roads component was awarded in February 2021 to AFCONS. Work on the project has commenced. Ground-breaking of the project was held on 27 March, 2022, during EAM's visit, along with the award of contract for the Reclamation portion of the project.

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- **Expansion of MIFCO facilities in Felivaru and Gemanafushi:** Maldives Industrial Fisheries Company Limited (MIFCO) currently collects 60 per cent of skipjack tuna caught by the fishermen at a fixed price set by Government. MIFCO has the capacity of adding value to 40% of the collection, while the rest is exported as frozen tuna, resulting in the export of frozen tuna becoming a loss-making operation, affecting the sustainability of the company. The project includes expansion of MIFCO facilities in Felivaru and Gemanafushi. The tendering process to select the EPC contractor is currently underway.
- **Cancer Hospital:** The scope initially involved setting up of a cancer specialty hospital in Hulhumale' which will provide complete range of clinical services including diagnostic, therapeutic and support services, as well as setting up of the first Population Based Cancer Registry in Maldives, connecting their 150+ health centers on various islands. Proposed hospital will be a model centre and State of Art Cancer Facility in Maldives. GoM has on Oct 22, 2020 requested for change of location of the Hospital from Hulhumale to Laamu. The project will be executed under the supervision of TATA Memorial Centre (TMC). The DPR was funded by India. A team from TMC and Hosmac (which prepared the feasibility report) visited Laamu in September 2021. The revised feasibility report is being finalised.
- **Gulhifalhu Port project:** The objective of this project is to relocate the congested Malé Commercial Harbour and warehousing from Malé to Gulhifalhu Island (which is in Greater Malé region). The container terminal, quay, storage, general cargo terminal, etc will be significantly larger than current facilities. GoM envisages development of Gulhifalhu International Port as a modern, technology-driven, globally competitive port inclusive of warehousing and logistic zones that could serve the requirement of Maldives for next 40-50 years. The Maldivian side has decided to reduce the scope of the project. A revised DPR is under preparation by Govt of Maldives.
- **Hulhumalé Cricket Stadium:** During EAM's visit to Maldives in March 2019, GoM requested Indian assistance for the construction of cricket stadium in Hulhumalé, to which we readily agreed. During PM visit in June 2019, it was committed that a Cricket Stadium in Hulhumalé will be built under Indian assistance. President's Office, which is directly involved in the project, prepared a DPR on Cricket Stadium at Hulhumalé through its own resources. The tendering process is underway by the Government of the Maldives.
- **Airport Redevelopment Projects:** The EXIM Bank of India will support the redevelopment of airports in Hanimaadhoo and Gan. The Hanimaadhoo airport redevelopment project is at the tender-evaluation. Pre-qualification process for selection of EPC contractor is underway.

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- **Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP):** Under a separate Govt of India's \$ 400 million LoC and \$ 100 million grant, the GMCP project aims to connect Male to Villingili, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi islands through a series of bridges, causeways and roads. The project is crucial for the proposed Gulhifalhu Port, and will be a major catalyst for the Maldivian economy in the future through jobs and economic activity. The DPR has been prepared by GoM through M/s Arup Ltd. A team from EXIM Bank of India visited the Maldives in October 2020 to sign a USD 400 million LOC Agreement for the project. India is also offering USD 100 million grant support to the project. The project was awarded to AFCONS in August 2021. Work has commenced. A ground-breaking ceremony could be planned in August 2022 when the piling work is expected to commence.
- **Projects under EXIM Bank's Buyers Credit**
  - **Social Housing projects in Hulhumale' Phase II :** On 23 September, 2021 EXIM Bank of India concluded two Agreements with Fahi Dhiriulhun Corporation Limited (FDC) of Maldives to extend Buyers Credit of approx. USD 227 million for the construction of 4000 Social Housing Units in Hulhumale' Phase II. A total of 2800 units of 3 bedrooms and 1200 units of 2 bedrooms will be constructed under the two projects. The construction is being undertaken by National Buildings Construction Company (NBCC) and JMC Projects (India) Ltd. Work has commenced on both projects.
  - **Road projects :** Earlier, EXIM Bank had extended around \$ 53 million in Buyers' Credit to a Mohan Mutha- Ashoka Buildcon JV for development of roads in Hulhumale' Phase I & II.

### **Bilateral Economic and Trade Relations**

30. India and Maldives signed a trade agreement in 1981, which provides for export of essential commodities. Growing from modest beginnings, India-Maldives bilateral trade stood at US\$ 246 million in 2020, heavily in favour of India. Although the level of commercial exchanges and trade has not been commensurate with its potential, Indian exports are registering a steady rise since the last few months. This is a direct result of the launch of the cargo vessel service between the two countries in September 2020 and commencement of work of three of our Line of Credit projects since February 2021. MoU on Pre-arrival exchange of information between customs was signed in July 2021.

31. India emerged as Maldives' 3<sup>rd</sup> largest trade partner in 2021. Indian imports from the Maldives primarily comprise scrap metals while Indian exports to the Maldives include a variety of engineering and industrial products like drugs and pharmaceuticals, radar apparatus, rock boulders, aggregates, cement and agriculture produce like rice, spices, fruits, vegetables and poultry produce etc.

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**Bilateral trade figures (Jan-Dec, in US\$ million)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Exports to Maldives</b>	<b>Total Imports from Maldives</b>	<b>Total Trade</b>
2013	154.0	12.3	156.3
2014	170.6	2.9	173.5
2015	225.82	3.0	228.82
2016	274.55	1.55	276.10
2017	282.04	4.12	286.16
2018	286.13	3.01	288.14
2019	290.27	3.42	293.69
2020	242.82	3.33	246.15
2021	317.35	5.94	323.29
2022 (Jan-April)	144.68	3.05	147.73

*(Source: Maldives Customs Service)*

32. State Bank of India has been playing a vital role in the economic development of the Maldives since February, 1974 by providing loan assistance for promotion of island resorts, export of marine products and business enterprises.

### **Education & Capacity Building**

33. India has been a traditional partner for the Maldives in human resource development across sectors for decades. Given its small population base, isolated geographical location of islands, and many resource challenges, Maldives suffers from a crunch of good human capital. Several Maldivian youths acquire their higher education in India Universities every year. Indian teachers have been a fixture at Maldivian schools across islands for decades. India has traditionally offered a substantial number of ICCR scholarships to Maldivian youth. For 2021-22 the number of scholarships offered stands at 39. Despite the impact of the pandemic, 6 Maldivians have travelled to India under the scholarship scheme in 2021-22. For 2021-22, the number of scholarships offered stands at 34+. India also offers 10 seats every year to Maldives under Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt. of India "India Science and Research Fellowship (ISRF) Programme". Maldives has been a partner of the ITEC programme for several years.

34. India is seeking to initiate/strengthen institutional linkages with all stakeholders in the Government and society of Maldives. In the past 3 years, institutional linkages between counterpart organisations on both sides have increased adding heft to capacity building and training initiatives. Various MoUs focusing on capacity building of Human resources includes (i) MoU on Civil Services between Civil Services Commission (CSC)

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and National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), (ii) MoU on Cooperation in Customs Capacity Building, (iii) MoU on Parliamentary Cooperation between Lok Sabha and Majlis, (iv) MoU between the Judicial Services Commission (JSC) of Maldives and the National Judicial Academy of India (NJA), (v) MoU between Election Commission of India and the Elections Commission of Maldives, (vi) MoU between Public broadcaster Public Service Media (PSM) and Prasar Bharati, (vii) MoU between Auditor General's Office (AGO) in the Maldives and the CAG, (viii) MoU between Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and Islamic University of Maldives (IUM), etc. Under these MoUs various physical and virtual training programmes have been conducted. Amid COVID19 pandemic situation, under various MoUs, the capacity building of Human resource were organised. Various virtual trainings were conducted under e-ITEC including in the field of online education, electioneering, policing, health, audit, governance, judiciary, etc.

### **Tourism**

35. The Maldivian economy is heavily dependent on its tourism sector, which is the major source of foreign exchange earnings and government revenue. Tourism directly accounts for about quarter of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Maldives and indirectly for a much larger proportion of GDP. In terms of direct employment, tourism accounts for more than a third of job opportunities for Maldivians and if the allied sectors are included, the contribution of tourism sector in total employment (direct and indirect) would rise up to nearly 70%.

36. In 2018, India was the 5<sup>th</sup> largest source of tourist arrivals in Maldives. Out of the total of 14, 84,274 tourists, around 6.1 % (over 90,474) were from India. However, in 2019, India reached the 2<sup>nd</sup> spot with almost double the number of arrivals (166,030) compared to the previous year. In a pandemic-hit 2020, India was the largest source market for the Maldives with nearly 63,000 Indians visiting the Maldives. In 2021, India continued as the top market with over 2.91 lakh Indian tourist arrivals and a 23% market share. In 2022, India with 86,358 (till 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022) tourists arrivals ranks 1<sup>st</sup> as tourists source market.

### **Consular Matters**

37. Indians are the second largest expatriate community in the Maldives with an approximate strength of 27,000. A large number of doctors, nurses, health professionals and teachers in the Maldives are Indian nationals. Indian nationals also consist of a sizeable number of unskilled workers, besides other professionals and business community.

38. The second round of the Consular dialogue was held in Male' in December, 2018. During the State visit of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih to India on December 17, 2018, a 'Bilateral Agreement on the facilitation of Visa arrangements' was signed and

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came into effect on March 11, 2019. Further, during the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister, 'Bilateral Agreement on Exemption from Visa requirement for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports' was signed on March 17, 2019 and came into effect from August 05, 2019.

39. There is an agreement for transfer of prisoners under the 'Transfer of Sentenced Persons (ToSP)' agreement signed between the Government of Maldives and the Government of India.

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May 2022