

## 2<sup>nd</sup> JOINT HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY IN MALDIVES: 18 Apr - 25 MAY 22

The second Joint Hydrographic survey by the Indian Navy and the MNDF was carried out by Indian Naval Ship Sutlej (INS Sutlej) from April 18 to May, 24 2022. During the period, the ship surveyed Northern Maldives and the Male area including Thilafushi, Hulhumale and Male port on the request of the Government of Maldives.

The survey covered 6500nm of soundings including 4750 nm in Northern Maldives and 1730 nm in Male area. These sounding lines have effectively surveyed 944 square kms involving extensive surveys of 844 square kms in the northern area from Hanimadhoo to Farukolhu Funadhoo in Shaviyani atoll and 100 square kms in the Male area. Some of these areas were last surveyed in 1853. The INS Sutlej used multi beam echo sounders for the survey.

The extensive surveys of these areas will generate updated Navigational Charts/ Electronic Navigational Charts of the areas which will enhance the navigational safety of ships and enhance the Blue Economy of Maldives, Blue Economy has been identified as the first of 5 priority sectors in the 'Strategic Action Plan (SAP) of the Government of Maldives The Survey has a positive impact that cuts across all the 6 sub-sectors specified in the Blue Economy Sector of the SAP viz Tourism, Fisheries, Agriculture, SMEs, Labour and Employment, and, Economic Diversification. Therefore, beyond the obvious benefits for navigation, these hydrographic surveys map the waterways of the Maldives for a prosperous future.

The ship also carried out tidal observations at 10 locations in Male area and four locations in Northern Maldives which will enable accurate tidal predictions in future. New benchmarks have also been set up in Funadhoo, Kanditheemu and Makunudhoo, Thilafushi and Hulhumale which will facilitate accurate tidal readings and predictions.

In addition, on the request of the Ministry of Fisheries, Agriculture and Marine resources, an area off Kashidhoo was also surveyed to enable installation of a Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) for Maldivian fishermen.

This survey will facilitate printing of one small scale in Northern Maldives and three large scale charts in Male area viz Thilafushi, Male and Hulhumale which are urgently required for the growing maritime activities and businesses in the region.

Five fair sheets of surveyed areas were handed over to Defence Minister H.E. Mariya Ahmed Didi on May 24, 2022 during a ceremony held onboard INS Sutlej. CDF Maj General Shamaal, Head of Maldives Hydrographic Service Brig General (Retd) Mansoor, Senior officers of MNDF and representatives of Maldives Ports Limited and Ministry of Transports were also present during the ceremony.

The survey is in line with India's policy of supporting the Maldives to set up Hydrographic facilities within the MNDF. In addition to the hydrographic equipment presented to the MNDF in March 2021, more equipment was gifted to MNDF by the Chief of Naval Staff in April 2022 for the Maldives Hydrographic office.

The INS Sutlej imparted on-the-job training to MNDF personnel on the use of survey equipment. The surveys were jointly conducted by Maldivian and Indian personnel braving rough weather and during the month of Ramadan too. The training will enable the MNDF to undertake independent surveys in the future. India will train more MNDF personnel at our Hydrographic Institute in Goa.

The first Joint Hydrographic survey was carried out by India Naval Ship Darshak in the Month of February and March 2021. This second Joint survey will help in the production of more charts thereby improving navigation safety, economic development, security and defence, environmental protection, coastal zone management and scientific research.