



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)  
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,  
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

Date -13 Aug 2024

## “NAVIGATING TIDES: THE EVOLVING INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONSHIPS

### *“Navigating Tides: The Evolving India-Maldives Relationships”*

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and details the topic of India – Maldives bilateral relationships.

#### **Syllabus mapping:**

**GS-2: International Relations:** India and its neighborhood first policy.

#### **For Prelims:**

What are the projects, agreements, and initiatives between India and Maldives?

#### **For Mains:**

Why the recent times, the relationship between India and Maldives are on a roller coaster and what can be done to make it more advantageous for the countries?

#### **WHY IN THE NEWS ?**

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar Embarks on Three-Day Official Visit to Maldives. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has commenced a three-day official visit to the Maldives today. The visit aims to reinforce the strong partnership between India and the Maldives and to explore new avenues for advancing bilateral relations. This trip follows the recent visit of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu to India in June for the swearing-in ceremony of the new Cabinet and Council of Ministers.

#### **INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONSHIPS**

The Maldives, a crucial maritime neighbor of India, holds a strategic position in the Indian Ocean. It has been a significant partner in India’s ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy and the ‘SAGAR’ vision— Security and Growth for All in the Region. During his visit, Dr Jaishankar is expected to focus on enhancing this partnership, discovering new areas of cooperation, and addressing any concerns that have arisen over the past year.

India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and commercial links steeped in antiquity. The 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.

## **AREAS OF COOPERATION**

**Geo-economics:** Both countries engage in trade and economic cooperation. India is a significant trading partner for the Maldives, providing various goods and services. Investments in sectors like infrastructure, tourism, and healthcare are also crucial.

**India's Trade Position:** India emerged as the Maldives' second-largest trade partner in 2022. India became the largest trade partner of the Maldives in 2023.

**Trade Composition:** Indian Imports from Maldives: Primarily consist of scrap metals. Indian Exports to Maldives: Include a wide range of products such as Engineering and Industrial Products: Drugs, pharmaceuticals, radar apparatus. Construction Materials: Rock boulders, aggregates, cement. Agricultural Products: Rice, spices, fruits, vegetables, poultry produce.

**Seafood Exports:** Potential: There are ongoing efforts to explore and increase seafood exports from the Maldives to India.

**Visa-Free Entry:** Implementation: In February 2022, the Maldives implemented visa-free entry for Indian nationals arriving for business purposes, which further enhanced bilateral trade and investment opportunities.

**Security and Defense:** India has provided security assistance to the Maldives. This includes maritime security cooperation and assistance in counter-terrorism and anti-piracy measures.

**Joint Exercises:** **Bilateral Exercises:** "Ekuverin" and "Ekatha" are key bilateral exercises conducted regularly. **Trilateral Exercise:** The "Dosti" exercise, involving India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka, is held regularly. The most recent trilateral exercise in February 2024 was hosted in Malé, with Bangladesh participating as an observer.

### **Key Defense Projects:**

**Composite Training Centre (CTC):** India is involved in establishing a Composite Training Centre for the MNDF to enhance their training capabilities. **Coastal Radar System (CRS):** India has helped install a Coastal Radar System to improve maritime surveillance. **Infrastructure Projects:** India is contributing to the construction of the Ministry of Defence Headquarters and the "Ektha" MNDF harbor.

**Developmental Assistance:** India provides developmental aid to the Maldives in various sectors, including education, health, and infrastructure. This support often comes in the form of grants, loans, and technical assistance. **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH), Maldives Institute of Technical Education** (Maldives Polytechnic 1996), **India-Maldives Faculty of Hospitality & Tourism Studies**(2002), **Technology Adoption Programme in Education** (2013), **National College for Police and Law Enforcement (NCPL)**(2022) and **Restoration of Hukuru Miskiiy** (Friday Mosque).

**Infrastructure and Connectivity:** India is supporting many connectivity projects in the Maldives these are:

**Water and Sanitation in 34 Islands:** Improving water supply and sewerage facilities, with several projects already commissioned.

**Addu Development Project:** Includes roads, street lighting, stormwater drainage, shore protection, and land reclamation. Work is progressing well, including land reclamation by Van Oord.

**Expansion of MIFCO Facilities:** Developing cold storage facilities to improve tuna processing. The contract was awarded to Rinac India Limited in January 2023.

**Airport Redevelopment:** Redeveloping airports in Hanimaadhoo and Gan, with contracts awarded to Indian companies and progress being monitored.

**Greater Male Connectivity Project:** Connecting Male to surrounding islands through bridges and roads, funded by a USD 400 million LoC and USD 100 million grant. The project is progressing well under AFCONS.

**Police Infrastructure Development:** USD 41 million buyer credit for developing police infrastructure, with a groundbreaking ceremony held in August 2022 on Thulusdhoo island.

**Cultural and Tourism Exchanges:** Both countries engage in cultural exchanges and tourism cooperation. Contribution to GDP: Tourism is a cornerstone of the Maldivian economy, contributing directly to about 25% of the GDP. When including indirect impacts, this contribution rises to nearly 70% of the total GDP. 2021-2023: India continued to lead as the top tourist market. The numbers were approximately 291,000 in 2021, 241,000 in 2022, and 209,000 in 2023, holding market shares of 23%, 14.4%, and 11.1%, respectively.

**Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance:** India has played a significant role in providing disaster relief and humanitarian aid to the Maldives during natural calamities, such as the 2004 tsunami.

**Recent Developments: Open Skies Arrangement:** In March 2022, India and the Maldives agreed to an open skies arrangement, enhancing connectivity between the two countries and potentially boosting tourism further.

**Institutional Linkages: Bilateral Agreements:** Several MoUs and agreements have been signed to enhance institutional cooperation:

**Civil Services:** Between the Civil Services Commission (CSC) of Maldives and the National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG) of India.

**Customs:** Cooperation between Maldives Customs Service (MCS) and the CBIC of India.

**Parliamentary Cooperation:** Between the Lok Sabha of India and the Majlis of Maldives.

**Judicial Services:** Between the Judicial Services Commission (JSC) of Maldives and the National Judicial Academy (NJA) of India.

**Election Commission:** Cooperation between India's Election Commission and the Elections Commission of Maldives.

**Public Service Media:** Partnership between Public Service Media (PSM) of Maldives and Prasar Bharati of India.

## ***SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MALDIVES TO INDIA***

**Strategic Location:** The Maldives is strategically important due to its location in the Indian Ocean. Control over or influence in this region is crucial for maritime security and trade routes. India's SAGAR policy recognizes the role of Maldives in its role in the Indian Ocean region.

**Countering Influence from Rival Powers:** India aims to counterbalance the influence of other regional powers, such as China, which has been increasing its presence in the Maldives. Maintaining a strong relationship helps India ensure its strategic interests are safeguarded.

**Security Concerns:** The Maldives' geographic proximity and potential for instability pose security concerns for India. Ensuring stability in the Maldives is crucial for India's national security.

**Historical significance:** Maldives is historically important for India. India and the Maldives share many common histories.

## ***SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA TO THE MALDIVES***

**Economic Support:** India is a major economic partner, providing essential aid and investment. This support helps the Maldives in its economic development and in addressing various domestic challenges.

**Security Assistance:** India's support in maintaining maritime and internal security is vital for the Maldives, given its limited defense capabilities.

**Cultural and Educational Links:** The Maldives benefits from Indian cultural and educational exchanges, which contribute to its human resource development and cultural enrichment.

**India's significance to the Maldives can be seen in the following examples:**

**1988 Coup Attempt:** India's prompt intervention during the 1988 coup attempt in the Maldives was critical in strengthening bilateral trust. The swift and decisive action, followed by the withdrawal of Indian troops once their mission was complete, helped cement a long-term and friendly relationship.

**2004 Tsunami:** India was the first to assist in the 2004 tsunami, highlighting its role as a reliable neighbor in times of crisis. This assistance included humanitarian aid and reconstruction support.

**2014 Water Crisis:** India's aid during the water crisis in Malé further demonstrated its commitment to supporting the Maldives in times of need.

**COVID-19 Pandemic:** India's rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the dispatch of vaccines and other assistance, reinforced its position as a dependable partner in health crises.

### ***"HURDLES AND HEADWINDS: KEY CHALLENGES IN THE INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONSHIP"***

**India Out Campaign:** The rise of the India Out Campaign in the Maldives, fueled by anti-India sentiments and a pro-China political agenda, poses a significant challenge. This campaign aims to reduce Indian influence and presence in the Maldives, aligning with the broader strategic goals of China.

**Potential for China's Increased Dominance:** The ongoing geopolitical tensions and the Maldives' tilt towards China create a risk of diminishing India's influence in South Asia. China's efforts to establish dominance could be facilitated by political shifts in the Maldives and reduced Indian engagement.

**Economic Dependence on External Factors:** The Maldives' economy is heavily dependent on tourism and foreign aid. This dependence makes it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations and influences from major powers, including India and China.

**Reduction of Indian Military Presence:** The recent request by the Maldivian president to withdraw 77 Indian military personnel is indicative of the changing geopolitical landscape. This move reflects a shift in the Maldives' foreign policy towards a more pro-China stance and raises concerns about India's strategic presence in the region.

**Political Instability:** Frequent changes in Maldivian political leadership lead to inconsistent policies and strained relations with India. For example, the earlier leadership was in favour of India but the present leadership is in favour of China.

**Domestic Sentiments:** Anti-India sentiments in the Maldives, driven by domestic political factors or historical grievances, can affect the relationship. The radicalization of youth and unnecessary comments by the government do not augur well for future relationships.

### ***"BRIDGING THE GAP: EXPERT SUGGESTIONS FOR ADVANCING INDIA-MALDIVES RELATIONS"***

**Enhance Strategic Dialogue:** Scholars like Dr. C. Raja Mohan advocate for a more robust strategic dialogue between India and the Maldives to address mutual security concerns and enhance cooperation.

**Strengthen Economic Ties:** Increased investment in key sectors such as tourism, infrastructure, and healthcare could further solidify economic ties. Dr. Mohan Malik has emphasized the importance of economic cooperation in strengthening bilateral relationships.



**Promote People-to-People Contacts:** Expanding cultural and educational exchanges can help build mutual understanding and reduce anti-India sentiments. Scholars like Dr. Sreeram Chaulia suggest that enhancing people-to-people connections can mitigate political tensions.

**Collaborative Regional Initiatives:** Engaging in joint regional initiatives to address common challenges, such as climate change and maritime security, could bolster cooperation. Dr. Harsh V. Pant has highlighted the importance of regional cooperation in enhancing bilateral relationships.

**Support for Local Sentiments:** Most Maldivians value the relationship with India, which suggests a stable base of public support. India should continue to engage with Maldivian civil society and government to nurture this positive sentiment.

**Mutual interest management:** India must communicate its strategic concerns. If the Maldives shows signs of aligning more closely with China to the detriment of Indian interests, India might need to assertively communicate its position, ensuring that its concerns are understood without escalating into confrontation.

**Balanced Approach:** While asserting its interests, India should balance its response to avoid pushing the Maldives further towards China. Diplomatic and economic measures should be calibrated to encourage alignment with India without provoking unnecessary hostility.

**Recent Agreements:** Despite the challenges, more than 100 agreements signed between the Maldives and India during President Mohammed Muizzu's swearing-in ceremony offer hope for future cooperation. These agreements indicate a continued commitment to bilateral relations and highlight the potential for collaboration on various fronts.

## Conclusion

In a nutshell, the India-Maldives relationship, marked by a deep historical bond and shared strategic interests, is undergoing a significant phase of adjustment and recalibration. Despite recent challenges and shifts in Maldivian foreign policy, India remains steadfast in its commitment to sustaining and strengthening this crucial partnership. The substantial increase in aid for the fiscal year 2023-24, with a remarkable 300% rise from the previous year, underscores India's dedication to ensuring the Maldives remains a key priority in its foreign policy agenda.

## PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to the Maldives Consider the following statement:

1. Maldives is the smallest country by area in the Asia.
2. Maldives is a founding member of the SAARC.
3. Maldives is a coral island country consisting of 30 islands.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None.

**ANSWER: B**

## MAINS QUESTION

Discuss the recent developments in India-Maldives relations, highlighting the impact of the substantial increase in Indian aid for 2023-24 on bilateral cooperation. How does this increase in aid reflect India's strategic priorities and commitment to the Maldives amid shifting geopolitical dynamics?

( 250 words 15 marks)

[MundeDhananjayNavnath](#)

PLUTUS IAS  
**PLUTUS IAS**  
UPSC/PCS

# PHILOSOPHY OPTIONAL

**MORNING BATCH**

STARTS FROM

**16<sup>th</sup> AUG 2024**

**08:00 AM**

📍 2nd Floor, Apsara Arcade, Karol Bagh Metro Station  
Gate No. - 6, New Delhi 110005



**OUR CENTERS** Delhi | Chandigarh | Shimla | Bilaspur

**Shailendra Upadhyay**

UPSC CSE Interview 2023

✉ info@plutusias.com

☎ 8448440231

🌐 www.plutusias.com

# IAS