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INDEX

▪ Abstrac	4
▪ Introduction	4
▪ History	5
▪ India-Maldives trade relations and investment	5
▪ China-Maldives trade relations and investment.....	7
▪ Structured breakdown of the investments by India and China in the Maldives	7
▪ India's Maritime security relations with Maldives	8
▪ Foreign Policy of Maldives.....	9
▪ India-Maldives Relation during Covid Pandemic	10
▪ India- Maldives Cultural Relation.....	10
▪ India- Maldives Defence Relations.....	11
▪ Maldives Coup Attempt – 1988	11
▪ Recent Development in Maldives.....	12
▪ Cause to disturb India-Maldives relations.....	12
▪ Ways to Enhance India, Maldives Relations	13
▪ Conclusion.....	13
▪ References	15
▪ Bibliography	17
▪ Webliography	17

ACRONYMS

ALH - Advanced Light Helicopter

AP - Adalat Party

ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BIMSTEC - Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.

BRI - Belt and Road Initiative

CSRS - Coastal Surveillance Radar System

DOSTI - Double Virtue

GMCP - Greater Male Connectivity Project

HADR - Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

ICCR - Indian Council for Cultural Relations

IGMH - Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital

INMAFF - India-Maldives Friendship Festival

IOR - Indian Ocean Region

IORA - Indian Ocean Rim Association

JP - Jumhoory Party

MDP - Maldivian Democratic Party

MNDF - Maldives National Defence Force

M-SAR - Maritime Search and Rescue

NAM - Non-Aligned Movement

PNC - People's National Congress

POLRES - Marine Pollution Response

PPM - Progressive Party of the Maldives

SAARC - South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

SAGAR - SECURITY and Growth for All in the Region

SBI - State Bank of India

USA - United States of America

India-Maldives Relations: A Comprehensive Journey Across Dimensions

Abstract

The article delves into the intricate relationship between India and the Maldives, covering an extensive range of topics such as politics, economy, culture, security, history, and diplomacy. Both internal and external factors affecting the Maldives could have adverse impacts on India. This encompasses the political instability that occurred in the island nation between 2008 and 2012 as well as the increasing influence of China. From shared history, growing dynamics, collaboration, obstacles, and future possibilities, the article aims to examine the connection between India and the Maldives from 1968, when the Maldives became a republic, to the present. It offers a thorough grasp of both nations' bilateral ties by concentrating on how their foreign policy strategies have changed over the past ten years. The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the maritime landscape of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and identify key factors shaping its trade dynamics.

The research methodology involves a qualitative analysis of historical records, scholarly literature, and contemporary data sources to examine the evolution of trade networks, the strategic significance of sea-lanes, and the economic drivers fuelling growth in the region.

Keywords: Trade and Investment, Maritime security, Foreign policy, Operation Cactus.

Introduction

India, the world's largest democracy and now perhaps the most populous country plays an important role in South Asia. India maintains amicable relations with neighboring countries, particularly the Maldives, based on shared history and cultural links. The Ministry of External Affairs of India recognizes a close connection between the two countries, emphasizing linguistic, ethnic, and commercial ties. This is not only true for Maldives but most of the South Asian countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi prioritized strengthening ties with South Asian nations, inviting SAARC leaders to his 2014 oath-taking ceremony and declaring Neighbourhood First as a cornerstone of his foreign policy.

India's interest in the Maldives is focused on political stability, protecting against external influences, assuring the safety of Indian workers in the Maldives, and securing investments. India and the Maldives share their maritime boundary, and India was among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations upon Maldivian independence in 1965.

Over the years, India has engaged in bilateral visits, contributed significantly to healthcare infrastructure in the Maldives, and maintained a large expatriate community. India adheres to a policy of non-interference in the Maldives' internal affairs with the only exception of the 1988 military intervention to thwart a coup based on potential security concerns. India wants to ensure regional stability and prevent the region from becoming a playground for international rivalries. India also wants to ensure that radical Islamists do not create a base in the Maldives and endanger the Indian peninsula. While prioritizing political stability in the Maldives, India maintains a cautious approach, respecting the sovereignty of its littoral state.¹

The paper delves into several key issues, notably the 'India Out' campaign and its implications, alongside the abusive behavior of Maldivian ministers towards PM Modi, and subsequent actions taken by the Maldivian President. Additionally, it examines the impact of the Boycott Maldives campaign in India, as well as the economic consequences stemming from the withdrawal of bookings by Indian tourists on the Maldivian economy. Furthermore, the paper explores the strategic and security-related deal between Maldives and China, analyzing its potential implications and the broader geopolitical context in which it unfolds.

History

The Maldives, an archipelago of islands having a rich history extending back to the 5th century BCE, saw the early influence of Buddhism, likely from Sri Lanka and southern India. In 1153 CE, Islam was first introduced to the people on the archipelago. Portuguese rule from 1558 to 1573, was followed by Dutch protection in the 17th century and a British protectorate from 1796 onwards.² The country attained complete independence in 1965. In 1968, the country changed from a sultanate to a republic.

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom started modernization and democratic changes in the 21st century, and these efforts culminated in a new constitution in 2008 that allowed the first multi-party election. Since then, Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), Progressive Party of the Maldives (PPM), Jumhoory Party (JP), and Adalat Party (AP) have emerged as influential players in country's politics.

Climate change was given top priority during Mohamed Nasheed's (MDP) presidency in 2008 because low-lying islands are being threatened by rising sea levels. However, his tenure was marred by controversies, leading to his resignation in 2012 amid allegations of forced resignation. Subsequent elections saw political shifts, with Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom (PPM) (Brother of former President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom) assuming office. Yameen's presidency witnessed infrastructural development funded by China, but also political suppression and controversial actions, including the declaration of a state of emergency in 2018.³

In a surprising turn, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih (MDP) secured a landslide victory in the 2018 election, succeeding Yameen. Solih's government embarked on anti-corruption efforts and sought to strengthen ties with India, receiving substantial aid commitments. Challenges persisted, including addressing religious extremism and political violence.⁴

The administration faced a setback in May 2021 when a bomb explosion critically injured former President Nasheed, highlighting ongoing security concerns. Despite this, the government maintained momentum in its reform agenda. The recent election victory of President Mohamed Muizzu (PNC) has set the stage for a diplomatic reshuffle of preference between India and China, with significant implications for regional influence.⁵

Overall, the Maldives' recent history reflects a dynamic political landscape, characterized by shifts in leadership, geopolitical influences, and efforts towards democratic consolidation, economic development, and addressing pressing challenges like climate change and internal security threats.

India-Maldives Trade Relations and Investment

India and the Maldives have a strong connection through trade and investment. In 1981, they made a big trade agreement and after that in 2004 joined a free-trade deal with other South Asian nations. Since then, India and the Maldives have expanded their trade relations. India has actively helped the Maldives in its economic growth by giving a lot of economic aid and working together on various projects. These projects focus on building things like infrastructure, health facilities, telecommunications, and the workforce. The Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, which India established in 1995, is one notable example. The IGMH is located in the capital city of Male. Over the years, it has evolved into Maldives' premier medical facility, boasting 200 beds and cutting-edge healthcare services. Since February 1974, the SBI has become important for Maldives' economic growth. The SBI provided loans to support things like island resorts, exporting marine products, and businesses. Indian companies, including the Taj Group, run resorts like Spa and Vivanta Coral Reef Resort, and Taj Exotica Resort in the Maldives.⁶

In 2010, GMR Infrastructure, an Indian company, and KLIA, a Malaysian company, were given a

two-year contract to renovate and extend the Male International Airport. This marked a

Significant Advancement in the Country's Infrastructure

From 1978 to 2008, when Maumoon Abdul Gayoom was the President, the Maldives had good relations with India and did not involve China much. However, in later governments, there was a shift. They welcomed Chinese investments and made agreements, making China the Maldives' largest trade partner. In 2018, when the new government took over in the Maldives, India wanted to improve relations and reduce China's influence. India gave \$4 billion for programs to help with social and economic development. Also, a \$800 million loan was announced for building things like roads and bridges during a visit by India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj in March 2019.⁷

India showed its commitment to the Greater Malé Connectivity Project, a big project connecting Malé with nearby islands. They funded it with a \$400 million loan and a \$100 million gift. This project has made India the second-largest trade partner of the Maldives in 2020. When it comes to trade, India mainly buys scrap metals from the Maldives. On the other side, India sells various engineering and industrial products, medicines, radar equipment, rocks, cement, and agricultural goods to the Maldives.⁸ India and the Maldives have worked together on economic projects and building things. India started its mission with a CDA in 1972 and a resident High Commissioner in 1980. In November 2004, the Maldives opened a full High Commission in New Delhi. India's efforts to balance China's influence have been important in making their relationship stronger.



All figures are in US \$ Million

China-Maldives Trade Relations and Investment

When Mohamed Nasheed was president, China paid for a big housing project in Hulhumale and they upgraded Malé International Airport after Indian workers were removed. By 2014, China had invested in more things like building a bridge from Malé to Hulhule, a new Foreign Affairs building, projects for clean energy, a national museum, tourism, and telecommunications. When Abdullah Yameen Abdul Gayoom became president (2013-2018), he started to support China more and put a pause on Indian projects. He welcomed lots of Chinese building projects in the Maldives, showing a change in who the Maldives were friends with.¹⁰

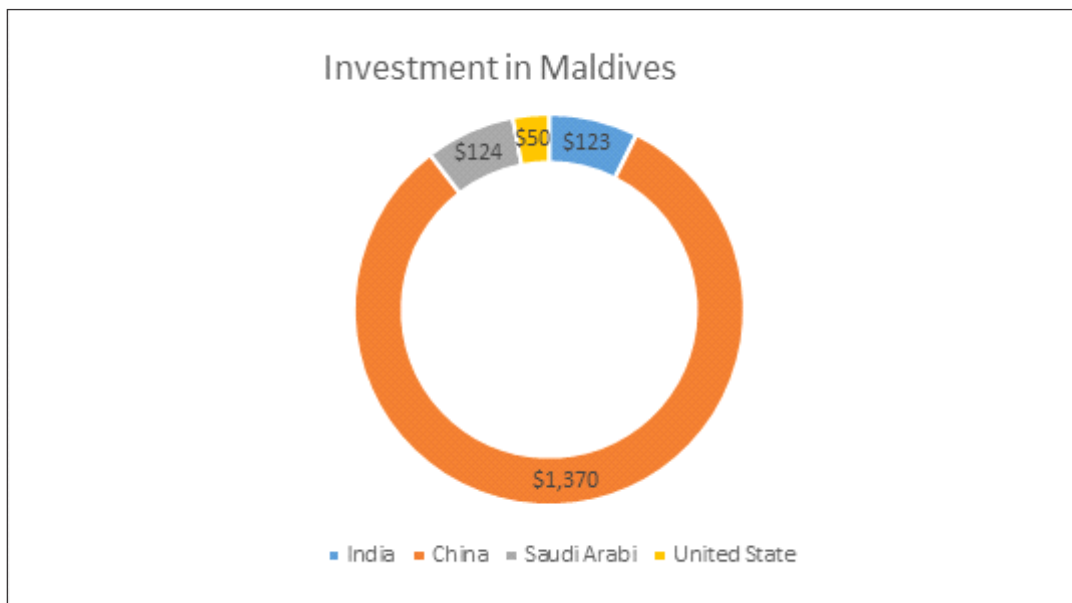
In 1972, Maldives and China established a diplomatic relationship. Male hosted a Chinese embassy in 2011, and since 2009, the Maldives have had an embassy in Beijing. About 70% of the Maldives' debt is because of Chinese projects, and they have to pay \$92 million every year, which is about 10% of their budget. China's big influence in building stuff, trading, and energy makes some people worried that the Maldives might get stuck relying on China.¹¹

It was an important moment from January 8 to 12, 2024, when President Mohamed Muizzu went to China. They talked about making the Maldives' economy stronger and China said they support the Maldives' independence. They both said they would work together on the Belt and Road Initiative, focusing on making things green, improving the digital economy, and using the ocean wisely. They signed a plan for working together from 2024 to 2028, focusing on things like building stuff, healthcare, clean energy, and protecting the ocean. President Muizzu's visit made the friendship stronger and gave hope for more growth in the future.¹²

Structured Breakdown of the Investments by India and China in the Maldives

Sr. No	Project	India	China
1	Infrastructure Projects	Smaller-scale projects like renewable energy, water management, and transportation.	Large-scale projects such as airport expansions, bridge construction, and port development.
2	Tourism Sector	Some investments in eco-friendly tourism initiatives and hospitality training programs.	Investments in resort development and tourism-related infrastructure.
3	Healthcare and Education	Healthcare facilities, medical equipment, and educational institutions.	Limited investments in healthcare and education compared to other sectors.
4	Housing and Urban Development	Limited investments in this sector primarily focused on affordable housing and community development.	Investments in housing projects and urban development initiatives.
5	Renewable Energy	Investments in solar energy projects, promoting clean energy initiatives.	Limited investments in renewable energy projects.
6	Maritime Infrastructure	Limited investments in maritime infrastructure, focusing more on cooperation in maritime security and safety.	Investments in port development and maritime infrastructure as part of the Maritime Silk Road initiative.
7	Financial Assistance and Grants	Provides financial assistance, grants, and concessional loans for various developmental projects.	Offers financing through loans and investments, often linked to broader strategic objectives such as the Belt and Road Initiative.
8	Trade Agreement	Big trade agreement in 1981 They are both part of SAARC and signed the South Asia Free Trade Agreement.	N/A

9	Free Trade Deal	2004 Free Trade Deal The major goal was to reduce customs duties on all traded goods to zero by 2016.	N/A
10	Notable Investments	Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (1995)	Largest housing project in Hulhumale
		Male International Airport renovation (2010)	Malé-Hulhule Bridge (2014)
		Greater Malé Connectivity Project (2020)	National Museum (2014)
11		Economic Aid	\$4 billion (2018)
		\$800 million loan (2019)	Not available
		Male International Airport	Male-Hulhule Bridge
		Greater Malé Connectivity Project	National Museum
13	Trade Partnership	Second-largest trade partner (2020)	Largest trade partner



Major Countries' investment in Maldives

India's Maritime Security Relations with Maldives

India has been working on addressing maritime security concerns, especially after the 2008 Mumbai attacks and the danger of pirates near Somalia in the Indian Ocean. In IOR, India has strengthened its naval security to stave off any maritime threats. The threat from Somali pirates, which was at its highest in 2012, has also affected India's safety and shipping activities in that area.

In 2009, India took big steps to work closely with the Maldives on sea security. A. K. Anthony, the Indian Minister of Defense, signed an agreement to fortify their strategic alliance and hold out China's expanding sway in the Indian Ocean. India agreed to station two helicopters in the Maldives to keep an eye on matters. They also established an Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) station on Hannimadhoo Island and Addu Island. Additionally, they established radar stations on each of the 26 atolls, linking them to the coastal radar network of India.¹⁴

To deal with Maritime Security, India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka joined coast guard exercises. These exercises focused on things like Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Marine Pollution Response (POLRES), Maritime Search and Rescue (M-SAR), and Anti-piracy activities. The goal was to work together better in handling security problems in the region. To enhance maritime security near Sri Lanka and Maldives, a Trilateral Maritime Security Cooperation Initiative began at the first National Security Advisor meeting in Male in October 2011. The aim is to make novel security stronger along the coast and tackle common challenges. However, because of political problems in the Maldives, some planned meetings were delayed.¹⁵

As part of his strategy for the Indian Ocean, Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to improve the region's capacities, support neighboring countries in building their own, work together to achieve shared objectives, encourage sustainable development, and interact with partners outside of the IOR. The growing power of China in the Indian Ocean is something India wants to stop because of geopolitical concerns and the flow of energy supplies. India is particularly concerned about China's ties with nations like the Maldives and Sri Lanka, as well as its investments and projects, which raise concerns about maritime security.

To cut short China's increasing influence, India signed a defense deal with the Maldives in 2016. The deal is meant to make defense cooperation stronger by developing ports, continuous training, building capabilities, supplying equipment, and doing sea surveillance. The goal is to balance China's strategic interests and possible military presence in the Indian Ocean, keeping India's influence strong and maintaining stability in its sea surroundings.¹⁶

The Sagarmala project aims to modernize ports for trade and economic growth. The Blue Economy focuses on using the ocean for energy, mining, and biotechnology. Blue Diplomacy involving making ocean-related deals. SAGAR Initiative seeks security and growth in the IOR under Prime Minister Modi. SAGAR collaborates with neighboring countries through groups like BIMSTEC, ASEAN, and IORA as part of India's **Neighbourhood First Policy**.¹⁷

Foreign Policy of Maldives

To maintain mutual respect for independence, sovereignty, and integrity, the Maldives' foreign policy is centered on amicable cooperation with other countries. In 1977, the Maldives joined the NAM and remained neutral during the Cold War, not aligning with any one party. In the same year, Maldives began active participation in the United Nations. The president was appointed as the country's first permanent representative. The Maldives hosted two SAARC meetings as one of the founding members of the SAARC. In 1982, it also became a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, however, left it in 2016 due to what it saw to be unjust treatment and sanctions for democratic changes. It officially re-joined on February 1, 2020.¹⁸

Previously, the Maldives pursued a policy of neutrality, seeking support for development while maintaining independence. However, there has been a recent shift in alliances under President Yameen's leadership, with closer ties being forged with China, the USA, and Saudi Arabia.¹⁹

Chinese influence in the Maldives has grown evident with the establishment of a Chinese embassy visa section in Male in 2014. Additionally, the nation has cultivated closer ties with Saudi Arabia, particularly in Islamic affairs, as demonstrated by a commitment from the Saudi Prince to construct 10 mosques across the archipelago.

In 2014, President Yameen unveiled a fresh foreign policy focused on safeguarding national sovereignty and protecting the Islamic identity of the country.²⁰ Economic development continues to be crucial, aligning with the earlier foreign policy goals of promoting economic growth. During a visit to Delhi in 2016, President Yameen declared an 'India-first' policy, highlighting the close ties between the two countries.²¹ The visit led to various agreements, including a defense cooperation pact, emphasizing the shared perspective on Indian Ocean security. Both nations also promised to work together on counterterrorism efforts, addressing concerns about Maldivians joining extremist groups in West Asia.

India-Maldives Relation During Covid Pandemic

India and the Maldives have become closer during the COVID-19 pandemic, showing how countries use their influence through pandemic-related efforts. India, being a major producer of vaccines, has actively worked to strengthen connections, especially with its nearby countries. Dr. Rajaram Panda points out that India's strength in being a big pharmaceutical producer is crucial in this regard.²²

An instance of India's proactive involvement occurred when the Indian Air Force executed an 18-hour mission, employing a C-130 cargo plane to airlift 6.2 tonnes of vital medications and medical supplies to the Maldives. The immediate assistance demonstrated India's dedication to helping its neighbors in difficult times. Furthermore, the Maldives was among the first nations to benefit from "Mission Sagar," an initiative launched by the Indian Navy in May 2020 to offer medical assistance to nations in the Indian Ocean region. This indicates the significance India places on its ties with its maritime neighbors.²³

To help the Maldives cope with the economic challenges caused by the pandemic, the Government of India gave significant financial aid. In 2020, they provided 250 million US dollars, showing India's commitment to not just dealing with immediate health issues but also lessening the broader impact of the pandemic on the economy.²⁴ This financial support was vital for the Maldives to navigate through the challenges posed by the unprecedented crisis.

India showed its leadership in making vaccines with the 'Vaccine Maitri' project. By providing COVID-19 vaccinations to friendly nations, India assisted them during difficult times. The Maldives and Bhutan were among the first countries to get 100,000 vaccine doses each from this project. India later sent another 100,000 vaccine doses to the Maldives. This shows India's commitment to making sure its neighbors can get vaccines to keep their people safe and healthy.²⁵

India's approach during the COVID-19 pandemic, involving medical aid, financial help, and vaccine distribution, not only displayed its influence but also strengthened its close ties with the Maldives. This underlines the importance of regional collaboration during challenging times.

India- Maldives Cultural Relation

India and the Maldives share a special connection that goes beyond politics and business – it's rooted in culture. According to Mr. Krishna, a key diplomat, the real strength of this relationship lies in the deep connections between people at the grassroots level. The cultural ties between India and the Maldives have a long history. Long ago, people from India and Sri Lanka who followed Buddhism settled in the Maldives around 5 BC. After that, people from places like Indonesia, Madagascar, and China also came to live there. The Maldivian language, Divehi, is similar to languages spoken in India and Europe (Indo-European language). Besides Divehi, people in the Maldives also speak English, Hindi, and Arabic because of various cultural influences.²⁶

Many Indians are living in the Maldives, especially in the capital city of Male, where they help with education, healthcare, and building projects. Many teachers in the Maldives are from India, which shows how close the educational bond is. Cultural events and collaborations play a vital role in understanding each other better. In 2009, a Maldivian rock band joined a cultural event in South Asia. The ICCR sponsored a Maldivian theater troupe in 2010, performing in Delhi, strengthening cultural ties.

In 2010, there was a festival called the India-Maldives Friendship Festival. It was organized by the High Commissioner of India along with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Indian Club. The festival was attended by President Nasheed and his cabinet, and even Bollywood star

Salman Khan was there. These festivals are important because they help people from both countries learn about each other's cultures and celebrate their shared heritage. President Nasheed's visits to India in 2010, including attending the Commonwealth Games in Delhi, were significant for both diplomatic and cultural connections. However, there have been challenges, like the 'India Out' campaign, which has caused concerns among the Indian community in the Maldives. Instances of harassment, especially of Indian teachers, show the complexities in the cultural and political landscape.²⁷

The cultural relationship of India and the Maldives has a deep history and has been strengthened through various exchanges. While cultural events have brought them closer, challenges like the 'India Out' campaign highlight the need for ongoing diplomatic efforts to ensure the well-being and security of the Indian community in the Maldives. The mix of cultural ties and diplomatic efforts is vital in shaping the dynamic relationship between India and the Maldives.

India- Maldives Defence Relations

India and the Maldives have collaborated extensively on defense and security since 1988 due to common issues they face in the IOR. India has been a crucial supporter of the Maldives in various ways to make sure they have a good security plan.

The collaboration started in 1988 when India stepped in to stop a coup against President Gayoom's government. Since then, India has given defense training and equipment to the Maldives, covering about 70 percent of their defense training needs. To foster cooperation and keep peace in the region, both countries have signed several defense agreements. In 2006, India gave a Trinkat Class Fast Attack Craft to the Maldives National Defence Force. India intended to include the Maldives in its security plans following the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack to prevent potential terrorist attacks on Maldivian resorts.²⁸

Coup Attempt in Maldives - 1988

There was a terrifying incident in the Maldives in 1988. A few Maldivians attempted to overthrow the Maldivian government, with the assistance of fighters from a group in Sri Lanka and under the leadership of businessman Abdullah Luthufi. They quickly seized control of the capital, important buildings, the airport, the port, and media stations, making the situation very serious.²⁹

To stop this, the Indian Armed Forces started Operation Cactus. Indian soldiers secured the airfield and reached Malé using boats they took control of. They successfully rescued President Gayoom, bringing things back under control within hours. Some of the people involved in the coup tried to escape to Sri Lanka on a stolen freighter, but Indian Navy ships stopped it near the Sri Lankan coast.³⁰

Because of this intervention, the coup attempt failed. Accurate information and fast military action helped bring back order. There were nineteen reported casualties, mostly from the group trying to take over, along with two hostages killed by them. The quick and effective response from the Indian military stopped the situation from getting worse, showing that Operation Cactus was successful in ending the coup attempt.³¹

India's military interventions in Maldives (1988) have only added to the insecurity as well as fear of Indian hegemony among its neighbors. Because of its pervasively dominating position in South Asia, it can be convincingly argued that India constitutes the core while all its neighbors form the periphery of the South Asian region.³²

An annual combined military exercise between India and the Maldives since 2009 is called Ekuverin, which means "Friends" in Dhivehi. This practice aims to enhance cooperation between the Indian Army and the Maldives National Defence Force, especially for counter-terrorism operations in urban or semi-urban areas. The tenth Ekuverin exercise occurred in 2019 and the eleventh in 2021.³³

In 1992, the Indian and Maldivian Coast Guards started a military operation known as DOSTI (Double Virtue), which eventually expanded to a trilateral exercise with the participation of Sri Lanka. The fifteenth edition in 2021 made their friendship and cooperation stronger.³⁴

However, during Abdullah Yameen's time as the leader from 2013 to 2018, India-Maldives relations faced challenges. Yameen criticized India's presence, shifted foreign policy towards China, and didn't renew agreements, causing issues in their relationship. Fortunately, Yameen's Progressive Democratic Party lost the 2018 election, and the Maldivian Democratic Party's Ibrahim Mohamed Solih took over as leader, reaffirming the "India First policy."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi traveled to the Maldives in September 2018 to witness President Solih's inauguration after the establishment of the Solih leadership. On a state visit, President Solih traveled to India in December 2018. To raise awareness in the Indian Ocean region, they jointly opened a training center for the Maldives National Defence Force and a Coastal Surveillance Radar System (CSRS) constructed by India during these visits.³⁵

In January 2019, Major General Shamaal, the Chief of the Defence Force, and Defense Minister Mariya Didi traveled to India for the 2nd Defence Cooperation Dialogue. The previous minister of external affairs, Sushma Swaraj, visited the Maldives in the same year and signed agreements about community development initiatives, visa waivers, a Line of Credit, and collaboration on energy efficiency and renewable energy.³⁶

India and the Maldives signed an agreement on February 21, 2021, during the visit of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, to enhance the capabilities of the Maldives National Defence Force and Coast Guard by developing, supporting, and maintaining a harbor. SIFAVARU's³⁷ Coast Guard Harbour & Dockyard will play a significant role in the region's efforts to provide disaster relief and humanitarian assistance.³⁸

The defense and security teamwork between India and the Maldives has grown over the years, dealing with common challenges in the Indian Ocean. Despite some setbacks, their strategic partnership continues to develop, helping the stability, security, and prosperity of the region. Their joint efforts highlight the importance of working together to address today's security challenges.

Recent Developments in Maldives

The "India Out" campaign advocates for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from Maldives. There is a bilateral deal between India and Maldives concerning the maintenance of helicopters gifted by India. Maldivian ministers have been reported for verbally abusing PM Modi, prompting action from the Maldivian President. This has fuelled a boycott of the Maldives campaign within India. Moreover, the Maldivian economy faces repercussions due to the withdrawal of bookings by Indian tourists. Additionally, there has been a notable strategic and security-related deal between Maldives and China. This highlights shifting alliances and geopolitical dynamics in the region. The campaign and subsequent actions underscore the complexities of diplomatic relations and the influence of external factors on national policies. The economic ramifications of such disputes, particularly in the tourism sector, underscore the interconnectedness of nations in an increasingly globalized world. The strategic deal with China adds another layer of complexity, indicating potential shifts in regional power dynamics and alliances. Overall, these events highlight the multifaceted nature of international relations and the intricate balance of interests at play.

Cause to Disturb India-Maldives Relations

There is a long history of diplomatic, cultural, and financial relations between the Maldives and India. However, recent occurrences have caused some instability in their relationship. Several factors have contributed to the recent strains in India-Maldives relations. One significant issue is

the political dynamics within the Maldives. In recent years, there have been shifts in power and governance, leading to uncertainty and changes in foreign policy priorities. Additionally, there have been instances where some segments of the Maldives society have taken India's intervention in the country's internal affairs adversely, which has led to issues.

In addition, the geopolitical situation in the Indian Ocean region has witnessed an acceleration in rivalry and strategic concerns amongst the world's major powers. This has led to concerns about sovereignty and influence, with both India and Maldives navigating these complexities to safeguard their national interests. Furthermore, the Maldives' economic inequality and developmental obstacles have occasionally strained bilateral relations as India tries to strike a balance between aid and respect for the Maldives' sovereignty and self-determination.

Ways to Enhance India, Maldives Relations

India and Maldives can strengthen their relationship despite challenges through various avenues. There are some suggestions to improve the India and Maldives' relationship -

- They can focus on diplomatic engagement and dialogue. Regular high-level meetings can help them discuss mutual concerns openly, leading to better understanding and trust between the two nations.
- Cooperation on maritime security is important. Since both countries have a lot of sea around them, they can work together to stop things like piracy and illegal fishing. This could involve doing patrols together, helping each other get better at dealing with sea issues and sharing information to stop problems before they start.
- Economic cooperation is key. By working together on trade, investment, and development assistance, they can both prosper economically. India can lend a hand to Maldives in important areas like tourism, infrastructure, and renewable energy can help Maldives achieve its sustainable development goals.
- Promoting cultural exchanges is essential. Encouraging initiatives like student exchange programs, cultural festivals, and heritage preservation efforts can deepen the historical and cultural ties between India and Maldives, fostering friendship and mutual respect.
- They can join hands in fighting climate change. Both countries are feeling the effects of climate change, like rising sea levels and crazy weather. Collaborating on adaptation and mitigation strategies, along with marine conservation efforts, can help them deal with rising sea levels and extreme weather events, ensuring a sustainable future for their nations.
- They need to respect each other's independence. India should avoid interfering in Maldives' internal affairs, while Maldives should understand India's security concerns and regional interests. By respecting each other's sovereignty, space, and respect they can build a relationship based on trust and mutual benefit.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between India and the Maldives spans a wide spectrum of areas, including politics, economy, culture, security, and diplomacy. Despite historical ties and shared interests, recent geopolitical shifts and internal dynamics have posed challenges to their bilateral relations. The Maldives' evolving political landscape, marked by changes in leadership and foreign policy priorities, has occasionally strained ties with India, especially during periods of uncertainty and political unrest.

However, both countries have shown resilience in navigating these challenges, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect, sovereignty, and cooperation. India's proactive engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic and its continued support for the Maldives' development underscores the depth of their partnership.

Furthermore, defense and security cooperation between India and the Maldives have strengthened over the years, addressing common threats and enhancing maritime security in the Indian Ocean region. Cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections have also played a vital role in fostering understanding and goodwill between the two nations.

In the face of evolving geopolitical dynamics and internal challenges, India and the Maldives must continue to prioritize dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding to ensure the stability, prosperity, and security of the Indian Ocean region. Their shared commitment to regional peace and development serves as a foundation for a resilient and enduring partnership in the years to come.

Enhancing India-Maldives relations requires a concerted effort from both sides to address the underlying causes of strain and capitalize on shared interests and opportunities. By prioritizing diplomatic engagement, economic cooperation, cultural exchanges, maritime security, and environmental protection, India and Maldives can build a stronger and more resilient partnership for the benefit of their peoples and the broader Indian Ocean region.

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