

# PM Modi's Maldives Visit Marks Diplomatic Reset and Strategic Gains

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## PM Modi Maldives Visit Latest News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on an official visit to the Maldives, at the invitation of President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu.
- This marks his third visit to the Maldives and the first by any Head of State or Government during President Muizzu's tenure.

## Key Highlights of PM Modi's Visit to Maldives

- **60th Independence Day of Maldives**
  - PM Modi congratulated Maldives on its 60th Independence Day
  - He is participating in the 60th Independence Day celebrations of the Maldives, as the Guest of Honour.
- **Stamp to mark 60 years of India-Maldives friendship released**
  - PM Modi and President Mohamed Muizzu issued a stamp to mark 60 years of India-Maldives relations.

- India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with Maldives following its independence in 1965.
- The stamps feature India's Uru boat and Maldives' Vadhu Dhoni, symbolizing shared maritime heritage and centuries-old Indian Ocean trade.
  - **Uru boat** – A large wooden dhow handcrafted in the historic boatyards of Beypore, Kerala.
  - The traditional Maldivian fishing boat – **Vadhu Dhoni** – is used for reef and coastal fishing.
- **India gifts BHISHM health cube sets to Maldives**
  - As part of India's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR, India gifted handed over two units of **Aarogya Maitri Health Cube [BHISHM]** sets to the Government of Maldives.
  - BHISM is a state-of-the-art portable Cube containing medical essentials, designed for rapid deployment in emergencies and disaster zones.
    - With state-of-the-art medical equipment as part of the cube, it can provide medical aid to 200 casualties with in-built support to sustain a crew of six medical personnel for up to 72 hours.
- **Inauguration of the Building of Ministry of Defence in Male**
  - PM Modi and Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu inaugurate the building of the Ministry of Defence in Malé.
  - This building has been constructed with India's financial assistance.
- **Other Inaugurations / Handing-over**
  - Handing-over of 3,300 social housing units in Hulhumale under India's Buyers' Credit facilities
  - Inauguration of Roads and Drainage system project in Addu city
  - Inauguration of 6 High Impact Community Development Projects in Maldives
  - Handing-over of 72 vehicles and other equipment
- **Agreement/MoU Signed**
  - Extension of Line of Credit (LoC) of INR 4,850 crores to Maldives
    - LoC has been extended to support the island as it faces an enduring twin deficit problem.
    - This is the **first time that such credit is being extended to the Maldives in Indian Rupee.**
  - Reduction of annual debt repayment obligations of Maldives on GoI-funded LoCs
    - This agreement gives major relief to Maldives by reducing its yearly debt payments to India.
    - Earlier, Maldives had to pay \$51 million every year for an \$800 million loan. Now, after a 40% cut, it will only have to pay \$29 million annually.
  - Launch of India-Maldives Free Trade Agreement (IMFTA) negotiations
- **Climate Cooperation and Green Commitments**
  - Joint tree-planting under India's "**Ek Pedh Maa Ke Naam**" and Maldives's "**Pledge of 5 Million Tree Plantation**" campaigns.

## Analysis - From 'India Out' to Independence Day Invitation

- Maldives' shift from the anti-India 'India Out' campaign to extending a ceremonial invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for its Independence Day celebrations in 2025 marks a significant diplomatic turnaround.
- Initially, President Mohamed Muizzu's tenure, beginning in September 2023, reflected a pro-China tilt.

- His party's campaign had strongly criticised India's military presence in the Maldives, and his early diplomatic visits to Turkey and China, bypassing India, sent a clear message of divergence.

## Pragmatic Diplomacy Paid off

- Despite derogatory remarks from some Maldivian ministers and demands for troop withdrawal, India maintained composure, **choosing engagement over escalation**.
- Modi met Muizzu at COP28 in UAE, and India replaced its 76 military personnel with HAL technicians in May 2024, addressing Male's concerns without severing strategic ties.
- This pragmatic diplomacy coincided with Maldives facing internal economic stress, limited Chinese support, and the ruling PNC gaining a supermajority in Parliament.
- Seeking stability and economic aid, Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer visited India in May 2024, followed by President Muizzu's five-day visit in October.
  - The visit concluded with the adoption of a joint vision on economic and maritime security partnership.
- India's assistance played a crucial role in this reset—raising aid by ₹120 crore, rolling over Treasury Bills worth \$150 million, extending currency swaps of \$750 million, and offering the highest-ever quotas for essential goods exports.
- Trade surged to \$548 million in 2023, backed by visa-free access for Indian business travellers and LoC projects.

## Conclusion

- President Muizzu's public statement affirming that "Maldives will not do anything that would harm India's security interests" marked a clear departure from the earlier rhetoric.
- The Maldives' gesture to invite PM Modi as Guest of Honour on its 60th Independence Day underlines the maturing of bilateral ties, driven by realism, mutual interest, and regional necessity.
- In sum, India's patient diplomacy and sustained economic engagement turned a strained relationship into one of renewed trust and cooperation, exemplifying a successful recalibration in the Indian Ocean neighbourhood.

**Source:** IT | IE | MEA | LM

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