

India resumed its bilateral relations with the Maldives as Minister of External Affairs, Sushma Swaraj visited the island nation from 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The two countries which exercise their aspirations over the Indian Ocean went through a tension when former President Abdulla Yameen imposed an emergency last year on 5<sup>th</sup> February, on grounds of electoral politics. The former President had also close ties with China and thus this bilateral meet marks India's first meet after the new government had been elected. The incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's swearing-in ceremony was attended by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and therefore it concludes that the two countries haven't been able to exchange much on the last state-visit. Last year in the month of December President Solih's state visit to India was a success as India decided to extend \$1.4 billion as financial assistance to the Maldives.

Feels like home.

EAM [@SushmaSwaraj](#) receives a warm welcome on arrival in [#Maldives](#). In a special gesture, FM [@abdulla\\_shahid](#) & Foreign Secretary Abdul Mohamed receive EAM at airport. 1st high-level visit to Maldives since new Maldives government assumed office in Nov. 2018. [pic.twitter.com/dkbs42Ejhw](https://pic.twitter.com/dkbs42Ejhw)

— Raveesh Kumar (@MEAIndia) [March 17, 2019](#)

Swaraj was received by her counterpart Abdulla Shahid and Maldivian Foreign Secretary Abdul Mohamed. The MEA has mentioned in its press statement that the Ministers will review the gamut of bilateral relations and discuss the future programme of action. Swaraj had also met the Defence Minister Mariya Ahmed Didi, Finance Minister Ibrahim Ameer, National Planning and Infrastructure Minister Mohamed Aslam, Transport and Civil Aviation Minister Aishath Nahula and Economic Development Minister Fayyaz Ismail as part of strengthening the relations between the two countries. On part of the Maldivian government, it has reaffirmed the 'India First Policy' which aims at maintaining a transparent and accountable relation with India. Reverting to the trade and financial sector, the two countries have agreed to hold the Maldives-India Business Forum in 2019.

Apart from that, India decided to assist Maldives with the construction of a cricket stadium and allowance of a new Indian Embassy in the suburban island of Hulhumale. The Solih Government has also accepted to audit and analyse the numerous contracts given to China

by the former Yameen government. The MEA has released the agreements signed between the two countries which include MoU on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic and official passports, MoU on collaboration in the field of energy efficiency and renewable energy and finally MoU on Indian Grant Assistance on implementation of High Impact community development through local bodies. Maldivian have guaranteed India by reiterating its stance to support the country for its permanent membership in a 'reformed' United Nations Security Council.

Strong convergence in India's 'Neighbourhood First' & Maldives' 'India First' policy

EAM [@SushmaSwaraj](#) called on President of Maldives [@ibusolih](#) in Male. Took stock of the progress made in bilateral relations since President Solih's State visit to India in December 2018. [pic.twitter.com/DPgBrg9qHF](https://pic.twitter.com/DPgBrg9qHF)

— Raveesh Kumar (@MEAIndia) [March 18, 2019](#)

The two-day state visit concluded with Sushma Swaraj inaugurating the renovated Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital. New bilateralism has been established again between India and Maldives.

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