



India and Maldives - Recent Developments

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Maldives Foreign Minister and its President's special envoy to India, Mohamed Asim visited India.
- The visit gains significance amidst the recently strained relationship between India and Maldives.

\n

\n\n

What was the recent tussle?

\n\n

\n

- Maldives recently signed its **Free Trade Agreement with China**.
- This is Maldives's first FTA with any country and China's second FTA with any country in South Asia after Pakistan.
- The trade pact would open Maldives to Chinese goods and tourists in unprecedented numbers.
- India was certainly concerned with this, due to the possible increased Chinese military presence in the island nation.
- The Maldivian President had earlier promised that Maldives would be an integral link in China's Belt and Road Initiative
- Besides, the Maldives government recently **suspended three members of a local body**.
- This was notably on charges of meeting the Indian Ambassador without

seeking prior approval.

\n

- However, responding to these, India articulated its hope that as a friendly neighbour, Maldives would be sensitive to India's concerns in keeping with its "India first policy".

\n

\n\n

What are the outcomes of the visit?

\n\n

\n

- The visit was aimed at overcoming the "trust deficit" between the two countries and reset the strained relations.
- \n
- Maldives foreign minister reiterated Maldives' **"India first" policy**.
- \n
- The emphasis is an attempt to allay India's concerns over Maldives' growing proximity towards Beijing.
- \n
- It was conveyed that Maldives would stay **sensitive to India's concerns** over peace and security in the Indian Ocean region.
- \n
- The talks also involved strengthening the bilateral relationship keeping in mind its 'India first' policy and our 'Neighbourhood first' policy.

\n

\n\n

What are the implications?

\n\n

\n

- The visit by a foreign minister may have cleared some of the bitterness between the two countries.
- \n
- However, India can certainly not continue to take its predominant power in South Asia for granted.
- \n
- It cannot be indifferent to the developments in the smaller neighbours, as they have wider geopolitical ramifications.
- \n
- Both countries have to learn to deal with each others proximity and acknowledge that there are no alternative but to make amends in ties.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n



IAS PARLIAMENT

Information is Empowering

A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative