

# India Maldives Diplomatic Row

## Why In News

- The **President Of The Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu**, Had To Suspend 3 Deputy Ministers Of His Government To Avert A Diplomatic Row Between New Delhi And Malé Over Their Derogatory Comments About Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The **Maldives government suspended three of its ministers**- Mariyam Shiuna, Malsha, and Hassan Zihan- for their 'derogatory remarks on India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following the latter's Lakshadweep visit.



## What Happened

- **A row erupted** on social media last week when a minister and some other leaders in the **Maldives used derogatory remarks** against PM Modi after he posted a video of him on a beach in Lakshadweep.



- **The post by Mariyam Shiuna** – which has now been deleted – featured the pictures of PM Modi from his recent visit to Lakshadweep. The Deputy Minister of Youth Empowerment, Information and Arts, referred to the **Indian prime minister as a ‘clown’ and a ‘puppet of Israel’**.
- PM Modi's visit to the country's smallest **Union Territory comprising 36 islands** was seen a move to promote tourism on the island.
- In the tweets, the ministers used derogatory words against PM Modi, accused India of targeting Maldives, and said India faces significant challenges in competing with the Maldives in beach tourism.



- The Maldivian Foreign Ministry said they were aware of the “**derogatory remarks** on social media platforms against foreign leaders and high-ranking individuals”, adding that “these opinions are personal and do not represent the views of the Government of Maldives.”
- **Ministers Mariyam Shiuna, Malsha Shareef and Mahzoom Majid** were suspended with immediate effect, hours after the Maldives government distanced itself from the remarks made by the ministers.
- Strongly condemning the comments by the ministers, **former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed** asked the incumbent President Mohamed Muizzu to tell the world that the comments by the ministers "do not reflect government policy".



- "What appalling language by **Maldives government official Mariyam Shiuna** towards the leader of a key ally, that is instrumental for Maldives' security and prosperity. The Mohamed Muizzu government must distance itself from these comments and give clear assurance to India they do not reflect government policy," **Mr Nasheed said in a post on X.**



- "The **government believes that freedom of expression** should be exercised in a democratic and responsible manner, and in ways that do not spread hatred, negativity, and hinder close relationships between the Maldives and its international partners," the Maldives government said in the statement.
- "Moreover, the relevant authorities of the government will not hesitate to take action against those who make such derogatory remarks," the island nation's government said.

## India - Maldives

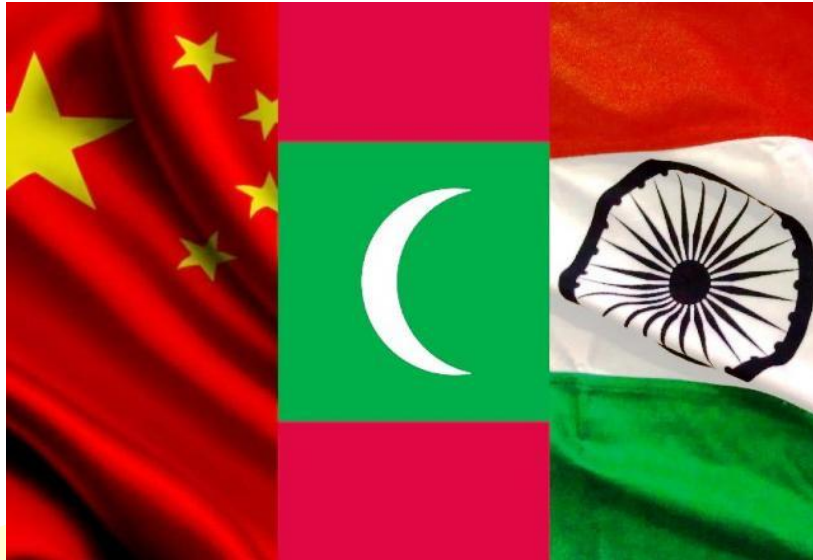
- Maldives is India's key maritime neighbour in the **Indian Ocean Region** and **occupies a special place in India's initiatives such as SAGAR**, or Security and Growth for All in the Region, and the 'Neighbourhood-First Policy' of the Modi government.
- India-Maldives ties in the past few months have been strained, after President Mohamed Muizzu came to power.



- In his election pledge, Mr Muizzu had said he would remove a **small contingent of some 75 Indian military personnel** in the Maldives, and also revise his nation's "India-first" policy. Mr Muizzu, who is seen as a pro-China politician, had defeated his India-friendly predecessor Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in the presidential run-off held in September.



- "China and the Maldives boast time-honoured friendship. In the **past 52 years since the establishment** of diplomatic ties, the two countries have treated each other with respect and supported each other, setting a fine example of equality and mutual benefits between countries of different sizes," said Wang Wenbin, another spokesperson of the Chinese foreign ministry.



- Mr Muizzu's predecessors in the recent past visited **India first, considering the wide-ranging bilateral ties** and the Maldives' proximity to India, followed by China, which has expanded its influence in the island nation by investing in major infrastructure projects there.
- The new Maldives President had met **PM Modi in Dubai** on the sidelines of the COP28 climate talks in December 2023. Both leaders had agreed to set up a core group to discuss the multidimensional relations and further deepen ties.

