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## Parliamentary Election in Maldives

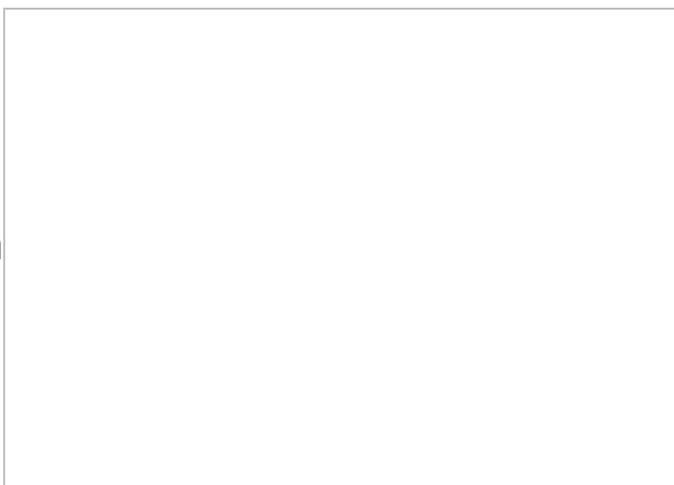
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The Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) has made a landslide victory in the parliamentary election in the Maldives by winning more than two-thirds seats in 87-Member People's Majlis (Maldives Parliament).

- MDP victory is also a boost to President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih of the Maldives, who also belongs to MDP. Victory paves the way for easy passage of bills and a policy agenda with a realistic chance of implementation.
- President Solih assumed power after a presidential election in September 2018, replacing his predecessor Abdulla Yameen, who had propelled the Maldives into China's economic embrace.

### Significance For India



- After a downward trend in relation during the presidency of Abdulla Yameen, that benefited China considerably, the relation between India and Maldives are warming up again under the new president Ibrahim Solih.
- Since September 2018, India and Maldives have seen a number of bilateral visits
  - India's Prime Minister Visited Maldives to attend the swearing-in ceremony of President Solih.
  - Maldives President also visited India in December 2018.

## India-Maldives Relation

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- India and the Maldives share deep **historical, cultural, and economic ties.**
- India was among the **first to recognize the Maldives after its independence in 1965** and to establish diplomatic relations with the country. India established its mission at Malé in 1972.
- India's bilateral and financial assistance to the Maldives has been reciprocated through an **"India first" policy by the Maldives.**
- Importance of the Maldives for India:
  - The Maldives is an important aspect of India's **'Neighbourhood First' policy.**
  - **Strategically located in the Indian Ocean,** Maldives archipelago comprising 1200 coral Islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan, and India. More than 97% of India's international trade by volume and 75% by value passes through the region.
  - As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a **'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region,** India needs to cooperate with the Maldives in security and defense sectors.
  - India is also a preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation, and business.
  - **Maldives is also a member of SAARC.** It is important for India to have the Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region.
  - Since China's naval expansion into the Indian Ocean - Maldives significance has steadily grown and now it's at the heart of international geopolitics.
  - There is significant Indian diaspora in the Maldives. Innumerable Indians work across the hospitality, education, and health-care sectors of the Maldives economy.

### South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

- The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union in South Asia **formed in 1985.**
- The member states include **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.**
- SAARC comprises 3% of the world's area, 21% of the world's population and 9.12% of the global economy, as of 2015.
- **The organization promotes the development of economic and regional integration. It launched the South Asian Free Trade Area in 2006.**
- SAARC maintains permanent diplomatic relations at the UN as an observer and has developed links with multilateral entities.