



### Message from the President of the Republic of Maldives



H.E. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom  
President of the Republic of Maldives

There is now more trade between the two countries. With the establishment of a direct air-link by the national carrier Maldivian, it has now become easier for people from both countries to travel for work, business, studies, and leisure.

On the economic front, a significant number of Bangladeshis are contributing to our development programmes through working in crucial sectors such as construction, tourism and agriculture, bridging acute skills gaps in our country.

Cooperation and exchange of skilled workers will indeed be a mark of the new partnership that will evolve within the SAARC framework – that of sharing skills and resources in the region; and Bangladesh is in a position to provide such skilled resources to the region.

Bilaterally the Maldives and Bangladesh have entered into mutual agreements on several vital sectors of the Maldivian economy. With the significant gains in economic development achieved by both our countries, a concerted effort is needed to explore new areas of cooperation and to increase trade, commerce and investment.

Both the Maldives and Bangladesh have common goals and aspirations.

Both are countries that have set accelerated economic and social development programmes and targets for socio-economic development and enhanced living standards of their peoples.

On the international front, the Maldives and Bangladesh have collaborated on crucial issues that affect both countries directly. Most important of all are the issues related to climate change and sea-level rise.

The changing weather patterns and increasing frequency of natural disasters have affected more than ever before, low-lying countries such as the Maldives and low-lying and coastal areas in Bangladesh. Countries with limited resources are faced with an imminent and grave danger where adaptation and mitigation measures become a real challenge. Hence, both our countries have collaborated and joined hands in the international arena to combat the adverse impact of climate change.

I wish for continued economic progress and increased prosperity for both our countries and the South Asian region.

### Message from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives

ON the occasion of the Maldivian Independence Day anniversary, I wish to convey greetings and best wishes to the people of the Maldives and friendly and brotherly peoples of Bangladesh.

On this auspicious occasion, I wish to note the close bilateral relations that have developed over the years between the Maldives and Bangladesh. Our relations have grown from strength to strength, and we have developed closer relations on several fronts with distinct mechanisms for bilateral cooperation. In this regard, I am happy to note the ongoing cooperation in the fields of health, education, IT and labour sectors.

Bangladesh is a country with huge potential in human resources, and the Maldives continues to benefit immensely in the training of medical doctors. Over the recent past, the number of students pursuing medical programs and internships have increased manifold. I also wish to note the role played by private medical institutes in the provision of medical education in the country. The number of medical scholarships that have been offered by the

government of Bangladesh has also been increased over the recent past. Hence, I wish to convey sincere appreciation for the generous gesture of friendship and support extended by the government of Bangladesh in the development of human resources in the Maldives.

Another area where cooperation has been progressing is that of the IT sector. Currently an MOU on IT sector cooperation is functioning. It also highlights the importance and priority accorded by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh to develop a Digital Bangladesh and the readiness of the government of Bangladesh to extend assistance to countries in the region in the development of respective IT sectors.

In addition, the utilization of labour from Bangladesh is a key aspect of cooperation between the two countries. And, it is important to note the immense contribution made by Bangladeshi workers in key sectors of the Maldivian economy.

On this momentous occasion I also wish to note the need for expanding further the areas of cooperation between the two countries especially in the areas of

investment, trade and commerce. And much work will be undertaken over the course of the year to further such sectors of cooperation.

In conclusion, once again I wish to convey best wishes to the government and people of Bangladesh on this important occasion.

Long live the Maldives Bangladesh friendship.



Dr. Mohamed Asim  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Maldives

# Maldives: The Sunny side of Life

Welcome to the Maldives, where sands are white as the smiles of the locals, where fish swim happily in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, where the weather is a dream, and the deep rays of the sun wait to engulf you their arms.

In ancient times, the shores of the Maldives welcomed lost travellers. Still welcoming, these shores remain, providing a tranquil haven for visitors.

#### Atolls in Maldives

Maldives is formed as one of the most complex and vibrant atoll structures found anywhere on the planet. The 26 natural atolls are categorised into 20 atolls for administrative purposes.

The 20 administrative atolls have distinct



names and features that makes each one of them extraordinary. Now it is possible to explore all the atolls of the Maldives by staying in resorts, hotels, guest houses and traversing across the ocean in liveaboards.

#### History

Though the ancient history of the enthralling Maldives is enshrouded in mystery, it is believed that the island nation was inhabited over 2500 years ago. Besides the recorded early history of the Maldives is limited and few archaeological remains of the prehistoric period survived.

#### First Settlers

The first settlers of the country are believed to be natives of the South Asian subcontinent. Correspondingly similarities in culture and language attest to settlers from neighbouring India and Sri Lanka inhabiting the Maldives.

The Maldives is located in a prime marine route traversed by travellers and traders to navigate through the Indian Ocean. Accordingly the strategic and geographical positioning of the Maldives is believed to have influenced the early settlers to colonise the country. For medieval seafarers the Maldives was a station to resupply their vessels with water, wood, coir and dried tuna.

#### Contact with the outside world

Although the Maldives was located in a geographically remote area, there are historical records of the islanders interacting with some of the greatest human civilisations of the time.

Roman historical records of 362 AD mention of a Maldivian delegation visiting Emperor Julian bearing gifts. Similarly Chinese historical documents of 662 AD records, Maldivian king sending gifts to the Chinese emperor Kao-Tsung of Tang dynasty.

#### Historical Chronicles

Copper plates called Loamaafaanu scribed with Maldivian texts on the orders of Kings survive to this day and are displayed at the National Museum. These copper plated texts preserve some significant historical information about the Maldives.

In the medieval period navigating the precarious Maldivian waters were a challenging affair. Consequently many shipwrecks occurred. One such shipwreck resulted in the French navigator François Pyrard of Laval enduring a Maldivian adventure from 1602-1607. Pyrard's chronicle which was published in 1611 portrays a detailed insight on the life of Maldivians.

Overseas travellers from far-off lands have contributed immensely to the Maldivian history through publishing their experiences. Such noteworthy chronicled contributions from Chinese historian Ma Huan and the famous Arab traveller IbnBatuta have survived to this day.

#### Religion

Maldivians began to embrace Islam en masse in the year 1153 AD. There are many folklores and legends associated with the conversion story. One such folklore states that the Maldivians were haunted by a sea demon named Rannamaari. To appease this sea demon the islanders were forced to present a



virgin girl every month.

According to legend a Moroccan scholar, Abu-al Barakath Yusuf al Barbaree who was visiting the Maldives during this period, rescued the Maldives from this sea demon and convinced the king to adopt Islam.

The Medhu Ziyaarai shrine, a popular tourist attraction found a few steps away from the Friday Mosque in Male' is believed to be the final resting place of this Moroccan scholar.

#### Foreign Occupation

Throughout the recorded history the Maldives existed as an independent polity for the most part. However, there were brief periods of foreign aggressions perpetrated by colonial masters and neighbouring powers.

The Maldivians love and value their freedom. Hence, whenever the country faced any foreign aggression, the heroes of the nation fought bravely to preserve the sovereignty of the country.

Starting from 1558 the Portuguese invaded the Maldives for a period of 15 years. The Maldivian national hero, Muhammad Thakurufaanu Al-Auzam led a successful uprising against the Portuguese aggressors and freed the country. This event is marked annually as the National Day of the Maldives.



There was a brief period during the mid-seventeenth century where the Dutch asserted control over Maldivian affairs. Subsequently on 1887 under an agreement the Maldives became a British Protectorate.

The British Royal Air Force operated an airfield on the Gan island of Addu Atoll. This airfield was active during the Second World War. Today this airfield has become the Gan International Airport, the gateway to the southern region of the country.

#### Becoming a Republic

For much of the known history, the Maldives were ruled by successive kings and queens belonging to different dynasties. However, on 1932 the first constitution of the country was adopted paving way for a republic.

The short lived First Republic was declared on 1953 with Mohamed Amin as the First President. However, the sultanate again made a comeback and lasted until 1968 when the Second Republic was proclaimed.

Under the premiership of Ibrahim Nasir, who became the First President of the Second Republic, Maldives gained independence from the United Kingdom on 26th July 1965. A new constitution was adopted and the Maldives embarked on a rapid modernisation process. The existing fishing industry was upgraded, and the first airport of the country was opened in Hulhulhe' island on 12th April 1966.

During this period the Maldives began to explore new economic opportunities. This resulted in the opening of the first resort in 1972. Since, then the tourism industry has flourished in the country. Today the Maldivian tourism industry is regarded as one of the best in the entire world.

Although the Maldives is small in size, the country has built and enhanced a respectable reputation in the international arena. At present the Maldives leads the way in advocating for the protection of small countries and preserving the environment.

#### Culture

The customs and social behavior of the Maldivians have been greatly influenced by the Indians, Sri Lankans, Arabs and North Africans who visited the Maldives while traversing through the trading routes of the central Indian Ocean. The Maldivian culture

is rich and vibrant due to the infusion of various other cultural elements.

Though Maldives was culturally influenced by other traditions, Maldivians have built and preserved an exclusive cultural identity.

Accordingly the Maldivians converse using a language of their own; In 1153 AD Maldivians converted to Islam and the religion has transformed and introduced new fundamentals to the Maldivian culture.

#### Folklore

Maldivians inherited a treasure trunk of ancient mythology and folklore that was passed orally through generations. These myths cover fascinating stories on various aspects of island life.

Since the islands are surrounded by sea, most folktales depict fearful sea demons and spirits that haunt the islanders.



#### Life in Islands

Traditionally the island communities were very close-knit. This togetherness is still prevailing in the small island societies.

Accordingly men will be mainly engaged in fishery, carpentry and toddy tapping. Women were mainly engaged in household duties and raising families.

Certain rituals and practices were followed in the islands on special occasions like weddings. Some of these rituals survive to this day.

The advent of tourism in the 1970's accelerated the modernisation process of the country. Today an increasing number of women hold crucial positions within the public and private sector. As a result of economic growth, dramatic lifestyle changes were introduced.

*Heartiest Felicitations to  
the People of Maldives on the Joyous Occasion  
of their Independence*