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مشاوران

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دوره نهم

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the same food and laugh and cry over the same things. We, Mr. Prime Minister, are the same people.

Most Historians and Anthropologists places a substantial wave of human migration to the Maldives as far back as 2500 years ago. And that migration Mr. Prime Minister, according to the Mahavamsa, and our mythology they came from West India.

Mr. Prime Minister; they came from Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujrat and Maharashtra.

We should also note the trade/commercial and travelling ties between the coastal states of India - Calicut, Kolkata, Cochin, Goa and Mumbai - and the Maldives. It is in this spirit and recognition that the President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has made 'India First' policy. Mr. Prime Minister, I reaffirm our commitment to this policy.

Mr. Prime Minister; We live in turbulent times.

When Vascoda Gama rounded the cape of the Good Hope. Like all of South Asia we then fell to colonial rule. Mr. Prime Minister not Indian Rule and never was that the case. India has never infringed on our rights for self-determination, but has always got us out of troubled waters. We always thank the Indian people and governments for this.

Mr. Prime Minister; the Parliament of India and the People's Majlis had always enjoyed friendly and fraternal relations. I am confident that the India-Maldives relations would further continue to grow and strengthen in the coming years under your able leadership.

Now, Mister Prime Minister; I would like to invite you to address the Maldives, People's Majlis.

**Address by the Prime Minister of India,  
Mr. Narendra Modi  
at the People's Majlis,**

Hon'ble Speaker of the People's *Majlis*, former President of the Maldives and my dear friend Your Excellency, Mr. Mohamad Nasheed,

Hon'ble Members of the People's *Majlis*

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Namaskaar (Good Evening).

I convey to you the greetings and best wishes on behalf of 1.3 billion Indians, and on my own behalf.

The joy and enthusiasm of the holy festival of Eid-ul-Fitr is still with us. I convey to you and all the people of the Maldives sincere greetings on this occasion also.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

The Maldives is a garland of over 1000 islands. It is a rare gem not only of the Indian Ocean region but the whole world.

Its boundless beauty and natural treasure have been a centre of attraction for centuries.

This country is a glowing example of the indomitable courage of man in the face of nature's force.

Maldives has been witness to the constant flow of trade, people and culture.

And Male, this beautiful capital, is not merely a gateway for tourists to the blue oceans.

It is also the key for the entire world to a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indian Ocean region.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

It is a matter of great happiness and honour for me to be with all of you today in the Maldives and in this august *Majlis*.

I am privileged that the *Majlis* resolved unanimously to invite me in its very first meeting after the election of Hon'ble Mr. Nasheed as the Speaker.

This gesture of yours has touched the heart of every Indian and has enhanced their pride and honour.

And for this, Hon'ble Speaker, I sincerely thank you and all the Hon'ble Members of this august House on my behalf and also on behalf of the whole of India.

***Hon'ble Speaker***

This is my second visit to the Maldives. And in a sense, it is also for the second time that I am witnessing the historical proceedings of the *Majlis*.

I was very happy and greatly privileged to be present at the Inauguration Ceremony of President Solih last November.

That occasion celebrated, in an open stadium amidst thousands of people, a famous and historical victory of democracy whose faith, courage and resolve were the basis of that victory.

That ceremony was an overwhelming experience. I felt first-hand the energy of true democracy in Maldives.

That day, I witnessed the dedication and commitment of the common citizen of Maldives for democracy and also their love and regard for leaders like you, Mr. Speaker.

And today, I salute all of you, the flag bearers of democracy in Maldives.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

This House, this *Majlis* is not just a building constructed of bricks and mortar.  
It is no ordinary gathering of people.

It is that energy centre of democracy where the pulse of the nation and its heartbeat resonate in the thoughts and voice of each and every Member of this House.

It is here that the dreams and aspirations of people come true through your efforts.

It is here that Members belonging to various ideologies and parties converge to convert their collective will into lasting achievements for the sake of democracy, development and peace in the country.

In just the same way, a few months ago, the Maldivian people collectively presented a glowing example of democracy to the whole world.

That journey of yours was full of challenges.

But Maldives showed, you all showed, that it is the people who ultimately win.

It was no ordinary success.

This achievement of yours is a great source of strength for democracy in the whole world.

And who could be the happiest and the most proud of this achievement of the Maldives?

The answer is oblivious.

It is of course your closest friend and neighbour, and the largest democracy in the world, India.

Today, in this august gathering, I would like to emphasise that India and all Indians have always been, are and always will be with you for the cause of strengthening democracy in the Maldives.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

In India too, we have recently completed the largest democratic exercise in the history of mankind.

For 1.3 billion Indians, it was not just an ordinary election, but a celebration, a mega festival of democracy. Over two-thirds of eligible voters, that is more than 600 million people, turned up to vote.

They gave an overwhelming mandate for development and stability.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

The fundamental Mantra of my government *sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas* (together with all, for the development all and with the trust of all) is not merely for India.

It is also the cornerstone of my government's foreign policy and approach in the larger world, especially in our neighbourhood.

'Neighbourhood First' is our priority.

And in the neighbourhood, Maldives is a priority.

And therefore, it is no coincidence that I stand amidst you today.

In December last year, India was the first country President Solih visited.

And now, the affectionate invitation from Maldives has brought me here, making it my first overseas destination in this new term.

And a short while ago, I was also fortunate and privileged that President Solih conferred on me Maldives' highest civilian honour for foreigners.

I am truly at a loss for words to convey my gratitude.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

Relations between India and Maldives are older than history.

From time immemorial, blue waters have washed our shores.

The waves of the vast seas connecting us have been the messengers of friendship between our peoples.

They have also nourished our cultures and civilisations.

Our relationship has been blessed with the depth and expanse of oceans.

Trade has flourished between Maldives and India, including my home state Gujarat for millennia. More than 2500 years ago, Maldives traded with Lothal, which is considered among the oldest ports in the world. Thereafter, trade continued with cities like Surat.

Even Indian children have coveted the treasure of Maldivian cowries.

Music, musical instruments, customs and traditions are vivid examples of our shared heritage.

Take for example Divehi language.

'Week' is called 'hafta' in India, and also in Divehi.

Let's look at the names of weekdays.

'Sunday' in Divehi is Aadittha, which is related to Aaditya or Sun.

Monday is called Homa which bears similarity with 'Soma' or Moon.

'Dhuniye' in Divehi is the same as 'Duniya' in India, which stands for the world.

And 'Duniya' is also a famous Maldivian name.

And it is not just about this world. The similarity between our languages extends also to heaven and hell. The Divehi words 'suvuruge' and naraka are similar to 'swarag' and 'narak' in Hindi.

A list of such similarities can be very long. If I continue, we will have an entire dictionary.

Suffice to say that at every step we realise that we are flowers of the same garden.

And therefore, cooperation with you in preserving the cultural heritage of Maldives, preserving its manuscripts and developing dictionary of Dhivehi are of great importance to us.

And it is also for this reason that I was very happy to announce today India's cooperation for the conservation of the historical Friday Mosque.

A coral mosque like this exists nowhere else outside Maldives.

Hundreds of years ago, wise Maldivians had created its unique architecture using wealth of the sea.

This bears testimony to their respect for and harmony with nature.

Regretfully, the same marine wealth today faces threat from pollution.

As such, the conservation of this magnificent coral mosque will also send a message to the entire world for the conservation of our environment.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

India has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Maldives to support its freedom, democracy, prosperity and peace.

Be it the incident of 1988, or fighting natural calamities such as the Tsunami of 2004 or the more recent water shortage.

We are proud to have stood with you, supporting your efforts at all times and at every step.

And now, the strong mandate in both our countries for development, prosperity and stability has opened new avenues for our cooperation.

There has been encouraging progress in implementing the economic package of 1.4 billion US dollars, which was agreed upon during the visit of President Solih to India.

The unwavering focus of India's developmental cooperation with your great country is the social and economic development of the people of Maldives.

Whether it is about water supply and sanitation on the islands, creating infrastructure and developing health and educational facilities: India's cooperation will always be focused on the welfare of the people and be based on the requirements and priorities of Maldives.

Dozens of our Social Impact and other cooperation projects touch the lives of the common people in this country and contribute to your efforts for the betterment of their lives.

India will continue to be a reliable, strong and leading partner for democracy and prosperity in Maldives.

And this cooperation will strengthen your hands as representatives of the Maldivian people.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

Relations between two countries are not confined to their governments alone.

They draw energy from strong ties between their peoples.

Therefore, I attach special significance to all those efforts which promote people-to-people exchanges.

Hence, I am particularly happy that today we have agreed to start a new ferry service between our countries.

I am also very happy that the visa facilitation agreement concluded last year has made it easier for thousands of Maldivians coming to India for business, medical care, education, leisure, tourism, etc.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

While taking our mutual cooperation forward, we have also to be mindful of the vast uncertainties and serious challenges around us today.

There are many emerging challenges from the disruptions caused by technological advancement, shifts in the axis of economic and strategic power in a multi-polar world, competition and rivalry.

However, I would like to touch upon three such topics that are most important for both our countries.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

Terrorism is a very big challenge of our times.

This is not a challenge faced by one nation or region only. It is a challenge for all humankind.

Not a day goes by when the horrific face of terrorism does not show itself, and takes an innocent life somewhere.

Terrorists do not own banks. They don't have their own mints, nor armament factories. But neither money nor weapons seem to be in short supply for them.

Where do they get these from? Who provides them the facilities they need?

State sponsorship of terrorism is the biggest threat.

It is indeed extremely unfortunate that even now some people resort to the fallacy of distinguishing between the so-called 'good' and 'bad' terrorists.

We have lost enough time debating these artificial differences. It is now tolerable no more.

All forces supporting humanity must come together to effectively fight terrorism.

The litmus test for today's leadership is the way they deal with the dark forces of terrorism and radicalisation.

The international community has actively arranged for global Convention and many conferences on the grave threat of climate change. Why not on the issue of terrorism?

I call upon all global institutions and all leading nations to organise a global conference on terrorism within a stipulated timeframe, so that there can be meaningful and result-oriented discussions for plugging the loopholes that terrorists and their supporters exploit.

If we delay action any further, our current and future generations will never forgive us.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

I mentioned climate change. There is no doubt that it is a reality of our times.

Drying rivers and uncertainty of weather adversely affect our agriculture and farmers.

But, even more than that, melting glaciers and rising sea-levels have become an existential threat for countries like the Maldives.

Marine pollution has wreaked havoc on livelihood dependent on coral islands and the Ocean.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

Who can forget your radical and courageous step to hold the world's first Cabinet Meeting in the depths of ocean for attracting the world's attention to these dangers?

Maldives has taken several other exemplary initiatives also to promote sustainable development.

I am happy that it has joined the International Solar Alliance.

The initiative to launch this Alliance, taken jointly by India, has provided a platform to several countries of the world for taking practical steps to save our Earth.

Renewable energy is a potent alternative for mitigating many adverse effects of climate change.

This distinguished gathering is familiar with India's ambitious target of 175 GW of renewable energy by the year 2022, and the progress achieved in attaining it surpassing all expectations.

And recently, India's cooperation has lit up streets of Male with 2,500 energy-efficient and environment-friendly LED street lights.

And over two hundred thousand LED bulbs have reached homes and shops in Maldives.

They will help save precious electricity and environment, and also cut electricity bill.

India has paid special attention to the needs and concerns of small islands.

She has not only herself come forward to address many of their specific difficulties but also raised her voice at various global fora, highlighting those difficulties and calling for their redressal.

However, everyone needs to join in so that we can reach the requisite level of collective efforts.

But we will be wrong to assume that merely technological solutions can help us fight the challenge of climate change.

It will not be possible to adequately mitigate adverse effects of climate change without bringing in changes in our values, approach, life-style and societies.

The ancient Indian belief regards the Earth as our mother and all of us as her children. If we regard this planet as our mother, we can only respect and conserve it, and cannot harm it.

We should also remember that this home, our earth, is the legacy we hold for our future generations in trust, and it is not a property we own.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

The third subject is the Indo-Pacific, which is our shared region.

It is a region with 50% of the world's population, and enormous diversity of religions, culture, languages, history and political and economic systems.

But it is also a region with many unanswered questions and unresolved disputes.

Indo-Pacific region is an inalienable part of our existence. It has been our lifeline, and also the highway for trade and prosperity.

In every sense, it is the key to our shared future.

Therefore, I had said in June 2018 in Singapore that everyone will have to work together for ensuring openness, integration and balance in the Indo-Pacific.

Only this will ensure trust among nations. Only this will ensure continuation of rule-based order and multilateralism.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

4 years ago, I articulated India's vision and commitment for the Indian Ocean region in the form S.A.G.A.R, which is a word in Hindi meaning 'sea'. This acronym stands for Security And Growth for All in the Region, which is a blueprint for us for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

Today, I would like to once again stress on this principle of inclusiveness.

I would also like to reiterate that India will use its capabilities and strengths not only for her own prosperity and security.

We will also endeavour to develop the capacity of other countries in the region, to reach out to them in the times of disasters with humanitarian assistance, and work for shared security, prosperity and a bright future for all.

A capable, strong and prosperous India will be a robust pillar of peace, development and security not only in South Asia and Indo-Pacific, but in the entire world.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

We cannot have a more suitable partner than the Maldives in realising this vision and for cooperating to benefit from the Blue Economy.

Because we are maritime neighbours.

Because we are friends.

And there is no one big or small, strong or weak among friends.

The foundation of a peaceful and prosperous neighbourhood rests on trust, goodwill and cooperation.

And this trust emanates from the faith that we would be sensitive to each other's concerns and interests. So that both of us can enjoy more prosperity and more security.

It is possible only when our mutual trust and confidence are strong not only in good times, but also during difficulties.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

*"Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam"* is both our philosophy and policy. It means that the whole world is but one family.

The greatest man of our age, Mahatma Gandhi had said "There is no limit to extending our services to our neighbours".

India has always shared her achievements with the world and especially with her neighbours.

Therefore, our development partnerships are to empower people, and not to weaken them. Nor to enhance their dependence on us.

Nor indeed to impose the impossible burden of debt on the shoulders of generations yet to come.

***Hon'ble Speaker,***

This is a time of complex transitions, full of challenges.

However, challenges also bring opportunities.

Today, Maldives and India have the opportunity:

- to set an ideal for the world of being good neighbours and friends;
- to usher prosperity through our cooperation so that the economic, social and political aspirations of our people are fulfilled;
- to work together for ensuring stability, peace and security in our region;
- to ensure the security of the world's most important sea lane;
- to defeat terrorism;
- to keep the forces that nurture terrorism and extremism away from our shores;
- to bring about necessary changes for a healthy and clean environment.

History and our people would expect us to make full use of these opportunities and not to let go of them.

India is firmly resolved to cooperate fully in these efforts, and also to deepen its invaluable friendship with Maldives.

I reiterate to you this solemn pledge today.

I thank you once again for the privilege you accorded to me to be amongst you and the honour that you bestowed on me.

I thank you for your friendship.

Thank you very much.

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### Concluding remarks of Speaker of People’s Majlis

Thank you, Prime Minister, for your invaluable speech.

Prime Minister; you might have noticed that number of parliament members were not using the headphones. They quite clearly, very clearly understood what you said.

I would like to stress that it is not the size but the sincerity, understanding and commitment that are crucial to building lasting relationships between our two countries. These elements are very visible in our relationship with India. Although very short, I am sure your visit will raise the relationship between our two countries and two legislatures to higher levels for the mutual benefit of peoples on both, our peoples.

Mr. Prime Minister; I would like to gift you a copy of our first constitution, as a token of appreciation for India’s deference towards the Maldives.

Mr. Prime Minister; as you may well be aware, the first Constitution of the Maldives came into force in 1932. The first People’s Majlis was borne out of that constitution and has continued to function as an institution since then.

But Mr. Prime Minister, I must mention, this copy that we present to you today, lacks the seal of the then Sultan. The copy with the seal was rather enthusiastically impaled by a strong Male’ mob less than a year after its ratification.

We wish the Maldives - India relationship a happy, prosperous and productive journey into the future.

والحمد لله رب العالمين. ޖަމިއްޔާއި ސަރުކާރު.