

PM Modi's Maldives Visit Signals Renewed Focus on Bilateral Ties After Standoff



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is slated to visit the Maldives on July 25, 2025, marking his first trip to the island nation since a recent period of strained relations. The visit, announced by India's Ministry of External Affairs, comes at the invitation of Maldivian President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, who extended an invitation for PM Modi to be the "Guest of Honour" at the Maldives' 60th Independence Day celebrations on July 26. This high-level engagement is seen as a crucial step towards de-escalating tensions and reaffirming India's "Neighbourhood First" policy in the strategically vital Indian Ocean region.

The bilateral relationship experienced a significant downturn following President Muizzu's election in late 2023, campaigned on an "India Out" platform advocating for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the Maldives. Tensions further escalated in January 2024 when several Maldivian cabinet ministers made derogatory remarks about PM Modi on social media, prompting widespread outrage and calls for a boycott of Maldivian tourism by Indian citizens. This diplomatic spat led to a significant decrease in Indian tourist arrivals, a vital revenue stream for the island nation.

Despite these challenges, both nations have demonstrated a willingness to mend ties. President Muizzu attended PM Modi's swearing-in ceremony in June 2024, followed by a state visit to India in October 2024. During this visit, both leaders adopted a "Joint Vision for a

Comprehensive Economic and Maritime Security Partnership," laying the groundwork for renewed cooperation. Furthermore, India has continued to provide financial assistance and support for infrastructure projects in the Maldives, including rolling over repayment of treasury bills and extending a currency swap facility. Indian military personnel operating aviation platforms in the Maldives have also been replaced by "competent Indian technical personnel," addressing a key Maldivian concern.

PM Modi and President Muizzu are expected to hold extensive discussions on strengthening the India-Maldives partnership and review the progress of the Joint Vision document. The visit holds profound significance, coinciding with both the 60th anniversary of Maldivian independence and 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

This diplomatic outreach signals a clear intent from both New Delhi and Malé to stabilize and advance their relationship, crucial for regional stability and India's broader strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. The outcome of this visit will be closely watched as it sets the tone for future cooperation in defense, economy, and maritime security between these two important maritime neighbors.