

AFTER OVER THREE YEARS, MALDIVES REJOINS COMMONWEALTH

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Commonwealth of Nations

The Maldives on Saturday re-joined the Commonwealth, more than three years after the Indian Ocean island nation quit the association amid mounting criticism of its human rights record then.

In 2016, the Maldives pulled out of the Commonwealth terming “unjust” the grouping’s decision to penalise the country over former President Mohamed Nasheed’s controversial ouster in 2012. It followed the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)’s warning to Maldives of suspension from the bloc, voicing “deep disappointment” over the country’s lack of progress in resolving the political crisis during former President Abdulla Yameen’s presidency, whose authoritarian slant sparked concern domestically and internationally.

However, months after President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih won the 2018 presidential elections, promising to restore democracy, he wrote to the Commonwealth, requesting to re-join the bloc.

Following the island nation’s readmission Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland said: “The reform process under way in Maldives aligns with the values and principles of the Commonwealth and we encourage the nation to continue on this path.”

President Solih said in a tweet: “A short while ago, I had a conversation with the Commonwealth’s Secretary General who informed me that the Maldives has been formally reinstated into the Commonwealth as its 54th member state. We shall long strive to uphold the Commonwealth’s values of democracy and human rights.”

India lauds inclusion

The Government of India congratulated the Government of Maldives on its readmission to the Commonwealth of Nations as its 54th member. “India has always been a key supporter of Maldives’ readmission and for it to play a larger role in international organisations and the comity of nations. We are committed to working closely with Maldives on shared Commonwealth goals like development, democracy and peace,” the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

New Delhi-Male ties witnessed a significant shift following the poll defeat of former President Yameen, perceived to be a friend of China. India said it would continue working with Maldives in achieving its “democratic and developmental aspirations.”

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