

**POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GOVERNANCE IN
MALDIVES
(1968-1998)**

**Thesis Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

HARISH CHANDRA BEHERA



**CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST ASIAN & SOUTH WEST
PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI – 110067
INDIA
2006**



CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTHEAST ASIAN & SOUTH WEST PACIFIC STUDIES

SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

NEW DELHI - 110 067

Phone : 26704350

Fax : 91-11-2671 7586

91-11-2671 7603

Date: March 2006

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the thesis entitled “POLITICAL SYSTEM AND GOVERNANCE IN MALDIVES (1968 – 1998)” submitted by me is a bonafide work and it has not been submitted to any other university for the award of any other degree.

Harish Chandra Behera

Harish Chandra Behera

(STUDENT)

We recommend that thesis may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Mahendra P. Lama

Prof. Mahendra P. Lama
(CHAIRPERSON)

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for South, Central, South East
Asian and South West Pacific Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University,
New Delhi-110067

Dr. P. Sahadevan

Dr. P. Sahadevan
(SUPERVISOR)
SUPERVISOR

Centre for South, Central South East
Asian and South West Pacific Studies
School of International Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067

In loving memory of my Late Father Shri.
NATABAR BEHERA
and my Late Sister Mrs. PRAMILA

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PREFACE

Maldives became a British protectorate in 1887 and remained so until 26 July, 1965, when it attained independence. After independence, the country abandoned the Sultanate system and became republic again on 11 November 1968. The political system and governance in Maldives from 1968 to 1998 has passed through many phases. The study covers 30 years of Maldives existence as an independent nation. The year 1968 signifies the country's emergence as a republic, and in 1998 Maldives adopted a new Constitution.

The political system and governance in Maldives is highly centralized. The country has a Presidential form of government. The President is the Chief- Executive and Controls the entire constitutional machinery, including the legislature and Judiciary. After independence, the regime structure under the Maldivian constitution has reflected a considerable degree of continuity. Also stability and orderliness have been the hallmark of its political system with only two persons occupying the office of President so far-Ibrahim Nasir (1968-1978) and Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (since 1978). Nasir operated as a benevolent despot. In contrast, Gayoom has viewed his own role as a liberal democrat but he enjoys absolute powers even under the new constitution, which came into force on 1 January 1998.

The main objectives of the proposed study are:

- 1). It has examined the nature of political system in Maldives.
- 2) It has analysed the political processes and the problems of governance.
- 3) The study understands the structure and the functions of the local administration.
- 4) It has analysed the relationship between the Atoll Administration and the Central Government.
- 5) The study has evaluated the steps taken by the president to strengthen the political system. And
- 6) It has analyzed the challenges to political order in Maldives.

The study has proposed to test the following hypotheses:

- 1) A Centralized political system in atoll states can bring about political stability at the cost of freedom and open competition for power.
- 2) Participatory institutions tend to be weak in atoll states because of undeveloped political culture resulting from the state controlled electoral process
- 3) People tend to accept a centralized political system because they are more concerned about development and economic survival.
- 4) Centralization of power is only possible in Atoll-State like Maldives because mobilization of people for political reforms is difficult;
- 5) Finally, problems of governance in atoll states are more political than economic or cultural.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Apart from defining the key concepts like political system and governance in atoll States, **the first chapter** discusses the geographical frameworks and historical background of the country. It examines the nature of the society and culture of the Maldivians. The role of Islam in unifying the country and the pre-Islamic society of Maldives also examined.

The second chapter analyses the evolution of political system from the ancient period. It specially deals with the political system of the Sultanate system in the pre-constitutional development period. The second chapter also emphasizes the nature of the Sultanate political system; and what were the institutions, how the power was concentrated, and how the Sultan governed in the atoll- state. It extensively analyses the impact of colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch and British rule) on the political system of Maldives. The chapter also highlights the agreements with British and its impact. An analysis of the Constitutional development and the political system under various Constitutions up to the period of independence has also been given. The purpose is to find out the nature of the political system during the pre-

independence period so that the continuity and change in the post-colonial political system can be identified in the Maldives.

The third chapter analyses the nature of post-colonial Maldivian political system. It focuses on the Constitutional development in Maldives. The main backgrounds of the 1968 Constitution and the 1998 Constitution of the country have also been analysed. The powers and functions of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary under the 1968 and 1998 Constitutions have also been studied extensively. The chapter also highlights the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of the Maldivian citizens. Analysis of Maldives Public Service Commission and its contribution to the government has been given. Finally, the chapter also makes a critical review and an assessment of the nature and functions of the political system in Maldives.

The fourth chapter analyses national institutions of governance in Maldives. In this chapter, the focus is on political and economic institutions, which govern the country. There are many national institutions; it may be political or economic institutions, nevertheless, functions for the government. This chapter analyses the functions of some of the key political institutions such as Ministry of Home and Environment, Ministry of Defence and National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Treasury and also Ministry of Atolls Development. Among them, the Ministry of Home and Environment is important and its functions rely upon the nation's development of the nation. The chapter made a profile of certain economic institutions such as The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA), Bank of Maldives Limited (BML), Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), State Trading Centre (STC), and the National Security Service (NSS). Finally, it highlights how these institutions function for the development of the nation.

The fifth chapter analyses the local administration. It deals with the powers and functions of the Atoll-Chief and the Island- Chief, and how the national government controls the local administration. It highlights the type of political system that strengthens the local administration. Also,

Urban/Municipality administration of Maldives has been analysed. An extensively analysed of administrative relations has also been given highlighting how local administration is carried out in the country. Economic development of the local level administration is also another important point discussed. Budgetary allocations of the central government to the local administration of the country have also been analysed. Finally, the chapter highlights the socio-economic indicators of the country, and how much the policies and programmes of the central government are helping to the local administration.

The sixth chapter analyses the problems of governance in Maldives. It focuses on how the geographical factor has been the source of problems of the country. The chapter analyses problems of the socio-economic development and also socio-economic implications of regional imbalances in Maldives. It deals with challenges of seating human resource base in the country. The challenges of widening political representation in the higher Offices of Maldives have also been analysed. The country's security problems both, military and non-military; the causes for the coup attempts, and the Maldivian Government's strategies to overcome such challenges have also been dealt with in this chapter. Finally, it analyses the 1988 coup attempt and India's military involvement to foil the coup attempt in Maldives.

The thesis has concluded with identifying the trends in the political process of Maldives and the changing nature of political system and also its acceptability in the country.

The proposed study is based on historical-analytical method. The required data for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The constitution, government documents and speeches of the leaders form the primary sources. The secondary sources comprise of books, articles, newspapers and magazines etc.

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCATION

The World consists of 196 independent states now; of which only 24 are Island- states. Of these Island states, the atoll- states are very few in the world. The number of total atoll- states is only eight in the world, which have different types of administrative system. The atoll- state is an island made of coral; it is shaped like a ring with a lake of salt water in the middle. The basic material comprises of limestone of organic origin, formed by the accumulation of the calcareous skeletons of marine animals and plants, mainly corals and coralline algae. The most important group of atolls is the Maldives, which is located in the Indian Ocean. In the Atlantic Ocean there are several atolls in the Lesser Antilles; and the Bahamas contain some rather artificial atolls. The largest atoll in the land area is Christmas Island, in the central pacific.

It is a fact that large numbers of island states are small, remote and poor in resources. They share enough in common with each other (as well as with non-Island small states) to merit attention as a group. The smallness of these states can be appraised not only in terms of their single but also in terms of power. The major components of power wealth, organization, status, and will are highly deficient in these small atoll-island states.¹ It is however; noteworthy that smallness can be viewed only in general terms. For instance, if one talk of deficiencies, the various indicators connoting them cannot be absolutely quantified and correlated. At best, they give an idea of the range of smallness. Secondly, smallness is a relative concept. Some states may be viewed as large in the regional framework but small in global terms. Finally, smallness is not static but dynamic.² The discovery of an important resource or a better mobilization and augmentation of available resources may change the position of a state in the power hierarchy.³

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1. *The Europa World Year book, volume 11, Routledge Taylor and Francis Groups, Landon and New York, 2005, pp. 2856-2860*
Percy Selwyn, "small, poor and Remote: Islands at a Geographic Disadvantage," (Sussex: Institute of Development Studies 1978), mineo.
Mike Faber, "Island MicroStates: Problems of inability." *The Round Table*, 1984, p.372.

It is true that atoll-island states are totally different from other states because of so many factors. The incidence of a large number of islands, remote from each other, with small population poses problems for its own in planning for the provision of welfare services and infrastructure for economic development.⁴ The geopolitical point of views of these atoll-island states are different. Majority atoll-island states have unitary political system because political elite prefers unitary structure to federal structure.⁵ This is so because unitary political system offers more political stability at the cost of freedom and also open competition for political power. The political elites in atoll-island states have thus been trying how to establish a strong unitary political system that they can benefit from the system. The federal structure gives more welfare to the common people. The centralized political system tends to be strong in the atoll-island states than decentralized system because of enormous challenges to real political order.

Atoll-island states are not without challenges. Challenges are there in the area of politiy, economics, and the military. Given the central control of the political life and dispersal of population throughout the atoll-island political process itself is very much centrally controlled.⁶ It is a fact that political elite belonging to a narrow geographical zone and wider representative of elites is encouraged in atoll-island states with centralized political system. Hence, political stability, which is ensured through strict executive control, is identified with the regime stability in atoll-island states.⁷ For example, Kiribati is one of the atoll states in the world where unitary political system is found. In Kiribati, executive power is vested in the President. The President governs with the assistance of the Vice-President and the Cabinet whom he appoints from the among members of the Mancaba.

⁴ . Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutta Luithui. *The Republic of Maldives: Development Imperatives of a Small State*, 1982, p.5.

⁵ . Lawrence Ziring, "The Insecurity of Small States", *BISS Journal*, (Dhaka) July 1986, p.124.

⁶ . Urmila Phadnis. "Political Dynamics of the Island States: A Comparative Study of Sri Lanka and Maldives", *IDSA Journal*, 1980, p.305.

⁷ . Kamal Siddiqui, (ed), *Local Government in South Asia*, 1990, p.291.

The Marshall Islands is an atoll- state, where federal political system is there. The constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands provides for a parliamentary form of government, with legislative authority vested in the 33 members of Nitijela. The Nitijela elects the President of the Marshall Islands from among its own members. In Marshall Islands, the local governmental units are the municipalities and the villages. Elected Magistrates and Councils govern the municipalities so that village government remains largely traditional.⁸

Nauru is a small atoll- state in the world. Nauru has a unitary political system. Legislative power is vested in the parliament, with 18 members elected by universal adult- suffrage for three years. Executive authority is vested in a Cabinet, which consists of the President of the Republic. The President is elected by the Parliament, and the ministers are appointed by him. Responsibilities for administration are divided between the Nauru Local Government Council and the Government. The Council, an elected body of nine members from the country's 14 districts, elects one of its members to be the Head- Chief.

However, Papua New Guinea is an island- state in the SouthWest Pacific, where federal political system is followed. In Papua New Guinea, executive power is vested in the British Monarch (the Head of State), represented locally by the governor-general, who is appointed on the proposal of the National Parliament by simple majority vote. The governor-general acts on the advice of the National Executive Council, which is led by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The Prime Minister can be appointed and dismissed by the Head of State on the proposal of the National Parliament. The federal structure of the parliament has been there since very beginning. New regional authorities and local councilors have replaced provisional governments.⁹

The Europa World yearbook 2005, Volume 11, Rutledge Taylor & Francis Groups, London and New York, 2005, pp. 2854-2860
ibid.

Therefore, it is true that small population and land areas with this population lack appropriate political structure. Personal as well as geographical factor has also been source of some problems for federal system in atoll-island states. This is the reason why majority of atoll-island states has unitary political system. As mentioned earlier, the political stability of these small atoll-islands is ensured through strict executive control. Similarly, the small Atoll-island State of Maldives shares this characteristic, which marks the significant feature of any atoll-island political system in the world.

Geographical Framework of the Maldives

The Republic of Maldives comprises of an archipelago of 1190 small coral islands. It is located 600km southwest of the southern tip of India and 670km southwest of Sri Lanka; only 200 islands of these are inhabited. These islands are constituted into 26 natural atolls for easy administration. They are further divided into 19 administrative units or atolls. These islands are very small and low-lying, with many no more than two metres above the sea level. Common features are tall coconut palms, white sandy beaches and crystal clear lagoons. The land area, however, is only about 298 sq. km. The total area including land and sea is about 90,000 sq. km. The length of the archipelago is 823 km, while it is 130 km at its greatest width.¹⁰

TABLE-I

¹⁰ . Source: <http://www.luptravel.com/international/asia/maldives/topography.htm>.

Island-wise Administrative Divisions¹¹

Name : Atolls	Islands	
	Inhabited	Uninhabited
1. North Thiladhunmathi	16	39
2. South Thiladhunmathi	17	25
3. North Miladhunmadulu	14	44
4. South Miladhunmadulu	14	74
5. North Maalhosmadulu	16	74
6. South Maalhosmadulu	13	75
7. Faadhippolhu	04	71
8. Ari Atoll	17	95
9. Male Atoll	09	71
10. Felidhe Atoll	05	21
11. Mula Katholhu	09	49
12. North Nilandhe Atoll	05	26
13. South Niandhe Atoll	08	30
14. Kolhumadulu	13	49
15. Hadhdhunmathi	12	71
16. North Huvadhu Atoll	10	79
17. South Huvadhu Atoll	10	79
18. Foamulah	01	--
19. Addu Atoll	06	37
20. Male (Capital) (Part of Male Atoll)	01	--
Total Number of Islands	200	990 / Ground Total 1190

¹¹ . Source Population and Housing Census, 2001 in Maldives, Ministry of Planning and Development, *Statistical year book of Maldives*, 2001, p.9.

Population: The population of Maldives has been increasing rapidly in recent years. The population of Maldives according to 1990 census was 213,215. The country's population in mid-1994 was estimated at 252,077. The high 1994 birth- rate of 44 per 1,000 has led to an increase in population, with more than 276,000. According to 2001 census, the population of the country was 288,800. Now, the population of Maldives has already reached more than 300,000. It is expected that to reach about more than 400,000 by the turn of 2020. Although the high population growth rate is considered a serious problem, Maldives still lacks an official birth control policy. It is true that the growth- rate of population also poses problems for the country's future food-supply because the dietary staple of rice is not grown in the islands.¹²The largest concentration of Maldives population is in Male, a small Island of approximately two square kilometres, whose population (1990 census) of 55,130 represented slightly more than 25 percent of the national total. The 1990 census recorded an average population density of 706 persons per square kilometre in Maldives.

The first accurate census was conducted in December 1977 and showed 142,832 persons residing in Maldives, an increase of 37 per cent over the 1967 estimate. The next census in March 1985 showed 181,453 persons, consisting of 94,060 males and 87,393 females. This pattern has been continuous in Maldives. Despite rapid population growth, family planning programmes in Maldives were not implemented in a well funded and planned manner until the UN implemented several programmes in the 1990s. Maldives is the 7th most density-populated country on earth. The government has not taken actions for over limiting the number of children for a couple, or set a target population goals.¹³

History of Maldives

It is true that only distinct ethnic minority is found in Male, capital city of Maldives, among the trading community of Indians, who settled there in the 1800s. Several hundreds in number, they are a religious minority. A small

¹² . Source: <http://www.hellomaldives.com/Maldives/population>.

¹³ . WHO, *World Health Report on Maldives*, 2004.

number of Sri Lankans have come to Maldives in recent years to work in the tourist resorts; because Maldivians, as devout Muslims, refuse to work in facilities serving alcoholic beverages. So, this situation has created some sort of resentment among the local Maldivians who are facing employment problems¹⁴

The islands were originally inhabited by aborigines of Dravidian descent who were driven from South by the wave of Aryan immigrants about the fifth or fourth centuries BC. Over the centuries, trading contacts with the Arabs, Negroes and Asians (particularly Indians and Sri Lankans) have also had their imprint on the Maldivian society.¹⁵ Arab and Persian influences appear to be the most important, as is evident from the religion, language and culture of the Maldives.¹⁶

Mohammed IBN BATTUTA, the first traveller, visited the Maldives in 1344 AD. He was the first to reside in Maldives Islands before putting down his experiences in writing. Hence, his writing can be called the first authentic account of the archipelago. It is true that the written history of Maldives begins with the conversion of King Kalaminja to Islam in 1153 AD.

The early history of the Maldives is obscure. The first ruler of the Maldives was Theemugey Maha Kalaminja (1141-1153 AD), but it was too difficult and rare the names of his parents as it were not recorded. T.M. Klaminja (Raja) ruled as a Buddhist King and he embraced Islam in AD 1153.
17

Once upon a time when Maldives was sparsely inhabited, a prince of Mogal birth named Koimala Kalo was married to the daughter of the King of Human. He made a voyage with her in two vessess from Lanka. When they reached in the Maldives islands, they were welcomed in the Rasgetheemu

¹⁴ . Source: <http://www/Hellowmaldives.com/Maldives/index.htm>.

¹⁵ . J.P. Anand, "The Maldives: A Profile," Encyclopedia of Maldives, 1997, p.29.

¹⁶ . A.R. Tuly, *Marriage and Kinship in an Island Society*, (Delhi, National, 1972), pp. 1-82.

¹⁷ . Subhash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo, Niana Agencies Limited, 1996). Pp.33-37.

Island in Raa Atoll. The people of that island learned that the two chief visitors were of Lanka royal decent from Lanka, and invited them to remain.

Koimala was crowned as King of Maldives in Rasgetheemu. Two vessels were sent to Lanka to bring people from the Lion Race. Koimala and his wife actually reigned as a Buddhist rules for twelve years, and he was then converted to Islam. He ruled for thirteen years and after that finally went for Mecca.

However, the authentic record on the chronology of ruling sultans and their descendents also gives a keen insight into the political behaviour of the hereditary oligarchy. *Thaarekh* (History) is presented in an abridged form in English in H.C.P.Bell's account of Maldives. H.C.P.Bell had written about Maldives to date its history, archaeology, coinage, climate, geography, and every other aspect of the people's lifestyle. He not only brought together all the preceding studies on this islands but also gave new interpretation to them, adding new knowledge and research.¹⁸

According to Maldavian history, the country remained a sultanate uninterruptedly for 836 years since the beginning of its recorded history (AD1153), with an unbroken line of sultans and upto 1953, except for a short-lived republic that came into existence. It reverted to sultanate rule in 1954 and remained so till 1968, from which date it named itself the Republic of Maldives with an elected President. Maldives achieved political independence in 1965.¹⁹

Britain finally recognized Maldives as a fully independent and sovereign state when the agreement on independence was signed in Colombo on July 26, 1965. Historical facts prove that there were only two periods when Maldives was under foreign domination and rule. The first period was under the Portuguese. The Portuguese managed to gain control over it in 1558 which lasted to 1573, for about 15 years, the rule exercised by a governor resident in Goa. The second period was under the Dutch, who occupied Male with a

¹⁸ . H.C.P. Bell, *The Maldives Islands: An Accounts of Physical Features Climate, History, Inhabitant, Productions and Trade*, Sessional Paper XLIII, 1883, p.11.

¹⁹ . Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, *The Republic of Maldives: Development Imperatives of a Small State*, 1982, p.10.

detachment of troops for some time, though this seems to have had no significant impact on the Maldives.²⁰

The Maldives Islands was a British protectorate from 1887 to 1965. The British did not interfere in local affairs and administration of the Maldives. The reason why the British did not interfere in local affairs was because the British struck a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the country. The British was only interested in how to establish airstrips in Maldives. Hence, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the British established two airstrips: one was at Gan in the southernmost Addu, Atoll and another was at Kelaa in the north. The British people were given a 100-year lease of Gan airbase. So, at last the country became fully independent on July 26 1965; later the same year, on September 21st, Maldives became the 117th Member State of the United Nations. Following a referendum in 1968, the country adopted another Republican constitution. The country's English name was changed from "Maldive Islands" to the "Republic of Maldives. Now the country is totally free, sovereign and independent.²¹

The Nature of Maldives Society

Islam is the state religion since the twelfth century. Almost all Maldavians belong to Sunni Sect, which was introduced into the islands in the 19th century. Religion is a dominant force in the national life of Maldives.²² The importance of Islam in Maldives is further evident in the lack of a secular legal system. Maldives' traditional Islamic law code of Sharia, known in Dhivehi as Sariatu, forms the basic law code in Maldives. It was interpreted that local Maldivian conditions are to be conformed to by the resident, the attorney general, the ministry of Home Affairs, and the Majlis. In Maldives, mosque forms the central place where Islam is practiced. Maldivians are religious minded. Friday is the most important day for Muslims to attend mosque; shops

²⁰ . Clearance Maloney, *People of the Maldives Island* (Madras: Orient Longmans, 1980), pp-76-92.

²¹ . Subhash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo, Niana Agencies Limited, 1996). P.33.

²² . B.H. Former, "Maldives: Physical and Social Geography", *Australia Year Book*, 2004, p.2616.

and offices in towns and villages close about 11 a.m. and sermon begins by 12.30 p.m. Most inhabited islands have several mosques. Male has more than thirty-five mosques. Now Maldives has a total of more than 724 mosques and 266 women's mosques.²³

In Maldives, prayer sessions are held five times daily. The mosque caretakers make the call. Most shops and offices close within fifteen minutes after each call. During the ninth Muslim month of Ramadan, Muslims of Maldives fast during the daylight hours. Actually, Ramadan begins with the new moon and ends with the sighting of the next new moon.

It is true that men eat before the rest of the family and make all the major decisions, while the women stay at home and look after the family. Under Islamic law, men are allowed up to four wives; in the past it was considered a mark of eastern and piety to have as many.²⁴

But today it's becoming rare for a man to have even two wives. Each wife is considered equal and lives in a different house. In Maldives, some marriages are still arranged. There is an increasing desire for romantic love, partly inspired by Hindi films and western literature. It is very easy for men to divorce than to marry in Maldives.²⁵

Maldives has been mentioned for its high literacy rate in South Asia. The literacy rate of the country is very high compared with other countries in South Asia. The Medium of instruction is Dhivehi in Secular Schools and Arabic in Islamic Schools. Government middle schools in Male use English as the medium of instruction. Only primary and secondary education is imparted, neither of which is compulsory. Students seeking higher education must go abroad to a university.²⁶

²³ . Source: <http://www.hello Maldives.com/Maldives/index.htm>

²⁴ . George Thomas, *Encyclopedia of the third world*, volume 11, Man Sell Publishing, London, 1995, pp.1165-1171.

²⁵ .<http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/people/index.htm>

²⁶ . Verinder Grover, ed., *Encyclopaedia of SAARC Nations, Maldives: An Introduction* 1997.

However, it is a fact that the traditional nature of Maldives society has been changed under the influence of modern elements. Firstly, the country came under foreign contact, which posed a problem of threat to its distinctive identity. Another important point is, a large number of students go abroad for education and business purposes. People of Maldives particularly young people, are influenced by the value of modernization.²⁷

The Culture of Maldives

Despite some negative connotations, modernization helped Maldives to be more homogeneous in the early 1990s. Traditionally, a significant gap existed between the people living in Male and the rest of the population inhabiting the outer atoll-islands distant from Male. Modernization has brought changes on the basic unit of society. Around 80 per cent of Maldives households consist single nuclear family composed of a married couple and their children rather than an extended family.

Unmarried adults remain with relatives instead of living alone or with strangers. Their society is patrilineal, but women do not accept their husbands' names after marriage, and can retain their maiden names.²⁸

In the early 1970s, Islam was widely disseminated. Religion and culture of Maldives define a set of behavioral expectations. Maldivians have a strong sense of cultural distinctiveness and national identity. In the process, a strong tradition of Koranic scholarship has prevailed at all levels. Koranic schools are the major institutions for the dissemination of formal education. In Maldives, disobedience to the rules set by the religion can bring capital punishment, and the worst punishment for the offenders is banishment or exile to an uninhabited island. Despite strong Islamic restrictions, women participated in all social activities and held important positions.

²⁷ . Nidhi Sharma, "The Modernization of Maldives", *The Pioneer*, 1997.

²⁸ . Albert Grag, Ibn Batuta, in *the Maldives and Ceylon: James Duncan Campbell, Status of Women in Maldives*, 1997, pp. 61-68.

Language of the Maldives

The official and common language of Maldives is called Dhivehi. It belongs to the Indo-European language family related to Sinhala, a language of Sri Lanka. English is widely used in commerce, and is increasingly becoming the medium of instruction in government schools. Characteristically, the numbers from one to twelve in Dhivehi are of Sinhalese origin, and after twelve, Hindi. Dhivehi is spoken throughout the atolls.²⁹ Dialect differences are pronounced in the four southeastern atolls. The traditional script, Thana, is written from right to left. This locally invented script contains twenty-four letters. The first nine of which are forming of the Arabic numerical. In 1977 a script was introduced along with Thana for official correspondence but since 1979 the requirement of the language was no longer mandatory.

Recently, use of Roman Script has been officially permitted to make it possible to use typewriters for correspondence in Divehi, which is the official language of the country. However, Dhivehi has many regional variations. In the northern region, stretching from the northernmost atoll Hua Alif to Laam in the south, the language of the people of Maldives is called Male Dhivehi, and it differs from atoll to atoll. In the southern atolls, however, different dialects are spoken which are thought to represent a more original form of Dhivehi. Addu atoll has one dialect, Fuah Mulaku another, and the giant Huvadhu atoll has several dialects.³⁰

Socio-economic Issues

Earlier, there used to be narrow socio-economic base of the authority structure, but that has changed. The poor socio-economic state is directly related to the literacy of the islands and the policy matters. It brings into sharp focus the paucity of educated and trained man -power. Even if there may be high level of literacy, the educational attainment of the population as a whole

²⁹ . Maldives, *US Department of State, Bureau South Asian Affairs*, February 2005.

³⁰ . Clearance Maloney, *People of the Maldives islands* (Madras: Orient Longmans, 1980).

remains low level in the country.³¹ In Maldives, primary education comprises classes one to five, enrolling students in the corresponding ages of six through ten. Secondary education is divided between classes six through ten, which represent overall secondary education; and classes eleven and twelve, which constitute higher secondary education. In 2000, Maldives had a total number of 73,642 students in school: 32,475 in government schools and 41,167 in private schools.³² It is a fact that in Maldives there is no university. If somebody seeks higher education, he or she must have to go abroad for higher education.

However, International Organizations enabled the establishment of the Science Education Centre opened in 1989. Japanese aid enabled the founding of the Maldives Centre for Social Education in 1991.³³ In the latter months of 1993, work began on the Maldives Institute of Technical Education to help eliminate the shortage of skilled labour.³⁴ As far as educational policy is concerned, the policy should focus on enhancing the qualifications and productivity of Maldivian teachers by providing more multisubject training and introducing more multigrade teaching. In particular, the skills of primary school teachers must be enhanced, especially in the outer islands, which will raise the current relatively low level of student achievements. The provision of equal access to education for the people residing in the outer islands is necessary for the decentralization of administrative responsibilities in the atolls and for ensuring more geographically balanced growth. Another major challenge related to human- resource development is the curtailment of the population growth- rate, which is currently above 3 per cent and one of the highest rates in South Asia.³⁵

³¹ . Maldives, Social Indicators of Development 2000 published for The World Bank, the Johns Hopkins university place, Baltimore and London.

³² . Maldives, *Asian Development outlook* (published for the Asian Development Bank by the Oxford University press, 2004). P.139.

³³ . Subhash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo, Niana Agencies Limited, 1996). Pp.33-37.

³⁴ . [www.Google.com.Maldives](http://www.Google.com/Maldives), library of congress country studies.

³⁵ . Maldives, *Asian Development outlook*, published for the Asian Development Bank by the Oxford University Press, 2002.

Therefore, the government of Maldives is keen on introducing educational systems to meet the increasing and diverse man-power. Its main target is achieving universal primary education. So that it also enhances the skills of the workforce through vocational training. In addition, it will start the implementation of a third training and education project to develop human resources, encouraged by the effectiveness of two previous projects in this field. Maldives is facing many problems because of lack of trained man-power, and it is the main cause for underdevelopment. Without trained man-power, no blueprint for development can be launched.³⁶

Conclusion

Maldives has a cohesive society, and is not confronted with the problem of divisiveness. Maldives is famous in South Asia for its history, culture, and traditions. The nature of society of the country was very traditional but it has changed over the years. However, religion, culture, language and regional variations are still playing a great role in unifying the different communities in Maldives. It has always maintained the political, social, and cultural uniqueness, with interrelations between the islands and atolls. But it would do well to recognize that in the process of modernization, social tensions are bound to arise. It must be sensitive to this issue. Maldives is not developed because of lack of trained man-power. In fact, it is the bottleneck for development.

Growth-rate of population also poses problems to Maldives. Lack of an adequate educated class, including the absence of qualified teachers for basic education needs, aggravates the difficult situation. There is the question of resources to meet the demands of many important and high priority projects. The important things are how to improve the financial resources and to diversify the nation's economy, with a dynamic government under an able leadership. The government of an atoll state should be concerned of

³⁶. Ibid.

environmental needs. No other countries in South Asia would be as seriously affected by environmental changes as Maldives. In fact, its very survival would be threatened. Maldives should effort to highlight this issue. Maldives can capitalize this issue in global level so that it can maintain the democratic spirit if it has to develop overall.

CHAPTER-II

THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL SYSTEM

This chapter analyses the evolution of political system in Maldives from the ancient period. It specifically deals with the political system of the Sultanate system in the pre-constitutional development period. This chapter also emphasizes the nature and structure of the Sultanate political system; and what were the institutions, how power was concentrated, and how the Sultan governed the atoll- state. It extensively analyses the impact of colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch and British rule) on the political system of Maldives. The chapter also highlights the agreements with Britain and its impact. An analysis of the constitutional development and the political system under various constitutions up to the period of independence has also been given. The purpose is to find out the nature of the political system during the pre-independence period so that the continuity and change in the post-colonial political system can be identified in the Maldives.

Maldives remained a Sultanate system uninterruptedly for more than 800 years. The Sultanate system lasted from 1153 to 1965, excepting the fifteen years of Portuguese interlude and a brief period of presidential rule in 1953. According to the history of Maldives, there were ninety-three Sultans, including four Sultanas. A highly organized central administrative system had evolved in the course of the long history of Maldives. The first known king was Koimala Kalo of the Male Dynasty, who actually ascended the throne in A.D.1141. Twelve years later the country embraced Islam. The period that followed the conversion to Islam in A.D.1153, with the King Koimala Kalo assuming the title of Sultan is believed to have witnessed the formulation of a stable central administration, and a constitutional monarchy gradually evolved with advisory councils. This system continued unto 1932, when the first democratic constitution was proclaimed.

However, the political system (Sultanate) in the pre-constitutional development was very interesting and important in Maldives. There were regular successions from Sultan to Sultan, basically from father to son; or at

times in the absence of a son or as a result of a conflict of power, there used to be change in the family, which held the power.

Traditionally, the country was ruled by hereditary succession to the throne, bristled with coups and squabbles: a common phenomenon in many monarchical systems. It is true that the Sultanate functioned by giving priority to the political and economic aspects of Maldives society. Basically, Islamic law regulated the political system. The religious and political structures were operated in such a way that the former was subordinated to the latter.¹ The authentic historical records clearly indicate that the people of Maldives did actually participate in the governance of the country. The ruler or Sultan listened to even the views of the people, and were respected and very often considered. The decisions of the rulers were never despotically enforced on the people but were rather taken by the Sultan on the advice of the administrative councils set up for the purpose. The structure of the political system of the Sultanate system was very important in Maldives. Most of the political activity and power struggles were confined to Male and the neighbouring islands in Maldives. The Sultan has been, from the olden times, exercised his administrative powers more or less in a capacity similar to that of a constitutional monarchy.

The Sultan's predecessor had conventions that had been looked upon as laws in the administrative structure. When necessity arose under new circumstances, the Sultans deviated from the normal procedures with the advice and consent of the councils. The Sultan was considered the head: he had the *de jure* supreme power and say in administrative affairs.² The ruler was never a despotic or autocratic. All his actions were constantly reviewed by the councils of advisors and chiefs who voiced the views of the people at the meeting of the councils where the Sultan himself was only member. It is

¹ . Subhash Chalwa, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo: Niana Agencies Limited, 1986.) pp. 17-37.

² . Urmila Phadnis and Ela Duta Luithui, *Maldives: Winds of Change in an Atoll State*, (South Asia Publishers Pvt. Ltd., P.10.

true that Sultans could even be deposed on the decisions taken by the councils if they had contravened the existing customs and conventions. One would therefore be justified in drawing the conclusion that the de facto supreme power in governance rested with the people, and that the system functioned fairly and smoothly.

It can therefore be said that a high degree of democracy in its modern sense was maintained throughout the country's known history. The Sultan functioned as a constitutional monarch and was assisted in his administrative duties by three important councils:

- (a) Raskamuge Is Majlis
- (b) Raskamuge Dhevana Majlis and
- (c) Rasmkamuge Thinvana Majlis.

These councils can be compared in broad principle with the present day constitutional organs such as the senate, the legislative and the local government institutions. The three constitutional councils had existed right through the known recorded history of the country, subject to variations in the number of members in each council. But essentially, the functions of each council remained unchanged.³

Therefore, the Raskamuge Is Majlis, the first council of the realm, consisted of the king and his most trusted and closest advisors known as Klieds or Noble Chiefs. This council was summoned when decisions on matters of great importance and exigency were to be taken. When the meetings of this council were held, the Sultan himself attended as a member of the Majlis. He was titled the Raskilege the King Kilege, which indicated that he was the first among the equals. Hence, the right to rule the country

³. Subash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo: Niana Agencies Limited, 1986,) p. 29.

was vested in the Sultan, but the most important characteristic in the execution of his authority and rule was that he delegated part of his powers to the Kileges in carrying out the day- to-day administration in his name and on his behalf. Thus, the Sultan's powers were divided among his immediate subordinate Kileges who exercised them with a deep sense of responsibility. The Sultan was therefore a *primus inter pares*, who was assisted and advised by the Kileges.

The second council was the Raskamuge Dhevana, which consisted of the kileges; the Chief Justice or Qaazi; some nobles called Wazirs; the Treasurer and the Controller of government revenue known as the Bodu Bandeyri; the Handheygiri or Shah Bandar, the principal collector of customs; and Avashuverin, who were the nobles representing the four wards of Male. This council met more often than the first council of the realm and discussed matters related to the affairs of government.

The third council of the Realm was the Raskamuge Thinvaana Majlis. It consisted of the members of the first and second councils together with Edhuru Beykalun, which included the four; Badi Koshi, Gunners, the Kuli Koshi and the exponents of martial arts.⁴ The provisional chiefs were known as Kangathi Kolilee Beykalum. These Kangiathi Beykalums were in charge of the administration in the provinces or atoll and were directly responsible to report to the Handheygiri, who represented the authority of the central government. The duties of the provisional chiefs were to maintain law and order and manage the affairs of the provinces and to keep the Handheygiri constantly informed of the developments in their regions. They had the right to advise the Sultan about the administration of the provinces. They usually gathered in Male and held council with the Sultan and other responsible officers towards the end of the southwest monsoon season. Interesting aspects they discussed were the general administration in the

⁴ . Clarence Malony, *The People of Maldives Islands*, (Madras: Orient Longmans, 1980), p.181.

atolls, revenue, and taxation during the proceeding year, and planning of specific policies. So, the Sultanate system in the preconstitutional development period was basically traditional, hereditary system, similar to that of a constitutional monarch⁵

Overall, the Sultanate system did not follow modern ideas and modern democratic political system but followed basically traditional and hierarchical political system. The power was centralized and the king was the head. The system was basically made to appear in consonance with or sanctioned by Islamic law. The country was highly centralized and no question of decentralization of power arose. Socio-economic position was not in good condition. Views of the people were respected but common people did not enjoy any political right. So, the right to rule the country was vested in the Sultan, who had the powers to appoint or dismiss even the highest ecclesiastical official.

The Advent of European powers in the Maldives

According to historical facts, the European Colonial powers came to the Maldives about 16th century, beginning with the Portuguese, then the Dutch, and finally the British. When Maldives was under foreign domination and rule, the country's political and economic systems underwent a change. But the European colonial powers did not change the socio-political fabric of the Maldives.

There were many reasons for the colonial control of the Maldives. Sultan Hassan IX was the ruler from A.D.1550 to A.D.1552. During his rule he had a dispute with his ministers over a certain matters, which turned the ministers and even the people against him. He wanted to renounce Islam and that caused turmoil in the country. After this incident the Sultan became so unpopular that he was forced to flee to Cochin in India. After a few days, the

⁵ . Maldives, *Department of Information and Broadcasting*, Historical Background of Maldives, 1970.

Sultan got himself baptized into Christianity by Francis Xavier. The Sultan was strong-minded and later converted the population of Maldives to Christianity. After that, he went to Goa and requested the Portuguese leaders to lend him a ship to attack and capture the Maldives. This was the interesting story about how the leader of one's own country invited the colonial power to rule in the country.⁶

However, Sultan Ali Vi of Maldives ruled from A.D.1557 to A.D.1558 in the country. He was a good ruler and attempted to improve the deteriorating condition of the country, but he proved unsuccessful. Despite his efforts, the biggest Portuguese war-expedition arrived in the Maldives under the leadership of Andreas Andre and the Sultan Ali lost his country to the hands of the Portuguese. He was killed in battle against the invading Portuguese.⁷

The Portuguese Invasion and Occupation

The Portuguese occupied the islands for 15 years. The people of Maldives were not happy with the state of affairs prevailing in the country that time. The main aims of the invaders were to hold a monopoly of trade; religious conversion (to convert the natives to Christianity) and complete colonization of the country. During the Portuguese invasion and occupation nothing was done to improve the welfare of the people. Consequently, the patriotic and religious people of Maldives started forming small groups against the policies of the Portuguese. Even the Portuguese power could not change the ways of the people. There was a conflict between the people of Maldives and the Portuguese, and many Portuguese were killed and others surrendered. After about 15 years of foreign domination, Maldives once again became an independent country.⁸

⁶ . Subash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo, Niana Agencies Limited, 1986), p. 19

⁷ . Source: <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/history/index.htm>.

⁸ . A brief historical sketch of the Portuguese period is available in Bell's reports. Amin Didi also deals with the account of Maldivian interaction with the colonial powers in a book on Maldivian history in Divehi.

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During the Century the Dutch ousted the Portuguese as a principal force in the Indian Ocean. In 1645 Maldives established diplomatic ties with the Dutch Governor of Sri Lanka and exchanged tribute for cowries shells. In return the Dutch provided of spices, nut and ammunition.

In 1796 the British took over Sri Lanka from the Dutch in and trade between Male and Colombo increased. At that time the Sultan of Maldives took himself very seriously. He wrote a letter to the Governor of Sri Lanka, asking him not to welcome any enemy but to take care of any shipwreck from Maldives.⁹ The Dutch did not interfere with the local government and affairs of the Maldives. After the Dutch, Maldives became a British protectorate in 1887. Actually, between 1887 and 1965, Maldives remained a British protectorate, but Britain did not interfere with the internal affairs of the country. After becoming a British protectorate, Maldives continued to be on its own. The British did not enter the country physically till the Second World War, when they established a staging post on Gan Island in Southernmost Addu Atoll.¹⁰

The Period of British Suzerainty

After the withdrawal of Dutch from Ceylon, the Sultan of Maldives, in a communication to the Governor of Ceylon in 1798, expressed his desire for maintaining good political relations with the British.¹¹ There were five important agreements between the two countries. The first agreement was signed on December 16, 1887. According to the 1887 agreement, the responsibility of recognizing and installing the Sultan, as well as the control of the country and its defense and foreign relations were vested in Great Britain. Another agreement was signed at Male on April 24, 1948 between the United Kingdom and the Maldives Islands. The third agreement was signed in 1953 between the two countries. The agreement was the legal basis

⁹ . <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/history/index.htm>.

¹⁰ . H.C.P. Bell. The Maldives Islands: An Account of the physical feature, climate, History.

on which the Gan airfield was being constructed. The fourth agreement was signed in 1956; under this agreement, the inhabitants of Gan were to be re-settled elsewhere at the expense of United Kingdom. The fifth agreement was signed in 1965; under this agreement, Britain's rights over Addu Atoll were reduced to a period of 30 years from 100 years.¹² The 1887 agreement was very important for both the countries because it had important implications other than Maldives becoming a British protectorate.

What happened after the agreement between the two countries which made Maldives a British protectorate? More importantly, the agreement underlined the principle of non-interference in local affairs. At the same time, the British pledged to protect Maldives from any external aggression. For this, Maldives was to pay an annual tribute to Britain to build a staging post on Gan Island during World War II. In 1965 Gan was converted into an air base for exclusive use to HM forces till it was vacated in 1976.

The political system can see the changes made by the British even in the outside world particularly India and Sri Lanka. After the changes made by the British in political system of Maldives, the educated male elite wanted to introduce a reform in the political structure because they urged that colonial government should not be supported directly. This is evident from the constitutional changes in 1932, which were largely fashioned on the Donough constitution of Sri Lanka promulgated a year earlier. "This was politically correct that Britain provided for an elected People's Assembly, Legislative Council and a Council of Ministers."¹³

As there was an agreement of non-interference, the colonial government mediated to resolve disputes between its subject and the Maldivian government only if and when requested by the Sultan. There were

¹¹ . R.H.C. Steed, "Back to First Base on Gan", *Daily Telegraph*, 12, 12 May 1959.

¹² . V.H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Developments in the Maldives", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, August 1979, pp.134-148.

¹³ . Clarence Maloney, "The Maldives: New stresses in an old nation", *Asian Survey*, Vol. no.4, July, 1976, pp. 664-671

also provisions for the Sultans of Maldives, who came to the throne in accordance with the constitutional practice of the country. It means, Britain recognized the Sultanate system, but Britain never had a physical presence in Maldives to exert any influence on the internal administration of the islands.

But, then why did the colonial power mediate to resolve disputes between the subjects and the Maldivian government; and what happened between the two countries. The colonial government was protecting the island through shortened principles, for which Britishers were trying hard to get it. But the Sultan of Maldives did not understand the actual politics, which the British were playing. During the Sultanate system, governance without interference from the external powers was smooth. But the colonial powers came and did not solve the problem.¹⁴ As for the British, with the 1887 agreement the effective political status of Maldives came under the British rule as a protectorate till 1965. In internal matter and the conduct of domestic politics, the Maldives remained largely unhindered. And at the constitutional level, certain changes were brought about, that did not seem to affect either the pace or the pattern of social structures, except in a formal sense.

However, “under the 1956 agreement, the United Kingdom was entitled to such defense facilities in the Maldives as they after consultation with the Maldives Government, determined to be required for the defense of the Maldives or any part of the common wealth.”¹⁵ The 1956 agreement was the result of consultation in accordance with the 1953 agreement, which formed the construction of legal basis of Gan airfield.

According to the 1960 agreement (which was a largely- restatement of 1956 agreement), Britain’s rights over Addu Atoll were reduced to a period of 30 years from 100 years. Payment of \$100,000 was made to the

¹⁴ . Maasud Ul Hasan Nuri, Maldives in the 1990’s, Spotlight on Regional Affairs, No. 4, 1992, pp. 65-195.

Male Government immediately and another \$ 750,000 was promised over a period of five years for development works. In addition to the annual sum of \$25,000 in foreign exchange, the government received salary of the 900 odd islanders working in the British installations.¹⁶

Thus, the British colonial power came into the domestic politics of Maldives. Because of the absence of any treaty or agreement underlining the relations between the two countries, the British had desisted from interfering in the numerous instances of coups and take over of Sultanship and government by dissident factions. They were mostly into commercial activities; British subjects conducted business in Maldives territory. Trade with British India and Ceylon had been also increasing consistently.¹⁷

The colonial powers did not make an impact on the political system of Maldives. People of the country tried to understand how to get freedom from the colonial powers. They managed to retain the Sultanate system. Finally, when Ceylon attained independence in 1948, Maldives also suggested for a new agreement to be drawn. The new agreement, which was based on the first, was signed between the two countries. According to the new agreement signed in Male on April 23, 1948, Maldives was to stop paying the tribute to British whilst still remaining its protectorate status. It is very important that the colonial powers (Portuguese, Dutch, and British) urged to change the political structure of the Maldives, but even then, there was no change in the local level system (atoll, island levels).¹⁸

¹⁵ . The Department of Information and Broadcasting, *The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives* (Male, n.d.).

¹⁶ . Times, 5 February 1960.

¹⁷ . Ibid.

¹⁸ . Urmila phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, "The Maldives Enter World Politics", *Asian Affairs*, Vol.8, No.3, January-February 1981, pp. 166-79.

Modernization of Political System and Various Pre-1968 Constitutions of the Maldives

Maldives did not have a written constitution until December 22, 1932. There were systems of taxation, national defense, and discharge of public duties and administration of justice under unwritten constitution.¹⁹ These were clearly defined by usage and customs, though not by written documents. "A deeper study of the evolution and development of the system of government and administration in the Maldives would show that there was an unwritten constitution which was firmly established in the country."²⁰ The people, in the form of time-honoured customs and traditions, accepted it; so these records clearly indicate that the people were respected and were very often considered by the ruler in power. The decisions of the rulers were rather taken by the Sultan on the advice of the administrative councils set up for the purpose. Hence, we found that democratic character was there even before independence in Maldives. Modernization of the political system was maintained more or less in Maldives even in earlier times.

Therefore, the history of the constitutional evolution of Maldives up to the present day can be divided into three periods:

- (a) The first period covers the ancient and medieval eras when administration was carried out according to the unwritten constitution as dictated by customs and conventions;
- (b) The second period was when the existing customs and conventions were written down and backed by law ; and

19 . V. H. Coelho, "Constitutional and political developments in the Maldives", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, Vol. 28, no. 8, August 1979, pp. 134-148.

²⁰ . Subash Chawla, *The New Maldives*, (Colombo, Niana Agencies Limited, 1986, p. 29.

- (c) During the third period amendments to the written constitution began to be brought about as and when the necessity arose.²¹

However, in the Maldives there were various constitutions in the pre-1968 period. Discussed in detail are various important pre-1968 constitutions. These were 1932 constitution, 1954 constitution and 1964 constitution.

The Constitution of 1932

In 1932, Muhammad Shamsuddin III, who had been recognized by the British over his rivals, was persuaded to accept the first written constitution in history of Maldives. It not only limited his powers but also introduced the principle of elections. The first democratic constitution of the Maldives was proclaimed in 1932. The Sultan became the Head of State and a cabinet of Ministers headed by a Prime Minister was elected. The first written constitution of the country was largely based on the customs, conventions and other traditional administrative practices that have been followed for centuries. So, the constitution of 1932 provided a People's Assembly consisting of 47 members elected by people- four each from the larger atolls, two each from the smaller atolls, one from Mulaku Island and four from capital of the country 'Male'. Only literate males were granted voting right. A legislative council was elected every five years, consisting of twenty-eight members of whom seven were nominated by the Sultan. In the first stage, the People's Assembly elected the rest. The President of the Council generally became the Prime Minister, who was appointed by the Sultan in consultation with the Legislative Council. Even other ministers were to be chosen by the Prime Minister with the consent of the Sultan.

No minister was to indulge in any business or trade of the country. Therefore, a large part of the revenues was reserved for the Sultan's count

²¹ Ibid.

and the office bearers. Despite this, ministers were engaged in trade and enjoyed certain privileges in the purchase of goods from the government and hence, openly contravened the above prohibition. There were some problems for the legislative council; the dispute was as usual. The new cabinet attempted to take certain measures which ironically helped strengthen the former Prime Minister in his efforts to let the political forces swing in his favour. Demonstrations against the council of ministers took place in Male.²²

Also, the Borah merchants, who went on strike in July 1933, closing their shops, refusing to buy fish from Maldives further, confounded the power tussle. It was an attempt to keep their monopoly of the rice or fish trade, which was being threatened by the new constitution and Maldivian government's intention to purchase its own steamer to fish and bring in rice. The British had intervened as intermediary and settled the matters by ensuring the continuation of the constitution. The Sultan had repealed the reform and the taxation measures. Even the idea of purchase of a government steamer was dropped. Thereafter, certain ministers were expelled from Male so that power was restored to persons related to the former Prime Minister Abdul Majid Didi.²³

The first 1932 written constitution lasted for 23 years because Muhammad Amin Didi sought a referendum for the abolition of Sultanate system in Maldives. During the first 1932 written constitutional period, there was more corruption, and a large part of the revenue was reserved for the sultan's court and the office-bearers.

The Government had continued to remain a close family preserve. There were power tussle among sons of the Sultans. It was a difficult period for the people to enjoy their freedom because it was like a limited monarchy,

²² . <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/history/iddex.htm>.

²³ For the text of the constitution see co Affairs of the Maldives Islands, Eastern, No. 164.

and the actual government was in the hands of oligarch, who were all members of an exclusive and closely allied aristocracy.

It is evident that the political elite (Sultan) had been trying from the very beginning to get political power. Power was a close family preserve. Even the elected councils did not have power but only consisted of nominees of the ministers. They had little influence over the minister's activities. The legislative council had power to only pass the Annual Budget; but this too appeared to have existed on paper only. The Sultan dominated the whole system, which was based on oligarchy. As a result there was another attempt for liberalizing the constitutional framework of Maldives politics. The 1953 Republican constitution lasted for less than a year because Ibrahim Mohammed Didi, who became the Sultan, suspended the constitution and took over the government.²⁴ So, only few families controlled the political power, and they enjoyed complete power during the period:

The 1954 Constitution: Reversal from Republican to the Sultanate

Further constitutional changes took place in Maldives after the death of the Mohammed Amin Didi. Maldives brought about changes in the internal constitutional structure. The 1954 constitution was considered another milestone in the constitutional history and trend of political liberalization. It was consisted of 48 members; the Majlis along with the nobility elected the Sultan. The Majlis, which was largely an elected body, could override the Sultan's veto. During this period, a constitutional social reform took place in Maldives. It was basically about the abolition of unreasonable forced labour in Maldives.²⁵

Therefore, the form of government, especially the sultanate system, was considered archaic and hardly had any progressive thought. There had

²⁴ . Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: Winds of Change in an Atoll State*. (South Asia Publishers, 1984), p.27.

²⁵ . For the text of the 1954 constitution see Ahmed Zaki trans, *Constitution of the Maldives* (Colombo H.N. Cave, 1954),

been an earlier manifestation of this same desire in 1953. When the People's Assembly and the Majlis decided to establish Republic, Mohammed Amin Didi was chosen to be the Head of State by a popular referendum.²⁶ Existing political system of that time considered the people's decision to be valuable. The 1954 constitution recognized the superiority of the Sultan even though the Majlis members and the nobility elected the Sultan of the country. The Sultan still enjoyed the power of the State. It was only when the Republican constitution came into force in 1953 that the power came in the hands of the President, but it lasted for only one year. The 1954 Constitution was based on the Republican system after the Sultanate. It can be said that the government was a constitutional Sultanate, where the Sultan was really powerful.²⁷ Ten years later in 1964, the constitution was again changed. The Sultan became a figurehead. All executive power was vested in the Prime Minister.

The 1964 Constitution

This constitution was promulgated fully in 1964. It formed the basis of its first post-independence constitution under which, amongst other things, the Sultanate system finally came to an end forever in the atoll island-state. The main objective remained how to secure the tenure of Gan which, it was agreed, would continue under the 1960 agreement. The first draft of the agreement with regard to this was submitted in mid-May 1964, and by July 1965 an agreeable draft was ready and signed. The agreeable draft emphasised for the complete independence of Maldives on July 26, 1965.²⁸

However, in July 1965, Britain was faced with pressure from various quarters- internal (public opinion in the Maldives) and external (rising support from regional and other countries) to agree to independence of the

²⁶ . Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: Winds of Change in an Atoll State*. (South Asia Publishers, 1984), p.31.

²⁷ . V.H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Developments in Maldives", *Encyclopedia of Maldives*, 1997, pp.29-45.

²⁸ . Times, 27 July 1965. For the text of the agreement See Great Britain.

Maldives.²⁹ But it had retained the lease of Gan base up to 1986. This was prematurely terminated by it in 1976 as part of the British Policy of withdrawal from East of Suez.³⁰

Therefore, the period 1960 to 1965 was very crucial because the country was fighting with the British's monopoly system on Gan Island. The country urged the British to grant them complete independence, with the right to conduct her own external relations. Maldives finally became an independent state in July 26, 1965. Before, it was very difficult to deal with British. Under terms of an agreement signed between Sir Michael Walker, (the British High Commissioner in Sri Lanka) on behalf of the United Kingdom, and Ibrahim Nasir (the Prime Minister) on behalf of the people of Maldives, finally, Maldives was recognized as a fully independent state in 1965.

It was under the reign of Sultan Mohammad Fareed I that Maldives attained a sovereign independent status by discarding its protectorate status. On November 11, 1968, the Sultanate was abolished and replaced by Republic. President Ibrahim Nasir, who was the Prime Minister since 1957, became the first President of the second Republic.³¹ The new constitution of the Republic of Maldives was adopted on March 15, 1968. This new 1968 constitution recognized that Maldives is a composite, sovereign, and fully independent state bearing the official name of the Republic of Maldives.³²

Constitutional and political development took place in Maldives as a result of the search for a new image for the country. Constitutions of Maldives were changed one after one. Even the 1953 constitution lasted for less than one year; this happened because of lack of communication after its

²⁹ . V.H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Development in Maldives", *Encyclopedia of Maldives*, 1997, pp.30-35.

³⁰ . Suman Dubey, "Gan-The Last Outpost". *The Asia Magazine*, 27 July 1969, p.17.

³¹ . R. H.C. Steed, "Back to First Base on Gan". *Daily Telegraph*, 12 May 1959.

³² . Maldivian Islands, Attainment of Independence. *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol. January 1966, p. 32.

independence from Sultanate, and after the change in the internal constitutional structure. The 1964 constitution was changed because it did not evidently satisfy the mood of the Maldives people for long. The Prime Minister and the constitutional Sultanate were not satisfactory; another thing is that the constitutional Sultanate position was not strong. This is more or less applicable even in the traditional Maldives polity. Once a political leader is accepted at any level, as an island Headman, an atoll Chief or the Head of the nation, it means that a strong individual leadership is expected. That was why the 1964 constitution was changed in Maldives. So, Maldives was declared a Republic for the second time in 1968. In fact, the 1964 constitution was changed due to change of the system. The Sultan became a figurehead (nominal head). All executive powers were vested in the Prime Minister. The reigning Sultan, Muhammad Farid Didi was ill and was without an heir. He was deposed and the Republic came about in a peaceful manner on November 11, 1968. The new (1968) constitution of the Maldives was adopted in March 1968

Under the constitution of 1968, elections were held for the first time in September 1969. However, the 1968 constitution vested considerable powers in the President, including the right to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. These were the developments in the political system during the 1960s.³³

However, from 1932 onwards, Maldives has been a form of modern democracy in which necessary amendment in the constitution were brought about by the consent of the 48 member's of the Citizens' Majlis, which is a unicameral legislature and has gradually assumed full legislative powers. This phase culminated with the declaration of the first Republic of Maldives in 1953, which lasted only for seven months. The Sultanate was then reinstalled and an elective monarch continued till 1968, when the second

³³ . The Department of Information and Broadcasting, *The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives* (Male, n.d.)

Republic was proclaimed. It is this system, which had incorporated several amendments and modification in the 1968 constitution that can be found in Maldives today.

What is remarkable in the process of the constitutional evolution in Maldives is the present constitution, which is not entirely a new one. The old political system has been modified and amended to suit the present day requirements. It has always responded to the political, social, economic, and cultural uniqueness of the country, covering interrelations between the islands and atolls.³⁴

It is true that political system during the Sultanate system was different. The power structure had assumed a different and important role under the Sultanate system. The people of Maldives have not forgotten about the constitutional system because it has not changed the country's character and democratic spirit.³⁵ The country has come into contact with other countries but its character has not been changed entirely. Even various socio-political and cultural influences have had their impact. These types of influences were but minimal in Maldives from the very beginning. .

The End of the Sultanate System in Maldives

In the Maldives political system, there was more than 815 years of Sultanate system. The sultanate system was basically hereditary. There was no arrangement of merit and capability as the basis of becoming the State. The monarchical system was based on Islamic law. The Sultan (the King) had all powers. The Sultanate system was not working well for the whole people because there were problems for common people, which were yet to be addressed. They could not enjoy their rights as citizens of the country.

³⁴ . "Maldives Islands. Attainment of Independence", *Current Notes on International Affairs*, Vol.37, January 1966, p.32.

³⁵ . Ahmad Marniku Hassan, *The Maldives Islands: A Profile*, (Male Novelty Press, 1977), pp.87-94.

People tried to be free under the system but they did not get opportunities to exercise their rights. So, the system came to an end in the atoll- state.

Actually, the country reverted to Sultanate rule in 1954 and remained so till 1968, from when it named itself the Republic of Maldives under an elected President. Maldives acquired political independence in 1965. No colonial power directly ruled the Maldives islands, except the Portuguese who managed to gain control over it from 1558 to 1573. The Dutch occupied Male with a detachment of troops for some time though this seemed to have had no significant impact on Maldives. After the Dutch, the British came to hold protectorate rule over the islands. The British did not enter the country physically till the Second World War, when they established a staging post on Gan island in southernmost Addu Atoll.³⁶ Maldives remained a British protectorate even though Britain did not interfere with the internal affairs of the country.³⁷ It was during the reign of Sultan Mohammad Fared I that Maldives attained a sovereign independent status by discarding its protectorate status on July 26, 1965.³⁸ It formally became an independent nation on November 11, 1968. Following a national referendum, the Sultanate system was abolished and was replaced by a Republic so that the sultanate system came to an end in Maldives forever.³⁹

³⁶ J. P. Anand, *The Maldives: A Profile*, Encyclopaedia of Maldives, Deep and Deep Publications, 1997, pp. 29-42.

³⁷ C.H.B. Reynolds, "The Maldive Islands", *Asian Affairs*, Vol.62, No.1, February 1975, p.40.

³⁸ Clarence Malony, *The People of Maldives Islands*, (Madras, 1980), p.185

³⁹ J.P. Anand, "The Maldives: A Profile", *Encyclopedia of Maldives*, (Deep and Deep Publications, 1997), pp.29-42.

Conclusion

It is evident that no western colonial power directly ruled the Maldives except the Portuguese who managed to gain control over it for 15 years. As Britain became a protectorate power and the conduct of domestic politics remained unhindered. At the constitutional level, certain changes were brought about in the social structures. In Maldives, the traditional framework of political conduct was still practiced. Customary ruling of the country was carried out through a hierarchical set-up of an aristocratic oligarchy at the top, the Heads of island and Chief of atolls in the lowest level. Despite relative decentralization because of constant pressure, constitutional changes did not herald any significant change in the power elite. The Sultan and his descendants and also other nobles continued to rule the roost. In this context, practically all political squabbles and changes were family affairs. With the heralding of independence in 1965 in such a background, political democratization still needed to go a long way in the new state called Maldives.

CHAPTER-III

THE NATURE OF POST- COLONIAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

This chapter analyses the nature of post-colonial Maldivian political system. It focuses on the constitutional development in Maldives. The backgrounds of the 1968 Constitution and the 1998 Constitution of the country have also been analysed. The powers and functions of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary under the 1968 and 1998 constitutions have also been discussed extensively. This chapter also highlights the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of the Maldives citizens. Analysis of the Maldives Public Service Commission and its contribution to the government has been given. Finally, the chapter also makes a critical review and an assessment of the nature and functions of the political system in Maldives. Since independence, the country has had two constitutions. The first one was 1968 Constitution, which has been replaced by the second one that came into force on January 1, 1998.¹

The 1968 Constitutional Provisions

According to the 1968 Constitution of Maldives, only one candidate was permitted to contest for the post of President.² The 1968 Constitution states that the post of President is powerful and any law or legislation adopted by the Parliament has to have the Presidential consent. The President has the power to grant amnesty to offenders, and also the power to confer titles and other awards. He has the power to nominate a certain number of members to the legislature and members of judiciary. Under the 1968 Constitution, there were 48 members of the People's Majlis who were elected from 20 atolls. The Island- Chief and Atoll- Chief were appointed by the Home Ministry, which was under the control of the President's Office. The Home Ministry has the power to control the local administration. In fact, the President has the power to give guidance, and directions through the Ministry of Home Affairs. Fundamental Rights and Duties of citizens of Maldives were guaranteed by the Constitution.

¹ The Constitutions of the Republic of Maldives (1968, 1998), *Male, Ministry of Information*, 2000.

² The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1968, 1998), *Male, Ministry of Information* 2004.

Under the 1968 Constitution, Maldives' administration of justice was not separated. The judicial power was vested in the President rather than in the judiciary. Since the beginning, it was the President who determined the number of courts to be established at different places rather than by the Judiciary. It was prevalent in the Maldives in accordance with the Islamic law; there were no secular laws in Maldives. The diffusion of functions has occurred because members of the People's Majlis were also allowed to hold government positions. The major reason for such an enmeshing of legislative and bureaucratic functions was due to lack of adequate number of qualified man- power. The 1968 Constitution mentioned that there was no specific term of office for the President; one person could have ruled the country for unlimited terms.

The 1998 Constitutional Provisions

Under the 1998 Constitution, a multi-candidate contest is permitted for the post of President. Even the administration of justice has not been separated from the executive and legislature. According to the 1998 Constitution, members of the People's Majlis has been increased from 48 to 50. The number of inhabited natural atolls have also increased from 26 to 27. The Atoll-Chief and Island-Chief of these atolls are appointed by the Ministry of Atoll Affairs.

Under both the constitutions there is no specific terms mentioned for the post of the President. But according to the new amendment that has been proposed, specific term for the post of the President is given. President Gayoom himself has suggested that the President's tenure should be limited to two five-year term, and that women should be allowed to contest for the Presidency. On this matter, the Majlis also can make laws for the country. Both the 1968 and 1998 constitutions more or less have differences as well as similarities in terms of provisions mentioned. In order to change the constitutional provisions, the amendment of the constitution of Maldives is required.³

³. Ibid.

According to the Article 34 of the 1998 Constitution, the eligibility condition for the post of President are: A person shall be qualified to be elected as President if he (a) is a of Sunni Muslim; (b) is a citizen of the Maldives whose parents and grandparents are Maldivian citizens; (c) has attained thirty-five years of age; (d) is of sound mind; (e) is capable of discharging the duties and responsibilities of the office of the President; (f) has not been convicted of any offence; (g) is not a citizen of a foreign country; and (h) is not married to a foreign national.

The amendment of the 1968 Constitution first took place in 1975. The main amendment of the 1968 was that the elected Atoll Committees were abolished and the atoll chief became an appointee of the Home Ministry under the President. The Ministries of External Affairs, Finance, and Communication were abolished and converted into departments controlled by the President's Office. The concentration of power in the hands of the atoll supreme was thus total and complete.

The Maldivian government, in February 2004, made an initiative to amend the 1998 constitution. The President appointed another eight people to serve the council; the People's Special Majlis also included members of the People Majlis and the council of Ministers. The People's Special Majlis has been empowered to amend the constitution. At the same time, President Gayoom has invited members of the public to send him proposals for constitutional reforms on June 2, 2005.

The President of Maldives (The Executive)

The President of Maldives is a real Executive. The President controls the entire constitutional machinery, including the legislature and judiciary. Under the 1968 Constitution, the President of Maldives is the Head of the State and Head of the Government. The powers of State were vested in the President. The President is so powerful that he can assign to himself any ministry of his own choice in the State. He appoints the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers.

The amended 1968 Constitution does not mention the Office of the Prime Minister. It gives power to the President to nominate eight Majlis members and also empowers him to appoint Vice-President. Understanding the background of the 1968 Constitution is important to understand the constitutional amendments introduced in 1975, which allow more concentration of authority in the hands of the President.

In the 1998 Constitution, the President holds more power because he is the Head of the State. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of armed forces and the police. The legislative power is vested in the People's Special Majlis but the President enjoys all powers including Legislative and Judiciary.

The Majlis is elected every five years. In 1998, the Majlis consisted of 50 members-- 2 elected from Male and 2 from each of the 20 atolls, and 8 are nominated by the President. According to the 1998 Constitution, the Atoll-Chief and Island-Chief are appointed by the President through the Ministry of Atoll-Affairs. There are three political parties in Maldives. There are both continuity and change evidenced in the institutional structures and processes of the 1968 and 1998 constitutions of Maldives.⁴

However, even after independence, the regime structure under the Maldivian constitution has still reflected a considerable degree of continuity. Also, stability and orderliness have been the hallmark of its political system, with only two persons occupying the office of the President so far: Ibrahim Nasir (1968-1978) and Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (since 1978).

The President is nominated by the People's Majlis and confirmed by a public referendum. According to Article 34 of the 1998 Constitution, the President is to be first nominated by the People's Majlis, the unicameral legislature, and subsequently seeks the popular verdict through a referendum

⁴ V.H. Colho, "Constitutional and Political Development in the Maldives," *Foreign Affairs Reports*, vol.28, no.8, August 1979, p.136.

for five years tenure. The provision for the nomination of the President by the People's Majlis for anyone contesting the Presidential election has been incorporated in the Constitution to emphasize that he should be acceptable to the Parliament before he secures popular confirmation in the form of a referendum. The provision in the present Constitution involves the entire nation in the electoral process.

The presidential election may have been orderly and remarkably consensus-oriented; however, the President holds the supreme authority; he is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and protector of Islam in the Maldives. He can appoint Cabinet Ministers who should be members of the Parliament.⁵

Powers and Functions of the President

The President is powerful in Maldives. He enjoys the executive power. He has the power to appoint and remove the Cabinet Ministers, Chief Justice of High Court, Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the People's Majlis, Attorney-General, Atoll-Chiefs, Judges, Auditor-General, and also Commissioner of the Election. The President presides over meetings of the Cabinet Ministers and appoints the Vice-President. The President of Maldives makes a statement and declares the policies of the government at the opening session of the People's Majlis every year. The President holds Public referendum on major important issues.

The Chief Executive promulgates decrees, directives, and regulations as may be required from time to time. He ensures the proper execution of policies of the government and compliance with the provisions of the constitutions and law.

Being the Head of State, nobody can challenge him or his power. The President receives and recognizes the Ambassadors of Foreign countries on behalf of the country. The President also sends representatives with special

⁵ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1998), *Male, Ministry of Information*, 2004.

privileges to foreign States. In fact, the President controls the constitutional machinery, including the legislature and judiciary. In the event of such agreements requiring ratification by the government, they will not come into force unless the President has ratified the same on the advice of the Cabinet of Ministers.

All international agreements come to be effective only if the President gives his consent. The President also has the power to grant amnesty to offenders, to confer titles, and other awards. In the event of any emergency confronting the state, he has the discretion of proclaiming temporary orders which do not contravene the Constitution. The President has also the right to issue a proclamation of emergency. In such cases, the promulgation has the power to take orders of all measures expedient of protecting national security and also public sectors of the country. Such measures may even include the suspension of Fundamental Rights and Laws. According to the 1998 constitution, a proclamation of emergency may be extended, if approved by the People's Majlis for a period determined by the People's Majlis.⁶

Resignation of the President

The 1998 Constitution states that the President can resign from the Office by forwarding his letter of resignation to the Speaker of the People's Majlis, specifying the reason. However, the President continues to hold office until the Speaker of the People's Majlis submits within three days the said letter of resignation to the Majlis. The President then has to be notified in writing the acceptance of the said resignation by the People's Majlis. Such provisions are there but no President has resigned from the office so far. Even constitutional provisions are there for impeachment of a President but it has been difficult to put this provision into practice.

Urmila Phandnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives: Winds of Change in an Atoll State*, (South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1985), p.36.

Considering after existent political system so far, there is a need for a change in the system; and for that constitutional reform is needed. One of the first reforms needed is the presence of the political parties. Opposition political parties have important roles to play in multiparty democracy; if at all the Maldivian leadership allows the formulation of political parties from the very beginning. Maldivian Parliament has recently allowed political parties in the country.

Removal from the Office of the President

According to the Maldives Constitution, the President may be removed from Office in case of any allegation against the President. The rules against which a President may be removed are dealt with in the sub-clauses 2(a) and 2(b) of Article 477 of the 1998 Constitution.

To explicate the provisions more, it is true that in Maldives constitutional provision allows the removal of the President from the Office but practically no President has been removed from the Office. There are three grounds on which the President may be removed from the Office: firstly, Maldivian Constitution is more supreme than the President; secondly, on the event of the President becoming permanently incapable of discharging the functions; finally, if the President intentionally violates the constitutional provisions. On such conditions, members of the Majlis (2/3 members) can pass the motion against the President and thus can be removed from office.

The President may be removed based on the following grounds:

- (a) The President becomes disqualified under the provisions of the constitution for the office of the President.
- (b) The President becomes permanently incapacitated to discharge the functions of the office by reason of mental or physical infirmity.
- (c) If the President violates the Constitution intentionally, then he or she has to forgo the office as the Chief Executive, as written in the

Constitution. If the President violates rules of the Constitution, then he or she has to be removed from the office.

Floating the constitution in itself is an offence according to Islam. In Maldives, religion is more supreme than the President. Everyone has to respect Islam, even the President of the country. He should not violate the religion, otherwise on that very ground he can be removed. However, provisions are there in the country that a motion from the People's Majlis be addressed to the Speaker of the Majlis. A motion to remove the President from the Office may only be considered in the People's Majlis when one-third of the members of the Majlis have passed it, and two-thirds of the Majlis have resolved to consider it.⁷

If the office of the President becomes vacant by reasons of death, resignation, or removal from the office, the Speaker of the People's Majlis discharges the function as Acting President. The Speaker generally continues to discharge such functions until a three-member council is elected by secret ballot of the People's Majlis to administer the State.⁸ Even the President could appoint a Vice-President so that he or she may discharge the duties and responsibilities of the President.

The Cabinet of Ministers

Article 54 of the Maldives 1998 Constitution states that there shall be Cabinet of Ministers appointed and presided over by the President. The executive power is vested in the Cabinet of Ministers. The Cabinet of Ministers consists of the Vice-President, Ministries charged with responsibility for the Ministers and the Attorney-General.

So, nothing in this Article restricts the President from directly taking charge of a Ministry, as he deems fit without appointing a Minister. This is

⁷ Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1998), [http:// www. precidencymaldives. Gov. MV/ download /constitutions.pdf](http://www.precidencymaldives.Gov.MV/download/constitutions.pdf).

⁸ Clarence Maloney, "The Maldives: New Stresses in an Old Nations", *Asian Survey*, vol. 16 No. 7, July 1979, p.668.

a unique system where cabinet of Minister has to obey the highest authority of the country.⁹

The Powers and Functions of the Cabinet Ministers

The political system of Maldives is highly centralized. It has a Presidential form of government where the President is the absolute powerful. Article 58 of the 1998 Constitution states that the Cabinet Ministers should discharge the functions assigned by the President. The function of the Cabinet of Ministers is to assist the President. First important function of the Cabinet Ministers is to assist the President in formulating government policy on important national and international matters of concern. Secondly, the Cabinet of Ministers assist the President in the formulation of annual budget of the State and government bills to be submitted to the People's Majlis. It is a unique system where the Cabinet Ministers enjoy executive power. Thirdly, the Cabinet Ministers advise the President on the ratification of international treaties and agreements signed by the government of the Maldives with foreign governments, which require ratification by the State. Finally, the Cabinet Minister advise the President of Maldives on the development of the country. The President has his own choice of whatever policies best before good of the country. The President has the discretionary power to follow these policies.¹⁰

According to the Article 59 of the 1998 Constitution, every Minister has to discharge his or her duties with loyalty and to the best of its ability. Every minister has to be responsible for the functions assigned to him or her and also has to be accountable to the President. Any Minister whose negligence causes loss or damage to the State should accept the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, [http://www.presidency Maldives. Gov. .MV/ download/ constitutions. pdf](http://www.presidency.mv/gov.mv/download/constitutions.pdf).

responsibility thereof. Discharge of Ministerial functions and responsibilities, and accountability to the President are expected.

The Attorney-General

Article 60 of the 1998 Constitution states that there shall be an Attorney-General of the country appointed by the President. He has represent the State in all courts tribunals, whenever required by the Chief Executive of the Maldives. The Attorney-General discharges the functions assigned to him by the President with loyalty and to best of his ability. Whenever required by the President, the Attorney-General has to give legal advice.

Resignation and Removal of Ministers and Attorney-General

Ministers as well as Attorney-General may resign from the Office, with resignation written in hand and addressed to the President. However, such Ministers and the Attorney-General can continue to hold Office until the time the President notifies him of the acceptance of the resignation. The President can remove any Minister or the Attorney-General from Office. In the event of a vote of no-confidence against a member of the Cabinet passed by the People's Majlis, such a member has to resign from Office and has to inform the President about the resignation.¹¹

Dissolution of the Cabinet Ministers

According to the 1998 Constitution the President may dissolve the Cabinet Ministers if, in his opinion, they are unable to discharge their functions effectively. Upon the dissolution of the Cabinet Ministers, the President informs the People's Majlis of the dissolution. The President can also appoint new Cabinet Ministers as soon as possible.¹²

The Legislature (Parliament)

¹¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1968, 1998), *Male, Ministry of Information*, 2004.

¹² *Ibid.*

The Legislative power, except the enactment of the Constitution, is vested in the People's Majlis; but the President of the country controls the legislature, as overarching powers are vested in the President under the Constitution. The President functions in a highly centralized government structure, under which political dissent is considered as an offence. Although the government has restored Parliamentary privileges, the Legislature has not become autonomous of the Executive. This is because power is fundamentally tilted towards the Executive under the Constitution. There are no similarities between the Indian Parliament and the Maldivian Majlis. In India, the real Executive is the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, but in the Maldives the real Executive is vested in the President and the Cabinet of Ministers.

The People's Majlis

Article 63 of the 1998 Constitution states that there shall be a People's Majlis of the country, elected in accordance with the Constitution and law. A person qualifies to be a member of the People's Majlis if he or she is a Muslim; is a citizen of the Maldives; has attained twenty-five years of age; is of sound mind; is capable of reading and writing Arabic and Dhivehi script and numerals; he or she has not been convicted in the past five years. Lastly, he or she should not be a foreign national.

Maldives Legislature (the People's Majlis) consists of 50 members; 42 members are directly elected from each atoll (including Male) and 8 members are nominated by the President. The term of the People's Majlis is five years from the date on which the first meeting of the People's Majlis was held after its election. Upon the dissolution of the People's Majlis on the expiration of its term, the first meeting of the newly elected People's Majlis is held. A person elected or nominated as a member of the People's Majlis assumes membership after taking oath before the President.¹³

¹³ V.H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Developments in Maldives", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, vol.28, no.8, August 1979, pp. 34-48.

The Powers and Functions of the People's Majlis

In a year there are three regular sessions of the People's Majlis. The dates for the commencement and conclusion of these three sessions are determined by the Speaker. The Speaker determines the sessions because he or she administers all affairs of the People's Majlis and also presides over the sittings of a regular session of the Majlis. The Speaker of the People's Majlis generally informs the President before convening and concluding any session of the People's Majlis. However, in addition to the sittings of the regular sessions of the People's Majlis, an extraordinary sitting of the People's Majlis is also held when directed by the President of Maldives.

The People's Majlis elects the President by a secret ballot and nominates him for endorsement by the people in a national referendum. Once a person becomes a member of the Majlis, he or she has the right to vote in the Majlis. All matters proposed for discussed in the People's Majlis are passed by a simple majority. As the People's Majlis have 50 members, 26 votes constitute a simple majority which 34 votes a two-third majority.

According to Article 81 of the 1998 Constitution, a Bill passed by the People's Majlis becomes a law and is implemented on being assented by the President. The validity of a decision of the People's Majlis on any matter which is not inconsistent with the provisions of the Maldives Constitution is considered final¹⁴. It will not be questioned by any court or tribunal, or any other such authority.

The People's Majlis can remove any Minister through the no-confidence motion. A motion expressing want of confidence in a member of the Cabinet Ministers may be moved in the People's Majlis.¹⁵ The reason for such a motion is debated in the People's Majlis upon the submission of such matter to People's Majlis, together with a written statement from the

¹⁴ . The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1998), *Male, Ministry of Information*, 2005.

¹⁵ "The Europa World Year Book", *Maldives*, Volume II, Europa Publications, 2003, p. 2622.

concerned member of the Cabinet. The member of the Cabinet, against whom the motion is passed, is given a notice of fourteen days concerning the said motion. He or She is considered to be in want of confidence if the motion is supported by majority of the Majlis. The concerned member has the right to defend himself in the Majlis against the motion expressing the want of confidence in him.

The People's Majlis holds an important authority over the very ownership of any part of the territory of the country. No part of the territory of the Maldives can be leased or otherwise given possession to a foreign national without the approval of the People's Majlis. Another important power of the People's Majlis is the passing of Bills. Each financial year, the Minister of Finance and Treasury submits the proposed State Budget for the approval of the People's Majlis.¹⁶ The People's Majlis estimates the expenditure and income of the State for the year and the expenditure and income of the State for the preceding year, and the Budget so proposed is passed by the People's Majlis. No supplementary or excess funds are added to an already-passed Budget unless it has been submitted to and passed by the People's Majlis.

The Speaker of the People's Majlis

According to Article 68 (1) of the 1998 Constitution, the Speaker of the People's Majlis can be appointed and removed from Office by the President. The President controls the entire constitutional machinery, including the legislature and judiciary. In accordance with Article 65 of the Constitution, any vacancy of the post of Speaker should be filled up within seven days of such vacancy. He or she should have a minimum qualification required for the Office of Minister. He or she should have the competence to discharge

¹⁶ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, [http:// www. Presidency Maldives. gov.mv/download /constitutions.pdf](http://www.PresidencyMaldives.gov.mv/download/constitutions.pdf).

the functions of the Speaker. The Speaker of the People's Majlis assumes Office upon taking oath before the President.

The Powers and Functions of the Speaker of the People's Majlis

Article 72 of the 1998 Constitution states that the Speaker administers all affairs of the People's Majlis. The Speaker of the People's Majlis discharges the functions as acting-President (if the post of the President is vacant) and summons the People's Majlis. The Speaker carries out all matters relating to the election of the Council of Ministers. The Speaker of the People's Majlis is one of the most responsible persons in the Maldives government. The Speaker is the presiding officer of the Majlis. The Speaker presides over the sitting of the regular sessions of the Majlis. An extraordinary sitting of the Majlis convened whenever directed by the President. The speaker submits to the President all matters passed by the People's Majlis. The Speaker is the constitutional Head of the People's Majlis.¹⁷

The Speaker of the Majlis may resign from Office, addressing the resignation written in hand to the President. He can even continue to hold Office until the President notifies him of the acceptance of the resignation. It is unlike the procedure in the Indian system where the Speaker of the Lok Sabha gives his resignation letter addressed to the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.

The Deputy Speaker of the People's Majlis

Article 70 (1) of the 1998 Constitution states that the Deputy Speaker can be appointed and removed from Office by the President. The Deputy Speaker is appointed by the People's Majlis seven days prior to the date on which the first meeting of the newly elected People's Majlis is held in the event of any vacancy. Within seven days of such vacancy in the House, the Deputy Speaker is appointed from among the members of the house. In the opinion

¹⁷ Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, *Maldives : Winds of Change in an Atoll State*. (South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd.,), 1985, pp. 36-45.

of the President, he or she should be competent to discharge the duties of the Deputy Speaker. Then, Deputy Speaker of the People's Majlis assumes office upon taking oath before the President.

According to the Constitution, it has clearly been mentioned that the Deputy Speaker is to assist the Speaker in discharge of the function referred to him. In the event of any vacancy in the Office of the Speaker, or when the Speaker is unable to perform his function, the Deputy Speaker may temporarily discharge the function of the Speaker. The Speaker is not a member of the People's Majlis but the Speaker should have qualifications required of a Minister; however the Deputy Speaker is appointed from among the members of the People's Majlis.¹⁸

The Deputy Speaker, like the Speaker, may resign from the Office by writing the resignation in hand; addressed to the President. The Deputy Speaker of the People's Majlis can also continue to hold office until the time the President notifies him of the acceptance of the resignation letter to the Speaker of the People's Majlis.

The People's Special Majlis

According to Article 92 of the 1998 Constitution, the power to make and to amend the Constitution of the Maldives is vested in the People's Special Majlis. In fact, the members of the Cabinet Ministers, members of the People's Majlis, members elected from Male and the atolls, and lastly eight members appointed by the President consist the People's Special Majlis. The People's Special Majlis is convened as decided by the President and draws conclusion of the business, and the agenda is also discovered by writing in the hand of the President.

The level of qualification for the membership of People's Majlis is applicable even for the People's Special Majlis.

¹⁸ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1968, 1998), *Male, Ministry of Information, 2005.*

The Powers and Functions of the People's Special Majlis

The People's Special Majlis enjoys important powers. Any article or provision of the Constitution may be amended only by a law passed by a majority of votes in the Peoples Special Majlis, and after being assented by the President. The Amendment of the Article of provision has been referred to in Article 101 of the Constitution and passed by the People's Special Majlis; it is presented to the President within seven days from the date of passing. Hence, any Bill returned to the People's Special Majlis for reconsideration in accordance with clause (1) of 102 Article is passed by a two-third majority of the People's Special Majlis. In case it is not passed by a two-third majority of the People's Special Majlis, it becomes void. Finally, "a Bill passed by the People's Special Majlis becomes law and enter into force upon being assented by the President and thus such law is published in the Government Gazette."¹⁹

This is called the law-making procedure of the Maldivian legislature. In accordance with Article 103 of the provisions of the 1998 Constitution, the validity of a decision of the People's Special Majlis will not be questioned by any court. But, the President of the Maldives can take decision regarding the validity of a decision of the People's Special Majlis.

President and Vice-President of the People's Special Majlis

Article 97 of the 1998 Constitution states that a President and a Vice-President of the People's Special Majlis shall be elected from among its members at the first sitting of the People's Special Majlis. When the Office of the President or that of the Vice-President of the People's Special Majlis becomes vacant prior to the dissolution of the People's Special Majlis, a new member shall be elected to fill such vacancy.²⁰

¹⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, [http:// www. presidency.maldives. gov.mv/download/ constitutions pdf.](http://www.presidency.maldives.gov.mv/download/constitutions.pdf)

²⁰ Ibid.

The Speaker of the People's Majlis presides over the first sitting of the People's Special Majlis until the President of the People's Special Majlis is elected. The President and the Vice-President of the People's Special Majlis assume office upon taking oath before the President. The President of the People's Special Majlis administers all affairs of the Majlis, convenes sittings of the Majlis for discharging the duties assigned to the Majlis, and presides over such sittings and submits to the President all matters passed by the Majlis within seven days of their approval. The Vice-President of the People's Majlis assists the President of the People's Special Majlis in the discharge of functions conferred upon him. In the event of any vacancy in the Office of the President the Vice-President temporarily discharges the functions of the President.

The Judiciary

Article 112(1) of the 1998 Constitution deals with the administration of Justice. The Judicial system is undertaken in accordance with the Islamic law. The Chief Justice and other Judges of the High Court are appointed by the President. All courts, with the exception of the High Court, are under the control of the Ministry of Justice. There are four courts in Male and 200 island courts, one in every inhabited island. In January 1999, the Government had declared that the island court in each atoll's capital would oversee the administration of Justice in that atoll.

The High Court

The High Court consists of the Chief Justice and other Judges. The number of judges may be determined by the President. The Chief Justice and other Judges of the High Court are appointed by the President. There are minimum qualifications required to be the Chief Justice or Judges of the High court. A person, in the opinion of the President, should have the necessary educational qualification and competence to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the Chief Justice or a Judge of the High Court. Apart from

these, other qualifications are also required. A person should have attained thirty years of age; he or she must be of sound mind; he or she should not have been convicted of any offence which is prescribed in Islam, or convicted of criminal breach or of bribery; and he or she must not be a foreign national.

All appeals from the court of Maldives are according to the regulation promulgated by the President. The High Court hears cases determined by the President, to be filed with the High Court among the proceedings instituted by the State. The President controls the Judiciary, and the higher authority of the Judiciary is the President and not any court or even High Court of the country. Maldives administration of justice is pyramidal in structure. Inhabited islands courts form the lowest administrative justice unit and the High Court forms the apex structure. The Ministry of Justice is responsible to the President.²¹

The Island Courts (Other Courts)

In Maldivian Judicial system, the island courts are under the control of the Ministry of Justice. The judges of the courts are appointed by the President of the Maldives. There are four courts in Male and 200 island courts, one in every inhabited island. The President can increase or decrease the number of courts.

However, there are minimum qualifications required for appointment of Judges to such island courts. At first, he or she must be a Muslim and must be a citizen of Maldives

Minister of Justice is assigned by the President to issue directives and orders concerning the administration of courts and the conduct of Judges in Maldives. The Ministry of Justice thus has the authority to control the island courts, except for the High Court of the country. There is a difference between the High Court and other courts (island courts). The

President is directly responsible in the functioning of the High Court, it gives directives and orders concerning the administration. But for the island courts, the Ministry of Justice issue directives and orders.²² The Atoll-Chief and the Island-Chief are responsible for the smooth functioning of these island courts.

Resignation of Judges of the High Court and other Island Courts

Article 116 of the 1998 Constitution states that a Judge of a court may resign from office by addressing his resignation letter to the President. Till the President notifies him or her of the acceptance of the resignation the Judge can continue the Office. There are same provisions for the High Court and other courts of the country. The President may, at his discretion, remove a Judge of any court from Office, as he is the supreme authority of the administration of Justice.

The Relationship between Executive, Legislature and Judiciary

Separation of powers is an established constitutional principle. In order to prevent the accumulation of too much power in one person or one decision-making body, there must be some separation of the three branches of the Maldives constitution: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Without the separation of these three powers, absolute power will be vested in one individual, which could lead to inefficiency, corruption, and authoritarianism.

Article 4 of Maldives 1998 Constitution sets out the working of the Government. Article 1 states the powers of the State of Maldives shall be vested in the citizens. The said powers, for purposes of governing the State,

²¹ V. Suryanarayan, "Islam, Political Evolution and National Identity in Maldives", N.N.Vohra, ed., *Religion and Society in South and Southeast Asia*, Konark Publication, 1998, pp. 119-121.

²² Abbas Ibrahim, "Religious political contribution of Harmonious Regional Relations in South Asia and Southeast Asia: A Maldivian Perspective", N. N Vohra, ed., *Religion and Society in South and Southeast Asia*, Konark Publications, 1998.pp.125-131

shall comprise the following: (a) The Executive; (b) the Legislature; and (c) the Judiciary. Article 2 of the 1998 Constitution states the executive power is vested in the President and the Cabinet Ministers. The legislative power is vested in the People's Majlis and People's Special Majlis, and the power of administering justice is vested in the President and the courts of Maldives. Thus, it can be seen from Article 4 that the Maldivian Government does not operate on a strict separation of powers. The functions of government are clearly divided, but the organs of the State overlap. There is a supposed separation of the Executive and Legislative branches, but Article 4(2) clearly states that the President occupies dual responsibilities, as Head of the Executive and the Judiciary.²³

The Cabinet Ministers are appointed by the President, although it is notable that Article 55(2) of the Constitution allows him to take direct charge of any ministerial department without appointing a Minister. Currently there are 20 Ministers, and President Gayoom is in control of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, and jointly in charge of the Ministry of Defence and National Security.²⁴

Article 39 states that the President shall be the highest authority of administering justice in the country. Independence of the Judiciary is essential to ensure that those facing charges do so in the absence of the possibility of political bias. A body that is part of both the Executive and Judiciary will be responsible for the formulation of policy and then interpreting that policy in the courts. There is no check on the executive authority.

There is no independent system of Judicial review in Maldives. A recent investigation of the death of an inmate at the Maafushi was undertaken by the Presidential Commission, whose members were all appointed by the President. Parts of the report were not even made public due to lack of an effective separation of powers. Even if such a separation

²³ . Restoring power to President Gayoom, *Hindu*, (Madras), 5 Nov., 1998

²⁴ . The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives (1998), *Male*, Ministry of Information, 2005.

between the Executive and the Legislature theoretically exists, the influence of one over the other seeks to undermine the separation.²⁵

Fundamental Rights of the Citizens

Articles 13 to 28 of the 1998 Constitution state that Fundamental Rights are the soul of the country's citizens. There are 16 Fundamental Rights for its citizens in Maldives which, have been guaranteed by the Constitution.

Article 13 states the equality of citizens before the Law. It means that Maldivian citizens are equal before and under the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law. Article 14 (1) and (11) mentions about Revocation and Renunciation of citizenship, so that no Maldivian shall be deprived of citizenship, except as may be provided by law. Article 15 states the right to be treated in accordance with law and the right to appeal against oppressive treatment. Article 16 (1) and (2) talk about the presumption of innocence and the right of the accused to defend himself. Prohibition of punishment under retrospective legislation is given under Article 17(1) and (2) (3). Article 18 of the Constitution states the inviolability of residential dwelling and premises Article 19 states the freedom of education. Article 20 states that inviolability of letters, message, and other means of communication will not be intercepted for its citizens. Freedom of movement, according to Article-21, is a Fundamental Right which guarantees freedom for every Maldivian citizen to return to Maldives irrespective of where he may be. Unless prohibited by law, a Maldivian citizen has the right to leave Maldives and travel within the country any time. Right to acquire and hold property is another Fundamental Right (Article-22). Every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property in accordance with law. Article 23 mentions the protection of property right in the country. Article 24 states the Right to Work, permitting every citizen the right to practice any occupation, provided that

²⁵ . "Constitution of the Maldives: A structure Built on loose sand" at www.Maldivesroyalfamily.com/maldives_constitution.shtml.

such occupation is not prohibited by law. Freedom of Expression under Article 15 is a Fundamental Right for all citizens. Every citizen of the country shall have the freedom to express his or her conscience and thoughts orally or in writing or in other means, unless prohibited by law in the interest of protecting the sovereignty of Maldives, and in maintaining public order and protecting the basic tenets of Islam.²⁶

Freedom of Assembly (Article-26) allows citizens to assemble peacefully and in a manner that does not contravene the law. Freedom of Association (Article-26) is an important Fundamental Right in Maldives for its citizens. Persons shall be free to form societies and associations, unless prohibited by the law in the interest of safeguarding national security and stability. Finally, Right of Pension is the last Fundamental Right (Article-28). It states that every Maldives citizen engaged in employment shall have the right of pension in accordance with law.²⁷

Fundamental Rights are very essential for the citizens overall growth and development. Although Fundamental Rights have been written in the Constitution, they have not been practically guaranteed by the State. There is a long history of denial of basic human rights to its citizens by the State. The Maldivian government has sustained this repression. The President Gayoom calls the political system a 'model of democracy'. This version of democracy has no concept of Maldivian freedom. The Freedom of expression and assembly for political association have been denied to the people.²⁸

Fundamental Duties of the Citizens

There are three important Fundamental Duties of the Maldives citizens. Article 29 of the 1998 Constitution states that every citizen of the country

²⁶ . The Constitutions of the Republic of Maldives (1968 and 1998) , *Male, Ministry of Information, 2005.*

²⁷ . *Ibid*

²⁸ A. V. Varghese, *Situation in the Maldives: A Period of Big Challenges*, *The Deccan Herald (Bangalore)*, 29 June 1990.

has to be loyal to the State, and obedience to the constitution. The primary duty of every citizen is to honour the freedom and rights of others. It is the duty of every citizen to protect and uphold the country's Constitution. Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties go hand in hand. Without Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights are meaningless; both are complementary to each other.

Secondly, Article 30 mentions the protection of the Constitution, upholding the law, and honouring the rights of others. Finally, Article 13 (1) and (2) mention the violation of laws, regulations, and principles inconsistent with Fundamental Rights. Where any law, regulation, or any principle having the force of law is inconsistent with the Fundamental Rights, such a law, regulation or principle shall, to the extent of its inconsistency, be considered void. Also, the Fundamental Rights shall not, temporarily or otherwise, be denied save in accordance with the 1998 Constitution of Maldives.

There was no constitutional provision of forming a political party until 2004, and at the same time it does not guarantee anyone the full right to do so. The right to freedom of expression was very much restricted because of the overarching power of the President. Thus citizens have to follow the constitutional provisions, which are compulsory for every citizen of Maldives.²⁹

Public Service and Other Institutions

Maldives Civil Service is a political term which is very new to the country and in most cases not understood by many. There is no Civil Service in Maldives in a true sense, but it is a kind of Public Service which include elected, appointed, and employed personnel, including the Head of the Government, Ministers, Directors, and even messenger boys. They all get

²⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Maldives, [http:// www. Presidency Maldives. gov.mv/download /constitutions.pdf](http://www.PresidencyMaldives.gov.mv/download/constitutions.pdf).

pensions for 20 years of their uninterrupted service to the State and for not retiring from service.

There are Public Servants in the Majlis (Legislature) holding post in Public Service at the same time in a Ministry or Department without a Departmental or Ministerial responsibility. There is no independent Civil Service Commission, and everyone is employed in the administration of the State by the Public Service Division of the President's Office.

Political parties were interested without regulating Public Servants joining political parties in Maldives. It has become a system where public servants become Ministers without being elected or endorsed for by the Majlis. These have led to the weakening of the tradition of political impartiality that existed in the public service and erected a chaotic political public service; a system which is quite contrary to the public interest, and a highly politicized public service system. Political factors have become crucial for the appointment and promotion of Public Servants in the post-party era.

It has now become vital to establish a Civil Service Tribunal with an already independent Civil Service Commission to deal with the ongoing malpractices of Public Service by the Public Service Department of President's Office of Maldives.³⁰

Critical Review and Assessment of the Nature and Functions of the Political System in Maldives

The nature and function of the existing political system in Maldives is highly centralized. The President is not only the real Executive but also controls all the powers including Legislative and Judicial. In Maldives, judiciary system is not independent and ordinary citizens do not have any effective recourse to seek the help of law against any unjust penalization.³¹ It means, the highest authority is not the court but the President of Maldives.

³⁰ . www.minivannews.com/news/news:phps

³¹ Ibid.

Hence, many factors are responsible for the spread of political discontent among a section of the political elite. These are: "The concentration of political and economic forces in Male due to which the atolls are getting increasingly marginalized in the contest for power. Secondly, the narrow base of the decision- making structure in the country; lastly, the presence of an oligarchic streak in democratic political system."³²

The killings of three prisoners by the National Security Service and the injuring of a dozen more in Maldives in early September 2003 exposed the functioning of the political system. NSS personnel function under the President's Command. The totalitarian government that has sustained this repression has concealed itself behind the veil of a model of democracy. This version of democracy upholds no individual freedom; assembly or political association has been denied to the people. It was this veil which was finally lifted on September 20, 2003.³³

In their efforts to decentralised the system, Maldivians are confronted with many problems in the hands of the central government. There are demerits in the centralized political system. There is no local self-government for the atolls and islands in the country. People are denied of opportunities to govern themselves on local level. The government has not been giving importance to the uninhabited islands and 200 inhabited islands of the country.³⁴

The Maldivian leadership has not taken the step to strengthen the democratic political system.³⁵ Other political institutions are equally weak because of the underdeveloped political culture. Maldivian leadership's promise for a better democracy during the election time has never been fulfilled. Even President Gayoom had declared that his new term would have

³² A. V. Varghese, "Situation in the Maldives: A Period of Big Challenges", *The Deccan Herald* (Banglore), 29 June 1990.

³³ Report by Maldivian, "Flush funds and family games in the Islands", *Himal*, october10/16 2003.

³⁴ *Reported in the Asia 1994 Year Book*, No. 9, p. 170.

³⁵ S.S. Mishra, "Strains and Stresses of Democracy in Maldives", Virender Grover, ed., *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations*, 1997, pp. 113-116.

the system work for a better democracy. He stood for the decentralization of the political power, but apparently is yet to be implemented.

On June 2, 2005, Maldivian Parliament voted for a multi-party democracy for the first time in the tiny atoll-nation. The parliament unanimously approved a resolution to allow political parties seek recognition and contest elections, ending the no-party system in the nation. The motion was moved on the basis of a request by President Gayoom to review its earlier decision not to allow political parties in the country.

Although political parties in Maldives had been previously banned, there had been no official proscription on political activity so far. President Gayoom himself proposed a number of radical reforms in the 1998 Constitution's constitutional reforms. He has suggested that the President's tenure should be limited to two five-year terms, and women should be allowed to stand for the Presidency. According to the 1998 constitutional reforms, the President would also lose the right to nominate eight members of the People's Majlis. The People's Majlis would become independent of the Executive, and the post of Prime Minister would be created. The Judiciary would be restructured; a Supreme Court would be created as the highest court of appeal, which the President would appoint on the advice of the People's Majlis. The proposals have been discussed by the People's Majlis, and the People Majlis voted for these proposals. It is yet not clear whether the present government will implement this proposed amendment practically or not.

Conclusion

The above discussion and analyses make it amply clear that the political system and governance in Maldives is different from other countries in South Asia. The post-colonial Maldivian political system requires more democratic restructuring. A new approach and mind-set are necessary for the work ahead. Recently proposed constitutional reforms by the President

are yet to be implemented. Maldives needs proper constitutional reforms for the betterment of its political system. If these suggestions are implemented by the Maldivian leadership, then the country is bound to develop in every front.

CHAPTER-IV

**NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FOR
GOVERNANCE**

This chapter deals with National Institutions for Governance in Maldives. In this chapter, the focus is on political and economic institutions, which govern the country. There are many national institutions; it may be political or economic institutions, nevertheless, which function for the government. This chapter analyses the functions of some of the key political institutions such as Ministry of Home and Environment, Ministry of Defence and National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Treasury and Ministry of Atolls Development. This chapter makes a profile of certain economic institutions such as the Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA), Bank of Maldives (BML), Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), State Trading Center (STC), and the National Security Service (NSS). Finally, it highlights how these institutions function for the development of the nation.

The Ministry of Home Affairs and Environment of Maldives

The Minister of Home Affairs and Environment is appointed by the President. The President may dismiss the Minister, if, in his (President) opinion, he is unable to discharge effectively the functions assigned to him by the President. Earlier in 1978, this Ministry was not assigned the powers to function separately because it was functioning under the President himself. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs has a separate department. The Home Ministry has been functioning single-handedly. This is a very important portfolio in the Maldives political institutions now.¹

The Powers and Functions of the Minister of Home Affairs

The main functions are to maintain law and order in the Maldives. How to maintain law and order in the country and how to maintain internal peace and security of the people, public property, and territory of the island-state and sea

¹ . Maldives, *Ministry of Home Affairs and Environment*, Male, 2005

water of Maldives have been the functions of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This Ministry looks after important national and international matters and issues on the advice and direction of the President. The Ministry looks after problems of the whole country through Atoll-Chief and Island-Chief. The Minister of Home Affairs and Environment gives directions to the Island-Chief and Atoll- Chief for the welfare of the people.²

Therefore, there are several departments, which come directly under the purview of the President at the centre. As a result, the Ministry of Home and Environment also comes under the control of the President. The Ministry of Atolls Development also plays a great role in the Home Affairs. It is the Atoll-Administration that controls the islands and atolls of the country, but the Ministry of Home Affairs is accredited for it. The national institution like Home Affairs has also been playing an important role since independence. There are very few historical records about the Sultanate periods. It does not certify the prevalence of such a system in the history of Maldives. The Ministry of Home Affairs has been functioning in Maldives very well since 1968. But due to three coup attempts by foreign mercenaries the nation has been facing problems since 1986. The coup was basically an external threat, like military invasion, to besiege the country. Despite the fact that there is no external threat today, Maldives still faces problems of good governance.

The Home Affairs Ministry has been working jointly along with the Housing and Environment for one decade. Such type of Ministry has a big role in the developmental fields. In fact, better governance of a country relies on the government's policies and programmes. But functions of the Home Ministry is not considered good in the country because of the centralization of political system, with the Ministries not getting opportunities to play their autonomous role. Whatever, guidance and directions that come from the President have to be complied with by the various Ministries.

² .“ The Maldives: introductory survey”, *The Europa World Year Book*, Volume 11,

The Ministry of Defence and National Security

The President of Maldives appoints the Minister of Defence and National Security; but the Minister can be equally dismissed or removed by the President. The Ministry of Defence and National Security is a very important Ministry in the country. Hence, the Maldives Police Service, which was previously administered by the Ministry of Defence and National Security as a paramilitary unit, has become a civil authority and is now administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs. This was announced at a ceremonial function on September 1, 2004.

Interestingly, there is no specific legislation in Maldives, such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (UK), the Police Act 1958 (NZ), the Australian Federal Police Act 1979, or the Canadian Mounted Police Act, that gives the Maldives Police Service the power to arrest, search, and seize. Such a legislation would give the Ministry of Defence and National Security the power to arrest anywhere in the country; while the jurisdiction of Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Atoll- Development is restricted to the capital, Male, and atolls respectively.³

When the Ministry of Defence and National Security administers the Police Service, police officers act as delegates of the Minister of Defence and National Security and therefore have the power to arrest anywhere in the Maldives. The Ministry of Defence has a great role to play in the country. This national institution has been working in the country since 1968. This type of institution existed even during the Sultanate period.⁴

However, during the Sultanate period when the country became a British protectorate, the colonial powers bid for supremacy and control over naval routes made significant target points. Because of a large number of

Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London, 2002, p.261.

³. Maldives, *Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture*, (Male, 2005)

⁴. Suman Dubey, "Gan – The Last Outpost", *The Asia Magazine*, July 1969.

islands, with small population, remote from each other, there were problems in its own planning for the provisions of welfare services and infrastructure for defence development. Despite everything, the National Security Service and police have been doing their duties to protect the independence and sovereignty of the country. The Defence Ministry functions according to the President's order, protecting the government property, buildings, and the people's security in the islands.⁵

Maldivian leadership maintained that international obligation to provide security to small states would not prevent them from seeking bilateral assistance. President Gayoom made it clear that he would not hesitate to ask India or any other countries for military help; this indicates the foreign interferences in the internal affairs of the country.⁶ The proper maintenance and arrangements are expected to be in order in the defence system. Strategically, Maldives has to devise its own system so that it can safeguard its national security from external threats.

Political institutions like Ministry of Defence and National Security is gradually fortifying itself in defence matter. For this purpose, the Maldivian leadership is spending more money on defence and national security. If the country does not spend more Budgets on defence then it will face security problems.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a key department of Maldives government. This department has a separate status and the President takes personal interests in how it can function well. The President appoints the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry functions under the guidance and advice of the President. It functions for the national interest of the country, with a focus on how to make good relationships with the neighbouring countries in particular

⁵ . Ibid.

and the world in general. The Ministry of External Affairs has to evolve good foreign policy through diplomacy and has to make it successful. Within the framework of SAARC, it has to maintain good relationship with the countries of South Asia.⁷

It is the President of Maldives who takes the initiative to strengthen good relations with other countries in the world because Maldives is a small island-state in South Asia. The Ministry makes policy on important international matters and issues. The People's Majlis (Parliament) has been giving advice to the President from the very beginning on the matter of ratification of international treaties and agreements.

Maldives follows a nonaligned policy and is committed to maintain friendly relations with other countries. It has a UN Mission in New York, with the permanent Representative to the UN in New York also accredited as Ambassador to the United States; it has embassies in Sri Lanka and in the United Kingdom; it also has a trade representative in Singapore and a Tourist Information Bureau in Germany. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka maintain resident embassies in Male. Denmark, Norway, the U.K., Germany, Turkey, and Sweden have consular agencies in Male under the supervision of their embassies in Sri Lanka and India. The UNDP has a representative resident in Male. So is the case with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Like the United States, many countries have nonresident ambassadors accredited to the Maldives, most of them based in Sri Lanka or India. Maldives is a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). So, Ministry of External Affairs and Foreign Secretary are committed to maintain friendly relations with all these countries.

⁶ . Maldives, The Department of Information and Broadcasting, *Maldives: A Global View- Excerpts from President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom speeches (1979-1989)* (Male, 1990).

⁷ . Urmila Phadis and Ela Luithui, *Maldives: Winds of change in an Atoll State*, (New Delhi, South Asia Publication, 1986)

Therefore, President Gayoom said during the NAM summit that being a small country, Maldives has been trying to send representations from time to time but today it has become positive.⁸ Even he said that a country like Maldives may lack in technological advancement, material wealth, and in fact it may lack in many of the material criteria by which progress is measured in the present day world, but his country does not lack the courage to speak out freely according to its own convictions.

Therefore, Maldives and its commitment to a Non-Aligned policy is a result of a small states' desire to retain its autonomy and independent status. The issues of national security are interlined with the issues of governance.⁹ The government of the country has been working positively for international peace and cooperation with major countries. The Ministry of External Affairs looks at the broad aspect on how to make developmental work in a constructive manner with the world community. This is the ultimate goal of the government of this country. Maldives has also been gaining political, economic, and cultural benefits from the world community. It is trying hard to play a major role in South Asia.

The Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Maldives

The President of Maldives appoints a Minister of Finance and Treasury who looks after the financial matters of the country. The President can even keep this financial portfolio under him because it is an important portfolio. Whenever the President keeps the financial department under him, the other Ministries assist the President in the formulation of government policy on important national and international matters and issues. The Ministries advise the President on the development of the country's economy policy. The Cabinet Ministers assist the President in the formulation of the annual budget

⁸ Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutta Luithui. *Indian Studies on South Asia Co-operation (The Republic of Maldives: Developmental Imperatives of a Small State)*, September 1982, pp. 62-71.

and government bills to be submitted to the People's Majlis. However, the Finance Minister presents in the People's Majlis an annual budget.¹⁰ The Finance Ministry of the country estimates the annual budget and the members of the People's Majlis of Maldives pass the budget. For passing the budget, 51 per cent of its members are required. The Finance Minister and other Ministers are responsible for passing the annual budget in the Majlis. Maldives' Foreign Economic Policy emphasizes on the creation of favourable conditions for effective use of trade and aid. The country's economy is dependent upon various sources. Owing to its tourism industry, the Island is in good position. This is a very important source of income for the Maldivian economy. Trade and commerce, and aids from international Banks likes ADB, World Bank, IMF and other countries have been main aids to the country.

In its aid programme, apart from the country donors, there have been important international bodies like the Colombo Plan and the UN. Since Maldives' independence, the various UN agencies have prepared invaluable studies on various facts of its economy. By 1980, there were 24 such projects and programmes in operation in Maldives. Now it has been doubled in number. Efforts have been made to develop infrastructure, education, health, transport and also agriculture of the country. Maldives has joined hands with several global and regional bodies like the World Bank, International Development Association, International Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank; and Asian Development Bank, and it has been able to seek assistance from these bodies.¹¹

⁹ . P. Sahadevan, "India and Maldives: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship", *South Asian Studies* (Jaipur), Vol.July-December, 1992, pp32-42

¹⁰ . " The Europa World Year Book", *The Maldives*, 2002, pp. 2617-2621.

¹¹ . In June 1982, the World Bank conducted a survey on Maldives economic performance with a view to consider the grant of loans for some development project. Earlier, the Bank had done a similar survey in 1980 entitled, *The Maldives: An Introductory Economic Report*.

Apart from these agencies, grants and loans have also come from several West Asian Countries like Libya, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iran for the development of the country's economic position. Countries like UK, Soviet Union, and China have been providing aid for educational and technical training through various agreements over the years. India and Sri Lanka are now providing aid for educational and technical training to the Maldivians. Japan and Singapore have also provided aid to Maldives. Its neighbours had significant economic dealings in the form of trade transactions and also aid commitments. Aid from neighbouring countries has largely been in the form of machinery, equipment, technical knowledge, and training.

The Maldivian economy is largely based on tourism and fishing industry. Development of Maldives has been dependent on the tourism, industry, and its complementary service sectors, transport, distribution, real estate, construction, and government. Taxes on the tourist industry have been ploughed into infrastructure and used to improve technology in the agricultural sectors.

GDP in 2002 totalled to \$ 640 million or about \$ 2,200 per capita. Maldives has experienced relatively low inflation in recent years. Real GDP growth averaged about 10% in the 1980s. It increased by an exceptional 16.2% in 1990, declined to 4% in 1993, rose to 10% in 1998 and has since levelled to 5% to 7% range.¹²

Maldives has been running a merchandise trade deficit in the range of \$ 200 to \$ 260 million since 1997. The trade deficit declined to 208 million in 2002 from \$ 233 million in 2001.

International shipping to and from Maldives is mainly operated by the private sector, with only a small fraction of the cargo carried on vessels operated by the national carrier, Maldives Shipping Management Ltd. Over the years, Maldives has received economic assistance from multilateral

¹² . U.S. Department of State, *Bureau of South Asia Affairs*, February 2005

development organizations, including the UN Development Program (UNDP), Asian Development Bank, and World Bank; it has also received economic aid from individual donors Japan, India, Australia, and European and Arab Countries.¹³

Maldives is one of the poorest and weakest states in the world, which are categorized by the UN as least developed countries (LDCS).¹⁴ Needing special assistance from the world community, it is bracketed within the UNDP's most seriously affected countries. Five basic criteria determine the economic status of a country.

- (1) Subsistence in agriculture,
- (2) Weakness of administration,
- (3) An acute shortage of trained manpower at all levels,
- (4) Inadequate inter-atoll and intra-atoll transport and communication, and
- (5) A narrow industrial base

To these could be added a low per capita income, a high population growth rate, poor health and sanitary conditions, and a traditionally unfavorable balance of trade.

Shortage of qualified manpower, poor health conditions, rapidly changing structure of the fishing industry, past neglect of the agricultural sector, and severe regional imbalance in economic development are the major problems besetting the Island Republic of Maldives. These problems are a major setback to good governance in Maldives. However, Maldives has been

¹³. Ibid

¹⁴. The World Bank, South Asia Programmes Department, *The Economy of the Maldives: Introductory Economic Report, 1980*.

working up its way towards covering the low resource and industry gap in the economy; and tourism industry is a major contributor in it¹⁵

Tourism industry actually emerged late in 1972. And it is an important concern to understand how the government benefits from the tourism industry. All the land is government-owned and leased out on tourists per head. Such type of resorts per bed has been the revenue of the government. Till recently, constructions of resorts were financed private sources, with some leading bank and with advance tour-bookings by tourist agencies. Even the Maldivian Government (Ministry of Finance and Treasury) has been providing short-term loans to resort owners for their progress in the tourism industry.

Tourism industry is a very important political and economical institution for governance in the Republic of Maldives. It will a major source of revenue for alleviating the financial crises in Maldives. Hence, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury is dependent on the development of the national institutions.

The Ministry of Atolls Development

The Ministry of Atolls Development is a key portfolio in Maldives. The Ministry of Atolls Development was initially established as the Ministry of Provincial Affairs in the late 1970s. The Ministry was then renamed the Ministry of Atolls Administration (MOAA) because of its central role in the administration of the rural atolls. By November 2003, the Ministry of Atolls Development had a greater role to play in the socio-economic development of the atolls.

The President appoints the Ministry of the Atolls Development. The Ministry has many important powers and functions to play in the country. The mission of Atolls Development is the sustainable development of the atolls. It

¹⁵ The World Bank, "The Maldives", *Financial Times Survey*, 28 May 1980, pp.67-71.

provides them with sustainable development to further enhance their livelihood through modern methodology, and technology capable workforce.¹⁶

The Ministry has established the Atoll Development Committee. The aim of the Committee is to organize developmental activities in the atoll and to advice and assist the Atoll-Chief and cooperate with him or her in various matters of the atoll. The main functions of the Atoll Development Committee are: to assist the activities conducted by the government or supported by the government; to work to improve the living conditions of the people of the atoll; and to foster good-will harmony and cooperation among the people. This Committee generates income for people. It mobilizes the Island Development Committees and Women's Development Committees. Finally, Atoll Development Committee monitors the activities of Island Development Committees and advices the committees on favourable changes.¹⁷

The present government has taken special notice of the social and economic implications of the regional imbalance and the programmes for widespread development of atolls the Ministry of Atolls Development has put into operation. The programmes were implemented by training people from various atolls. Besides these, community and youth centres have been operating in various atolls. Centres have been opened for integrated rural developmental programmes.

An analysis of the atoll-development activities in the Maldives showed that Male and the tourist islands are heavily favoured with facilities. Though Male requires special attention because of population concentration, dissemination of goods and services to islands further a field may help to reduce pressure on Male. Except for Male and other tourists' islands, no other islands have electricity, and it can be practically said of every other available service. Not only this, majority of development funds stop at Male; trade and exchange of goods is also largely restricted to Male.

¹⁶ . <http://en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/maldives>

¹⁷ . www.maldives.info.gov.mv/info/include/gov_list.

The present government has taken into consideration of the social and economic implication of this regional imbalance. The present President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom has been simultaneously alongside planning operations made on the spot study of the outlying atolls. Soon after taking those operations into consideration in 1978, he (Gayoom) began his tour of various atolls.¹⁸ By October 1981, he had visited 145 out of 200 inhabited islands in the country. From 1978 onwards the President and the Minister of Atoll Administration have been giving importance on atolls. "The President has set new style of open leadership which is in stark contrast to that of his first President Ibrahim Nasir. Gayoom's obvious attempt has been to help neglected areas develop and integrate with the rest of the country."¹⁹

In his address to the Atoll Chiefs' Conference in December 1980, he emphasized their importance saying that they were the strongest chains linking the government and people of the islands. On one side there is the administration, the unit with a responsibility to be aware of the people's difficulties and to find solutions to these difficulties. On the other side, are the people who must activate the schemes designed for their progress. This target achieved. In this effort the atoll- chief functions as the coordinator.

Apart from the tours by the President and several other officials, the government has initiated programmes for administrative training of atoll and island chiefs. Under the aegis of the National Women's Committee, for the first time, a plan for leadership training for women from various atolls was launched in June 1981. One representative woman from each atoll attended a three-month course under the plan. The objective of this programme was to train women to find ways and means to overcome problems which women encounter in daily life; to help their fellow women in the islands and atolls to do likewise; to take initiative in activities having direct bearing on their lives; and finally to improve their living standards.

¹⁸ . *Maldives News Bulletin*, No.10, February 2001

Correspondingly, the numbers of educational institutions and community and health centre in Maldives have increased. There are 272 educational institutions in Maldives, out of which 63 are government institutions. The government is spending more on health and social welfare sectors. A council of youth welfare and recreation has also been established. Community centres as well as school farms have been established in many atolls, with a view to improved community spirit. Help encourages the youth to cultivate easily available and several cultivable vegetables like pumpkin gourds, cucumbers, green chilies etc. In order to give a further impetus to developmental activities in the south, the government has established an Addu Development Authority in 1981.

Apart from the road service, which links the neighboring islands on the national level, the government has launched an integrated rural development programme for each atoll for greater educational facilities. Better health and sanitation facilities have also been started. The Ministry of Atolls Development has given major emphasis on improving transportation and communication between Male and other atolls, as well as among islands within atolls. The growing dependence of Maldivian exports on international market has not only become obvious but has also become beyond its control. Fish industry, which is a major industry, was dependent on export and things still have not changed.²⁰ Tourist and shipping enterprises rely mostly on foreign demand and domestic demand, which affects the price. Pricing within Maldives is affected in the process to acquire the extent of prices in the countries of export. Between 1974 and 1977, prices rose by more than 35 per cent despite the controlled rate at which the State Trading Organization disbursed essential commodities.

¹⁹. *Maldives New Bulletin*, No. 30, November 1981.

²⁰. As much as 48 percent of fish is exported, International Monetary Fund, *The Monetary and Banking System of Maldives*, 1987, pp. 7-16.

The Ministry of Atolls Development has given priorities on atoll development on certain sectors like:

- (1) Atoll Electricity Supply;
- (2) Electricity Supply Seenu Atoll;
- (3) Inter-Atoll Communication Network;
- (4) Inter-Island Transportation;
- (5) Integrated Rural Development;
- (6) Industrial Feasibility Studies;
- (7) Technical Assistance Gan Development Authority;
- (8) Aerial Photography; and
- (9) Deepening Island Harbours.²¹

The government is concerned with how to utilize properly the developmental work going on in every atoll and inhabited Islands in the country. Even present activities give an integral rural development programmes in the country; for instance the relocation of people from Firubaidhoo atoll to Funadhoo atoll, and also relocation of people from Maakandoodhoo to Milandhoo and Funadhoo; construction of harbours and reclamation of land; and establishment of health centres in every atoll in the country. The Government of the Maldives has also given importance on education and on how to increase the capacity of schools. Such types of integrated programmes are implemented in most atolls for development. The first phase of the project is to relocate people from one atoll to another atoll. The Atoll Administration launched this project on June 6, 1996. Twenty-six houses planned for this phase were completed and handed over to their owners on December 1, 1997. The second and third phases have also been completed. The work on the fourth and final phase is now in

²¹ Maldives, Ministry of planning, Human Resources and Environment, *Statistical yearbook of Maldives 1995*. (Male, 1995), Tables. XI-I and XII-I pp. 157 and 18; The Far Eastern and Australia, 1997 (London) Europa Publications Ltd. 1997, p. 606.

progress. The construction of 36 houses planned for this phase was completed and handed over on August 15, 2003. The end of work of the fourth phase would conclude the project to relocate the people from Firudhoo to Funadhoo atolls.²²

The Ministry of Atolls Development has also simultaneously started various projects on the sustainability of the development of the atolls. These are short-term ongoing developmental projects. The projects are: (a) IT Development project, (b) Atoll Development for sustainable livelihood (ADSL) II, (c) Southern Atolls Development project, (d) Outer Islands Electrification project and (e) Regional Development project (phase II).²³

Apart from the developmental projects, the Maldivian Government has been giving importance on economic matters. For the purpose, Maldivian Government has established key national economic institutions, which are of national relevance. Such certain economic institutions have been functioning since 1968. These institutions are Maldivian Monetary Authority (MMA), Bank of Maldives (BML), Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), State Trading Centre (STC), and the National Security Service (NSS) of the Maldives.

The new sectors in Maldives have come as a natural and oblivious consequence to increase foreign contacts. Such exploration of the obvious potential in the Maldivian economy has, however, not come about as a part of any integrated planning.

The planned economic development of the Maldives is a relatively recent phenomenon. The National Planning Agency and the National Statistical Agency, established in 1978 (when President Gayoom became the Head of the government) have been saddled with the simultaneous tasks of

²². The World Bank Population Project Department, "The Demographic Brief of Maldives", *World Bank*, Supplied by the National Planning Agency, Male, April 1988.

data collection and planning. There is a very close relationship between economic developments and the political development of the country. Without economic stability, political stability is not possible in present era. Political stability is absent because of the intensity of economic problems facing the country. However, taking into account some of the economic institutions, the country could now make the analysis of this situation.

Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA)

The Maldives Monetary Authority was established in 1981. This is the only central bank in Maldives. In 1982, the first commercial bank, the Bank of Maldives Ltd was opened as a joint venture between the government and the International Finance Investment and Credit Bank of Bangladesh.²⁴ The principal purposes of the Maldives Monetary Authority are: (a) to issue currency and to regulate the availability and international value of the Maldivian Rufiyaa; (b) to provide advisory services to the Government on banking and monetary matters; (c) to supervise and regulate banking so as to promote a sound financial structure; and (d) to promote in and outside the country the stability of Maldivian Currency and to foster financial conditions conducive to the orderly and balanced economic development of Maldives²⁵.

However, there is a Board of Directors of the Maldives Monetary Authority, responsible for the policy-making and affairs of the MMA. The Board consists of: (a) the Ministry-in-charge of finance as ex-officio Governor of the MMA; (b) senior-most official of the Department of finance as ex-officio Vice-Governor of the MMA; (c) three members appointed by the President of the Maldives from amongst Heads of Government offices

²³ . www.atolls.gov.mv/natics/announcements/Go6_19.pdf

²⁴ . B. H. Former, "Maldives: Physical and Social Geography", *The Europa World Year Book*, 2001, p. 2625

²⁵ . <http://www.Saarcnet.com/news/saarcnet/countryprofile/maldives>

responsible for economic subject; and (d) two members from the private sector appointed by the President of Maldives.²⁶

Functions and Financial Provisions of the MMA

The Maldives Monetary Authority issues currency note in the country and also deals with the banking functions and reserves management functions, together with the appropriate staff and such property. The MMA maintains an External Reserve of internationally accepted reserve assets consisting of all the MMA reserve position of Maldives in the General Department of the International Monetary Fund, and holds special drawing rights in International Monetary Fund. MMA brings treasury bills issued by foreign government. It also brings securities issued by foreign governments or international financial institutions.

The Authority also opens accounts for and accepts deposits for banks and other financial institutions in Maldives. The Authority acts as correspondent, banker, agent or depository for any monetary authority, central bank, or international financial institutions. The Authority may buy, sell and determine dealing rates for gold and foreign exchange. The MMA may also determine and make public the rates at which gold and foreign currencies may be brought, sold, or dealt with by banks and other persons authorized to do so in Maldives.

Relations with Banks and Other Financial Institutions

No bank or other financial institutions are allowed to conduct banking business in Maldives unless it holds a license granted by the MMA for the purpose. The MMA has the power to revoke license if a bank or other financial institution fails to comply with the conditions specified in the license. The bank or financial institution is entitled to appeal to the President against the decision of the MMA. The appeal should be made within 30 days of being

²⁶ . Maldives Monetary Authority ([http:// www.mma. gov.mv/](http://www.mma.gov.mv/))

informed of the decision; and the decision of the President will be final and conclusive.

Miscellaneous Provisions of the MMA

At the end of every month, the Authority prepares a report of the statement of the MMA and publishes it. At the end of each calendar year, the MMA prepares and submits to the President a report on its operations during the past year, together with a copy of its annual accounts certified by the auditor, and, finally, the accounts of the MMA audited by the Government Auditor of the Maldives.²⁷ “This is a view to streamlining and coordinating its transactions even with the outside world.”²⁸

The Bank of Maldives (BML)

The Bank of Maldives was established in November 1882. It has 17 branches across the Country, of which 5 are in Male and 12 branches in outer atolls now. It is the only bank having branches outside Male, the Capital of the country, and the only national bank operating in Maldives. It has the largest customer base, which is equal to one-fourth of the country’s population. With its mobile banking services to islands far-off from branches, it is providing basic banking services to all the inhabited islands of the country. The Bank of Maldives introduced the services of Automated Teller Machines and Point of Sales terminals to the country and has taken great initiatives to provide modern banking services at technologically advanced speeds. As the national bank, the Bank of Maldives has drawn up plans to expand its branch network to all the atolls of the country within the next 5 years.²⁹

The main function of this bank is the banking services that the benefit the country. It also streamlines and coordinates its transactions both nationally and internationally. This bank has been working on the government’s

²⁷ . Ibid.

²⁸ . *The Monetary and Banking of Maldives and International Monetary fund*, 1978, p.4

guidance and order since 1996. The Bank of Maldives comes second after the Maldives Monetary Authority, which is central bank of the country. The Bank of Maldives has limited deals with limited matters, unlike the MMA. However, this bank deals with commercial matters like industrial and trade, how to invest money to facilitate and promote trade and on and tourism etc. The profile is the main goal for the bank of the country.³⁰

Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI)

MNCCI was established in 1994. Later on, it merged with the Maldivian Traders Association in 2000. Being an island-state, tourism is the most dependable economic source. MNCCI facilitates and promotes trade and tourism investment and services, especially with the neighbouring countries like Sri-Lanka and India. MNCCI functions under the Ministry of Trade and Industry.³¹ The Ministry of Trade and Industry controls economic institutions, which focus on trade and tourism. The Ministry of Trade and Industry has been trying to provide better facilities to the people in this sector. The ancient trade in cowry shells was a monopoly of the Maldives, where the money shells were cultivated for export. Today, Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry has given important destinations of export including South East Asia, Europe, and the United States. Hence, such type of economic institution is vital in the development of the country.

State Trading Organization

The State Trading Organization Ltd. was first established in 1964 and was later renamed in 1976 and became a trading account. It is an important public institution of Maldives. The STO is a state-owned commercial organization, that comes under the administration of independent Board of Directors. It

²⁹ . Bank of Maldives (<http://www.bankofmaldives.com.mv/>)

³⁰ . Ibid

³¹ . Davinder Kumar Madaan, "Maldives and SAARC Economic and Trade Development", *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations*, 1997, pp. 235-239.

primarily deals with the import and distribution of sample of foods, fuels, pharmaceuticals, and general consumer items. The State Trading Organization takes the role of purchaser for the requirements of the country. The development of the state trade industry has effected long-term development projects in Maldives.

The role of the State Trading Organization (STO), which has a virtual monopoly on the fishing industry, has also not been very encouraging. In effect, it has amounted to the government levying a tax 30 to 55 per cent of gross earning.³²

There is no mechanism by which a collective approach to the problems of the fishermen and the industry as a whole can be made. For instance, collective bargaining of the price of fish in the market cannot be done in the absence of an organization. Considering the numerous problems in the fishery, a gradual expansion of local participation and its central control over fish collection, storage, and processing facility in Maldives are needed.³³ There are the government-encouraged investments by multinational corporations and international business houses. It has assured foreign investor of tax and duty concessions, unrestricted repatriation of profits, and non-interference in banking and other incentives. The Maldivian Government also hopes to develop other developed states' banking and trade, and insurance system. The government has invited foreign investors to establish industries and other commercial ventures in Maldives.³⁴ Other international agencies are helping Maldives in economic sectors, and even the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved a loan of US \$ 5 billion to strengthen the public accounting in the Maldives.

³² . The Europa World year book, volume 11, 2005, pp. 2854-2864.

³³ . The World Bank, World Department Tables 1993-43: *External Finance for Developing Countries* 1993-94, Vol., 2 Country Tables (Washington, D.C., (1993), pp. 278-81.

³⁴ . United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report, 1997 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) Table, 2.1, P.54.

The Asian Development Bank has approved a loan US \$ 5 billion for promoting good governance in Maldives in September 2002. The question in concern is how good governance can be brought in Maldives by the loan. The loan will promote good governance by making the system more efficient, accountable, and transparent. It will help improve public sector management and develop effective fiscal operations and the macroeconomic policy. Therefore, the project will make a critical contribution to the effective use of public funds to promote development and reduce poverty. "It will help prevent corruption, fraud and will reduce the vulnerability of the economy to external shocks".³⁵

National Security Service of the Maldives

The National Security Service of Maldives was founded in 1978 after President Maumoon Abdul Goyoom came to power. Its predecessor the National Security Guard was founded as the State's primary Paramilitary Organization during the term of the country's second President, Ibrahim Nasir. The NSS retained most of its functions until recently when a separate police force was established to differentiate the military duties and domestic law enforcement duties.

With the lack of security problems in the country for decades, a strong military establishment was not needed. Therefore, the NSS continued to function as a paramilitary organization. The NSS performs army and maritime duties as well as intelligence gathering. It also preserves internal security of the country. The NSS patrols through the territorial waters and fishermen for illegal activities. The NSS performs the functions of paramilitary police, defence, presidential bodyguard, immigration and immigration documentation, border control, intelligence espionage, and civil defence organ

³⁵. *UNDP, UN Building, Bumuzamagu, Male Maldives, 3 October 2002, pp. 1-4.*

of the Maldives. It also maintains the Indian Ocean, a zone of peace in keeping with a United Nations resolution.³⁶

The NSS was a small force numbering some 1000 personnel during the 1980s. After the attempted foreign coup of 1988, the NSS was expanded and strengthened with the help of India, the US, and the UK. Now the Maldives government has expanded the NSS to more than 5,000 personnel in 2005.

The NSS is further divided into sections rather than the regular military formations. Although it has the equivalent personnel of a full brigade or 4 infantry battalions, the operational capabilities and the fusion of support troops to that of combat troops make are difficult to achieve. The ranking system of the NSS is based on the traditional British military system, though with some minor modifications.

The Indian Government has given at least a dozen-armoured vehicle to help the expansion of the NSS. The NSS has also acquired a number of Cobra Light Armoured Vehicles from Turkey and 2 Modified Dovra class fast Attack Crafts from Israel. The CIA World fact book states that Maldives spends approximately \$41,100,000 or 5.5% of the GDP on military on military purpose.³⁷ Now the NSS has unfortunately been used a tool by President Gayoom to spread fear and intimidation and to crack down on democratic activities who are critical of his rule.³⁸ This NSS requires to function more for the national interest. It should be in terms of all levels, from national level to atoll and island levels. Otherwise, the country's security can be threatened from two sources internal and external sources.

It is a fact that President Gayoom, his family Ministers, and NSS, who together rule Maldives, have done very less to protect their fellow Maldivians. They have systematically violated the human rights of their country's men and

³⁶ . http://www.Maldives_royal_family.Com/maldives_nss/.Shtm/.

³⁷ . http://www.Maldives_culture.Com/news/maldives_nss_police03.htm.

women. Gayoom's promises of investigations and reforms, after the murder of Evaan Naseem, and mass shootings in Maafushi prison in September 2003, have all come to nothing.³⁹

Conclusion

The national institutions, be it political or economic institutions, have great role to play in Maldives. The national institutions of Maldives work for good governance in the Maldives. The political institutions play positive roles for the stability of the political system. In the past, Maldives had made serious efforts for security assistance from India and other countries. However, Maldives requires to promote its defence system and spend more on defence. Hence, national institutions, both political and economic have to support the government's developmental policies and issues, considering that they are vital for in the smooth functioning of the Maldives' government. There should therefore be proper co-operation and efforts on the part of the government and the national institutions. Maldives has to insist upon a meaningful co-operation at the regional and national level and work towards tackling the problems coming in the way of good governance.

³⁸ . Ibid.

³⁹ . [http:// www. dhiveobserver. Com/articles/gayye_violates_personal_integrity.htm](http://www.dhiveobserver.Com/articles/gayye_violates_personal_integrity.htm).

CHAPTER-V

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

This chapter analyses the local administration in Maldives. It explicates with the powers and functions of the Atoll-Chief and the Island-Chief. It focuses on how the national government controls the local administration, highlighting the type of political system that strengthens the local administration. The urban/municipality administration of Maldives has been discussed. It analyses the Central-Local administrative relations, and also how local administration is carried out in the country. The economic development of the local-level administration is another subject of study in this chapter. It focuses on the budgetary allocations of the Central government to the local administration. Finally, this chapter foregrounds the socio-economic indicators of the country, and how much the policies and programmes of the Central government are beneficial.

The administrative framework of Maldives has formed a pyramidal structure. Inhabited islands occupy the lowest administrative unit; the atolls come at the intermediate level; and the Central government forms the apex structure. Two levels of local government have existed in Maldives since 1965. The local government of Maldives started during the colonial times, when South Asian countries have not even started enjoying local government status. Local government in Maldives enjoys the status of self-governance at the national level in the present time.

The administrative framework of the local government of Maldives has been divided into two levels: the rural and the urban. Urban/municipality administration is placed only in Male, the State capital. The atoll and the island level of the administrative framework of Maldives have been divided into three levels: the national level, the atoll level and the island level. In this chapter, the main focus is on the functions of the Atoll-Chief and the Island-

Chief, and the functions of the local administration. The local government system was established only after the independence.¹

There is no strong decentralization of power in Maldives; but for easy administration the Central Government has controlled the local administration. There is no strong decentralized political structure and no autonomy of the local administration in the Maldivian political system. There were no political parties, and even if people were interested in local self-government.

The two levels of local administration are Atoll level and Island level of administration. There is administrative decentralization and some rudimentary elements of local representation found in Maldives but no decentralization of power. The present Constitution of Maldives also does not provide for any strong local government set-up. In the past there were semblances of local autonomy and self-government. There was even an attempt to convert local administration into self-government units; however, centralization of power has prevailed at the end.

Modern communication technologies have facilitated the centralization of the government's decision-making process. In a situation characterized by a small population and land area, lack of appropriate personnel, and few services, there was hardly any compulsion for a decentralized administration. This has resulted in modernization of the economy and the polity, with new technologies of transport and communication being able to bring the numerous Coral Islands of the Maldives together. That is why local administration is likely to give into centralized self-government and autonomous units of government at island and atoll level in the country.²

The Atoll Administration

¹ . Kamal Siddiqui, ed., *Local Government in South Asia: A Comparative Study, Local Government in Maldives*, (Dhaka University Press, 1992), pp. 291-301.

² Government of Republic of the Maldives (1989): *An Experience in Island Development*, Department of Information and Broadcasting,

There are 20 administrative units now in Maldives, 19 atolls and Male. The atolls are Alifu, Baa, Dhaalu, Faafu, Gaafu, Ddaalu, Gnaniyani, Haa Alifu, Haa Dhaalu, Kdaafu, Laamu, Lhaniyani, Meemu, Noonu, Raa, Seenu, Shaviyani, Thaa, and Vaava. However, Article 106 of the 1998 Constitution states that there shall be an Atoll-Chief appointed by the President for each Atoll of the Maldives. But the Ministry of Atolls Development oversees the atoll affairs.³

Qualifications of an Atoll-Chief

Article 107 of the Maldives 1998 Constitution talks about the qualifications required of an Atoll Chief. He or she must be a citizen of Maldives; he or she must be a Muslim, and should have attained 30 years of age. A person must be, in the opinion of the President, competent enough to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the Office of Atoll-Chief. The Atoll-Chief should not have been convicted of any offence during the past five years, and he or she must not be a foreign national. Only after meeting these eligibility he or she can be appointed as the Chief of the atoll.⁴

The Atoll-Chief resides in the capital island of each atoll. There are administrative units with government offices. Atoll Chiefs are the Heads of these units.⁵ In 1964 the Maldivian Government decided to have elected atoll committees and thus set up a procedure, whereby people wishing to be nominated could apply to the Election Division in Male for clearance. The procedure allows six candidates in an atoll. Getting the highest number of votes become the atoll committee members. Whosoever garners the highest votes becomes the Atoll-Chief. During those times, the term of an atoll chief was for two years.

³ The Constitution of Maldives, (1998), Male Ministry of Information, 2002

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Republic of Maldives, Male, and Ministry of Atolls Administration / <http://www.Atolls.gov.mv>.

The procedure at that time was characterized by factionalism, and there were lack of qualified people. After 1978 the election system was abolished. Atoll and Island functionaries once again began to be appointed for infinite terms by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The new Ministry is independent of the Home Ministry, whose jurisdiction is now restricted only to Male City. The new Ministry is charged with the responsibility of economic and social development of the atolls and islands. It also looks after and coordinates other Departments and Ministries.⁶

It is interesting to note that the term of national government is only five years, while the term of local administration is indefinite, which was appointed by the President. The salaries of the local functionaries are also included in the budget of the Government of Maldives. Most of them are educated men who do not have many stakes in the local spoils system but who can implement development policies. The Chief of atoll and other officers basically belong to local Atoll Chiefs (verins) and are transferred every three years. They may also be posted as Under Secretaries in the Ministry.

The Ministry of Atolls Development regularly trains the Atoll-Chiefs and the local staff. But there are still no women Atoll-Chiefs. There are no constitutional provisions for appointment of women candidates.⁷ In the local administration, powers are not divided like the power structure in the federal government. President Gayoom who is in power since 1978 has been sensitive to the growing pro-democratic sentiments in the country. The recent constitutional change has not fully created a space for free competition for power within the democratic framework. But at the atoll level there are other important officials like treasurers, clerks, workmen, cooks, peons and several Gazis (judges).

⁶ Clarence Maloney, *People of the Maldives Islands*, (Madras; Orient Longmans 1980), pp. 178-209.

⁷ V.H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Development in the Maldives", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, Vol.28, No. 8, August 1979, pp.134-148.

The main functions of the Atoll Chief (verin): is to control the local administration from Island to atoll levels. The President provides policy guidance and directions to Atoll-Chief so that the Atoll-Chief dispenses his functions effectively. The Atoll Chief is required to visit each inhabited island every month. In such visits, he is accompanied by Gazis (judges) to settle disputes and adjudicate inheritance claims.

The Atoll-Chief is also the local coordinator of all development activities at the atoll level. There is an Atoll Development Assistant Committee at the atoll level. This committee consists of prominent local citizens nominated by the Government.⁸ For reasons stated in the Island Development Assistance Committees, these have also not been very effective in discharging their functions.

The Ministry of Home Affairs looked after the local level administration till 1978. After that, the Ministry of Atoll Administration was created. The Ministry of Atolls Development is now responsible for the local level administration. The Central Government plays an important role in the local level administration because the political system in Maldives is highly centralized. There are no constitutional provisions, which grant more power to the local level administration.⁹ The Ministry of Atolls Development takes responsibility for local-level administration in the Central Government. Its main functions are to coordinate all island-level developmental activities in health, education, fisheries, agriculture, and other sectors. The Ministry of Atolls Development identifies and implements IRD for the atolls in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Development. The Central Government trains island and atoll-level officers in carrying out administrative or developmental functions and in creating public sector awareness and responsibility. The national government has established the atoll and island

⁸ "The Maldives: Introductory Survey", *The Europe World Year Book*, 2002, p. 2616.

⁹ The Constitution of Maldives, (1998), *Male Ministry of Information 2002*.

development assistance committees for improving social services and creating awareness about self-reliance. The Ministry of Atoll Administration is also responsible for upgrading the basic social infrastructures of institutions such as mosques, island or atoll offices, courts of Maldives etc. These are the important functions and the basic responsibility for local-level administrations of the Ministry of Atoll Administration.

In discharging the above functions, the Ministry is associated with Atolls Development Advisory Board (ADAB), which was created in December 1978 by the President's Office. The Ministry of Atoll Administration functions as its Chairman, while officials directly dealing with atoll development and representatives from the atolls are the members. In Divehi language there are no words for village, town or city. All are simply island with the basic administrative unit. Only 200 of the Islands are inhabited, while many are more sandbanks, scarcely wooded.¹⁰

The Ministry of Atolls Development is responsible for building a peaceful environment in Maldives through the implementation of developmental activities at atolls and national levels and by equal distribution resources. The primary concern of the Ministry of Atolls Development is to sustain development for the people of the atolls. It is the Ministry's endeavour to further enforce livelihood through modern technology-oriented workforce.

There are committees established by the Maldivian Government to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people at local level. Atoll offices and Island offices, together with Atoll Development Committees (ADCs) and Island Development Committees (IDCs), assist the Ministry in discharging its functions. Atoll Development Committees and Island Development Committees, place emphasis on the importance of decentralized planning and management of development activities. The government has

¹⁰ Veninder Grover, ed., "Maldives: in Introduction", *Encyclopedia of SAARC Nations*, (New Delhi, 1997), pp.1-7.

established fully operational Development Cells in atoll administration under the aegis of Atolls Development. As scattered islands characterize Maldives, it is difficult to provide equal service delivery to people. Therefore the government has adopted a population and development consolidation policy to minimize the difference in the economic scale by promoting economy viable for population concentrations. The Government has developed a policy and strategy to encourage the inhabitants of small islands, below a population of 500, to voluntarily move to places where socio-economic services and employment opportunities are enough to enable them to enjoy a better living.¹¹

The functions of the Atoll Development committee are: (a) to assist the activities conducted by the government or supported by the government; (b) to work to improve the living conditions of the people of the atoll and to foster good will, harmony, and cooperation among the people; (c) to generate income for the people; (d) to mobilize the island development committees and women's development committees; (e) to monitor the activities of the island development committees and advise the committees on favourable changes; (f) and to give the committees fullest cooperation to the Atoll-Chief when needed.¹²

The Chairperson of the Atoll Development Committee is the Atoll Chief. In the absence of the Atoll-Chief, the Committee will have an Acting-Head of the Atoll. The Atoll Development Committee consists of 10-20 appointed members.¹³ The Ministry of Atoll Administration, considering the population of each atoll, decides the number of members. The members are appointed by the Ministry of Atolls Development in consultation with the Atoll-Chief. At least a Woman Development Committee must be in Atoll. However, if a member needs to leave the atoll for any purpose, he or she should inform the chairperson of his or her absence. The Atoll Administration is most important for the local level administration set-up in the country.

¹¹ www.nationencyclopedia.com/AsiaandOceania/MaldivesLocalGovernment.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ www.seansuns.com/government.html

Without this set-up, the Maldives could scarcely be governed, as a single socio-economic political entity.

Island Administration

Each island in the Maldives has an Island Chief or Katheeb, who looks after day-to-day affairs of the islands and its development. The Island Chief reports to the Atoll Chief or Atholhuverin, who is in charge of the overall administration of all the islands in an atoll.

The Ministry of Atoll Administration appoints the Island Chief. According to the Islamic law (Shariah), there are qualifications required to be an Island-Chief. Island-Chief must be a Muslim; he or she must be a citizen of the Republic of Maldives; he or she must be a person who has attained thirty years of age and not be a foreign national. Hence, the Island-Chief is helped by one or more Kudu Katibus (Assistant Katibu) and a Mudimu in keeping the records and the performance of religious duties to help the Island-Chief. All these people are called Island Officials.¹⁴ These officials are appointed from the local areas because they are more concerned with the local areas. All these functionaries are paid by the national government. All the Island Officials have to undergo a month-long training course for Katibus. Such types of institutes are called the Institute of Islamic Studies and Ministry of Atolls Administration.¹⁵

The Atoll Administration has established Island Development Committees for the development at the local-level. It emphasized the importance of decentralized planning and management of development activities. The members of the Island Development Committees comprise prominent people nominated by the local community. The function of the Islands Development Committees (IDCs) and Women Committee is to help

¹⁴ www.islands.com/Maldives

¹⁵ Kamal Siddiqui, ed., *Local Government in South Asia: A Comparative Study, Local Government in Maldives*, (Dhaka University Press, 1992), pp. 296-301

the island administration in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects within their jurisdictions. During 1998 to 1999, the Ministry of Atoll Administration has given priority to increase political and legal awareness of women in the island. This has been done to encourage women to occupy leadership positions, to increase women's participation in the political arena, and to create awareness on the legal rights.

A landmark event, which has been a result of the recommendations made by the participants of the political and legal awareness works, was the inclusion of a female representative from each atoll at the Atoll-Chief's meeting held every two year. In the past, as only Atoll-Chiefs attended the meeting, the issues discussed were only from a male perspective, while others were not taken up at all.¹⁶

Women's Committee has been set up in Atoli and Island levels to bring about gender equality and the advancement of women. This is reflected in the changes seen in public perception and in the changes of portrayal of woman by media. Efforts have been made by other sectors for the advancement of woman and gender equality.

However, the Island Development Committees have not been very effective due to lack of man-power. In February 2000, the national government of Maldives has established an Advisory Committee on public sector reform and modernization to strengthen and develop the Maldivian system of public administration.¹⁷

The Maldivian Government has been functioning effectively on the island level. The President of Maldives has even appointed a woman as the Junior

¹⁶ *Government of Republic of Maldives: The Maldives, Department of Information and Broadcasting, 2003.*

¹⁷ *Maldives, The Europe World Yearbook, 2001, pp. 2616-2624.*

Island Chief of the Maradhoo Island.¹⁸ It shows that the national government has been trying best for developmental programmes at the local level, which have opened up scope for women.

The Main Functions of the Island-Chief

The main sources of revenue of the Island administration are the lands managed by the Island Office and the income from uninhabited island assigned to them. The Katibu maintains the records of census and the vital statistics, accounts, and daily records of fish catch. It is also the function of the Katibu to keep track of the island lands in the inlands and the products of Island trees. The important work of the Island Chief is to keep contact with the atoll office through walkie-talkie and submit records of fish catch and also weather reports.

As the major sources of income depend on fishing, shipping, and tourism, the Island-Chief has an increasing number of developmental responsibilities to deal with. In Maldives, in the more populous Island, the Island-Chief implements rules and regulation, including the one on entitlement of house or plot in the Island.¹⁹ Another important function of the Island-chief is to settle disputes, and solve factional problems. For dispensing justice on minor matters but for violations of law and orders, the Katibu calls the Gazi from the atoll office. The atoll office controls the island office and regulates the functions of island-offices. The Central Government has established communication between island-offices and the atoll offices. The Ministry of Atolls Development provides the policy, guidance, and directions to each Island-Chief through the Atoll-Chief.

¹⁸ Government of Republic of Maldives: Male the Capital, Information Bulletin No.3 Department of IAB, 2001.

Municipality Administration of Maldives

Male can be considered as the only city in Maldives, although its geographic dimensions may not qualified as a “city.” The Male Municipality, established in 1982, is the municipal authority of Male, which is an office administered under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Chairman of the Male Municipality reports directly to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Housing, and Environment.

Male has an area of about 1,77km. It houses about one-fourth of the national population. Immigration from other islands to Male is the major reason for the rapid growth in the population of Male. Major reasons for immigration are the higher standard and broader range of facilities, services, and education and also employment opportunities available in Male in comparison to those available in other islands.²⁰

Urban local administration in Maldives is vital to the political system and governance of the country. Thus, the local administration of Male is highly significant into contributing to the smooth governance at the national level. Male is divided into four wards. Reclamation of project carried out recently in the shallow waters within the western and southern reefs has added almost one-third of its original size to the island.²¹ Civil amenities in Male are provided by two organizations, namely the Male Municipality and the Maldives Water and Sanitation Authority.

The Male Municipality is headed by the Home Minister, and in this capacity, the Home minister is also called the President of the Municipality. The municipality functions directly under the President’s Office. In urban local administration there is a Municipal Council, which consists of several departments of administration to assist the President of the Municipality. The Municipal consists of two members from each of the four wards and high level

¹⁹. Census of 1995, Educational Statistics 1998, Ministry of Planning and Development, Minister of Tourism of Maldives.

²⁰ [Www. Presidency of Maldives. Gov.mv](http://www.PresidencyofMaldives.Gov.mv)

²¹ Kamal Siddiqui, ed., *Local Government in South Asia: A Comparative Study, Local Government in Maldives*, (Dhaka University Press, 1992), pp. 291-301.

officials from relevant government departments. The Maldivian President directly appoints this Municipal Council Body and it continues for a term of five years.²² The Municipality of Male of the Republic of Maldives has more than 600 permanent employees.

The Main functions of the Municipality

The main functions of the Maldives Municipality are providing services to the mosques, roads, streetlights, and housing, etc. The municipality administration registers the people living in Male. This type of census involves a proper house to house survey enumeration. It also responsible for cleaning up public roads, office buildings, and diplomatic premises. The Male Municipality has entrusted a private company with the responsibility to remove of garbage from the various points to a final disposal.

There are four departments under the Male municipality. This includes administration department, roads departments, community services department, and registration department. These departments are headed by the Senior Under-Secretary, the Chief Engineer, the Assistant Under-Secretary, and Under Secretary respectively. All these officers in the Male Urban Local Administration of the atoll states are liable to be transferred to other Ministries or Departments. Considering the roles of the urban local administration, it is very important that they add to the smooth functioning of the Maldivian political system.²³

The main source of income of the municipality is Central Government grants and foreign assistance. For road constructions, donations are received from beneficiaries; particularly from wealthy people. There is also a small fee

²² .www.Maldivesinfo.Gov.mv/info/include/gov-list.php

²³ Urmila Phadnis, "Political Dynamics of the Island States: A Comparative Study of Sri Lanka and Maldives". *IDSJ journal*, 1980, pp. 305-319.

for registration, which serves as a source of income. Sanitation in Male is the concern of the Maldivian Water and Sanitation Authority.

The Male Municipality maintains close links with Water and Sanitation Department. In Male, the households collect drinking water from rainwater. In Maldives, municipality administration and urban local administration prohibit well in every house. Water filter with a power pump supplies piped water to the households for other uses.

The Male Municipality has adopted a long-term strategy for improving the provision of public services by means of information technology. A national project is underway for the development and implementation of government information systems; a similar one is in the process for government agency networking. With the establishment of the Ministry of Science and Technology in 1998, the government of Maldives is rapidly undertaking development of both infrastructure and services to build an enabling environment for municipality and administrative districts/wards to move into the e-age.

Maldives has minimal natural resources. It is much dependent on trade and commerce for its development and its continued growth and prosperity. Given this scenario, it is also evident that e-applications and other e-resources will provide a gateway that supersedes natural resource restrictions. Thus, the development of information systems in Maldives would be instrumental in bringing about growth and prosperity.²⁴

Center-Local Administrative Relations

The constitution of Maldives has provided for centre-local administrative relation. The central government makes policies and programmes to develop conditions (socio-economic) of the people at the local level.

²⁴. www.maldivesinfo.gov.mv/info/include/gov-liss.php

The Republic of Maldives is a strong unitary State with a weak local-self government. Though there is no decentralized self-government and autonomous units of government in the islands and the atoll levels, there is an administrative decentralization across the country. There are very close relations between the central government and the local administrations. The political system in Maldives makes the country's administrative, financial and legislative relations different from other countries in South Asia.

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Atolls Development is responsible for local-level administration for the central government. Atolls Development Committees (ADCs) assist the Ministry in the local-administration.²⁵ The Ministry of Atolls Development has three regional sectors North, South, and Central. The Ministry of Home Affairs' jurisdiction is restricted only to Male. In fact, the central-local administrative relations are like the Executive and the Subordinate.

The Central Government has allocated finance for developmental works to the local level administration. The Central Government has already started various projects in various atolls. The government aims to provide for a better living standard for the local people in regions far from Male.

IT Development Project: Maldives has been trying to use information technology for development. It has developed a network of communication around the nation and with the world. Hence, the Government of Maldives has been investing a lot in training manpower and in getting the latest technology in various atolls including Male. **Outer Islands Electrification Project:** The Ministry administers loans for electrification in islands from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury of Maldives. Revolving fund schemes are utilized for loans from these sources for the people. **Regional Development Project:** The project is proposed for development as a sector loan within the framework of Gayoom's six Development National Plan (NDP'). It will be set within the

²⁵. Clarence Maloney, *People of the Maldives Islands*, (Madras; Orient Longmans 1980), pp. 172-209.

context of the NDPs overarching themes of regional development, ongoing poverty reduction, community development, improvement in the sanitation, solid waste management, planning sectors etc. **Southern Atolls Development Project:** The goal of the project is the wellbeing and increase in the income of the people.²⁶ Atoll Development for Sustainable Livelihoods (ADSL), under the UNDP practice area of Governance, aims to (a) contribute to the formulation of government policies on local development and further operation through the development of systems, procedures, and guidelines; (b) contribute to the capacity development at the individual, organizational, and societal level in the ADCs, IDCs at outer Island offices, WDCs, NGOs, Credit institutions, CBOs etc; (c) contribute directly to the efforts for poverty alleviation through financial supports for developing infrastructure and improve access to financial services. Its main aim of institutional, infrastructural, and environmental improvements will provide a better living standard for the local people in Maldives.²⁷

The present government has taken special note of the social and economic implications of this regional imbalance, and programmers for widespread development of atolls are being put into operation. President Gayoom and Ministry of Atoll Affairs Administration have held meetings and led mass prayers not only in the Capital but also in outlying areas. His obvious attempt has been to half make neglected areas develop and integrate with the rest of the country.

The number of schools, community, and health centres has increased. Community centres and school farms are established in many atolls, with a view to imbibe community spirit of the country. The government has launched an integrated rural development programme for greater educational facilities, better health and sanitation measures, greater administrative cohesion, and more cottage industries.

²⁶ . *The Republic of Maldives, Male, Ministry of Atoll Administration.*

²⁷ . *Statistical year book for Asia and the pacic,*(United Nations Publications, 2004), Maldives, pp-326-34.

Major emphasis has also been placed on improving transportation and communication between Male and other atolls, as well as among islands within the atolls.²⁸ The Central Government has established the Atolls Trading Corporation with a view to purchase locally produced items from the atolls, thus encouraging the development of small-scale industries and expediting the growth of an inter-island transport network. The Maldivian government has also set up developmental activities in various islands. It has introduced democratic elections to Island Development Committees and Atoll Committees. The government has also introduced information technology to Male including and other parts of the country.

However, understanding the socio-economic indicators of Maldives and how much the government policies have helped the local level administration is necessary. Development has been centered on the tourism industry and its complementary service sectors like transport, distribution, real estate, and construction. Taxes on the tourist industry have been put into infrastructural use and have been utilised to improve technology in the agricultural sector. DGP in 2000 totalled dollar 640 million or about dollar 2,200 per capita. Maldives has experienced relatively low inflation in the recent years.²⁹

Real DGP growth averaged about 10% in the 1980s. It expanded by an exceptional 16.2% in 1990, declined to 4% in 1993, grew to 10% in 1990 and has since leveled to 5- 7% range. Maldives has been running a merchandise trade deficit in the range of \$200 to \$ 260 million since 1997. The trade deficit declined to \$ 208 million in 2002 from \$ 233 million in 2001.³⁰

²⁸ . J.P.Anand, "The Maldives: A Profile", Verinder Grover, ed., *Encyclopedia of SARRC Nations*, (Dew Delhi, 1997), pp. 1-9

²⁹ . The Maldives, *The Europa World Year Book*, Volume 11, (Europa Publications, 2005) pp. 2413-2421.

³⁰ .

International shipping to and from Maldives is mainly operated by private sectors, with only a small fraction of the tonnage on vessels operated by the national carrier, Maldives Shipping management Ltd. Over the years, Maldives has received economic assistance from multilateral development organizations, including the UN Development Bank and the World Bank. Individual donors like Japan, India, Australia, and European and Arab Countries (including Islamic Development Bank and the Kuwaiti fund) have also contributed.³¹

Economics Sectors

Tourism: Over the recent years, Maldives has successfully marketed its natural assets for tourism: beautiful unplowed beaches on small coral islands, diving in blue waters, abundant with tropical and glorious sunsets etc. Tourism now raises about \$198 million a year. Tourism and related services contributed 31% of the GDP in 2002.³² Since the resort was established in 1972, more than 87 islands have been developed, with a total capacity of 19,000 beds. The number of tourists visiting Maldives increased from 1,100 in 1972 to 280,000 in 1994. In 2000, the number of tourist arrivals exceeded 466,000; the number reached 500,000 for 2003. The average occupancy rate is 69%, with an average tourist staying 8 days and spending about \$ 396.³³

Fishing: This sector employs about 11% of the labour force and contributes 7% or 10% of GDP. As the use of fishing net is illegal, all fishing is done by line. Production was about 164,003 metric tons in 2002, most of which was skipack tuna.³⁴

In the wake of the challenges affecting to social services and economic needs, the government's budget allocations have increasingly reflected a higher expenditure on social services. Monetary expansion and consequent

³¹ . U.S. Department of State, Bureau of South Asia Affairs, February 2005.

³² . Ministry of Planning and National Development, Male, Republic of Maldives

³³ . <http://www.planning.gov.mv/publication/yearbook,2005/key>

³⁴ . Statistical YearBook of Maldives, 2005

have covered the budgetary deficit by depreciating exchange rate.³⁵ Much of this has come about due to rapid expansion of various fields in a bid to speed up development, and also through foreign aid. This shows that the Maldivian Government's policies and programmes are focussed on the development of the local administration of the country. The Central-Local administrative relations have been positive since 1965, but Central Government should allow more budgetary allocations to the local level administration in Maldives.

The relationship between the central and local level administration of the country is important and necessary to strengthen the development of the Maldivian system of public administration. "The President has assumed short-term initiatives to establish the public sector reform and the process of modernization in the country."³⁶ It is not only for the political relationship at the local level administration, which is important but also relationship other level. It may be at the economic and social level. There are drawbacks in the functioning of the centralized power system in the country.³⁷ However, the Maldivian Parliament has now allowed political parties.

Central Government does not give importance to the decentralization of power, as it does not uphold democracy as a political set-up. Undoubtedly, such a situation has impeded the evolution of a consensus of politics at all levels in the State. Its physiography contributed to the need for a decentralized political framework.

Therefore, the process of strong decentralization of power is very difficult. It is essential to incorporate the additional institutional networks and

³⁵ . For detail see. *World Bank*, op. cit., op. cit, p. 142 and *Statistical year book*, op. pp. 120-21.

³⁶ *The Statesman Year Book 1975-76*, p. 1142.

³⁷ Clarence Maloney, "The Maldives: New Stresses in an Old Nation", *Asian Survey*, July 1976.

support system to form the central government. People's consciousness and people's participation in the political system is the need of the hour. Proper implementation of the above analysis is needed to ensure the decentralization of power.³⁸

Whatever policy and guidance come from the central level have to be implemented practically on the national level by the atoll administration. The atoll administration has to devise mechanism for self-reliance. It has to train Island and Atoll-levels officials to carry out administrative and developmental works at of the local level.³⁹

However, the traditional framework of political conduct has been the customary practice since long. As a consequence of the traditional practice of governance, constitutional changes did not bring any significance among the power elites. The main problem is faced at the local level administration. Strong centralization of power has made the local administration weak. . There is a possibility of political mobilization for a strong local self-government if people make strenuous effort to change the existing political system in the country. That can be made possible only if consciousness and participation in the internal dynamics of the nation's political system is made possible.

Conclusion

It is quite apparent that there is a high degree of centralization in the administrative set up of the Maldives. The geographical point of view that Maldives is composed of numerous coral islands and separated from one another impedes the strong decentralization of power. The present constitution of the Maldives does not provide for a strong local government set-up. However, this may be possible as modernization and information

³⁸ Kamal Siddiqui, ed., *Local Government in South Asia: A Comparative Study. Local Government in Maldives*, (Dhaka University Press, 1992), pp. 291-301.

³⁹ V. H. Coelho, "Constitutional and Political Developments in the Maldives", *Foreign Affairs*, vol.28, No. 8, August 1997, pp134-148.

technologies make inroads into the economy and the polity, and the new technology of transport and communication. Commutation has brought the numerous Coral Islands and the Maldives together so that local administration likely to give autonomous units of government at the atoll and island level in the country, thus making a proper decentralized self-government possible.

CHAPTER-VI

PROBLEMS OF GOVERNANCE

This chapter analyses problems of governance in Maldives. It highlights the geographical factor that has been a source of problems for the country. Also analysed are the problems of socio-economic development and the socio-economic implications of regional imbalances in Maldives. The challenges of settling human resource base in Maldives have also been foregrounded. The challenges of widening political representation in the higher offices of Maldives are of important concern. The country's security problems, both military and non-military; the causes for the coup attempts; and the Maldivian Government's strategies to overcome such challenges have been foregrounded. In this context, the 1988 coup attempt and India's military involvement to foil the coup attempt have also been brought into the fore.

The Geographical Factor

The geographical factor has been a source of problems for Maldives. As there are numerous uninhabited islands, there are problems in planning nation-wide provision infrastructures for development.¹ There is a need for an alternative to allocate the resources meant for the development of infrastructural facilities, such as power generation or transport. The sparsely populated islands pose problems in the development of a network of infrastructures in the Maldives. A great deal of organizational innovation is thus required to ensure an equitable accessibility of welfare services on a decentralized pattern.² It begins with an overview of the socio-political dimensions of its resources, both human and natural. The country faces challenges from the geographical point of view: challenges in terms of its security and sovereignty, which stem from internal and external problems. It is difficult to have a proper administrative set-up in all the 1,190 small coral islands in Maldives. Thus, its own stability is challenged from the geographical point of view. It is difficult to post military force in every uninhabited island, as there are a large number of islands.

¹ . <http://www.hellomaldives.com/maldives/geography>

² . Ravinatha Aryasinha, "Maldives, Sri Lanka and the India Factor", *Himal South Asia*, March-April 1997, pp.26-29.

Absence of military protection in the islands has thus become a deterrent in the proper governance of the Maldives.

The Problems of Socio-economic Development

The country faces problems in major fronts because of increasing population and uneven development within the country. Another reason is the huge socio-economic problems faced by the country. Apart from the inherent socio-economic problems, other reason that deters the growth of Maldivian economy is dependence of Maldives exports on international market forces. Fishery is a major contributing industry in Maldives, and it is dependent on export.³ Its tourist and shipping enterprises rely almost wholly on foreign demands. Domestic consumption is largely dependent on imports, which consequently means that prices in the countries of export affect the prices within Maldives to quite an extent. It was between 1974 and 1977, price rose by more than 35 per cent despite the controlled rate at which the State Trading Organization disbursed essential commodities.⁴ The increasing induction of the Maldives into the international market economic has also to cope with it.

The establishment of Maldives Monetary Authority in July 1981 was an attempt on the part of the government to usher in a central banking system, with a view to streamline and coordinate the transactions with the outside world.⁵ Simultaneously, the country tried blend economic growth with social justice. It was confronted with the task of maximal utilization of the hitherto underutilized resources. Meeting the target of economic growth actually meant lots of investments, which its poor economy can ill-afford. Consequently, the Maldives shed its age-long isolation and insularity and gradually got enmeshed into the vortex of international politico-economic systems to meet its developmental goals.

Like other Least Developed Countries, the Maldives is confronted with several economic constraints like: (a) a sharp increase in the cost of essentials as compared to the export earning; (b) insufficient export earnings, comparable

³. As much as 48 percent of Fish is exported, International Monetary Fund, *The Monetary and Banking System of Maldives*, 1978, p.4.

⁴. World Bank, Population projects Department, *The Demographic Brief for Maldives*, World Bank, Washington DC, April 1980, supplied the National Planning Agency, Male.

⁵. Maldives News Bulletin, no.23, 15 July 1981.

inelasticity of export incomes and non-availability of export surplus; (c) low level of foreign exchange reserves or their inadequacy for requirements; (d) an adverse impact of higher transportation and transit costs; (e) a relatively low importance of foreign trade in the development process.⁶ However, there has been a shift in domestic, economic, and planning perspectives for development. Fishing boats are being modernized and mechanized; manpower is being trained to serve the deficient areas of planning; and implementation of new development programmes and exports called for the same. Development efforts are made on a wider scale so that gains may be disseminated to the majority. Social relations are thus undergoing transformation, which is yet to take a definite shape. The barter system is practically out of practice and the relations of production are taking on an employer-employee pattern. Existing institutional networks in various fields like education, fisheries, communication and transport, banking etc, are strengthened and, radical innovations are introduced.⁷

A gradually increase in the population has resulted in an uneven development within the country. There are socio-economic problems in Maldives even today, as compared to the situation in other South Asian countries where educational expansion has not only overshot employment, but has also led to the excess of the youths and labour forces within the economic framework. Maldives' socio-economic problems are because of external exposure, liberal educational policies, and the population boom. So far, it has been easy to accommodate these changes and reach a national consensus on public policies. However, as the process of social change permeates the backward atoll people, emergence of groups that perceive themselves as deprived and marginally is possible.⁸

Socio-economic problem is a major problem in the Maldives but diversifying its relations with the rest of the world can increase the rising domestic needs. These new developments in a small State and its struggle to maintain its identity in an increasingly interdependent world make an interesting study. The socio-economic problems are not only in terms of physical problems, but abstract conflates as well.

⁶ . Shahid Qadir "UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries: Neither Break-through Nor Breakdown," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.4, No.1, January 1982.

⁷ . *Maldives News Bulletin*, no. 25, July 15, 2001

⁸ . Shahid Qadir, "UNConference on the Least Developed Countries: Neither Break-through Nor Break-down," *Third World Quarterly*, vol.4, no 1, January 1982, p.134

There is a conflict between tradition and modernity. Islam as the national religion has provided the Maldives with a national and cultural identity; with Divehi accepted as the official language. Divehi provides a common platform in Maldives; however, there is increasing social tension. The orthodox clergy is worried about the modernization and is trying to preserve the traditional Islamic way of life. It has to be seen how the traditional Islamic State will cope with the challenge of modernization. The government elite would need to discuss this issue, which is of concern to the security of the country, with much rationality.⁹

The focus is now on development and economic security in Maldives. The country was one of the poorest countries in the world according to the United Nations in 1971; but with the progress the country has made in the last decade, the country is now recognized as a middle-income level country in terms of human development.¹⁰ The adult literacy rate is more than 98 per cent. The World Bank has also described Maldives as a State with sufficient subsistence. Despite these achievements one must highlight the structural problems in its economy and development.¹¹ The Maldives has a narrow economic base and it is greatly dependent on exploitation of marine resources for export and import.

The Maldives faces several physical and climatic limitations; hence, fisheries have traditionally supplemented agriculture. The low moisture- holding capacities of its coral-sand-derived soils limit the range of crops. But agriculture continues to be subsistence economic for Maldives total cultivable area is estimated to be around 6,9000 acres. Cash crops are the major products of agriculture in Maldives. Demand for agricultural products is increasing, and large quantities of vegetables, fruits, meat, and poultry products are imported, requiring valuable foreign exchange. The government is taking up steps to improve human resource base in the country. But, as

⁹ Hideyuki Takahashi, "Maldivian National Security and the threats of mercenaries", *The Round Table*, 1999, pp. 453-444.

¹⁰ Ravinatha Aryasinha, "Maldives, Sri Lanka and the India Factor", *Himal. South Asia*, March-April 1997, pp.26-29.

¹¹ For eastern Economic Review, *Asia 1994 Year Book*, Hong, China Morning Post, 1994, p.169.

the process of modernization in Maldives is slow; the adverse consequences of the development process are gradually unfolding.¹²

Challenges to the Widening of the Political Representation in Maldives Higher Offices

The Maldives faces challenges in widening the political representation in its higher Office. People do not get opportunity as political representatives in the higher Offices of Maldives. Few elites have been the privileged ones to dominate the higher Offices since independence. The governing elite comprises a closely-knit, extended family network. It is culturally united and is aware of the compulsions of development. Only a handful of families in the Maldives have been participating in the country's economy, politics, and social structure. The power passes from one member to another of the same or extended family as a legacy.

Since independence, the country has had two persons who occupied the higher Offices of the country. One of them is the present President Gayoom, who is in the higher office of the country since 1978. There is no place for common people and women in the presidential post. Women represent 50 per cent of the country, even 10 per cent representation in the important Offices of Maldives can not be found. Few elites of the country have also been dominating the Majlis since independence. The Majlis' unicameral legislature meets only to approve the Government policies. They approve their own policy when their interest is not affected.

Ex-President Ibrahim Nasir was in power only for one decade while the present President is holding the Office since 1978. He accommodates both dissent and criticism. Lack of modernization, however, has not provided for effective State functions. Without a proper democratic set-up, the whole democratic process has been weakened. If proper democratic political system could be launched, the leadership is also likely to function effectively. Such a system would widen the political

¹²

World Bank, Population project Department, The Demographic Brief for Maldives, World Bank, Washington DC, April 1980, supplied by the National Planning Agency, Male.

representation in the higher Offices of the country. However, lack of a pure democratic set-up has become a setback for the governance.

But education and modernization are influencing the people's mind. Forces of modernization permeating the society and more educated youth being exposed to international milieu, imparting a set of values on democracy and development of the Maldives is possible.¹³ Even large sections on the population have begun shedding their traditional indifference of male-centered political development.

Nevertheless slow modernization and social tensions are still prevalent due to a narrow political elite base. It directly deters the widening of the narrow political base. It also disrupts the processes of consensus- building in the country. The decision-making structures still remain narrow and only a close-knit kinship continues to have easy access to the political Offices. Hence, Maldives still faces problems because of lack of wide political representation in the higher Offices and a narrow political elite base.¹⁴

Security problem is another challenge threatening the country. The security problems of the country are found in both military and non-military fronts.¹⁵ And the security concerns and military capability of Maldives are important subject matters that need to be addressed. Environmental problem is one of the non-military problems, and it is a serious problem threatening the Maldives Government. The country's territorial integrity and sovereignty can be threatened in the future if the environmental problems are not curbed. Therefore, the challenges and causes of the political disorder in Maldives are of serious concern.

Maldives being a small and weak island-State has no military capability to defend itself from external threats. From historical perspectives, the threats are of two

¹³ . Urmila Phadnis, "Maldives Challenges". *The Hindustan Times*, (New Delhi), 28 February 1990.

¹⁴ . Nidhi Sharma, *The Modernization of Maldives*, ed.. Verinder Grover, *Encyclopaedia of SAARC Nations*, pp.127-130

¹⁵ . World Bank, Population project Department, *The Demographic Brief for Maldives*, World Book, Washington DC, April 1980, supplied by the National Planning Agency, Male.

patterns: pre-colonial period and colonial period.¹⁶ Perceptions of security threat changes over time with the geo-political transformation in the domestic, regional, and global environment. The historical factor relevant to security in one particular era need not remain constant for all times. To cope with changing security threats, Maldives needs to update its security arrangement. Every islands, be it uninhabited or inhabited, need more people to be recruited for security purpose. The government should make developments on defence affairs.

Maldives Security Problems (Military problems)

The country's political, economic, and social structure, apart from ecological surroundings, have to be taken into consideration when security problems are analysed. The geographical distinction of the island-state also generates a different security consciousness, which is different from other States in the Asian subcontinent. Security concerns of small States of the Third World, especially island-states, arise mainly due to external factors. Their security threats do not originate from other sovereign countries but from non-state elements such as transnational mercenaries and terrorists.¹⁷ This is especially true of small island- states in the Indian Ocean in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, each island- state has to depend either on regional powers for its security or has to depend on the strength of the services by military and political means. Maldives once depended on India for its national security, but it is now making efforts to strengthen its national security on its own establishments.

Transnational mercenaries have threatened the country's security thrice. Three coup attempts were made to oust President Gayoom from power. President Gayoom has been earning popularity by adopting policies of democratization and economic liberalization. If these things are the main concerns of the dissident groups in Maldives, President Gayoom will continue to make or adopt such policies much to the resentment of the dissidents. It can be observed from the statements of the defence and foreign policy decision makers that the Maldivians are at present paying

¹⁶ . Hidayuki Takahashi, "Maldivian National Security and the Threats of Mercenaries". *The Round Table*, 1999, pp.433-444.

¹⁷ . Jonatha Alford, "Security Dilemmas of Small States", *The Round Table*, 1984, pp.377-382.

more attention to the activities of mercenaries than the threats posed by bigger nation-states.¹⁸

However, Mohamed Zahir, the Chief of Staff of the Maldives National Security Service, has pointed out that “irregular military threats have always been a problem for small state like Maldives, more than conventional threats.” Again, Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, former Security General of the South Asia Association for Regional cooperation (SAARC) stated that the “meaning of the word ‘security’ has broadened since the 1970s, so it is easier to discuss the problems of small State like Maldives, which is not fundamentally militaristic.”¹⁹ “The threats”, he said, “Maldives is facing at present include environmental degradation, location of Human Right, organized crime, drug trafficking and also AIDS.” All these threats culminate into a bigger security problem of the country²⁰.

The Maldives sought its security by various diplomatic means. It has kept out of cold war politics by adopting a policy of non-alignment. But times have changed and no country is ready to adopt the principles of non-alignment. Hence, various diplomatic initiatives of the Maldivian Government make it clear that its principal strategy works towards international support and commitment to its security. Maldives National Security cannot be changed to the security of the region because developments in its immediate and distant vicinity impinge on its interests. One of the security concerns of the island during the Cold War period was the threat of miniaturization of the Indian Ocean. It was a threat posed to the lateral and hinterland states.²¹

Two reasons can be attributed to such a political stand. First, the nature and magnitude of the security problems of Maldives are such that they cannot be easily managed even by a large-scale support extended by a committed friendly power.²² Military threat of the 1988 can be well depended even with a minimum level of bilateral military assistance. There is an immediate need of a strong military force.

¹⁸ . Ibid.

¹⁹ . Maqsd ul Hasan Nuri, “Maldives in the 1990’s,” *Spotlight on Regional Affairs*, March 1992, pp.65- 105

²⁰ . Ibid.

²¹ . Ajay Behera, *Sri Lanka and the Maldives*, 1992, pp. 33-355.

Maldives' unit of security, called the National Security Service, has no sufficient security personnel. The main duties of the unit are to preserve the internal security and to patrol the country's territorial waters from-illegal fisherman and smugglers. After the 1988 coup attempt, the military capability has not been fortified even after the 1988 coup attempt, but the government has increased the number of security personnel. Hardly 2,000 (NSS) personnel were there on duty. With such few numbers of security personnel, it is impossible to bring security to every uninhabited island in the country. Geographically, it is difficult to have military base on every island. Increasing the level of defence capabilities for self-defence against mercenary aggression is not sufficient. The country is unable to rise against the internal challenges to ensure security to its citizens. Maldives has failed to perform its most important duty as an island-State in South Asia.²³

Security problems are there because perceptions of defence and security are conditioned by its geographical characteristics, and threats conditioned by some other way. It may be internal social and political conditions besides proximity to large neighbours. So, for Maldives, the regional environment becomes equally important.

Maldives has a much more cohesive society and is not confronted with the problems of divisiveness. But it tends to accelerate the process of modernization. Social tensions are bound to rise and the Government must be sensitive to this issue. Neglecting the need for a strong military capability would involve an unnecessary risk for its security. The 1998 coup attempt in Maldives was an example of the outcome of limited security forces. Maldives has been dependent on India for military assistance to meet its internal security challenges. As the country is a part of the South Asian Subcontinent, sharing historical and cultural links with that of the SAARC countries for ensuring its security. SAARC can play an important role in Maldives security. It is recognized that a security order in South Asia requires an extensive economic cooperation among the countries of the region.

Environmental challenge is one of the serious security problems in the governance of the Maldives. Its territorial integrity and sovereignty can be threatened

²² . Ibrahim Husain Zaki, "Protection and Security of Small States", *UNAM*, 1995, pp.7-15.

²³ . V. Suryanarayan, "The Maldives and India's Security," in Satish Chandra, B. Arunachalan and V. Suryanarayan, eds. *Strategic Scientific and Historical Perspective*, (New Delhi, 1998).

in the future. Being an island-State, the government should look into this issue and try to develop ways to protect Maldives from environmental challenges.

The Environment Problems of Maldives (Non-military)

It is known that environmental challenge is one of the non-military problems of the Maldivian Government. No other state in South Asia would be as seriously affected by environmental changes, as Maldives would be. In fact, its very survival would be threatened. All South Asian countries should join hands with Maldives in addressing the global environmental problems and the green house effects.

The greenhouse effect has some direct consequences on the security of small Maldives. A rise in the temperature of the sea-level due to global warming would affect a large number of islands; most of them are not above two metres of the sea level. It is likely that by 2100 the islands would disappear from the earth's surface. Maldives, along with some other Indian Ocean littoral states, is faced with the threatening prospect of environment degradation in the form of rise of the sea level due to increase of global temperature.²⁴

President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, when addressing the United Nations General Assembly Session in New York on October 19, 1987, highlighted the problems of environmental challenges faced by the small states. The lifestyles of the Maldivian and their level of industrialization have little direct impact on these issues. It is the adverse impact of the industrialization in the world that has polluted the earth's surface.²⁵

Pollution of the earth's surface has put Maldives in peril. The President said that the rich and developed nations have wealth and land to defend themselves from a rise in the sea-level.²⁶ Maldives being a small State is more vulnerable to ecological degradation and it has to very soon prepare blue prints for sustainable development plan and policy.²⁷ As Maldives lacks the economic, technical, and technological

²⁴ President Abdul Gayoom's address to the UN General Assembly, New York, as cited in Maldives and her environmental position paper published by the Department of Information and Broadcasting, Male, Republic of Maldives, 1991.

²⁵ Gareth Porter, "Environmental Security As A National Issue," *Current History*, May 1995, pp. 218-229

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Vivian L. Rorbes, "The Maldives and The Sea Level Change Debate," *The Indian Ocean Review, Centre for Indian Ocean Regional Studies*, (Australia), March 1991, pp.18-42.

capability to deal with the formidable prospects of a significant rise in the sea- level, he also said, “we did not contribute to the impending catastrophe to our nation and alone we cannot save ourselves”.²⁸

Challenges to the Political Order in Maldives

Maldives has faced many problems of governance after independence and those were not external military threats but internal disturbances. Therefore, bringing about a stable political situation in Maldives has posed a challenge to the national leaders. The country has experienced three coup attempts in 1980, 1983, and 1988. What were the causes of the three coup attempts? Power struggle in Maldives is the possible answer to it.²⁹ Certain conditions are indicative of the power struggles in Maldives. First, only a handful of the families in the capital dominate the country’s economy, politics, and social structure. Power passes on from one member of the family to the other as a legacy. Second, the decision-making structure is narrow because the President is the highest authority of the country; nobody can challenge him. The President enjoys absolute power. There is an undemocratic way of functioning of the Office of President. The rights incorporated in 1998 Constitution is limited; and this is one of the reasons of the coup attempts. Limited opportunities and rights gave birth to dissidents.

Maldivian Government has been trying to function well; nevertheless there are certain constraints. Slow socio-economic development is one of the major constraints in bringing about good governance³⁰. Amir Ibrahim Nasir is the first President of independent Maldives, when the country was not threatened under coup attempt. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom is the present President. With the three coup attempts, it is suggestive that the country is not heading towards a better democracy, with dissidents threatening the order of the State. People consider these two Presidents to be troublemakers. Gayoom’s promises are populist strategies. He has failed to fulfill any of the major promises for the country. During his presidential elections he had promised a complete transformation of the political system of Maldives. It means

²⁸ . *Maldives and her Environment, Department of Information and Broadcasting, Male, Republic of Maldives, 1991, p. 18*

²⁹ . P. Sahadevan, “Challenges to Political Order in Maldives,” *BISS Journal*, 1998, pp.94-108.

³⁰ . Urmila Phadnis, “Maldives Challenges,” *The Hindustan Times*, (New Delhi), 28 February 1990.

from centralization to decentralization of political power. He had even promised during his election campaign that a better democracy and political reforms are two things to be aimed. Another important promise was that the post of presidential elections would be held by direct election, for which the position of the Majlis (Parliament) can be strengthened

Problems of governance in Maldives are increasing, as on the rise because the Government is not functioning for the welfare of the people. Consequently, the government has been facing many problems and challenges to the political order in the country. Maldives has been the target of mercenary attacks on several occasions. First time in 1980, second time in 1983, and third time in 1988. In 1988, a serious coup attempt was made that India's military assistance had to be sought. The Indian military operation was undertaken with the code name "Operation Cactus", which ended with the capture of the mercenaries on the high seas. Once the operation was over, Indian military withdrew from Maldives and normalcy was resorted.³¹ In the early hours of November 3, 1988, nearly 200-armed mercenaries from Sri Lanka set in surreptitiously to target Male. They went for three main targets: Headquarters of the National Security Service (NSS), the Radio Centre, Television and Telecommunication Centre, and the Presidential Palace.³²

The raiders headed for the presidential palace, which was soon vacated. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom immediately contacted two embassies, in New York and Colombo and also sent distress calls to the US, Britain, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, and Singapore. During that time Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India. The Prime Minister of India had consulted with his Congress Working Committee (CWC) and set up a special task force to deal the situation. Finally, the cabinet committee on political affairs met in the afternoon and took the decision to intervene in the Maldives coup attempt. But India's role in the suppression of the coup attempt came under suspicion. While the big powers like the US, UK, and USSR

³¹ . Alok Mukherjee, "Maldives: Anatomy of Operation Cactus," *Mainstream*, December 3, 1988.

³² . P. Sahadevan, "India and Maldives: Mutually Beneficial Relationship," *South Asia Studies*, Vol.27, No.2, July-December 1992, pp.16-31.

endorsed India's action upon the small states, it nevertheless reflected India's growing role as a regional policeman.³³

The raiders made a major mistake by not occupying the Hulule airport, which made it easier for the Indian paratroopers to land in Male. The Mercenaries fled their ship and had taken away 25 hostages. The Maldivian Transport Minister and a member of the Majlis were among the hostages. Two navel ships, INS GADAWARI and INS BETWA, were supplemented by Indian Air Force TU 142 from Goa. Two helicopters flew to Male and took four Maldivian officials to the GADAWARI to act as negotiators.³⁴

However, Operation Cactus was completed without a shot being fired. There was no large-scale killing by the raiding forces led by Abdullah Hutfi, the businessman who occupied the President's place for some time. It was not an easy task for the Indian Air Force to help restore normalcy. It reflected the poor capability of the Indian Intelligence Agencies working in Sri Lanka with the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF), nearly 50,000 at the time, who failed to detect the infiltration of these Tamils.³⁵ Hence, even the administration could be blamed for the problems when the time frame was limited. It was also difficult for the Indian Air Force to procure the maps of Maldives, which was mainly the domain of the Indian Navy.³⁶ The administrative confusion was only resolved when the Indian High Commissioner in Male made a visit to India. However, India's success in the attempt to foil the coup was due to its military brilliance and strategic policies.

Another shortcoming of the raiders was they did not destroy the telecommunication link with the outside world. During that time, President of Gayoom was whisked away from his home close to the palace and taken to an unknown place. That was how the President was able to communicate with the international community. Another serious miscalculation made by the dissidents was

³³ . K.K. Katyal, "Indian Troops Foil Maldives," *The Hindu* (Maldives), November 5, 1988.

³⁴ . Maqsd Nuri ul-Hasan, "Maldives in the 1990s," *Spotlight on Regional Affairs*, Vol.14, No.4, 1992, pp.65-195.

³⁵ . Dilip Mukherjee, "India and Maldives: A New and Closer Relationship." *Indian and Foreign Review*, Vol.12, No.8, 1st February 1989, pp.16-24.

³⁶ . Urmila Phadnis, "Maldives Challenges", *The Hindustan Times*, (New Delhi), 28 February 1990.

they thought that the Indian Navy would need at least 18 hours time to intervene, so they ignored the role of the Air Force.

After the 1998 coup, Maldives was forced to review its defence requirements by modernizing its NSS.³⁷ It also decided to create a defence intelligence service to monitor external and internal developments, The NSS now gets training from the US Special Forces and both countries have also conducted joint annual exercises for the last couple of years. Also the UN Charter has envisaged some mechanisms for ensuring the independence of small states from external threats. UN resolution 44/51 on protection and security of small States submitted by the Maldives and also adopted at the 44th session of the General Assembly.³⁸

According to the UN resolution of 44/51 on protection and security of small-states security measures are quite inadequate when it comes to the external threats.³⁹ Maldives comes under that category. Also, the convention of General Assembly about the recruitment, use of finance and training of mercenaries provide a modality to challenge acts of terrorism and mercenaries. Hence, helps are coming from the international organizations, especially on political, economic, military, and humanitarian grounds. President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom also reposes tremendous faith in the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) convention on its effort to suppress terrorism.

Maldives has been a late entrant into the global committee of nations. It is not in keeping with the time of the developing world. The dominant concern among the developing countries has been the internal dimensions of security emanating from the nation-building and modernization processes. Thus, domestic socio-economic and political processes play an important role and so do the regional and global environment.

A north- south divide through the country characterizes the whole area of Maldives. During the negotiations between the British and the Maldivian authorities, some inhabited islands of the Addu and Huvadhu atoll went under the leadership of

³⁷ . Johathan Alford, "Security Dilemmas of small States," *The Round Table*, 1994, pp. 377-382

³⁸ . Maqsd ul Hasan Nuri, "Maldives in the 1990's", *Spotlight on Regional Affairs*, March 1992, pp. 65-105

³⁹ . Urmila Phadnis, "Maldives Challenges," *The Hindustan Times*, (New Delhi), 28 February 1990.

Abdullah Afif Didi, who declared a separate state called the United Suvadive Republic in 1959. Though this secession was short-lived and died down after an agreement was reached between the Maldives and Britain in 1960, it underlined the possibility of a political division. The withdrawal of the British in 1976 adversely affected the Adduans in terms of jobs and many other facilities benefited by the atoll people.⁴⁰

A small island-State like Maldives finds it difficult to protect an area of 90,000 sq.km. and can be challenged by threats with military, economic, and ecological dimensions. The security problem of Maldives has a certain complexity due to its geopolitical location in South Asia. However, despite its small island-state status, it has always enjoyed an independent political identity. Ironically, the country is dependent, politically and diplomatically, for its regional security on the mechanisms of powerful countries.⁴¹

Conclusion

Many factors are responsible for the problems of governance in the country. Political challenge is a more important factor than any other. This chapter has analyzed the problems of governance in Maldives. It has also explained the causes of the coup attempts in the Maldives and how the Maldivian government tried to overcome such challenges. The other important aspects, such as geographical and socio-economic; the various steps taken by the Maldivian leadership to put down the dissidents; the security problems and the military capability linked with the dissidents are the main factors responsible for the problems of governance in the Maldives. The geopolitical factor has also been a source of problem for Maldives. The incidence of a large number of islands remote from each other poses problems for its own economic development.

There should be a system of direct election of the Maldivian President, then strengthen the position of Parliament, and enhance the accountability of the Government. Political restructuring is necessary for good governance. More importantly, the quality of governance which expresses itself through attributes such

⁴⁰ . Jim Breetvld, "British Base on Gan Ready for Service," *Times*, 9 December 1977.

as accountability, transparency, efficiency, empowerment, participation, equality, and justice are also important. And Maldives faces problems of governance because of lack of these things.

⁴¹ Deepak Tripathi, "India's Maldives mission and after," *India Today*, January 1989, pp.3-5.

CONCLUSION

Maldives is an archipelago of 1,190 small coral islands, of which only 200 are inhabited. The islands are grouped into 26 natural atolls. However, for easy administration, they are divided into 20 administrative units or atoll. Maldives became fully independent, outside the Commonwealth, on July 26, 1965. After independence, the Country abandoned the Sultanate system and became a republic again on 11 November 1968. The political system and governance in Maldives from 1968 to 1998 has seen many ups and downs. The study has covered 30 years of Maldives existence as an independent nation. The year 1968 signifies the Country's emergence as a republic, and in 1998 Maldives adopted a new constitution. The country has a cohesive society and is not confronted with the problems of divisiveness. The nature of society of the country was very traditional but it has changed over the years. However, religion, culture, language and regional variations are still playing a great role in unifying the different communities in Maldives. It has always maintained the political, social, and cultural uniqueness, with interrelations

between the islands and atoll. But it would do well to recognize that in the process of modernization, social tensions are bound to arise. The country's governance must be sensitive to this rising tension. Maldives is not developed because of lack of trained manpower.

From 1968 onwards, the political system in the Maldives has passed through many phases. The country has centralized political structure. It has a presidential form of government. The President is the Chief Executive and controls the entire constitutional machinery, including the legislature and judiciary. The process of effective decentralization has necessitated additional institutional networks, and it is necessary to get the centre's support to help distribution as well as coordination of powers from the top to the bottom. The President is the Head of State and Head of the Government.

The administrative framework of the country is divided into three levels: the island, the atoll, and the national government. Each island is under the control of an island Chief, (Katibu), who is appointed by the central Government. The Atoll Office controls the island Office. The President appoints the Atoll Chief and the Ministry of Atoll Administration oversees the atoll affairs. The Central Government has established radio and other communication links with all islands. The President provides the policy guidance and directions to each Atoll Chief, who can be removed by the President.

The administrative justice is undertaken in accordance with Islamic law. The President appoints the Chief Justice and other Justices of the High court. The President is the head of the Judiciary. It means that the President is the highest authority of administering justice in the country. The independence of the judiciary is essential to ensure that those facing charges do so in the absence of the possibility of political bias.

Maldives has a unicameral legislature, the People's Majlis. It consists of 50 members: the people directly elect 42 members for a five-year period and the President nominates eight members. Apart from Legislative functions, the People's Majlis elects the President by a secret ballot and nominates him for endorsement by the people in a national government.

This study has tested the following hypotheses:

Firstly, a centralized political system in atoll states can bring about more political stability at the cost of freedom and open competition for power. The political system and government in Maldives is different from other countries in South Asia. It will be right to say that a centralized political system in Atoll State like Maldives can ensure political stability, but this is possible only at the cost of freedom and open competition for power. A centralized political leader always thinks of overall development of the country: so if the people of Maldives are more concerned about development and economic survival then they have to accept a centralized political system, if not it will be very difficult for economic survival. Centralization of power is workable in Maldives because it has been a unitary and a presidential form of government from the very beginning. The

Centralization of power is better in Maldives considering the geographical point of view. The numerous coral islands separated from one another makes it impossible for decentralization of power. A small population and land area lack of appropriate personnel, and few services are possible for high degree of centralization in the administrative set-up of Maldives. Even the Maldives present constitution does not provide for a strong local government set-up. Administrative decentralization and some rudimentary elements of local representation can't be witnessed in Maldives. The national government controls the local administration.

Secondly, participatory institutions tend to be weak in atoll states because of underdeveloped political culture resulting from the State controlled electoral process. Even problem is there for participatory institutions; it tends to be weak in Maldives because of underdeveloped political culture resulting from the State-controlled electoral process in the Maldives. Participatory institutions have to be more independent from the State.

Thirdly, people tend to accept a centralized political system if they are more concerned about development and economic survival. It is true that some factors are responsible for the spread of political discontent among a section of the political elite. The concentration of political and economic forces in Male has consequence in the contest for power. Hence, problem of governance in Maldives is more economic than political. National institutions of the country have to show a lot of efforts for good governance. It is a fact that without economic development political stability is not possible in the Maldives. The national economic institutions have to support and to work for government's development policies and issues. The political institutions are required to play a positive role for the stability of the political system. Co-operation efforts are required between the Government of Maldives and national institutions of the country. Maldives has to insist upon a meaningful co operation at the regional level to tackle the problems of national institutions for good governance.

Fourthly, centralization of power is possible in atoll states because mobilization of people for political reforms is difficult. The centralization of power is given importance in Maldives because the central authority tends to be strong under the atoll political system. It is also because of enormous challenges, perceived or real, to political order. Challenges are not merely political but also economic and military. Centralization is the only option in atoll-state of Maldives.

And finally, problems of governance in atoll states are more political than economic or cultural. Maldives is facing problems of governance. The geopolitical factor has also been the source of problems. The question of security and stability of the small Island-State to counter external threats has been the direct experience of all Maldivians. President Abdul Gayoom has survived three coup attempts. Hence, increasing the level of defence capability would involve an unnecessary risk for its security. It is recognized that a secure order in South Asia requires an extensive economic cooperation among the countries of the region. The vision of security for the democratic politics in Maldives has to take into account not only national security but also political, cultural, and economic security.

However, it is a fact that the country's national security and development are totally dependent on good governance by the Maldivian leadership. The problems of governance in Maldives particularly from 1968 to 1998 are linked with the country's security problems. The 1988 coup attempt was serious enough to ask for India's military assistance. Hence, being a weak State in defence matter, without improvement on this matter, the protection and stability of the country is not assured.

Maldives President Mr. Gayoom himself has not been sensitive to the growing pro-democratic sentiments in the country from very beginning. The recent constitutional change has not fully created a space for competition for power within the democratic framework. How much will be true of the President's recent constitutional reforms is dependent upon Maldives leadership now.

The President recently outlined historic and far-reaching constitutional reforms, which would amount to an overall modernization of the system of governance of the country. After more than 37 years of the Maldives history, the country's Parliament has allowed a multiparty system. The Maldives Parliament unanimously approved a resolution to allow political parties to seek recognition and contest elections, ending the no-party system in the nation. So the President has announced plans to propose further consolidation of the Fundamental Rights of the people, though making the Human Commission an institution created by the constitution.

It will be workable if the President's proposed constitutional reforms would be implemented in the country. It is very much important that the President outline his view that the People should be given a wider choice in electing a President, either by voting on a plural list of candidates endorsed by People's Majlis, or by direct election without any role for the Majlis in the process.

It will be more democratic if the Maldives President will further democratize the People's Majlis, with the abolition of the category of appointed members. Proportional representation is to be introduced, and the Majlis is to become totally independent of the executive. The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker should be elected by the Majlis members rather than by appointed persons. The judiciary system has to be stable in future and a Supreme Court is to be created as the highest court of appeal. The Chief Justice and other Justices of the Supreme Court should be appointed and dismissed on the advice of the Majlis, with the consultation of the judicial service commission.

Therefore, changing nature of political system and its acceptability in the country is dependent upon President Gayoom's recently proposed constitutional reforms in the Majlis. How much the Maldivian leadership is going to implement practically is dependent upon the pressure of democratic forces.

Finally, if the present constitutional provisions change then it can give more democratic spirit to Maldives. The direct election of the Maldivian President would, and then strengthen the accountability of the government to the people. Political restructuring

is necessary for good Government and political system. The post-colonial Maldivian political system requires proper democratic process. The time has come for new thinking in Maldives. A new approach and a new mind-set are necessary for the work ahead. Overall, it can be said that the country needs proper democratic set-up for the betterment of its political system and governance. Maldivian leadership can develop Maldives by brining in a more democratic set-up in the political system.

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