

Greater Male Connectivity Project

August 14, 2020

India will fund the implementation of a major connectivity project in Maldives through a USD 400 million line of credit and USD 100 million grant. The 6.7 km Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP) will be the **largest civilian infrastructure project in Maldives, connecting Male with three neighbouring islands – Villingili, Gulhifahu and Thilafushi.**

GMCP

The GMCP project will include **construction of a bridge-and-causeway link spanning 6.7 kms.** Once completed, this landmark project will **streamline connectivity between the four islands, thereby boosting economic activity, generating employment and promoting holistic urban development in the Male region.** India is also extending **financial support for construction of a port in Gulhifahu.**

Regular cargo service between India and Maldives is also being started. Further, Maldives is the **first neighboring country with which an air bubble is being operationalized.** The **cargo ferry service will enhance sea connectivity and provide predictability in supplies for importers in Maldives and exporters in India.** It will also reduce logistics costs and times for traders. **The air bubble symbolises India's support to shore up tourism arrivals and revenues in the Maldives.** Health protocols in both countries will be strictly followed. The first flight under the Air Bubble is expected to commence on August 18

India has also **renewed quotas for supply of essential commodities to Maldives for the year 2020-21.** The commodities include food items like potatoes, onions, rice, wheat, flour, sugar, dal and eggs as well as river sand and stone

aggregates. The quotas assure food security, and the supply of essential construction items, and thereby provide certainty and price stability for such essential items in the Maldives

The initiatives are also seen as **stepping up New Delhi's diplomatic efforts in a region China has also been focusing recently**. The Indian Ocean island nation, popular with tourists for its beaches and turquoise waters, has become a **focal point in China's Belt and Road Initiative** aimed at building trade and transport links across the region. **India has sought to regain diplomatic influence in the islands after a new administration led by President Ibrahim Solih took power following the defeat of the pro-China strongman Abdulla Yameen in elections in 2018**. Yameen was convicted of money laundering and sentenced to five years in prison last year, after facing allegations of awarding contracts, including for a major bridge connecting Male to the island of Hulhumale and an extension to the international airport, to Chinese companies at inflated prices.