

South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > Maldives: Solih Takes Over- The Challenges ahead

Maldives: Solih Takes Over- The Challenges ahead

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Mon, 11/19/2018 - 14:42

Paper No 6461

Dated 19-Nov-2018

By S.Chandrasekharan

On November 17th, Solih took over as the seventh President of Maldives in a glittering ceremony at the Galolhu National Stadium.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi, former President of Sri Lanka Chandrika Kumaratunge as well as Senior Representatives of 46 countries were present for the occasion.

While three former Presidents, Gayoom, Waheed and Nasheed were present, a notable absentee was Yameen who perhaps stayed out of the function as he would have been booed by the public. Yameen's Spokesman, Ibrahim Muaz said that Yameen did not attend "because he believes that the people of Maldives have not received justice to date after losing an important right and to respect the request of thousands of his supporters"- A bad loser indeed!

Formerly, inauguration of Presidents normally took place on 11th November, but this time it was fixed for November 17th- the last day of the President remitting his office. But Yameen insisted on the inauguration being held on 17th only and not before.

Indian PM's personal attendance added to the importance and significance of the change of guard in Maldives and India's concerns on peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region. The joint statement by Solih and Modi at the end of the visit pledged to maintain peace and security in the Indian Ocean and being mindful of each other's concerns (note -about China and to a lesser extent of Pakistan from the Indian point of view) and aspirations on the stability of the region and commitment and support for increased cooperation in combating terrorism both within the south eastern region and across the world.

It is interesting to note that while Chinese strategists have declared in the past that the Indian Ocean does not belong to the Indians, they claim all of South China Sea as theirs!

Solih made some key pledges soon after the inauguration. Some of the important ones are

1. Electricity Fares to be reduced
2. Education upto first degree level to be made free.
3. Breakfast initiative for school students to be launched.
4. To approve the use of pension funds to finance Haj pilgrimage.
5. To expand the role of Maldives internationally for environment protection.
6. To take an active role on the issue of Global Warming.

Of these, the first three are to be implemented within the first 100 days.

Even before the inauguration, on the 14th, the Parliament repealed the much despised anti defamation law. According to one Parliamentarian – the Act was not made to protect the character of any individual but rather it served to hinder the media from telecasting and publishing content that showed the corruption and criminal activities of President Yameen's Government.

And now the challenges-

The first will be to undo the tremendous damage done to the Government by Yameen who had subverted almost all the institutions of the country including the Judiciary, Election Commission, the Legislature, State Enterprises and even the Security Forces. It may take a long time but it has to be done and the 'fear complex' that pervaded the entire country has to be remedied. No more can a Vice President like Adheeb could be allowed to run riot and firm and irreversible checks and balances will have to be put in place.

The second important challenge will be for the four-party coalition to run smoothly. The leaders of all the four parties are of strong character and some of them have inflated egos and it was a wonder that they in the first instance joined hands to topple Yameen. They also carry a lot of personal grievances against each other and it is hoped that they would rise above their personal prejudices to let the government run smoothly. A good beginning was made when the four leaders Gayoom, Gasim Ibrahim, Sheikh Imran and Mhamed Nasheed declared that they will not assume any portfolio but remain as advisers and meet once a month to smoothen out the differences and advise the Government. A good beginning was made by them in suggesting a non-controversial cabinet of 19 ministers in good time.

Notable appointees for some important ministries were-

Home- Imran Abdulla

Foreign Affairs- Abdulla Shahid

Finance- Ibrahim Amu

Defence -Mariyam Ahmed Didi

The last appointee for Defence was a surprise though her competence and loyalty to the MDP cannot be questioned. Her immediate task will be to clean up the security forces.

The third challenge would to manage the high debt already incurred under the Belt and Road Initiative of China. It was earlier thought that the debt burden was around 1.5 billion dollars. It was later learnt by Solih that debt burden was around 3 billion dollars, a sum that is more than what the Maldivian Government raises in three years!. Not many know that the agreements between the Governments and China are not with the Chinese Governments but with individual companies in China and that any dispute for arbitration under BRI will have to be in the BRI Court in Xian in China and under Chinese Laws!

Tags:

Solih ^[1]

Maldives ^[2]

Category:

Papers ^[3]

Topics:

Political ^[4]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2384>

Links

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1962>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/65>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/political>