

**State Visit of Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina,
Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to the Republic of
Maldives, 22-23 December 2021**

Joint Communiqué

1. At the invitation of His Excellency Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, President of the Republic of Maldives, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh undertook a State Visit to the Maldives from 22-23 December 2021. Prime Minister Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina was accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen, MP, Minister of Expatriates’ Welfare and Overseas Employment, H.E. Mr. Imran Ahmad, MP, Minister of Health & Family Welfare, H.E. Mr. Zahid Maleque, MP, and senior officials of the Government of Bangladesh.
2. Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Hasina was accorded a ceremonial welcome in Malé.
3. H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held Official Talks on 23 December 2021 in a warm, cordial and friendly atmosphere. They reviewed the entire range of bilateral engagements including exploring new avenues for further strengthening cooperation on trade, investment, connectivity, health, culture, agriculture, Information and Communication Technology, human resources development, consular and community welfare. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.
4. During the visit, Vice President H.E. Mr. Faisal Naseem, Speaker of People’s Majlis, Former President, H.E. Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, Chief Justice, H.E. Uz. Ahmed Muthasim Adnan and H.E. Mr. Ahmed Khaleel, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs paid courtesy calls on H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. President Solih will be hosting a State Banquet in honour of H.E Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her delegation.
5. H.E. President Solih recalled his successful State Visit to Dhaka in March 2021, to participate in the epochal celebrations commemorating the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Bangladesh and congratulated H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on these festive occasions. H.E. President Solih also thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the warm hospitality accorded to him, First Lady Fazna, and the accompanying delegation during the visit.
6. The two leaders noted that this year, Maldives–Bangladesh relations have been elevated to an unprecedented level. H.E. President Solih also recalled the very recent official visits to Bangladesh by Vice President H.E. Faisal Naseem and Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid earlier this year.

7. H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina discussed the global Covid-19 pandemic and noted the devastating impacts it has had on the economies, livelihoods and wellbeing of the people in both the countries, as well as across the globe.
8. Both leaders agreed on the importance of equitable access to vaccines to combat the pandemic. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated H.E. President Solih on the successful management of the Covid-19 pandemic situation in Maldives. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also appreciated President Solih for ensuring the welfare of Bangladeshi expatriates in Maldives, and including them in the Government's vaccination programme. H.E. President Solih also appreciated the initiatives taken by the Government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for successfully managing the pandemic in Bangladesh and balancing lives and livelihoods to minimize its negative impact on economy.
9. H.E. President Solih thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for mobilizing support in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, including the deployment of medical teams of the Bangladesh Armed Forces to the Maldives.
10. H.E. President Solih commended H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the outstanding socio-economic progress achieved under her leadership, and congratulated her as Bangladesh qualified for graduating from Least Developed Country (LDC) category to a developing country status. President Solih attributed this milestone achievement to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's foresight and exemplary leadership, coupled with the hard work of Bangladeshi people.
11. Both leaders reviewed the progress made on the commitments announced during the State Visit of H.E. President Solih and the official visits of Vice President H.E. Faisal Naseem and Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid to Dhaka earlier this year. They expressed satisfaction on timely holding of the first bilateral consultations at Foreign Secretary level, between the two countries in November 2021 in Malé.
12. The two leaders noted the need to expedite the implementation of the other instruments concluded during the visit of H.E. President Solih in March 2021.
13. H.E. President Solih reiterated Maldives' request to enhance cooperation between the two countries in the areas of health, higher education and human resource development. H.E. President Solih thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and appreciated the willingness of Bangladesh to assist the Maldives in these areas, through increased opportunities for higher education in multiple fields, including vocational training and internships for medical students. The two leaders directed their respective officials to coordinate to work out the details in this regard.
14. Both leaders were delighted to note that an increasing number of Maldivian students are choosing Bangladesh as one of their preferred destinations for higher studies. H.E. President Solih requested to expand the scope of higher education facilities for Maldivian students. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina welcomed the proposal and informed that the

Government of Bangladesh would be happy to extend specialized post-graduation courses and internships for the Maldivian medical professionals.

15. Both leaders noted with satisfaction the adoption of the calendar of activities (2022-2023) of the Cultural Exchange Programme (2022-2025) signed in March 2021 by both countries. Both leaders noted that the countries have been culturally linked for more than eight hundred years and stressed on collaborating further in the sphere of culture and heritage to make this bond stronger.
16. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offered to assist Maldives in the areas of Agriculture and Information & Communication Technology, where Bangladesh possesses substantial expertise. In exchange, H.E. President Solih offered transfer of knowledge in fisheries and pelagic fishing. Both the leaders also noted the need to promote sustainable governance of the ocean and environmental resources and proposed to collaborate on Blue Economy Initiatives of both the countries.
17. Considering the significant proportion of youth in both countries, H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina noted the importance of creating an enabling environment with opportunities to fulfil their aspirations. The two leaders agreed that the empowerment of youth is essential to build resilient communities. In this regard, both leaders welcomed the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding in Cooperation in Youth and Sports Development between the two countries.
18. Both leaders noted the untapped scope for economic cooperation between the Maldives and Bangladesh. They agreed to expedite the work in translating this potential into tangible outcomes through trade and investment initiatives. In the context of graduation from LDC status, and the need to maintain benefits enjoyed under South Asian Free Trade Area, H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated Bangladesh's offer to conclude a Preferential Trade Agreement with the Maldives. H.E. President Solih welcomed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's initiative for Preferential Trade Agreement and to hold Commerce Secretary Level Meeting to discuss trade related issues in details at the earliest.
19. Both the leaders agreed that connectivity in all its forms is crucial to promote tourism and trade. In this regard, they welcomed the launch of flights between Dhaka and Malé by US Bangla Airlines, noting this will boost people to people contact and trade opportunities between the two countries. They also stressed on the early launching of the direct shipping link.
20. Appreciating the enormous contribution made by the Bangladeshi expatriates to the socio-economic development of Maldives, H.E. President Solih stressed that a large number of Bangladeshi workers still remain undocumented and vulnerable to exploitation. Both leaders noted the importance of regularisation and recognized the urgency of the early conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Matters Relating to Migrant Workers and instructed their respective authorities to institute the modalities to expedite addressing this issue.

21. H.E. President Solih thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the assurance of reinstating on-arrival visa for Maldivian travelers to Bangladesh. H.E. President Solih also requested to facilitate long term student visa for Maldivian students for the complete duration of their studies.
22. H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina highlighted the importance of multilateralism and underscored their commitment to work together at the United Nations and other multilateral fora on issues of global concerns.
23. H.E. President Solih thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the support extended to the candidature of H.E. Mr. Abdulla Shahid, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives for the Presidency of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulated H.E. President Solih on the assumption of the Presidency by Abdulla Shahid and wished success in delivering his 'Presidency of Hope'.
24. Both leaders expressed their concern on the climate emergency, noting that the effects of climate change directly and negatively impact the livelihood and wellbeing of people in island nations and low-lying coastal states like the Maldives and Bangladesh. H.E. President Solih applauded H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her leadership as the Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum. The two leaders agreed to intensify their combined efforts in addressing the climate emergency, and proposed to enhance cooperation and exchange of knowledge between the two countries on climate change adaptation and disaster management.
25. Both leaders emphasized that the regional organizations such as South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation has an important role to play in promoting regional cooperation in many areas particularly in combatting the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.
26. H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina agreed on the importance of working together bilaterally, regionally and internationally in combatting the rising menace of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. In addition, both leaders also agreed to address and counter the threats posed by organised crime, piracy, narcotic and human trafficking, through multilateral and regional fora including Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in the quest to attain security, stability and peace in the Indian Ocean region. Bangladesh side highlighted that the country has assumed the Chairmanship of IORA for the first time, since October 2021 and sought the support of Maldives for working together towards greater maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean Region. H.E. President Solih congratulated Bangladesh and assured Maldives' cooperation in this regard.

27. H.E. President Solih thanked H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for the generous gift of military vehicles, acknowledging the goodwill and friendship extended to the Maldives by the Government of Bangladesh.
28. H.E. President Solih reaffirmed Maldives' support to Bangladesh on the issue of the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar nationals. The President added that the Maldives continues to condemn in the strongest terms, the atrocities committed against the Rohingya Muslim community in Myanmar and remain in solidarity with the Rohingya people. President Solih further commended H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Government of Bangladesh for graciously hosting the displaced Rohingya community, offering them protection and shelter, and her efforts to facilitate their peaceful and dignified repatriation to their home country.
29. H.E. President Solih and H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated their commitment to promote and protect human rights in all fora. They also agreed to extend all possible support to the candidacies floated by either country in various international organizations including the United Nations. Both leaders reiterated their commitment to promote human rights.
30. On conclusion of the Official Talks, the two leaders witnessed the exchange of the following bilateral instruments between the two countries:
- a) Memorandum of Understanding on the Recruitment of Health Professionals
 - b) Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the areas of Healthcare and Medical Sciences.
 - c) Memorandum of Understanding on Youth and Sports Development
 - d) Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation
31. H.E. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina thanked H.E. President Solih for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to her and members of her delegation during their stay in Maldives.

23 December 2021, Malé, Maldives