



INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA: OCTOBER DOSSIER

The October Dossier highlights the defeat of the BJP/NDA in the crucial Bihar elections, the President's visits to Jordan, Israel and Palestine and India's relations with the Maldives, in addition to selected press articles on domestic, regional and international affairs by very well-known journalists and experts.

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The end of the Modi magic? Massive BJP-defeat in Bihar

By Dr. Klaus Voll

Nearly all the poll-survey erred. Nobody expected a result of these dimensions in Bihar with its electorate of 67 million. The surveys predicted a neck-to-neck race between the *Mahagathbandhan* (Grand Coalition) of Janata Dal United, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Congress and the *National Democratic Alliance*, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party with the Lok Janshakti Party, RLSP and HAM.

NDTV with India's most experienced pioneer-election analyst Prannoy Roy predicted after the biggest *Exit-Poll* with national dimensions of 76 thousand people questioned a comfortable, although narrow victory for the NDA.

The absolute opposite happened. A veritable „*political Tsunami*“ finished the BJP. It was a referendum against Narendra Modi.

JDU + achieved an overwhelming victory with 178 seats, i.e. more than a two-third majority.

The RJD celebrated a remarkable comeback and became with 80 seats (2010: 22) the strongest party, followed by the JDU with 71 (2010: 115, then in alliance with the BJP). The Congress, 2010 only 4 seats, gained unexpected 27 seats this time, a true *Diwali*-gift for India's grand old party after so many defeats. Sonia Gandhi contributed largely to the coming together of the three coalition parties.

The NDA, e. g. BJP + , gained only 58 seats:

BJP 52 (2010: 91, then junior partner of the JDU), LJP 3, RLSP 2 and HAM (Hindustan Awam Morcha) 1.

Altogether the JDU + gained additional 37 seats compared to 2010 and NDA lost 36 mandates.

The Samajwadi Party, ruling in Uttar Pradesh with its 210 million population, the Nationalist Congress Party and the especially to Muslims appealing AIMIM (Owaisi) – the latter confining itself to Bihar's North-East with its higher Muslim electorate, could not win a single seat. A split of the JDU/RJD/Congress-support base, feared by many observers, therefore did not happen.

Other parties – amongst them the parliamentary *Communist of India, Marxist-Leninist* with 3 seats – and independent candidates gained altogether 7 mandates.

The JDU + gained altogether 41.9% (2014: 45%) and the BJP + 34.1% (2014: 40%)

Causes for the BJP/NDA-defeat

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducted an enormous and costly election campaign with 35 big rallies. Amit Shah, BJP-President, who stayed nearly two months in Bihar, conducted even

86 rallies. Modi engaged himself with his whole prestige as PM, also Amit Shah – whose re-election as Party President will soon be due.

In recent state elections the BJP did not put up a candidate for the post of Chief Minister. This hitherto successful strategy turned out to be counter-productive against the popular incumbent Nitish Kumar, who could show major achievements in nearly 10 years as Chief Minister, although the BJP had in Sushil Modi, a former deputy to Nitish Kumar, a quite capable politician.

The JDU + - slogan „*Bihari* (Nitish Kumar) *versus Bahari* (outsiders Narendra Modi and Amit Shah)“ proved to be very effective. Besides, Nitish Kumar empowered between 2005 till 2015 with practical development programmes numerous women in Bihar.

The BJP aimed at an alliance between *Forward Castes* with substantial sections of the so-called *Economic Backward Castes* (EBC's) – about 30% of the electorate with 124 sub-castes - and the Dalits, e. g. „*oppressed*“ respectively in former times called „*untouchables*“. But the BJP could obviously not attract sufficient support from these social groups – particularly also women – which is also reflected in the dismal performance of its alliance partners, who represent actually these various sections at the lower end of the social hierarchy. Also the aspirational youth, which cheered Modi in the 2014 *Lok Sabha* (Lower House) elections and contributed decisively that BJP+ could then win 31 of the 40 parliamentary seats in Bihar while leading in 170 Assembly segments, did this time not swing in his favour.

At the beginning of the campaign, the BJP propagated its seemingly time-tested „*development card*“, in order to replace it in later phases of the election campaign - which stretched over five weeks – by an increasing polarisation and open „*communalism*“ - „*a BJP-defeat would lead to victory celebrations with fire-crackers in Pakistan*“, so Amit Shah. Instead this proved to be dysfunctional especially in constituencies with a higher presence of voters of Muslim belief, e. g. about 17% of Bihar's population.

The highly charismatic and humorous Lalu Prasad Yadav – two months ago still in prison because of the „*Fodder-Scandal* – polarised instead successfully BJP/RSS-statements during the campaign, putting into question job reservations for disadvantaged social sections like OBC's and Dalits by RSS-chief Mohan Bhagwat, and transformed the campaign into a battle between „*forward and backward castes*“. The accusations, that during his rule he had led a „*jungle regime*“ hit back on the BJP and consolidated his *vote-bank* of the *Yadav-caste*, comprising about 14% of the population..

The former Army-Chief and BJP-Minister of State External Affairs, V. K. Singh, contributed with his statement on „*dogs*“ in the context of the burning of two small Dalit-boys in Haryana certainly, that the BJP could not win additional Dalit-votes.

'Counter-Narrative' to Modi, consequences and perspectives

The result certainly signals also discontent with the style of governance and the lack of employment opportunities, since one of Modi's major electoral promises in 2014 had been job creation.

In the meantime, the prices for the protein-rich *Dal* (lentils), the major food item for the *Aam Aadmi* ('common man'), shot up in a mind-boggling way.

Nitish Kumar succeeded to formulate a „counter-narrative“ to Narendra Modi, e. g. „good governance, economic development, social justice and an atmosphere of social harmony“ (*'Swabhimaan'*), so Pavan Varma, JDU-*Rajya Sabha* ('Upper House') member, a close confidante of Nitish Kumar and the JDU-face in the English TV channels. But Varma also conceded, that „caste“ is an essential factor in Bihar politics.

In the meantime, criticism is openly expressed in the BJP. R. K. Singh, *Lok Sabha* MP from Bihar and a former Secretary in the Home Ministry, criticised „that the BJP nominated criminals as candidates and sold tickets.“ Shatugran Sinha, also a BJP-MP from Bihar and a film star, called the result „a victory for democracy and Biharis.“

Some observers argue, that the RSS – irrespective of 3 000 active cadres in Bihar – possibly in a conscious or even involuntary manner (Mohan Bhagwat) could have internally sabotaged Modi, so that he does not become too powerful.

BJP-alliance partner Shiv Sena, since quite some time constantly and with irony criticising Modi, described Nitish Kumar as „a national political hero“ and the result „a personal defeat for Narendra Modi and also because of the arrogance of the BJP.“ Arvind Kejriwal, AAP-Chief Minister of Delhi, opined: „Modi should change his style of governance. The people are fed up with his frequent foreign tours.“

„The end of alliance politics is not over at all, irrespective of the absolute majority of the BJP in 2014“, so the journalist Swapan Dasgupta, who is close to the BJP. The result – in his opinion without doubt „a damage to the image of the PM“ - will have repercussions at the elections in Uttar Pradesh in early 2017. Dasgupta expects a „calibration of Modi's style of governance“, whereas others doubt that Modi is capable to learn. According to Dasgupta, the result will lead to a „country-wide realignment of anti-BJP forces“. But the defeat would give Modi also the possibility to reshuffle his cabinet, which some expect after the return from his visits to Britain and Turkey.

The Congress *Rajya Sabha* M. P. Mani Shankar Aiyar also expects national ramifications, „calling for a united opposition, not necessarily led by the Congress.“

After the duo Modi/Shah has been thoroughly defeated in 2015 for a second time, the party wants now to introspect. Ram Madhav, BJP-General Secretary and for many years spokesperson for the RSS, appealed „to improve the political discourse in the country.“ The party elders L. K. Advani, Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Yashwant Sinha and Shanta Kumar criticised in an open statement that the party is controlled by a handful of leaders without sufficient inner-party debates and demanded accountability for the defeat.

In a press conference after his victory, Nitish Kumar argued, that the electorate wanted an alternative to the policies of the Modi government. „It is directed against the politics of hate. Rising intolerance is a burning issue. People across India are celebrating.“ Lalu Prasad Yadav

added: „*Modi was acting like the RSS campaign manager. He mistook Bihar for Haryana and Maharashtra. The BJP tried every trick to divide the people of Bihar.*“

Quite a few observers expected in this election a final death-knell for the *Mandal-parties* by the BJP and predicted the end of the political career of Nitish Kumar. Instead, the winners have now the chance to reinvent themselves and possibly play a leading role in formulating a national alternative to Modi and the BJP. Some years ago Nitish Kumar showed interest in contacts with European Socialdemocrats.

After his consecutive electoral *Hat-Trick* since 2005 Nitish Kumar will now begin his third term as Chief Minister of Bihar. But there are already speculations, that he could become the major face of an anti-BJP/NDA alliance in 2019, provided he can successfully keep together his government with a numerically stronger RJD.

Part II India - Foreign Policy Developments

By Dr. Joyce Lobo

German Chancellor Merkel's visit to India

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel held bilateral talks at the *3rd Indo-German Intergovernmental Consultations (IGC)* on October 5, 2015. Having met last month for the G4 talks in New York, these talks strengthened the growing close ties between Berlin and New Delhi. Today the focus of this relationship is also for the sake of aiming at a humane, peaceful, just and sustainable world.

3rd IGC, October 5, 2015

India and Germany have forged their bilateral relations since 2001 through the '*Strategic Partnership*' which in turn has been fortified by the earlier held IGCs (2011 & 2013). In the 3rd IGC, both sides decided to build on the consensus that is growing on issues of foreign, security and economic ties. About 18 agreements/MOUs were signed between both the countries in foreign language, solar energy, skill development and vocational training, security cooperation, higher education, science and technology, manufacturing etc.

Security cooperation: Both sides have agreed to establish a new *Policy Planning Dialogue* between their Foreign Ministries to enhance exchange of views on issues of common concern. India and Germany have better relations in various global forums. The foremost being at present in the UN where both are pushing for necessary reforms and where both support each other's candidatures for a permanent seat in a reformed UN Security Council.

Discussions were held on the situation in West Asia and Afghanistan where Germany is both a donor and provider of forces. They laid emphasis that the *Heart of Asia* process was important for regional confidence building and security cooperation of Afghanistan. Here both discussed on the stability of Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region.

Economic cooperation: Under the IGC both sides discussed collaborations in manufacturing, skill development, urban development, environment, railways, cleaning of rivers, renewable energy, education, language, and science and technology. Mostly the talks focussed on economic ties. Areas like manufacturing, skill development, renewable energy, and climate change were given importance. India looks towards Germany for investment, trade and technology partnerships in manufacturing, infrastructure and skill development.

India has expedited regulatory clearances with regard to taxation, foreign investments, etc. While listing these, Modi assured during his speech at the *Indo-German Summit* in Bangalore the German investors and businessmen on India's improving economic indicators and mentioned the new National IPR (*Intellectual Property Rights*) policy that is being finalised.

Both countries stressed the importance of continuing the G20 agenda and implementation of its decisions; agreed to work closely to achieve required outcome in the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference.

There was no substantive announcement regarding the EU-India *Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement*, except that negotiations are to be resumed. India is keen on this deal in order to strengthen its manufacturing base and bring in infrastructural development. Both sides through the *High Technology Partnership Group (HTPG)* are looking for avenues for high technology collaborations. This is to also to accommodate manufacturing (particularly in defence) under the *Make in India* programme. India has agreed to set up the *Fast-Track system* for German companies in India which is to be operationalised by March 2016. Already 1600 German companies are present in India.

Skill development and cooperation in technology: Indian leaders have realised that having been blessed with a ‘demographic dividend’ of a 800 million working population under the age of 35; it faces the shortage of a skilled workforce of about 500 million by 2022. India needs to meet the international requirements for vocational education for skilled jobs. In this regard, India and Germany have agreed to cooperate closely in the area of vocational training and skills development by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This is to support policy reforms in the apprenticeship system including dual system pilot projects in selected industry clusters. Berlin will assist in the development of the curriculum and in establishing a *National Institute for Skill Development for Higher Learning* in India. At present efforts are on in promoting skills training in the sector of energy efficient building technologies and also in terms of the German companies imparting skills development within their own enterprises.

Both sides are already exploring collaborations under the ‘*Digital India*’ initiative and look towards cooperation in facilitating research and commercialization of technologies in Indian heavy industries. In the meanwhile the *Indo-German Partnerships in Higher Education* will facilitate collaborative research, and academic and institutional exchanges between Universities and Institutions of Higher Education.

Climate Change and Energy Technology Cooperation

Germany now wants to lead the example with regard to climate change, wherein it has decided to phase out its nuclear plants by 2022, and embraced clean and safe energy solutions. Despite this, Germany has strongly supported India’s membership of the international export control regimes. It has also emerged as a leader to combat climate change along with India. India aims to increase its renewable component in the energy mix up to 175 gigawatts by 2022 and increase efficiency gains in the use of electricity by 2030. Recently India announced its climate-change policy statement to cut the carbon produced per unit of GDP growth by 33-35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels.

The convergence of interests of both countries can be noticed through these aspirations. Both countries have decided to work closely with regard to tackling climate change and ensuring sustainable development. In this regard a separate joint statement was issued by both sides—*Climate Change and Energy Technology Cooperation*. The statement says that both “*share the long-term target of holding the increase in global average temperature below 2 degree Celsius above preindustrial levels.*” Hence the solutions that both sides look at are renewable energy and the efficient use of energy. In order to find sustainable solutions for India’s energy needs,

Berlin has pledged assistance of over one billion Euros for a *Green Energy Corridor* and a new assistance package of over a billion Euros for solar projects for a period of 5 years.

With regard to the upcoming *COP21* in Paris both countries intend to work closely with other countries to adopt the climate agreement under the *U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Both sides are in agreement that climate finance is important to ensure carbon cuts for developing countries.

In terms of bilateral cooperation, both sides have launched an *Indo-German Working Group on Climate Change* to discuss climate policy and exchange views on climate change matters. Also both have decided to build a comprehensive partnership – *Indo-German Climate and Renewable Alliance*. Already these issues are tackled in other dialogue structures established between both the countries which will form as cumulative inputs to be fed into the new alliance. This partnership will involve aspects of technology, innovation and finance for use of clean energy. For instance the solar technology, renewable energy storage, space cooling technologies, energy efficient rail and water infrastructure, super-efficient appliances and buildings, zero emission passenger and freight vehicles, and off shore wind.

Continuation in terms of cooperation at the *COP21* in Paris, reforms of the United Nations and the Security Council, in defence manufacturing, trade in advanced technology, intelligence, and countering terrorism and radicalism were part of the discussions. In terms of urban development sector, aviation and railway modernization both sides discussed the opportunities in store for Germany companies. Germany has now become part of India's initiatives in smart cities, Clean Ganga and waste management.

President Mukherjee's triangular Visit—Jordan, Palestine & Israel

In what seemed to be an unusual trip (October 10-15) that combined three important yet two contentious places of the Middle East, President Pranab Mukherjee proved like the Prime Minister of India, his acumen to visit several countries and successfully conduct foreign policy on behalf of the country. After PM Modi's visit to the UAE, it is quite natural for India to engage with more countries of the Middle East. One of the primary reasons is that India intends to invest in infrastructure which includes railways and industrial corridors, port development, roads and bridges, smart cities, etc. This requires funds to the tune of about US\$ 1 trillion and India is looking towards Middle East countries like the UAE for the same. Also countries like Israel are one of the major collaborators in sectors like power, ports and railways.

Apart from funds, strengthening economic cooperation has remained the mainstay of the Modi government. Thirdly, India seeks endorsement for the UN reforms particularly to the *UN Security Council* (UNSC) wherein India intends to seek permanent membership. Lastly, India is engaging with countries to seek common understanding on international terrorism sans military intervention in affected states.

Jordan

President Mukherjee became the first Indian Head of the State to visit Jordan like Israel. The visit suggests that both countries intend to strengthen bilateral relations that so far have remained normal. Jordan has been instrumental in extending humanitarian assistance to Indians from Iraq during the Gulf Crisis (1991) and in 2014. The President held talks with King Abdullah, on October 10, on the entire gamut of bilateral relations, regional and international issues of mutual concern. One of the important facets of this trip has been in terms of cooperation in higher education and learning. The President's delegation comprised of Vice Chancellors of eminent Indian Universities that signed about 10 MoUs with Jordanian universities.

Both countries have a bilateral trade of more than US\$ 2 billion (2014) and the target for 2025 is set to US\$ 5 billion. India is giving priority to areas like healthcare, IT & IT-enabled services, financial services, transport and logistics which Jordan has identified for investment. India is also looking towards Jordan for energy security given its shale deposits and also for its food security in terms of long-term arrangements for imports of phosphate. India imports rock phosphates (main importer), potash and finished fertilizers from Jordan. It was agreed by India to extend a line of credit of USD 100 million to Jordan for sectors of mutual interest yet to be identified. Since Jordan has *Free Trade Agreements* (FTA) with several countries, India can work through Amman and gain access to other markets.

The issue of Indian companies facing difficulties in terms of workers was raised, wherein the response was positive by the King. The King conveyed that his country's aim was to be a regional hub for financial services and in the meanwhile increase its service exports. Towards this end he had warned at the *United Nations General Assembly* (UNGA) about international terrorism and Mukherjee took the opportunity to acknowledge India's appreciation of the contents of his speech and the importance it attaches to this theme. Jordan has been affected by groups like *Al Jihad* and *Boko Haram* within its territory and also by other groups along its borders. Both countries agreed to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism and defence.

About six agreements and MoUs on cooperation in areas of merchant shipping and maritime transport, training programmes for diplomats, institutional and capacity building, cultural exchanges etc were signed between both the sides.

The President met with the elected leadership of the country and held talks with Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour on October 11. Talks focused on terrorism, Syria, Palestine, UN reforms and economic cooperation. Both sides agreed on four issues: terrorism should be fought on multiple fronts; belief that a long-term solution to Syria should be based on the Geneva-I process and the Geneva-I accord; the state of Palestine to be united with East Jerusalem as its capital as per the Quartet road map and also the UNSC resolutions; and the UN should be reformed. PM Ensour identified four areas for joint ventures and collaborations—IT, the pharmaceutical, automobile, textile, construction, new and renewable energy sectors. Also further possibilities for investment were to be identified. India also extended \$100 million Line of Credit to Jordan.

Palestine

The President held meetings and interactions with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, and the leaders of major political parties in Palestine. The first ever India-Palestine Academic Round Table was held during this visit wherein the President was accompanied by a delegation of distinguished academicians.

The President in his talks with Abbas focused on the on goings between Palestine and Israel, the way forward in the Middle East peace process and terrorism. India has supported the Palestine cause since 1947. Palestine since its declaration of independence in 1988, which India recognised, has been seeking international recognition as a state. It has been recognised by more than 70% of the countries so far. On September 30, 2015 the national flag of Palestine was installed at the UN that was supported by India.

Both sides have common understanding that peaceful negotiations and settlement of conflict as per the established principles is the way out. Moreover in order to stifle terrorist groups like *ISIS*, *Al Qaeda* and *Jabhat al-Nusra* from flourishing, the '*negotiated settlement*' of Palestine is important to contain the disenchanting youth from joining radical groups.

Projects (worth US\$ 17.79 million) were announced such as a techno park, the Palestinian Institute of Diplomacy, India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in ICT & Innovation etc. India engaged with Ramallah in terms of aid, assistance and capacity building. Also a grant of US\$ 5 million was given for Palestine budgetary support.

Israel

President Mukherjee met President Rivlin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The President had been bestowed the rare honour to address the Knesset on October 14. In his address he focused on India's democratic system, its participation in the UN as leading voice amongst the developing countries, transformative economic policies, and the economic opportunities. He pointed to India's endeavor to bring in reforms to the global administrative and financial architecture. He dwelled on the positives of the bilateral relations between both countries.

India and Israel have established full diplomatic relations in 1992 and from then onwards the defence partnership has been strengthened. In 1999, the latter provided critical defence supplies to India. Israel, like Jordan, supports India's bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC.

Two Agreements viz., avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion and on cultural cooperation including eight MoUs between Universities and higher education institutes of both the countries were signed.

The President in his talks with President Rivlin covered a range of issues— bilateral and those related to international relations. Discussions took place on collaborations in defence equipment and platform systems, agriculture and manufacturing. Since India has a vast population wherein several remain below poverty line, it sought further intensification of

cooperation from Israel in terms of technology. Both sides discussed about the ongoings in the Middle East, the war in Syria and the need for coordination between NATO and Russian jets in fighting the ISIS.

This visit was used by the President, as in Jordan and in Palestine, to explain about the economic transformation of India and the flagship programs that have been implemented to achieve economic development—the '*Make in India*' initiative, '*Digital India*' initiative, '*Smart Cities*', '*Model Villages*', '*Clean India*' and the '*Clean Ganga mission*'. India seeks collaborations in Science and Technology, innovation, and in research and development. Towards this endeavor, the academic delegation that accompanied the President has been present to establish close exchanges with their Israeli counterparts. India looks towards Israeli cooperation in defence, cyber security, agriculture, dairy, solar energy, water, telecom, etc. Bilateral trade between both the countries was around US\$ 4.52 billion (2014).

This visit by the Head of Indian State has sent a powerful message to Jordan that the relationship is not any more lukewarm, and to Israel and Palestine that one is not favored over the other. In July this year India's abstention on a UN resolution condemning Israel for 2014 Gaza attacks had led to concerns in Palestine. However, this visit reconfirms India's 1947 stance that it stands firm for the cause of Palestine. With regard to Israel, the message that India sends across is that it is ready to engage with countries that help its development agenda.

Part III South Asia

By Dr. Joyce Lobo

Foreign Minister Swaraj visits Maldives finally!

One of the countries that failed to figure in the peripatetic Prime Minister of India's trips has been the Maldives apart from Pakistan. Maldives gains significance given the fact that it is part of India's neighborhood, a member of the SAARC (*South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation*), and most importantly being part of the *Indian Ocean Region* (IOR). India's policy towards IOR is termed as '*Indian Ocean policy*', '*Indian Ocean strategy*', '*Indian Ocean diplomacy*', '*blue policy*' etc though not officially acknowledged. The moorings were laid by the Congress led UPA in 2011 with Sri Lanka and Maldives to form the *Trilateral Maritime Cooperation (TMC) of India-SriLanka-Maldives*. ²

Though Modi visited Sri Lanka, Seychelles and Mauritius, observers in the TMC, he cancelled the Maldives visit in the wake of turmoil following the arrest of former President Mohammad Nasheed. Modi missed the opportunity to engage with the Male leadership in order to ensure that the nascent democratic ethos survived in this island nation rather than descending into authoritarianism and a society that is bordering on radicalism. C. Raja Mohan ("*Raja-Mandala: Stumbling in the neighbourhood*", *The Hindu*, Oct. 13, 2015) says that "*Delhi found it difficult to countenance President Abdulla Yameen's brutalisation of his political opponents, including the former president, Mohamed Nasheed. Delhi's disapproval did not seem to have much of an impact on Yameen, who responded by warming up to China.*"

India's focus in the IOR is to attempt a *Blue Revolution* or the *Ocean Economy*. The 2013 initiative of China called the *Maritime Silk Route* (MSR) has been a source for Indian concern. India's neighbours like Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh have agreed *in principle* to the MSR. India feels that China aims to be a strategic balancer in the IOR though this initiative.

However, Foreign Secretary S Jaishankar had travelled to Maldives as part of his *SAARC yatra* in August to lay the groundwork for the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit that took place on October 10-11, 2015. Swaraj co-chaired, with her counterpart Dunya Maumoon, the *5th Meeting of the India-Maldives Joint Commission* which included areas of defence and security. The Commission met after a gap of 15 years. Yameen in his talks with Swaraj reiterated Maldives' policy of '*India First*' which seems ironical given the fact that the Commission is meeting after a gap of so many years. Irony surrounds equally when Swaraj too, in her meeting with President Yameen, emphasized on Indian policy of '*Neighbours First*'!

Swaraj and Maumoon discussed the challenges in the IOR, defence and security, trade and investment, space cooperation, renewable energy, etc. The defence cooperation includes at present the construction of a *Composite Training Centre for the Maldivian National Defence*

Forces (MNDF), joint patrolling, training programmes for MNDF officers in India, medical camps, joint exercises, etc.

In terms of trade and investment, both sides reviewed the experience of Indian companies in Maldives. Maldives is open to Indian investment for its *iHavan* and *Hulhulmale Youth City* projects. Both sides identified areas for trade and investment. On the sidelines of this meeting two MoUs were signed between the Foreign Service Institutes and on Youth Affairs and Sports of both the countries.

Rajeev Sharma, journalist, points two important 'misses' in the current visit: the statement issued after Sushma's meeting fails to mention any piece on Nasheed and Swaraj not meeting the opposition leaders of Maldives. (Rajeev Sharma, "Hits and misses in Sushma Swaraj's logjam-breaking Maldives visit", *Firstpost*, Oct. 11, 2015).