



**INSTITUTE OF  
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*Report – In-House Meeting*

## **“Maldives Media Delegation”**

**June 17, 2019**



*Rapporteur: Majid Mahmood*

*Edited by: Najam Rafique*

## PICTURES OF THE EVENT



Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held an In-House Meeting with a 3-member Media Delegation from Maldives on June 17, 2019. Members of the Maldivian delegation included: Mr. Waheed Ibrahim, Mr. Farooq Mohamed Hassan and Ms. Zihnath Hassan.

Mr. Najam Rafique, Director Research welcomed the delegation and introduced himself and the South Asian team at the institute, Mr. Majid Mahmood, Research Associate and Ms. Shahroo Malik, Research Associate. Ms. Malik, gave a brief introduction of the Institute, its working and contribution to the strategic discourse and issues relevant to Pakistan.

Mr. Najam Rafique apprised the delegation on the strategic environment in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. He said that due to growing geopolitical rivalry between China and US, the Indo-Pacific region has seen significant activities in recent years. He added that important sea lines of communication pass through the Indian Ocean and Maldives is strategically placed in that region.

Mr. Najam said that while India has been granted a special role by the US in the larger Indo-Pacific region, the latter is not the only player in the region. He said that China's One Belt and One Road (OBOR) initiative has a maritime component as well due to which trade in the Indian Ocean is set to rise. He was of the view that India has strongly integrated itself within the US Indo-Pacific strategy, and in line with its historic tradition, will impose itself over the nations of Indian Ocean. Pakistan for its part, he said, will continue to resist Indian hegemony in the region. Mr. Najam said that under Modi, there has been a rise of fascism within India under the banner of Hindutva ideology. This, he said, has dangerous regional implications. Modi, he said, has shown no inclination to improve relations with Pakistan, and has instead, embarked upon a confrontationalist approach towards its western neighbor.

Mr. Waheed Ibrahim said that Maldives is located at a very strategic place in the Indian Ocean. He said that international shipping lanes entering the Indian Ocean from Oman pass very closely from Maldivian coasts. While on the north eastern side, we have another important country Sri Lanka. Mr. Waheed added that this places Maldives as an important political player. This is the reason why India has a history of intervention in Maldives internal affairs, he said. Mr. Waheed said that looking from Maldivian prism, India-Pakistan relations are in a bad state and that he has

been telling his Indian friends that you cannot push Pakistan beyond a certain point because it is a nuclear power.

Mr. Farooq said that the number of tourists coming to Maldives is increasing and the higher percentage of those travelling are from Europe and China. He said that the number of Chinese tourists has been increasing in recent months. He said that there are deep links between Maldives and Pakistan, and suggested that despite the construction of the Gwadar Port, Karachi remains an important hub for trade. Mr. Farooq added that medicine and hospital facilities at Karachi are an important source for people of Maldives.

Mr. Waheed added that due to Indian influence in Maldives, progress in Pakistan-Maldives relations has slowed down. He said that flights from Maldives and Pakistan are suspended and cargo traffic between Karachi and Maldives has also decreased to a great extent. He said that Pakistani media should expose India's game plan in the region. He praised the existing MOU on tourism between Pakistan and Maldives, and hoped that relationship between the two countries will strengthen.