

The Maldives and Pakistan: Cooperation amid Regional Realities

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Summary

During Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu Muizzu's visit to Islamabad 20 to 22 October 2026, Pakistan and the Maldives agreed on various issues to strengthen their ties. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also raised India-related matters, to which Muizzu did not respond, at least publicly, realising how significant New Delhi is for the island nation.

The President of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, visited Pakistan from 20 to 22 October 2026 with a delegation comprising cabinet ministers and some senior Maldivian [government officials](#). This was the first visit by a Maldivian president in 11 years. In May 2011, then-Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen visited the Maldives. During Yameen's visit, [four bilateral agreements](#) were signed between the Maldives and Pakistan in the areas of sports, healthcare, education and combating narcotics drugs. In July 2017, then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited the Maldives. At that time, the two countries discussed strengthening cooperation in areas such as economics, education, health, tourism, youth, and sports. They signed [six agreements](#) on different matters. Nawaz Sharif also attended the Maldives' 52nd Independence Day celebrations.

Muizzu's visit to Pakistan marked 60 years of diplomatic ties between the two countries. In Pakistan, Muizzu addressed the Maldives-Pakistan Business Forum 2026 held in Islamabad. He [called on Pakistani businesses](#) "to seize emerging commercial opportunities and forge long-term partnerships with the Maldives". He also "called for direct sea corridors and announced that the national airline, Maldivian, aims to establish direct flights between Malé and Karachi soon to boost trade and travel". [Muizzu welcomed](#) "certified Pakistani pharmaceutical manufacturers and healthcare providers" and invited construction and engineering firms to partner on housing, connectivity, and land reclamation projects in the island nation. He spoke on the demand for Shariah-compliant finance, halal products and halal tourism, urging financial institutions and enterprises "to leverage opportunities in Shariah-compliant financing, sukuk issuance and halal value chains".

During Muizzu's visit, the two countries exchanged [20 memorandum of understanding](#) (MoUs) covering areas such as health, education, technical training, tourism, civil aviation, agriculture, fisheries, defence, maritime security, law enforcement, civil service cooperation, social protection, culture and youth affairs. The MoUs also included cooperation between Pakistan's Drug Regulatory Authority and the Maldives Food and Drug Authority. The two countries also announced plans to raise their bilateral trade from US\$13.9 million (S\$17.8 million), which [Shehbaz Sharif termed](#) "just a fraction of our potential", to US\$200 million (S\$255 million) in the next two years. Shehbaz Sharif announced [20 additional undergraduate scholarships](#) annually for Maldivian students and reaffirmed that his country is ready to "expand cooperation in education, healthcare,

professional training and capacity-building” and “reiterated commitment to supporting the Maldives’ food security and healthcare needs through the provision of essential food commodities and pharmaceuticals, including through government-to-government arrangements”. [He noted](#) that many Maldivian students were studying in Pakistani colleges and Universities, and about 250 Pakistani doctors and other paramedics were serving in the Maldives. Shehbaz Sharif also announced that to support Muizzu’s [Five Million Tree Initiative](#), Pakistan will contribute 100,000 olive cuttings and 100,000 seeds of various plant species, and provide technical expertise to establish nurseries, to support the production of one million plants over the next three years. The International Islamic University, Islamabad, also conferred an [honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree](#) in Politics and International Relations on Muizzu. Muizzu also met Pakistan’s Chief of Defence Forces, [Field Marshal Asim Munir](#). During the meeting, they discussed “matters of mutual interest, the prevailing regional security environment and avenues for enhancing bilateral cooperation”.

Beyond discussing bilateral ties, Pakistan also raised its India-related issues during Muizzu’s visit. Shehbaz Sharif said he briefed the Maldives leader on his country’s position regarding Jammu & Kashmir and the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). On the Kashmir issue, Shehbaz Sharif [reiterated his country’s old position](#) of addressing it in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolution. On the IWT, [Shehbaz Sharif said](#), “Pakistan’s position is loud and clear and beyond an array of doubt; legally binding treaties must be respected and shared water resources must never be weaponised or used as an instrument of political pressure or blackmailing.” He added that “Water is a lifeline for humanity...so this should be known to all and sundry that any violation in this behalf will be regarded by Pakistan as an act of war.”

Muizzu did not say anything publicly about [Kashmir and the IWT](#). However, on South Asian matters, he reiterated [the Maldives’ commitment](#) to playing “a constructive and proactive role in revitalising” the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). He added that “the Maldives stands ready to work closely with all SAARC member states towards creating the necessary conditions for convening the next SAARC Summit at the earliest possible opportunity”.

Muizzu’s visit to Pakistan provided an opportunity for the two countries to strengthen their political and economic relations, as evidenced by the MoUs and statements. In Pakistan, Muizzu did not react, at least publicly, to Shehbaz Sharif raising the matter of Kashmir and the IWT, mainly because he is aware of the significance of India to the Maldives’ economic health. Notably, Muizzu began his presidential campaign on an ‘India Out’ campaign and some of his decisions soon after being elected to office, such as asking New Delhi to withdraw its troops, who were there to maintain and operate two rescue and reconnaissance helicopters and a Dornier aircraft that India had donated years ago, strained ties [between the two countries](#). However, realpolitik forced him to shift from being a [defiant populist](#) to recalibrating his election promises and engaging with India.

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