Importance of Maldives Stability

What is the issue?

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- Recently, the unified Maldivian opposition pressed for a no-confidence vote against the speaker on July 24.
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- But, the vote has been cancelled after four MPs were stripped of their seats.
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- The issue assumes importance as Maldives has become an extension of the game for **regional influence** being played out between India and China.
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Why Maldives' stability is important?

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- Maldives is strategically located along major sea lanes in the Indian Ocean.
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- A **significant portion of world trade** takes place through the Indian Ocean.
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- All the energy supplies coming from Gulf nations pass through this area.
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- After the democratically elected government of Mohamed Nasheed was replaced in an alleged coup, Maldives has been facing **political uncertainty.**
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- Though India wants political stability and democracy to return to the country, it has no role in the ongoing developments in Maldives.
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- Chinese President persuaded Maldives to become a key link in his expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
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- In an interview, former Maldivian President Mohamed Nasheed said President Yameen had given **16 geostrategically located islands to the**

Chinese.
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- Also, **Wahabbism** is spreading fast in the Maldives, and its citizens have been found fighting alongside the Islamic State.
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- So, what is in Maldives' interest very much depends on what is in India's interest.
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Why India is worried?

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- President Yameen has tried to keep India happy with his **"India First" policy.**
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- But he evicted GMR, the Indian company building an airport in Male, and got in a Chinese contractor.
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- He is also allowing Beijing to build a **port at Gaadhoo island**, which sits at the entrance to the so-called One and a Half Degree Channel, a major international shipping passage.
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What is the situation now?

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- Nasheed, over the last year, has brought together former rivals in a coalition against the President, led by his own Maldivian Democratic Party.
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- Important one being Abdul Gayoom, who was bailed out by Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 in an attempted coup and who ran the Maldives for 30 years until Nasheed defeated him in 2008.
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- Nasheed relocated to Colombo, and has been lobbying with world powers to help restore democracy in the Maldives.
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- For the moment, these western powers are waiting to see how India reacts to the ongoing tensions.
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- The requirement, from India's perspective, is to find a leader who will not

only behave democratically but also refuse to bow to the Chinese.
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Source: The Indian Express

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