

High Commissioner's Speech at the Reopening of Olympus theatre 4 February 2023

Your Excellency President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih,
First Lady Excellency Fazna Ahmed.
Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage Excellency Yumna Maumoon,
Ministers, Senior Officials, Other Dignitaries,
Maldivian artistes' fraternity, Artists from India, Friends,

I am delighted to join you all as we re-open the doors of the iconic 'Olympus theatre' after its state-of-the-art upgrade. I feel a sense of deep satisfaction at India's association with this prestigious project.

2. This theatre, as we saw and we heard from previous speakers, has been the nucleus around which art and culture in the Maldives have blossomed. For decades, it has provided a platform for local artists – actors, filmmakers, playwrights and musicians - to develop and display their talents. It has supported the Dhivehi film industry and encouraged the development of the Maldives' music scene in its formative years.

3. I congratulate the Government of President Ibrahim Maohamed Solih, particularly Minister Yumna Maumoon and her dedicated team, for the successful implementation of this project. I also congratulate the artist-fraternity as well as the people of Maldives as they are the ones who will directly benefit from this project.

4. The India – Maldives partnership is first and foremost a relationship between our two peoples, nurtured by centuries' long cultural linkages. It was, therefore, natural for India to be a partner in this project which will, no doubt, revive, reinvigorate and rejuvenate the art and music scene in Male'.

5. To underline our commitment to this project and highlight the significance of our cultural linkages, I am happy that a well-known music band from India – Anirudh Verma Collective - would be performing

alongside Maldivian artists at tonight's ceremony. I extend a warm welcome to Anirudh Varma and his team.

6. We recognize the need to organize cultural shows beyond the capital region. Accordingly, the band will perform tomorrow in Alif Alif Thoddoo with the support of the local council. Further, partnering with Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Empowerment, we have scheduled a performance of the band at the surfing point in Male' on 6th February. I take this opportunity to invite you all to attend these performances.

7. And this is just the beginning. With the re-opening of the Olympus, we plan to work closely with Government of Maldives to organize movie screenings, music shows and other performances to further consolidate our close cultural and people-to-people ties.

8. Cooperation in the cultural domain, as I mentioned, is a key pillar of our partnership. The Indian Cultural Centre in Male' organizes several activities – including music classes – which see enthusiastic participation from our Maldivian friends.

9. We are working closely with Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage on several other projects under grant assistance from India. The most significant of these is the restoration of the Hukuru Miskiy in Male' where work is ongoing. Other projects include development of a Cultural Centre in Dhangethi; development of cultural places in Noonu Landhoo and restoration of the Dhiyamigili Palace in Thaa atoll. We also appreciate the support of Foreign Ministry in the implementation of these projects.

10. Excellencies, Friends, The Olympus theatre redevelopment is an excellent example of socio-economic projects that are being implemented across Maldives under India-Maldives development partnership. The redeveloped Olympus theatre is a symbol of India-Maldives friendship.

11. I once again congratulate the Government and people of Maldives for the successful implementation of this project. We all eagerly look forward to visiting this iconic theatre more regularly to experience Dhivehi art and culture, and appreciate the talents of the Maldivian artistes' fraternity.

Thank You.