

MALDIVES

## Bye, Thanks for Coming

The last 200 Indian soldiers will leave the Maldives on Nov.

3, a year to the day after 1,600 of them descended on the Indian Ocean archipelago to stifle an attempted coup. President Maumoon Abdúl Gayoom has planned a fine send-off for them, as well he might: India's swift response nipped in the bud an offensive that might have proven debilitating to his administration, if not fatal to himself.

In the event, a score of people were killed by the armed men who tried to storm the presidential palace on Nov. 3 last year. The attackers were Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas hired by



Earl Kowall

Indian troop presence: A year to the day

Abdullah Luthfi, a Maldivian businessman based in Colombo. Apparently it was not the first time Luthfi had acted against the Maldivian government: in 1976, he allegedly attempted to assassinate then president Amir Ibrahim Nasir.

He did not fare any better this time around. Luthfi, one other Maldivian and twelve Sri Lankans were condemned to death for their efforts. Their sentences were later commuted to life imprisonment. "We of this generation," Gayoom told his countrymen, "do not want to shed blood." Neighbouring Sri Lanka had briefly readied forces to go to Gayoom's aid. As one Maldivian diplomat in Colombo recalls, however, everyone agreed that "India, being the biggest and strongest nation, should supply the assistance." New Delhi did — and the rest was history. ■