MALDIVES BANS 'INDIA OUT' CAMPAIGN

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on Thursday issued a decree banning the 'India Out' campaign, now led by former President Abdulla Yameen, terming it a "threat to national security."

Stating that the government's policy was to provide freedom of expression and freedom of assembly guaranteed under the Constitution "to its fullest extent", and to "uphold democratic values", the Presidential order said the campaign against India "exploited" the freedoms and "intends to disrupt" the long-standing bilateral relations between the Maldives and India as well as efforts to maintain peace and security in the region.

The move follows a recent decision by the Maldives's National Security Council that the campaign "to incite hatred against India" is a "threat" to national security.

The 'India Out' campaign, started and sustained by critics of the Solih administration, gained prominence in recent months with former President Yameen spearheading it.

'India first'

The campaign accuses the Maldivian government of "allowing" Indian military presence in the island nation – the government has repeatedly denied it – and, of "being a puppet" of New Delhi. President Solih has opted for an 'India first' foreign policy and has said he is unapologetic about Male's close ties with New Delhi.

The Progressive Congress Coalition, representing Mr. Yameen's political camp, said it "strongly condemns the unconstitutional executive order" by President Solih.

"Our Constitution is very clear on the question of freedom of expression, and that it has boundaries, and ends when it infringes on someone else's. This campaign is clearly aimed at creating differences and hatred, that is not in the interest of anyone," Speaker and former President Mohamed Nasheed told *The Hindu* from Male over telephone.

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