

Nasheed snubs China, renews call for 'liberator' India's help

Maldivians see India's potential role in resolving the crisis gripping the island not as an occupation, but as a "liberating assistance", exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed said, reiterating his earlier call for Indian intervention.

Apparently rebutting China's recent statement that the Maldives could deal with the current situation on its own, he said: "Some say this crisis must be resolved domestically. But that would involve fist fights, and blood on the streets, which could lead to anything."

Following turbulence in the Indian Ocean Island over the last week, culminating in President Abdulla Yameen declaring a state of emergency on Monday, Mr. Nasheed had sought Indian military intervention to release jailed dissidents.

Pointing to an earlier instance of Indian intervention in the Maldives in 1988, Mr. Nasheed said: "They [India] come, they sort out the situation, and they promptly leave... it is because a vast majority of our people want India to intervene that I sought India's help. I wouldn't have called for that if it would backfire at home," he told *The Hindu*. He was referring to a coup attempt that India helped put down, on then President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom's request.

Meanwhile, the government on Wednesday said the state of emergency addressed "certain internal aspects of governance" affecting mostly the capital, and not tourist resorts. "Life in the Maldives continues as normal," it said in a statement issued to "assure international community."

After declaring the emergency, security officials arrested Supreme Court chief justice Abdulla Saeed, another judge of the court and former President Gayoom.

On Tuesday, three Supreme Court judges annulled a portion of an order of the court that set off the crisis. The earlier ruling called for the release of nine Opposition leaders from prison, including Mr. Nasheed, who is currently in Colombo.

'Judge ill-treated'

"I am told President Gayoom is not taking food, while Justice Ali Hameed has been ill treated," Mr. Nasheed said on Twitter. However, Dunya Maumoon, Mr. Gayoom's daughter and a minister of state in President Yameen's administration, rejected Mr. Nasheed's comment about her father, telling Reuters: "I just visited my father. He is keeping well. Nasheed is just spreading rumours."

China calls for dialogue

With Male coming under increased international pressure to release the jailed leaders and lift the state of emergency, China on Wednesday signalled that it could activate international diplomacy to resolve the crisis.

"The international community should play a constructive role based on respecting the sovereignty of Maldives, instead of taking actions that may complicate the situation," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in Beijing.

"In the past few days, I have said the current situation in the Maldives is its internal affairs. It should be properly resolved through dialogue and consultation by relevant parties," he added. An official source who did not want to be named told *The Hindu* that China was sounding the "international community", including India, the U.S. and UN bodies, that the situation in the

Maldives should be resolved through a home-grown process. This was in view of reports about the possibility of “external intervention” in the archipelago that would undermine the country’s “sovereignty”, said the source.

“We hope relevant parties can properly resolve the issue through dialogue and consultation and restore the national stability and social order as soon as possible,” Mr. Geng observed.

In response to a query, the spokesperson said that China’s Free Trade Area deal with the Maldives signed in December “serves the common interests of the two countries and two peoples”.

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