

## India rejects Maldives offer to send envoy

“Democratic institutions and the judiciary continue to be undermined and concerns ignored. These issues need to be properly addressed,” they added.

Sources also said Male had not given adequate notice for the visit, and that both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj were “away” this week. Mr. Modi is expected to travel to Jordan, Palestine, UAE and Oman on a trip beginning Friday. And Ms. Swaraj returned from a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia on Thursday night.

The strain in ties between New Delhi and Male comes in sharp contrast to an attempt to boost ties just last month. On January 11, Foreign Minister Mohamad Asim had travelled to Delhi and met Mr. Modi and Ms. Swaraj, inviting Mr. Modi to visit Male and had affirmed Maldives’ policy of “India First”.

Denying reports that President Yameen had intended to “bypass” India, Maldives High Commissioner to India Ahmed Mohamed, who is at present in Male, said, “India was in fact the first stop planned and proposed for a visit of a special envoy of the President of the Maldives.”

A press release from the Maldivian embassy said that Mr. Yameen had proposed to send Foreign Minister Mohamad Asim to Delhi for a visit 8-9 February, but the visit was “cancelled on the request of the Government of India”.

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