

'We need India's help to solve the impasse'

International actors may intervene to try and resolve the current crisis in the Maldives, but India alone can be the game changer, according to the island nation's exiled former President Mohamed Nasheed.

"I have faith in India," he said, amid few indications from New Delhi on its response to the development.

"Without doubt, we need India's robust physical presence there to solve this problem," he said, in a select media briefing on Thursday. The ex-President — who has been living in London since 2016, after the U.K. granted him political asylum — is currently in Colombo.

Increased scrutiny

On February 5, the Maldivian government declared a state of emergency, following it up with a spate of high-profile arrests that have put President Abdulla Yameen under increasing international scrutiny.

The U.S., the U.K., the European Union, India and the UN have all criticised his government for defying a Supreme Court order which had called for the release of his jailed political opponents, including Mr. Nasheed.

Earlier this week, the former President had appealed to India, asking for military intervention in the Maldives.

Observing that he was aware of India's "ambivalence" towards him, Mr. Nasheed said it was on account of two reasons — his opening of the Chinese embassy in Male ahead of SAARC summit in 2011, and the position he took around the Copenhagen climate change summit in 2009, that the increase in global temperature should be below 2°C which, he said, was not well received by India. He had reasons for both, he explained, pointing to diplomatic obligations and his own campaign against climate change.

He, however, said he felt a close connection with India — be it through literature, Bollywood films or food. "India may not like me [for some reasons], but all I am saying is please listen to me." His Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and India have common interests and shared concerns — like the increasing Chinese presence in the Maldives, and the apparently growing Islamist radicalisation — he said.

'Time is running out'

Mr. Nasheed has in the past accused China of grabbing land in the Maldives — he said he has commissioned research papers on the topic — and of creating a debt trap. "While we are not against FDIs, we don't need vanity projects and roads leading nowhere."

Indicating that time was running out, he urged India to intervene soon. According to the Maldives's Constitution, the Parliament needs to approve declaration of a State of Emergency within 48 hours.

If the House is not in session — the government has indefinitely postponed Parliament session citing security concerns — it has to convene within 14 days.

Meanwhile, a popular, privately-owned television network in the Maldives shut down late on Friday, citing threats to its staff, as the government continued its crackdown on dissent.

Channel shuts down

RaajjeTV, which airs news in the local Dhivehi language as well as English, had started receiving threats following its coverage of the February 1 Supreme Court ruling that set off the crisis.

“In spite of serious threats and intimidation, which escalated after the government’s declaration of a state of emergency, the police service has stopped protecting RaajjeTV, while security is being provided to government-backed TV stations,” the channel said in a statement, adding that it had no choice but to suspend its regular services safety to ensure the security and security of the station and its staff.

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