

## **Maldives Demand No Indian Interference**

**The** relations between India and Maldives are under serious strain for some years, particularly ever since the Yameen Govt. had come there. Earlier too, the people of Maldives did not like the way the Indian rulers were treating Maldives and meddled in its internal affairs. India's blatant intervention in the Maldives' political crisis and its siding with the opposition in the power squabble had worsened the relations further. It is still manifesting on various issues. The controversy over the two helicopters and the problem of visas to the Indian job seekers are among them.

The Indian Govt. has gifted two helicopters to Maldives in 2013. One of them was operated by the Indian Coast Guard and the other by the Indian Navy. The Maldives Govt. has been demanding for years for their withdrawal. The validity for the helicopters had expired earlier this year. But they are still in Maldives. The visa of Navy men was extended by one month at the end of May. But 28 Indian Navy men are still in Maldives.

An estimated 2000 Indian job applicants are in the Maldives with no work permits. The job seekers feel that they are the victims of bad relations between India and Maldives.

The officials of India's External Affairs Ministry say that the Indian Govt. has decided in principle to withdraw the helicopters together with Navy personnel. But they say that it is an "ongoing process." It indicates that the govt. is for going slow.

The developments in Maldives are rooted in India opting to serve as a frontline state for US in its strategy to impose its domination and contain China in the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian govt.'s moves to gift the helicopters and send navy personnel to Maldives came as a part of its attempts to create a small military foothold in this strategically significant area of the Indian Ocean. Things went well as long as there was an obliging government in Maldives. But the situation has changed with the change in the govt. The new Yameen govt. has gone a long way in developing close relations with China. China has heavily invested in Maldives. It has emerged as a biggest source of tourism in the archipelago. Maldives has joined the Eurasian infrastructure initiatives and signed a trade agreement with China.

The Maldives govt. has asked India to remove the helicopters from Laamu atoll where China is considering to build a port only in the wake of these strained relations between the two countries.

The Indian rulers began to show much concern towards the change of regime in the Maldives. They claim that India is entitled to it because the Maldives is a SAARC country and a neighbor. It is an open secret that the Indian rulers as well as the US and other western powers have given enough space and resources to the exiled opposition leader of Maldives Mohamed Nasheed's propaganda and tirade against the present Maldives govt. as well as China. He is openly appealing them to intervene in the situation, restore him in power in Maldives to enable him to stop Maldives drift towards China and reorientate the policies to suit the needs of US strategy in the Indian Ocean Region.

Here, the Indian rulers and the imperialists must know, firstly, the people of a country always wish to remain free and independent and will not accept the attempts of another country to dictate or treat and use their country as subordi-nate or a satellite. They will definitely oppose and fight against such attempts. Secondly, no other country can engineer a regime change or meddle in their internal affairs. The Indian rulers cannot claim such a right either in the name of being a member of SAARC or as a neighbor.

The only way for the Indian Govt. is to withdraw the helicopters together with Navy personnel forth with. It must restore normal relations with Maldives treating it equally and as a sovereign and independent country. It must not meddle into the internal affairs of Maldives. This will go a long way in bettering the relations between the two countries and amicably solving the problems including the problem of Indian job seekers in Maldives.

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