

Maldives crisis an internal matter like Kashmir, India should trust us to resolve it, says Minister Mo

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Dismissing allegations levelled by former president Mohamed Nasheed that the Maldives government was moving closer to China, the delegation said their country will never cause a threat to India and would still follow its India First policy.

Abdulla Yameen government says it is still following India First policy.

Male: The political crisis in the Maldives, like the Kashmir issue, is an internal matter and India should trust the local government to solve the problem on its own, a senior minister of the island nation said Tuesday.

Why haven't we gone into the Kashmir issue and asked to be an intermediary in the issue? Because they are internal matters, said Mohamed Shainee, a senior minister and chairman of all-party talks to resolve the impasse.

Shainee said that India should trust the Maldives, which may be a small country, but is independent and patriotic.

Asked about the role the Maldives government expected India to play at this juncture, Shainee said that a third party has started negotiations to resolve the crisis. He refused to reveal the identity of the third party, but said it was neither India nor China.

Shainee was part of a delegation of ministers who addressed reporters from India at the Maldives capital.

Dismissing allegations levelled by former president Mohamed Nasheed that the Maldives government was moving closer to China, the delegation said their country will never cause a threat to India and would still follow its India First policy. Maldives continues to consider India as a big brother, not China, said Shainee.

Asked about investments made by China over the last five years and the Maldives' decision to allow two Chinese warships to dock last year, Shainee said, India is a very strong country. We will never sound like a threat to India. We will never do that. If the question is being raised on two Chinese warships, we have similarly hosted US and Saudi warships, too.

Describing India and China as well wishers, Shainee said, We are eager to do business (with China) but portraying that China is the major investor in Maldives is against facts. India, Saudi Arabia, United States and many international funding agencies are actively part of major infrastructure, tourism projects happening right now.

The political crisis in the Maldives reached a flashpoint on February 5, when President Yameen declared a 15-day state of Emergency, which was extended by 30 days on February 20. Emergency was imposed after the Maldives Supreme Court ordered the immediate release of high-profile prisoners, including former presidents Nasheed and Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. It also reinstated 12 Members of Parliament who had earlier been stripped of their seats.

Minister of Legal Affairs at the President's office, Aishath Azima Shakoor, claimed that the February 1 order of the Supreme Court was beyond its Constitutional powers. She said that the nation's Constitution, which is 10 years old, is being reviewed by experts in the European Union and Singapore.

Claiming that there were no major demonstrations during the Emergency period and that routine life was not affected,

the ministers said they are open for talks. "But Nasheed and the opposition have been often choosing public statements instead of talks. Nasheed has violated the conditions for third-party negotiations but still we are waiting for a solution through talks without any pre-conditions," said Shainee.

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