

INDIA - MALDIVES TIES

Posted at: 14/08/2024

Context:

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu recently and emphasised New Delhi's commitment to deepen India-Maldives ties

Background:

Jaishankar is on a three-day official visit to Maldives to reset the bilateral relationship, the first high-level trip from India after the archipelago nation's pro-China president Muizzu assumed office last year.

Key Takeaways:

1. Jaishankar's trip to the Maldives comes weeks after President Muizzu's visit to India in June to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.
2. The Maldives is an essential ally for India, helping to protect its maritime borders and monitor the wider Indian Ocean region, where China is expanding presence.
3. The archipelago is located about 300 nautical miles (560 km) off the west coast of India and about 70 nautical miles (130 km) from Minicoy Island in Lakshadweep.
4. The Chinese influence in the Maldives has progressively expanded over the last few decades.
5. The island nation is a component of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which has resulted in an influx of Chinese money and a deepening of the two countries' relationship—at the expense of India.

Key Points on Mr. Muizzu's 'India Out' Campaign and Its Aftermath:

1. Muizzu campaigned on an 'India Out' plank during last years election, seeking the removal of Indian military personnel stationed in the Maldives.
2. The Indian military was primarily there to operate aerial platforms for health and environmental emergencies. Approximately 75 Indian military personnel were stationed in the Maldives for these purposes.
3. Muizzu used this presence as a focal point for political mobilization. Upon coming to power, Muizzu requested India to withdraw military personnel operating three aviation platforms gifted by India.
4. India complied with the request, withdrawing military personnel. India replaced them with civilian personnel to operate a Dornier aircraft and two helicopters.