

Maldives seeks India's support in improving civil-military ties

The Maldives, whose relations with India have been on an upswing since Ibu Solih took over as its President last September, has sought Delhi's assistance in improving the civil-military ties in the archipelago nation.

Maldives defence chief Abdullah Shamaal has discussed the issue with Indian officials during a visit to Delhi last week. The Maldives is seeking to replicate the Indian model in improving the relations between its defence forces and the civilian leadership.

During a visit of the Maldivian defence minister to Delhi earlier this year, Shamaal had taken a back seat, enabling the minister to engage with his interlocutors on all issues, the people said. Even during the Yameen regime, when the Maldives' ties with India were lukewarm, its military had maintained a cordial relationship with Delhi and the armed forces here.

Shamaal, an alumnus of the Indian Defence Staff College, also explored new dimensions of counter-terror partnership, including close monitoring of the movement of citizens between the two countries. Since the April 21 Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives are partnering closely to track down the radicals, monitor their movements and launch de-radicalisation initiatives. Southern Indian states are vulnerable to the presence of radicals in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

During his visit to Delhi, Shamaal also delivered a lecture on 'National Security Vulnerabilities: Issues for the Small

States'.

India has been providing swift help to its neighbours at times of natural calamities and security threats, and it is all set to play the key role of a “security guarantor” for peace and stability within the greater Indian Ocean region, Shamaal said on Friday amid China’s growing presence in the region.

“India has been (providing) customary security guaranteeing architecture for decades if not centuries. This is quite evident by the prompt and swift response of Indian Army services on various occasions,” he said.

Calling the Indo-Pacific region an economically and socially dynamic area, Shamaal said India is set to play the key role of a “security guarantor” for peace and stability within the greater Indian Ocean region.

On Thursday, Shamaal met defence minister Rajnath Singh and Indian Air Force chief BS Dhanoa and discussed ways to step up military and security cooperation through more structured and planned programmes. During his trip to Male on June 8, the first foreign visit in his second term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Solih expanded defence partnerships by jointly inaugurating a coastal surveillance radar system and a composite training centre for the Maldives defence forces – both supported by India.

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