

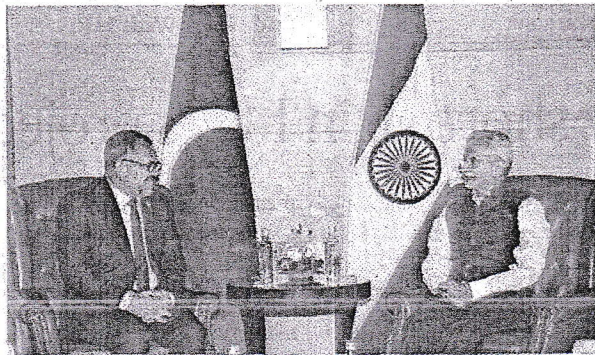
India, Maldives ties based on reciprocal sensitivity: Jaishankar

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New Delhi

As close and proximate neighbours, development of ties between India and Maldives is based on mutual interests and reciprocal sensitivity, Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar has said.

Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer, the first Maldivian leader to visit India after Mohamed Muizzu became the President of Maldives in November last year, met Jaishankar for bilateral talks on Thursday, in an effort made by the two countries to bolster strained diplomatic relations.

"I hope that our meeting today has enabled us to strengthen the convergence of our perspectives in various domains," Jaishankar said at the meet. The ties between the two countries have come under severe stress following Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu's insistence on withdrawal of Indian military personnel from the archipelago. Muizzu is widely perceived as a pro-China leader who may want to re-



TALKING IT OUT. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Maldives Foreign Minister Moosa Zameer in New Delhi PTI

duce India's traditional influence in Maldives. Zameer, after landing in India wrote on X, "Arrived in New Delhi on my first bilateral official visit to India! Looking forward to productive discussions, strengthening ties and experiencing the vibrant culture of India."

'FIRST RESPONDER'

Speaking at the bilateral meeting, Jaishankar pointed out that India had been a key provider of development assistance to the Maldives. "Our projects have benefited the lives of people of your

country; contributed directly to the quality of life. They range from infrastructure projects and social initiatives to medical evacuation and health facilities. We have also extended financial support on favourable terms in the past," he said.

Moreover, India has been a 'first responder' on numerous occasions for Maldives and its cooperation has also enhanced the security and well-being of the country through shared activities, equipment provisioning, capacity building and training, he added.

Responding to questions

from the media on discussions on debt relief measures, Zameer acknowledged that economic cooperation with India had been an integral part of the Maldivian economy. "...Maldivian people have benefited from the debt that we have received and also from a lot of grants that we have received from the Indian government and we really appreciate that," he said.

Jaishankar stressed on the importance of cooperation between neighbours cautioning that the world was today passing through a volatile and uncertain period. "In such times, as we saw during Covid, during natural disasters and economic difficulties, close partnerships with neighbours are of great value. So, today, we will be reviewing the various dimensions of our ties. It is in our common interest that we reach an understanding on how best we take our relationship forward," he said.

The Minister further pointed out that India had been articulating its interest in developing ties through its 'neighbourhood first' policy and SAGAR vision.