

Maldives FM arrives to reset ties with India

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Reflecting the importance the Indian Ocean archipelago attaches to ties with India under the new regime, Maldives Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid arrived here on Saturday on a four-day visit. This is first overseas visit after assuming office.

The visit is aimed at repairing bilateral ties which came under severe strain during the previous government in the Maldives.

Officials said the Maldivian



minister will hold talks with External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj on Monday. He will also call on President Ram Nath Kovind. A meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also a possibility.

Modi had attended the swearing-in ceremony of new

Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on 17 November in Male. During their meeting, Modi and Solih vowed to renew close ties and friendship between the two countries and agreed on the importance of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean region.

Solih, as the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party's candidate, had surprisingly defeated strongman Abdulla Yameen in the presidential election held on 23 September.

India-Maldives ties deteriorated under Yameen who was

perceived to be close to China. Some decisions by Yameen, including imposition of restrictions on work visas for Indians and signing of a new Free Trade Agreement with Beijing, also did not go down well with New Delhi. Ties between the two countries deteriorated further after Yameen imposed emergency on February 5 this year. India had criticised his decision and asked his government to restore the credibility of the electoral and political process by releasing political prisoners. The emergency lasted 45 days.