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BRITAIN READY TO START MALDIVES TALKS

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IT is probable that a British Government representative will be sent to the Maldivé Islands, 400 miles south-west of Ceylon, to begin negotiations for a settlement of the dispute with Britain over independence.

The Maldivian Government continues to condone acts of sabotage calculated to spur Britain into further action, the victim frequently being Mr. Humphrey Arthington-Davy, British representative in Male, the capital.

The latest demonstration consisted of storming and sabotaging the airstrip which serves the island's British staff.

The dispute has its origin in the establishment of the important RAF staging post at Gan, on Addu Atoll. In the 1960 agreement Britain obtained the right to re-establish an airfield at Gan and to

erect a radio station in Hitadoo island.

Relations between the R A F and the islanders were most amicable. Several hundreds were given work. The Maldivian Government ordered them to stop working.

They refused and the Male Government cut off supplies. The R A F supplied them with food.

Eventually the islanders set up their own republic. Britain refused to recognise it, but helped to compose the dispute and secured an amnesty for those who set up the republic.

The Maldivian Government wants to control the entire archipelago and the disposal of British economic aid.