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President vows to solve public health insurance issues

President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu has pledged to address the challenges faced by the public in accessing health insurance services. This commitment was made during the “Raees ge Javaab” series, allowing direct public interaction with the President on various issues.

A concerned individual from Gahdhoo, Gaafu Dhaalu Atoll, raised issues about the difficulties private individuals encounter in obtaining health insurance services conveniently. He pointed out instances where individuals, despite paying high premiums, only receive reimbursement for medical expenses after personally visiting a doctor. Additionally, there are delays or denials in reimbursement even after submitting bills. The individual stressed the need for easier access to health insurance for private individuals.

In response, President Dr. Muizzu acknowledged the existing regulations governing the health insurance system and pledged to collaborate with relevant authorities to find solutions that enable broader public participation in the system.

The government is actively working on initiatives to improve access to healthcare services for the public. Under the universal healthcare insurance scheme, Aasandha, the government plans to conduct biannual medical check-ups through government health facilities. Furthermore, starting March 15, applications for two treatments, IVF and IUI, will be accepted, expanding healthcare options for citizens.

SOURCE : PSM



A significant milestone in President Dr. Muizzu’s presidency: Maldivian Airlines has repurposed a seaplane into an Air Ambulance following necessary interior modifications. This revolutionary initiative aims to bolster the Maldives’ healthcare sector within the first four months of this administration, facilitating patient transportation from islands without airports.



Maldives will become a bunkering hotspot with Ihavandhippolhu facility

Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed has expressed confidence that the Maldives will emerge as a prominent bunkering destination with the establishment of the Ihavandhippolhu Bunkering Facility.

Speaking at the signing ceremony of the term sheet for the International Bunkering Project, Minister Saeed highlighted the significance of this initiative for the country’s economic development. The term sheet, signed between the State Trading Organisation (STO) and multinational energy and commodity trading company Vitol, outlines the agreement for the international bunkering project, with both parties committed to completing the necessary documents by a specified date.

Minister Saeed emphasised that the bunkering industry can also be a significant revenue generator in the Maldives and will play a crucial role in expanding the economy. With the agreement signed with Vitol, a leading energy trading company globally, Maldives is poised to become a sought-after bunkering service provider.

Pointing out the strategic geographical location of the Maldives, Minister Saeed noted that the country is situated near two major shipping channels where bunkering services are in high demand. He referenced research by reputable organisations like the Boston Consulting Group, highlighting the Maldives’ advantage of having calm seas and shallow waters, facilitating easy bunkering for ships of various sizes.

Minister Saeed underscored that the Maldives possesses all the natural resources required to offer bunkering services, yet such facilities are currently lacking. The government’s decision to establish the “Maldives Economic Gateway” project in Ihavandhippolhu, under the auspices of the Maldives Industrial Development Free Zone, signifies a significant step towards harnessing the country’s economic potential. This project, spearheaded by five government-owned companies, aims to create a conducive environment for economic growth and innovation.

SOURCE : President’s Office





Tax revenue projected to increase following bunkering project



CEO and Managing Director of State Trading Organisation (STO) Shimadh Ibrahim has disclosed that ongoing bunkering projects will significantly increase the government’s tax revenue, benefiting stakeholders across the board. He made the remarks during a ceremony to sign a term sheet between STO and the Multinational Energy and Trade Company from the Vitol group, aimed at establishing a bunkering facility at an international standard under the Economic Gateway Project.

The term sheet, signed by STO’s CEO Shiham Ibrahim and Vitol Company’s Director Jay Ng, outlines the project’s requirements and a mutually agreed-upon timeframe for completion.

The government has granted STO exclusivity to operate bunkering facilities in Haa Alif Atoll. CEO Shimadh Ibrahim emphasized the positive economic impacts of establishing a bunkering system, stating that increased tax revenue would benefit not only the government but also businesses and stakeholders, leading to higher profit margins. He highlighted that the bunkering project would bolster the country’s foreign reserves and create more job opportunities,

thereby supporting the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Speaking at the event, Vitol Company’s Director Jay Ng emphasised Vitol’s global reputation as a trusted brand and revealed that the company has hubs in several countries worldwide, including Singapore, the United States, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey. Ng noted that Vitol supplied approximately 6% of the global bunkering market last year, equivalent to about 13T out of the 230T global supply.

Under the agreement, Vitol will supply the required amount of oil for services provided by the bunkering facilities in Haa Alif Atoll, including heavy fuel for ships and marine gas oil. Additionally, STO disclosed that arrangements will be made to supply LNG and biofuel based on demand. Furthermore, Vitol will promote Maldives as one of its bunkering hubs as part of the contract.

STO stated that based on the agreement made according to the term sheet, it will serve as the physical bunker supplier for the Maldives Economic Gateway project.

SOURCE : PSM



The biggest project to come to the region is the Maldives Economic Gateway, which will be the largest economic project in the country. The project will benefit all the islands in the region.

His Excellency President
Dr. Mohamed Muizzu



Minister reveals intend to host ITB fair 2026 in Maldives

Minister of Tourism Ibrahim Faisal has announced ongoing arrangements and projects aimed at achieving the goal of hosting the ITB fair in 2026. Speaking after participating in the ITB fair 2024, an annual event held in Berlin, Germany, Minister Faisal expressed optimism about attaining the opportunity to host the prestigious tourism exhibition.

The ITB fair, known for being the largest international tourism exhibition, is held annually in Berlin, but other countries are also given the chance to host it. This year, Oman hosted the event, drawing industry delegates from various countries. Minister Faisal highlighted that as a leading global tourism destination, Maldives prioritizes participation in the ITB fair each year.

Minister Faisal is confident that hosting the ITB fair in 2026 would significantly develop and boost the Maldivian tourism industry. He emphasized the need for discussions with stakeholders and the Maldives Marketing & Public Relations (MMPRC) to plan the required arrangements for hosting the event, acknowledging the considerable expenses involved. Minister Faisal is committed to achieving this goal through unified efforts.

MMPRC’s Managing Director, Fathimath Thaufeeq, provided insights into Maldives’ participation in the ITB fair 2024. She mentioned that 107 companies from the country participated in the event, conducting a Maldivian In Win, showcasing the nation’s culture and traditional cuisine. Thaufeeq also highlighted the launch of a magazine promoting local tourism by the Guest House Association and the introduction of a media kit named “Maldives Finder 2024” by MATATO during the fair.

The ITB Berlin 2024 took place from March 5 to March 7 and was attended by delegates from the Ministry of Tourism, investors from the tourism industry, Maldivian companies in the tourism sector, and high-level delegates from MMPRC.

SOURCE : PSM



Land-use plan for more than 130 islands approved



Minister of Cities, Local Government, and Public Works Adam Shareef Umar has assured that the land-use plan has been approved for many islands, with only a minority remaining pending approval. This statement was made during a media address providing insight into the details of works and projects carried out by the ministry.

The decentralisation act mandates councils to prepare a land-use plan. According to the law, island councils should prepare a land-use plan within three months following the election of council members, based on areas of development and assistance required by atoll councils. However, two years after the election of council members, the majority have not submitted a land-use plan, with only a few islands having plans approved when the term for the previous government ended.

Minister Adam Shareef emphasised that the delay in approving land-use plans has been a significant concern raised by councils, hindering the progress of development. To address this concern, a government online portal was launched in January 2024 to expedite the approval process. The portal allows for the online submission of land-use plans and requests for changes to previous plans. Additionally, the status of plans can be reviewed online through the portal.

The minister noted that this initiative has enabled many councils to obtain approval for their plans effortlessly. Plans can now be approved within a week, provided there are no issues, marking a significant advancement compared to the months it previously took to obtain approval.

Land-use plans can be implemented after acceptance from gatherings with residents of the respective island following government approval. The ministry reported that 139 land-use plans have been approved to date, with 21 plans in the process of approval.

The Local Government Authority (LGA) has been providing assistance in developing land-use plans, primarily through funds. It assured that plans would be approved for all islands in the nation in the near future. The primary purpose of such plans is to allocate land for social and economic purposes, including housing projects, social services, and economic activities.

SOURCE : PSM



Gov't introduces USD 972,000 financial scheme for farmers

Government has initiated a financial scheme of USD 972,000 to provide financial assistance to farmers. This agreement, co-signed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Welfare and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade in collaboration with the SME Development Finance Corporation (SDFC), is part of the 'Maldives Agri Business Programme' (MAP). The MAP involves joint efforts by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Welfare and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

State Minister Hussain Shaam signed the agreement on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, while State Minister Mariyam Wishama signed on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Welfare and Managing Director Aishath Fifsheen signed on behalf of SDFC.

State Minister Mariyam Wishama affirmed that the MAP is specifically intended for 26 islands, including Haa Alifu Atoll, Haa Dhaalu Atoll, and Noonu Atoll, where activities are currently in progress. The grants will be disbursed to farmers interested in establishing hydroponic systems within their greenhouses.

Farmers participating in the MAP will receive financial aid, training, and information related to agriculture. Workshop programmes are underway in 12 islands to train farmers in producing cucumbers and melons in cocoa peats using established greenhouses. The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Welfare encourages farmers to adopt advanced technology and equipment that aligns with climate-smart and sustainable farming practices.

The project, launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, aims to expand the scale of agricultural operations and encourage youth to pursue careers in agriculture-related fields.

SOURCE : PSM

