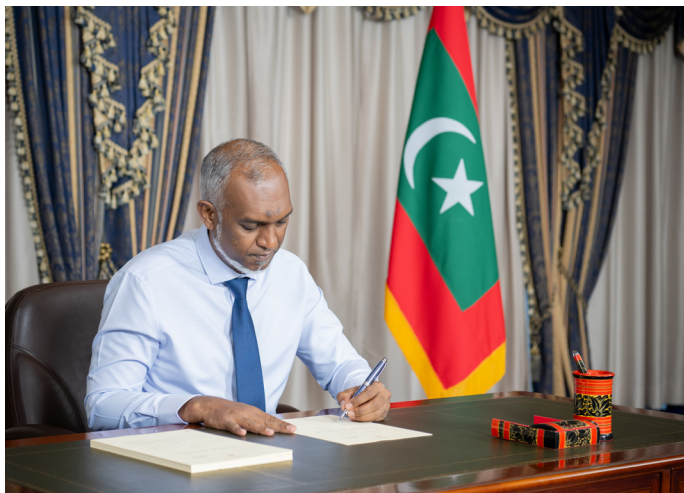




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## The President ratifies the Eleventh Amendment Bill to the Decentralisation Act

President Dr Mohamed Muizzu has ratified the 11th Amendment to the Decentralisation Act (Act No. 07/2010). The bill was passed during the 14th sitting of the first session of parliament on March 18, 2024.

The bill proposes amendments to Sections (b), (c), (d), (e), and (g) of Article 51 of the Decentralisation Act.

According to the Act, where the term of office for an existing council is shorter than one year, city status shall be conferred after the election of the newly constituted council. Conversely, if the existing council's term exceeds one year, the designation of the island or group of islands as a city shall ensue, subject to the procedures delineated in this amendment.

Upon the formal designation of an island as a city, the existing island council shall be reconstituted as the City Council. During this transition, the roles of the President and Vice President of the island council shall be elevated to the positions of Mayor and Deputy Mayor, respectively. The Act specifies that the terms of office for City Council members shall correspond with the original duration of their membership on the Island Council.

Furthermore, the Act stipulates that if a city is established encompassing all the islands within an administrative area, the atoll council for that administrative area shall be dissolved henceforth. Subsequently, the City Council shall assume responsibility for the maintenance of the atoll council's facilities and the provision of its services.

Following the ratification of the Amendment, this Act becomes effective upon its publication in the Government Gazette.

SOURCE : President's Office

## Tourist arrivals surge by 14.3% compared to 2023

The Ministry of Tourism has announced a significant surge in tourist arrivals, with 558,233 visitors arriving in the country so far this year. This marks a remarkable 14.3% increase compared to the total of 487,371 incoming tourists in 2023.

In January, 192,385 tourists visited the Maldives, followed by an even more impressive figure of 217,394 arrivals in February. As of March 24, the number of tourists has reached 148,456. This consistent growth in arrivals demonstrates the Maldives' enduring popularity as a premier tourist destination.



On average, the Maldives welcomes approximately 6,186 tourists daily, with visitors spending an average of 8 days during their stay. The majority of tourists hail from China, constituting 11.4% of incoming arrivals. Notably, China leads with 63,647 arrivals, followed by Russia with 58,038 tourists and Italy with 53,249 visitors.

February 2023 witnessed a record-breaking number of tourists, with over 200,000 visitors flocking to the Maldives, highlighting its appeal as a coveted travel destination.

With more than 500,000 tourists already arriving this year, the government aims to achieve a milestone of 2 million tourist arrivals in 2024, setting ambitious targets for the tourism industry. To support this goal, the government has initiated various projects aimed at enhancing global exposure and expanding the tourism sector.

SOURCE : PSM





## A law crucial to safeguard State secrets from political misuse



Minister of Defense Mohamed Ghassan Maumoon has stressed the critical need for legislation to protect state secrets from political exploitation. Speaking in a parliament sitting, Minister Ghassan emphasised the urgency of enacting a comprehensive law dedicated to preserving the confidentiality of classified information.

Minister Ghassan proposed the incorporation of hierarchical classification mechanisms within the legislation to effectively manage state secrecy. He underscored the gravity of the issue, suggesting that any unauthorised disclosure of classified information should be treated as a criminal offense. Such measures, he argued, would entrust the responsibility of safeguarding state secrets to designated authorities.

Moreover, Minister Ghassan revealed ongoing discussions within the Parliament aimed at exploring avenues for establishing and enforcing such a regulatory framework. He emphasized the collaborative effort required from the Parliament, citizens, and government to ensure the protection of state secrets. Minister Ghassan expressed confidence that implementing such a law would promote transparency in information dissemination while serving national interests.

Highlighting the potential benefits of the proposed law, Minister Ghassan envisioned enhanced cooperation between the government and Parliament in safeguarding vital state information. As discussions progress, the Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to advancing measures that bolster national security and protect sensitive state secrets.

SOURCE : PSM



## Gov't urges to avoid navigating closed canals

The Ministry of Construction and Infrastructure has issued a warning urging vessels to avoid canal routes closed for the ongoing Thilamale' bridge project, citing safety concerns and ongoing construction activities.

Canal routes including Male'-Villimale' and Villimale'-Gulhifalhu have been closed to facilitate the bridge construction work. Despite repeated advisories, particularly to speed boats from resorts, the ministry expressed concern over continued vessel operations in the closed canal routes.

The ministry highlighted the extensive use of barges and self-elevated platforms in the bridge construction process and emphasised the risks posed by anchor bolts placed in the closed routes. These risks include potential accidents and disruptions to ongoing construction efforts.

In response to non-compliance, the ministry announced the enforcement of legal measures against vessels violating the prohibition. Under the Local Transport Driving Licensing Regulations, vessel licenses will be withheld as a consequence for non-compliance, underscoring the gravity of the safety violations.

SOURCE : PSM

## Final voter's list for parliamentary election publicised

The Elections Commission of Maldives (ECM) has published the final voters list for the upcoming parliamentary elections scheduled for April 21. The list, available on government gazette and ECM's website, includes those who have re-registered to vote outside their island of residence.

According to the final voters list, a total of 284,663 individuals are eligible to vote, comprising 139,361 females and 145,302 males. The election will witness 369 candidates

vying for representative positions across 93 different constituencies.



In light of the re-registration process, ECM has adjusted the number of voting boxes to

be deployed. A total of 602 voting boxes will be utilised, with 181 located in Male', 51 in Hulhumale', and 9 in Vilimale'. Furthermore, 319 boxes will be placed in various atolls, 34 in resorts, 3 in other countries, and 5 in prisons.

ECM has explained that the placement of voting boxes in foreign countries was determined based on the number of people who re-registered to vote from abroad. A minimum of 150 re-registrations were required to establish a ballot box in another country, while 30 re-registrations were needed for boxes in resorts.

Moreover, ballot boxes will be set up in Trivandrum (India), Colombo (Sri Lanka), and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).

SOURCE : PSM





## Aasandha Scheme facilitates over 500 medical examinations

Since its inception on January 1, 2024, the Aasandha health scheme has facilitated medical examinations for more than 500 individuals, marking a significant milestone in accessible healthcare services in the Maldives.

Implemented to provide biannual medical check-ups at government facilities, the programme has ensured essential healthcare services for all individuals. Statistics reveal that 540 individuals have undergone medical examinations under the Aasandha program from January 1 to March 23, with a notable majority being women.



At Hulhumale' Hospital, 323 individuals have received medical check-ups, with 178 females and 145 males benefiting from the initiative. Currently, 30 individuals are on the hospital's waiting list, evenly distributed between genders. Medical check-ups are conducted daily, except on weekends, primarily catering to individuals over 65 years of age.

Similarly, Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) has conducted medical check-ups for 217 individuals, comprising 122 females and 95 males. With 345 individuals on the waiting list, efforts are made to accommodate both genders. Medical check-ups at IGMH are scheduled every Sunday and Tuesday, with Ramadan adjustments limiting the number to 12 individuals per session.

While the current focus is on individuals over 50 years old, plans are underway to extend this service to those aged 35-49 and younger than 19. Starting July 1, 2024, individuals between 19 and 34 years old will also gain access to medical check-ups.

The initiative aims to promote early detection and treatment of major diseases, reflecting the government's commitment to enhancing public health outcomes through proactive healthcare measures.

SOURCE : PSM



## Xizang Autonomous Region donates 1500T water to Maldives

The Chinese Xizang Autonomous Region has extended a generous donation of 1500T drinking water to the Maldives, aimed at alleviating water shortages on the islands. The decision to provide this aid was reached during the official visit of the region's chairperson to the Maldives in November 2023.

Produced within the pristine mountains of the Xizang Autonomous Region, the bottled water donation signifies a gesture of solidarity and support from China to the Maldives during times of need.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the arrival of the donated shipment, affirming its intent to distribute the water to islands experiencing water shortages.

During the visit, discussions between Chairman Yan Jinhai of China's autonomous region and President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu encompassed various areas of mutual interest. These included proposals to initiate direct flights between the two countries, bolstering the tourism sector, and exploring shared cultural backgrounds. Additionally, both parties exchanged insights on pressing global issues such as climate change, reflecting their commitment to collaboration on common challenges.

Chairman Yan took the opportunity to provide President Dr. Muizzu with insights into the cultural richness, geography, and environmental uniqueness of the Xizang Autonomous Region.

SOURCE : PSM

## Application deadline for 'National Award for Public Service' to expire tomorrow



The application deadline for the National Award for Public Service will expire at 1 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, March 28, 2024. Applications for the award were opened on February 25, 2024.

Any individual who has worked in a government office, agency, or subsidiary where the Government holds the most shares is eligible

for the award. Nominations may be filed by organisations or by individual nominees. If the organisation is to make the nomination, the candidate should have worked for or be currently employed by the organisation.

The National Awards Committee urges all applicants to fill in the required information and attach all the necessary documentation along with the application form. Nomination forms for the award are available through the designated portal "Form Hushahelhun" on the President's Office website ([www.presidency.maldives.gov.mv](http://www.presidency.maldives.gov.mv))

SOURCE : President's Office