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Ambassador of Maldives to Belgium, Geela Ali presents her Letters of Credence to His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium



The newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Maldives to the Kingdom of Belgium, Her Excellency Geela Ali, presented her Letters of Credence to His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium. The ceremony took place earlier today at Château de Laeken in Brussels.

During the private audience that followed the Credential Ceremony, King Philippe welcomed Ambassador Geela and congratulated her on assumption of her duties as the Ambassador of Maldives to Belgium. Ambassador Geela expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome extended to her and conveyed greetings and best wishes from President Dr. Muizzu and the people of Maldives to His Majesty the King and the people of Belgium.

Ambassador Geela assured King Philippe of the commitment of the Government of Maldives to enhance the bilateral ties between the two countries and to work together to foster closer collaboration in areas of common interest such as climate change, sustainable development and tourism.

Ambassador Geela is a seasoned professional with more than 30 years of experience in both the Health and Foreign Service sector of the Maldives. She began her career in Foreign Service in 2015, serving as the Minister, and Charge de Affairs at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Maldives to the UN offices in Geneva, Minister-Counsellor at the Embassy of Maldives in London (2016-2018) and Additional Secretary and Head of the Consular Services Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2018.

Ambassador Geela was accompanied by Mr. Mohamed Shaffau Ibrahim, First Secretary and Mr. Hassan Nawaaf, Second Secretary at the Embassy of Maldives in Brussels

SOURCE : Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Gov't working to empower and expand the role of Atoll Councils

Minister of Cities, Local Government, and Public Works, Adam Shareef has outlined the ministry's efforts to enhance the role of Atoll Councils and grant them greater authority.

Speaking exclusively to PSM News, Minister Shareef acknowledged the current limitations imposed by the Decentralisation of Administrative Areas Act on Atoll Councils' decision-making powers. However, he affirmed the government's commitment to expanding these powers and delegating management responsibilities for the atolls to the councils.

Currently, Atoll Councils comprise the Presidents of Island Councils within each respective atoll. Minister Shareef pointed out that this structure often leads councils to focus primarily on individual island development rather than holistic atoll development—a dynamic he intends to change. He emphasised the need for Atoll Councils to unite efforts towards comprehensive atoll development aligned with community aspirations.

Minister Shareef stressed the importance of clarifying and amplifying the responsibilities of Atoll Councils to bolster their mandate. He emphasised the imperative for councils to engage in conscientious collaboration with local communities.

Furthermore, Minister Shareef announced his readiness to introduce legislative amendments aimed at empowering Atoll Councils. He also disclosed that the National University of Maldives is conducting a comprehensive study on the country's decentralization system at the ministry's request. This study, he noted, will identify key challenges and propose effective solutions.

Through these initiatives, Minister Shareef aims to strengthen the effectiveness of Atoll Councils and enhance local governance structures across the Maldives.

SOURCE : PSM





Hanimaadhoo International Airport development to finish on March 2025



Managing Director of Regional Airports Company Limited (RACL) Ahmed Mubeen has stated the ongoing development of Hanimaadhoo International Airport is expected to be completed by March 2025. The managing director also announced that the development of the new runway in the airport is fully completed, and will be opened for operations on June 23.

The airport development project includes the development of a 2.46km runway to enable larger aircraft such as Airbus A320s and Boeing 737s to land at the airport. The initiative is directly interconnected with tourism within the region and the economy of the atoll.

The project undertaken for the redevelopment of the airport was launched in January 2023. The first initiative taken was to establish a new runway of 2,465m in length. Due to the land constraints encountered in both the new runway and the previous runway, a total of 1,200 meters of the new runway was put in operation on January 28, 2024, subsequent to the completion of the initial phase. While the works of the remaining 1,200 meters are completed, efforts are underway to prepare the runway for flight operations.

Speaking on a programme aired on PSM News, Mubeen stated that all the final preparations are ongoing to officially put the airport into operations. Upon completion of the development, the airport will have the capability to cater services to 1.5 million passengers annually and will operate 24 hours. Mubeen additionally disclosed all the practical works of the airport development project will be completed by the year-end.

Furthermore, Mubeen highlighted the collaborative efforts of various agencies to complete necessary tasks prior to the completion of the developmental project. As such, with the joint efforts from the Ministry of Tourism and the resorts situated in the Northern region of the nation, arrangements are being made such that tourists who made bookings to those resorts will arrive at Hanimaadhoo International Airport, instead of Velana International Airport (VIA).

RACL acknowledged the government's dedication and commitment to initiate the second phase of the airport development project upon completion of the first phase of the project. With the development of the seaplane terminal under the second phase, tourists will be able to travel to the resorts directly from Hanimaadhoo.

SOURCE : PSM

Economic growth projected to expedite compared to 2023

Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) has anticipated the economic growth rate will increase compared to 2023.

MMA revealed that the quarterly reports of all the major economic industries, other than the fisheries' industry, reported expansion in activity. The Quarterly Economic Bulletin Report includes comprehensive details on the progress of industries. The tourism industry was highlighted as the primary contributor to the nation's economic advancement.

MMA's report indicated that national productivity stood at 4% in 2023 and is expected to rise to 4.9% this year. The growth in tourist arrivals, particularly from key markets like China and Europe, is anticipated to enhance not only the tourism sector but also sectors such as transport and communications, thereby stimulating overall economic acceleration.

The Quarterly Business Survey conducted four times annually since 2013, aims to determine the ongoing activities and anticipated changes for the industries. MMA expressed confidence that these insights will inform strategic decision-making and policy formulation moving forward.

SOURCE : PSM



Aan and Ulya to represent Maldives in Olympic swimming

Swimming Association of Maldives has announced Mohamed Aan Hussain and Aishath Ulya Shaiq will represent the Maldives in the swimming events of the Olympic Games 2024.

The swimming association announced revealed the two opportunities given to the Maldives in swimming at the Olympic Games to be held in Paris, France, are opportunities from university places. It additionally disclosed the swimmers were selected to compete in the Olympics based on the highest World Aquatics swimming points acquired in a specific competition organised by the World Aquatics. The rules and criteria for determining swimmers to compete in the Olympics are also determined by the World Aquatics.

This year marks a historic milestone for the Maldives in the Olympic Games, which is slated to take place from July 26 to August 11. While four athletes will represent the Maldives in the Olympics, they will compete in swimming events, badminton, athletics and table tennis. As such, Abdulla Adam will represent the nation in athletics and is currently undertaking a training in Jamaica. Meanwhile, Fathimath Nabaha will be representing the Maldives in badminton.

Moreover, this is the first time a Maldivian athlete qualified for the Olympic Games. The groundbreaking achievement was earned by the table tennis star, Fathimath Dheema Ali. Previously, Maldivian athletes competed in the games in invitational (tripartite) opportunities provided. As such, Maldivian athletes have been actively participating and competing in athletics, badminton and swimming since 1988.

SOURCE : PSM



Tourism minister announces development plans for abandoned resorts



Minister of Tourism Ibrahim Faisal has announced strategic decisions to expedite the development of abandoned islands leased for resort development.

In an exclusive interview with PSM News, Minister Faisal revealed that the Economic Council has approved two key measures from a proposal aimed at accelerating the development of these islands.

One approved measure involves reclaiming the islands that have seen no development activity, returning them to the state without any conditions. The tourism ministry will collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and the Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) to negotiate concessions on the substantial fees owed by lessees to the state.

The second measure focuses on finding solutions for islands where development has stalled due to various issues. The tourism ministry will assist in securing the necessary funds or facilitate the sale of these islands to new developers.

The tourism minister emphasised that accelerating the development of these islands will require legal adjustments. He noted that the state incurs significant financial losses when leased islands remain undeveloped.

According to the ministry's statistics, there are 63 islands leased for resort development that have yet to be developed. Some of these islands have been leased for over 30 years.

The minister also highlighted that more islands will be developed and opened as resorts during this tenure. He projected that 12 to 15 new resorts will be opened over the next five years.

SOURCE : PSM



Loans issued to private businesses increases by 8%

Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA) reveals that loans issued to individuals running private businesses increased by 8% during the first quarter of the year. Although this is a significant increase in the number of loans issued during the first quarter of 2023, it is a notable decrease in comparison to the loans issued in the last quarter of 2023.

The Quarterly Economic Bulletin Report released by MMA indicates that the loans issued for private businesses increased by 8% during the first quarter of the year, marking it a significant increase of USD155 million compared to the loans issued during the first quarter of 2023. Meanwhile, the increase of loans issued to private firms is a 9% decrease compared to the loans issued in the last quarter of 2023.

During the first quarter of the year, the largest amount of loans was disbursed by banks to the tourism industry, construction industry and for personal purposes. The MMA report shows that loans to the tourism and construction industry attributed to 36% of loans issued to private businesses. Furthermore, the report outlines that loans issued to the construction industry increased by 7% during this quarter, with loans mainly disbursed to build houses. It additionally stated that the loans provided for personal use progressed the most. In the first quarter, 25% of loans were issued to individuals for personal purposes.

MMA's Quarterly Economic Bulletin Report additionally includes comprehensive details on the tourism industry, which is the main sector contributing to the nation's economic development. It sheds light on the current stance of the respective industries, while outlining the anticipated changes it may face.

All the major economic industries, other than the fisheries' industry, experienced an expansion in activity during the first quarter of the year, according to the MMA's reports. As such, the tourism industry experienced the highest growth. While a total of 604,004 tourists visited the Maldives, the number of bed nights have also increased by 9%.

Green Tax revenue from guest houses doubles compared to 2023

Statistics released by the Maldives Inland Revenue Authority (MIRA) indicate a significant increase in green tax revenue from guest houses compared to 2023. According to MIRA's 2023 annual report, USD 408,650 was collected as green tax from guest houses, marking a notable increase from the USD 246,433 collected in 2022. This represents a substantial rise of 66.1%. Guest houses contribute 4% of the total green tax revenue. Green tax is imposed on tourists visiting the Maldives to support environmentally friendly initiatives and is levied on resorts, guest houses, hotels, safaris, and tourists themselves.

While the revenue obtained through green tax have increased significantly, hotels in residential areas and tourist guest houses with more than 50 rooms are being charged USD6 per day, since January 1, 2023. Meanwhile, hotels in residential areas and tourist guest houses with 50 rooms or fewer are required to pay a green tax of USD 3 per day. The majority of green tax revenue attained by the government, totalling USD 3 million in 2023, predominantly comes from resorts, constituting 91.5% of the total revenue generated.

SOURCE : PSM