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### Strict enforcement of laws key to combating corruption asserts President



President Dr Mohamed Muizzu has asserted that enforcing anti-corruption laws and ensuring equal treatment for all suspects are essential to eradicating the pervasive corruption that has long afflicted the nation.

His statement comes in the wake of the Prosecutor General's Office's decision to annul immunity agreements with several individuals implicated in the Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) scandal.

The MMPRC scandal considered the most extensive corruption and embezzlement of state funds in recent history, has spurred significant legal actions. On social media, the president praised the Prosecutor General's Office for retracting immunity agreements with several individuals implicated in the scandal.

Initially, immunity agreements were granted to individuals who pledged to aid the investigation and assist in recuperating the embezzled funds. However, these agreements have now been rescinded for former Vice President Ahmed Adeb Abdulla Ghafoor, Ahmed Ishfah Ali, Mohamed Allam Latheef, and Mohamed Hussain. The Prosecutor General's Office also noted that the immunity agreement with Abdulla Ziyath had been rescinded in August 2022.

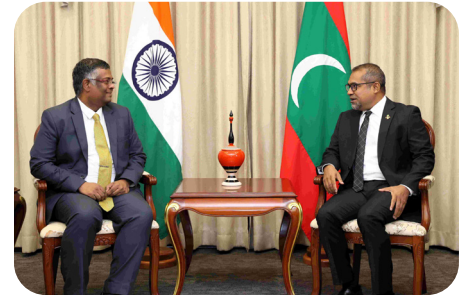
The President praised the decision to revoke the immunity agreements, which, according to him, had previously hindered the state from pursuing further legal actions against those implicated in the MMPRC scandal and had conferred certain privileges upon them. He reaffirmed that the elimination of corruption in the country necessitates the stringent enforcement of laws against all suspects.

The immunity agreements were originally designed to aid the investigation into the corruption and embezzlement of state funds and to assist in recovering the misappropriated funds. However, according to the Prosecutor General's Office, the individuals granted immunity did not provide the required support for the investigation and failed to help recover the embezzled funds.

After the immunity agreements were revoked, the Prosecutor General's Office instructed the Maldives Police Service (MPS) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to restart investigations into these individuals' involvement in the corruption scandal. According to the prosecutor's office, the investigations are to be concluded, and the cases submitted for prosecution.

SOURCE : PSM

### New High Commissioner of India to Maldives calls on Minister of Foreign Affairs



The High Commissioner of India to the Maldives, His Excellency G. Balasubramaniam, paid a courtesy call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Abdulla Khaleel, today.

At the meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Minister Dr Khaleel congratulated the High Commissioner on presenting his credentials to President Dr Mohamed Muizzu and exchanged views on fostering the positive momentum in the Maldives-India partnership. Both sides explored further to strengthen the robust ties between the two countries.

Highlighting the excellent bilateral relations between the two countries, the Minister expressed appreciation of the people and the Government of Maldives to the Government of India for the steadfast support extended to the Maldives over the years.

High Commissioner Balasubramaniam thanked the guests for the warm welcome and expressed his keen interest and commitment to strengthening the close ties between the two countries.

Minister Dr Khaleel was accompanied by Foreign Secretary Fathmath Inaya, Ambassador at Large Mohamed Fahmy Hassan, Joint Secretary Dr Ibrahim Zuhuree, Director Ahmed Suzil, and Director Aishath Shahula, and the High Commissioner was accompanied by Deputy High Commissioner Kumar Gaurav.

SOURCE : Ministry of Foreign Affairs





## Newly appointed High Commissioner of Pakistan to the Maldives calls on the Foreign Minister



His Excellency Vice Admiral (Retd.) Faisal Rasul Lodhi, the new High Commissioner of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of Maldives, called on the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Abdulla Khaleel.

During the meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs this morning, Minister Dr Khaleel welcomed the High Commissioner and congratulated him on his appointment. They also discussed ways to further strengthen and diversify the brotherly relations between the Maldives and Pakistan.

Minister Dr Khaleel thanked the Government of Pakistan for the continued support and assistance provided in human resource development. The High Commissioner assured his commitment to working closely with the Government of Maldives to enhance collaboration in areas of mutual benefit to both countries.

Minister Dr Khaleel was accompanied by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheryna Abdul Samad, Additional Secretary Aminath Abdulla Didi, and Director Asheer Abdul Azeez. Second Secretary Zulqurnain Ahmad accompanied the High Commissioner.

SOURCE : Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## Maldives begins research on historic site discovered on Kaashidhoo



The Ministry of Dhivehi Language, Culture and Heritage has initiated efforts to study the historic site uncovered during an excavation in Kaashidhoo, Kaafu Atoll approximately five years ago.

Ruins of a sizeable pre-Islamic site were discovered during an excavation of the island's Old Friday Mosque in 2020.

The Ministry said more parts of the ruins have been discovered at the site, and efforts to study the historic material are now underway.

[sarukaaru.gov.mv](http://sarukaaru.gov.mv)

## Makunudhoo Airport development progresses with completion of land reclamation



The land reclamation phase for the Makunudhoo Airport project in Haa Dhaalu Atoll has reached completion.

As Makunudhoo lies isolated from the rest of the atoll, residents have frequently requested the development of an airport. Residents continue to voice concerns over the difficulties in transporting ill patients from the island due to the rough seas surrounding it. Unlike other areas of the Maldives, the waters around Makunudhoo remain rough even during calm weather.

In 2023, Big Fish Maldives Pvt Ltd was contracted to develop an airport on Makunudhoo, with a one-year completion deadline. The project is valued at USD 16 million. Land reclamation efforts under the project were completed last month, with 43.12 hectares reclaimed.

According to the Makunudhoo Council, shore protection works are underway to safeguard the newly reclaimed land, including installing geotextile bags. A 3,394-metre revetment will also be installed to protect the dredged area.

Initial plans for the Makunudhoo Airport included a 1,500-metre runway. However, following a visit to the island last year, President Dr Mohamed Muizzu has pledged to extend the runway to 1,800 metres at the request of island residents.

SOURCE : PSM

The National Centre for Cultural Heritage, in collaboration with the University of East Anglia, Dhivehi Bahuge Academy, and Maritime Asia Heritage Survey, will conduct the research from 12 to 24 January.

Staff from the National Centre for Cultural Heritage and Dhivehi Language Academy assist the research efforts, along with a survey team from the Maritime Asia Heritage Survey and two Maldivian students completing a Masters in the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas with the Sainsbury Centre at the University of East Anglia.

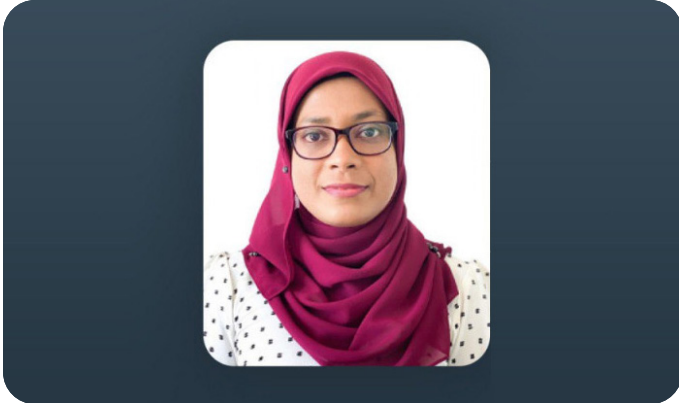
The Ministry said the two-week research project will teach participants the technical approach and conservation techniques for underground archaeological excavations.

Excavations on different islands across the Maldives have unearthed several historical sites and items. The Cultural Heritage Conservation Centre studies and conserves these finds. Considering such findings, meaningful information about the Maldives' rich history, culture, and heritage has also been documented.

SOURCE : PSM



## Parliament approves Moomina as HRCM vice president



Parliament on Monday approved the appointment of Moomina Waheed, a member of the Human Rights Commission of Maldives (HRCM), as the commission's Vice President.

The Parliamentary Independent Institutions Committee had skipped the interview process to endorse Moomina as the Vice President of HRCM.

Parliament approved the committee's endorsement during Monday's sitting, with 67 lawmakers voting in favour.

President Dr Mohamed Muizzu nominated Moomina as the Vice President of HRCM on 16 January and forwarded the nomination for Parliament's approval on the same day.

Moomina was appointed to HRCM in September 2020. She has a Master of Human Rights and Democratization Asia Pacific from the University of Sydney, Australia. Before her appointment to the Commission, Moomina was a consultant on delivering labour and employment mandates in the Ministry of Economic Development.

Moomina Waheed joined HRCM in 2004 and worked at different levels for over nine years.

During this period, she undertook many tasks and responsibilities, including vital roles in formulating and implementing the Commission's Strategic Plan, Annual Reports, Annual Budget, Annual Work Plans, preparation of shadow/alternative reports for the UN Human Rights Systems, International Relations, and relationship-building with various state institutions.

Moomina replaces Dr Ahmed Adhuham Abdullah, who resigned in October 2023.

The HRCM consists of five members in total.

SOURCE : PSM



## Visit Maldives gears to launch taxi campaign and outdoor campaign in Germany ahead of ITB Berlin 2025



Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) has announced a major promotional campaign in Germany. As part of its participation in ITB Berlin 2025, 200 taxis will be wrapped in Berlin.

This campaign, one of Visit Maldives' largest outdoor initiatives, will showcase the Maldives as a premier travel destination in one of its key source markets.

The taxi campaign will run for five weeks, from February 7th to March 13th, strategically coinciding with the Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival) and ITB Berlin, the world's leading travel trade show. These events are expected to attract over 600,000 attendees, providing unparalleled visibility for the Maldives. The 200 branded taxis will feature stunning imagery of the Maldives and captivating messaging, ensuring high impact across Berlin's most prominent areas. In addition to the taxis, the campaign will include prominent billboards at the Berlinale, targeting film enthusiasts and international visitors at this significant cultural event.

This extensive outdoor campaign is designed to significantly boost brand visibility and further elevate the appeal of the Maldives to German travellers. It marks a historic milestone in MMPRC's promotional efforts in Berlin.

Beyond this impactful campaign, Visit Maldives will actively engage with the travel trade and media through various activities at ITB Berlin. These will include seminars and panel discussions on industry-relevant topics and participation in IMM Germany, a dedicated event for media and journalists.

While plans are underway for a Networking Evening at ITB Berlin, the highly anticipated Maldivian Night has been moved to the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2025 in Dubai, at the end of April.

SOURCE : Visit Maldives



## Maldives to participate in the 48th Session of the UPR Working Group



The 48th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) commenced today at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This session will continue for two weeks and conclude on 31 January 2025.

During this period, the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group will examine fourteen States. The States to be reviewed during this session are Angola, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, The Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Kazakhstan, Madagascar, San Marino and Slovenia.

The UPR Working Group holds three sessions annually. The Fourth Cycle review of the UPR began in November 2022 and will conclude in 2027. The UPR is a State-driven process involving a review of the overall human rights of all UN Member States. This UN mechanism provides the States under review with the opportunity to report on the progress made in fulfilling their human rights obligations and commitments. It also allows fellow Member States to offer constructive recommendations on how the States under review can further improve the implementation of their human rights obligations. Each State review is further facilitated by groups of three States, known as "troikas", who serve as rapporteurs during this process.

The Maldives delegation for the 48th Session of the UPR will be led by Dr Salma Rasheed, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Maldives to the United Nations Office at Geneva. Counsellor Adam Hamid and Counsellor Uza will accompany her. Aminath Shifaya Ibrahim and Attaché Raaidh Saeedh, from the Permanent Mission. In line with the Government's key policies and priorities, the Maldives delegation will actively engage and provide constructive recommendations during this UPR Session.

SOURCE : Ministry of Foreign Affairs



## Parliament greenlights cabinet reshuffle



Parliament approved the four cabinet ministers on Monday following President Dr Mohamed Muizzu's recent decision to reshuffle his cabinet.

The nominations were submitted to the Government Oversight Committee during an extraordinary parliamentary session on Thursday. President Dr Muizzu formally proposed the names of the four cabinet ministers for parliamentary consideration. The cabinet reshuffle had been executed on 26 December.

The Oversight Committee endorsed the reappointment of the four ministers during a meeting on Sunday.

The nominated ministers are Moosa Zameer, Minister of Finance and Planning; Dr Ali Haidar Ahmed, Minister of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development; Dr Maryam Mariya, Minister of Agriculture and Animal Welfare; and Dr Abdulla Muththalib, Minister of Construction, Housing and Infrastructure.

During the extraordinary session on Monday, Parliament approved the committee's endorsement of the four ministers, with most lawmakers voting in favour.

Minister Zameer's nomination was passed with 69 votes, Minister Haidar received 63 votes, whilst Minister Mariya and Minister Muththalib were approved with 70 votes in favour.

In conjunction with the cabinet reshuffle, the President also restructured several ministries' responsibilities. The newly reorganised Ministry of Finance and Planning will now oversee land utilisation, urban development, national development planning and statistics—duties that the Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development previously managed.

The President also dissolved the Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development. In its place, the Ministry of Construction, Housing and Infrastructure has been established, replacing the former Ministry of Construction and Infrastructure. This newly formed ministry will now be responsible for executing social housing projects and formulating housing policies, including those related to social housing.

SOURCE : PSM



## Maldives to expand “Hakathari” to equipment used in Government projects



Minister of Climate Change, Energy and Environment Ahmed Thoriq on Monday revealed plans to incorporate equipment used in government projects into the energy-efficient “Hakathari” programme.

The Hakathari programme provides consumers with a simple and unambiguous indication of the energy-saving potential of electrical appliances at the point of purchase. This is achieved via the Hakathari label affixed to the appliances, which showcases a five-star rating system. A higher number of stars on the label indicates a higher level of energy efficiency and energy savings.

The Ministry conducted an inception workshop to initiate the expansion of the Hakathari Programme in partnership with USAID’s South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP).

The programme, which currently covers air conditioners, refrigerators, and washing machines, is being expanded to include water heaters, water pumps, and fans.

Speaking to PSM News after the workshop’s inauguration, Minister Thoriq stressed the programme’s significance in the ongoing efforts for greater energy efficiency and renewable energy solutions.

The Minister revealed plans to expand the programme from household appliances to electronic equipment used in government projects.

“We are also working at the policy level to change the rules for public procurement in the future so that the items used in public procurement are also sourced through this energy-efficient programme,” Minister Thoriq explained.

“We are also working to make the equipment used in government projects energy efficient.”

According to the Minister, the planned changes to the procurement policy will allow the entire state to reduce the amount spent on electricity generation, which will aid President Dr Mohamed Muizzu’s pledge to convert 33 per cent of the Maldives’ energy generation into renewable energy by 2028.

In addition, he also alluded to plans to expand the energy-efficient programme to the private sector.

SOURCE : PSM

## Maldives to enforce propeller guard - mandatory regulation for excursion vessels



The Government of the Maldives has taken a significant bold step towards the conservation of Whale Sharks (Fehurihi) once again by strictly reinforcing propeller guards in excursion boats.

“Sometimes, over 100 tourists swim after a single whale shark, with no set policy. Even speedboats venture into this area,” the Minister of Climate Change, Environment, and Energy, Mr Thoriq Ibrahim, noted. The Minister said this protocol will be implemented within the next three months. Special speedboats will be active in areas with whale shark activity and monitor vessels that take tourists to these sites.

Additionally, the new regulation requiring propeller guards will be expanded to areas beyond South-Ari Marine Park (SAMPA) where whale shark activity is observed. The SAMPA is a world-renowned area, and the most significant feature is that Whale Sharks can be seen here throughout the year. The protocol must be followed in all these areas and will be effective within three months.

“By mandating propeller guards, we are taking a significant step towards ensuring the safety of whale sharks and those who admire them. This measure reflects our commitment to sustainable tourism and preserving our marine environment,” added CEO & MD of Visit Maldives Ibrahim Shiuree.

Last year, the Maldives Government developed a legal framework to protect whale sharks and their natural habitat. The policies include precautions to take when interacting with these creatures and how to manage an injured or unwell whale shark. As per this policy, 250 meters around a whale shark is considered a contact zone, where only three vessels can be active. While in these zones, the speed of the vessels must not exceed 5 knots per hour, and when in the vicinity of a whale shark, the speed must not exceed 2 knots per hour.

With these new regulations, the Maldives continues to lead in marine conservation efforts, ensuring that future generations can appreciate the beauty of these gentle giants. These regulations enhance the experience for tourists interacting with whale sharks in the Maldives and safeguard the vital ecosystem that supports whale sharks in their natural habitat.

SOURCE : Visit Maldives