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### Minister Saeed Affirms, DBM's Rollout on Track, Emphasises Focus on Institutional Investors



The rollout of the Development Bank of Maldives (DBM) is progressing as planned, according to Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed. In a recent social media post, Minister Saeed highlighted the strategic significance of the institution, stressing that its phased approach is integral to the broader efforts to stabilise and strengthen the economy.

Founded on 16 November 2024 by President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, the institution aims to bolster economic growth and resilience. Minister Saeed outlined a three-phase rollout for the DBM, starting with the institutional setup, which is currently on schedule.

"The DBM's business model prioritises institutional investors and large-scale infrastructure projects, with plans to introduce retail services at a later phase," Minister Saeed stated. "This phased approach is aligned with broader efforts to stabilise and strengthen the economy."

Minister Saeed further remarked, "[We are] overcoming the mess we were inherited from an irresponsible government which lacked complete discipline in managing public finance."

The DBM's strategic objectives are crafted to bolster the long-term economic and social progress of the Maldives. These objectives include financing environmentally sustainable projects to help the country achieve its Net Zero targets and enhancing long-term investments by providing a range of financial products that support significant infrastructure and development initiatives requiring sustained investment.

The bank also focuses on supporting national development by facilitating both public and private initiatives that contribute to the country's economic and social progress. Additionally, the DBM aims to promote financial inclusion by providing accessible financial products for scalable businesses. The Administration envisions transforming the DBM into a regionally significant institution.

Minister Saeed elaborated, the second phase of the rollout will concentrate on securing investments for infrastructure development projects. This phase will be followed by the introduction of retail services, which is expected to enhance the country's economic strength.

As the country's inaugural investment bank, the DBM aims to offer low-interest loans for major development projects and substantial private investments. Minister Saeed previously stated that the DBM will partner with both domestic and international financial institutions and investors to fund these initiatives.

The comprehensive services offered by the DBM extend beyond loans to include equity finance, fund syndication, and risk insurance. Committed to sustainable economic and social development, the DBM also aims to raise funds for infrastructure projects, address financing challenges for Public Sector Investment Programme initiatives through syndicated finance, and boost foreign currency liquidity within the Maldivian banking system.

### Maldives Capital Urges Children to Stay Indoors Over Hazardous Air Quality



The Health Protection Agency (HPA) has warned caution over the current hazardous air pollution levels in the capital Male' urging children to stay indoors and adults to wear face masks when outside.

The Maldives Meteorological Service (MET Office) said the atmosphere in the Maldives has become polluted due to smoke drifting from the Indian subcontinent, a phenomenon typically observed at the beginning of the northeast monsoon which extends from January to March.

MET Office expects the air quality to worsen in the next 24 hours.

The tracker installed by the Maldives National University's Centre for Maritime to monitor air quality shows that the air quality in the Male' region was 137 at 1pm on Sunday.

The air quality level would pose health risks, according to health officials especially to people with pre-existing health conditions and children. The air quality is expected to remain at hazardous levels until sunset on Sunday, the data showed.

HPA has urged caution due to potential health risks that may be caused due to poor air quality. The authority urged those with respiratory diseases, cardiovascular conditions and different allergies to minimise outdoor activities, and to use masks when stepping outside.

HPA has also advised children, pregnant women and the elderly to stay indoors as much as possible during the hazy period.

SOURCE : PSM

SOURCE : PSM





## Maldives to Repatriate Undocumented Expats after Biometrics Collection



Maldives will begin to repatriate undocumented expatriates identified through biometrics data collection under the ongoing “Operation Kuran’gi”, the Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology has revealed.

Operation Kura’ngi, launched on 2 May, 2024, aims to provide a permanent solution to the issue of undocumented migrants in the Maldives. As part of the operation, fingerprints of migrant workers are recorded and checks are conducted to ensure that they are employed in the Maldives in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations. The data collected from across the Maldives through island and atoll councils will be compiled into a unified registry.

Speaking to PSM News’ “Raajje Miadhu” programme, the Minister of State for Homeland Security and Technology, Ahmed Siddeeq said the entire operation is expected to be completed in 2027.

However, biometrics data collection of all expatriate workers is expected to be completed in April this year. According to State Minister Siddeeq, the second phase of the operation after the biometrics data collection will involve the repatriation of undocumented expatriates in the country.

He revealed that the special repatriation programme will be conducted in collaboration with Immigration and Maldives Police Service (MPS).

“When we take a photo on our mobile phone, we can check if that person has been entered into our database. Or you can put any fingerprint and the system will know who he is. Who or which company brought him here first. If the visa fee has been paid for that person,” the State Minister explained.

The biometrics data collection under the Kuran’gi Operation will also assist in detecting expatriates entering the country on forged passports or travel documents, he added.

State Minister Siddeeq insisted that when the second phase of the operation begins, any undocumented expatriate will be repatriated immediately.

The ministry has provided fingerprint machines to the councils and developed a specialised application to facilitate the identification and regularisation of foreigners. The application allows individuals to upload photos of suspected illegal foreigners, providing information about their identity, purpose of visit, and affiliated company.

SOURCE : PSM

## Maldives to Mandate Propeller Guards and Stricter Regulations for Whale Shark Protection

Minister of Climate Change, Environment, and Energy Thoriq Ibrahim has announced a new regulation requiring the installation of propeller guards on vessels operating in territories where whale sharks are active. The measure will be part of efforts to protect the species and its natural habitat sustainably.

Speaking on a PSM News programme about the efforts being made to maintain the protected areas of the Maldives, the Minister said while 93 per cent of the Maldives’ territory is designated as protected, only five locations are actively managed. Of these locations, the South Ari Marine Park (SAMPA) in South Ari Atoll, the largest protected area in the Maldives, sees significant tourist traffic daily, he noted. Although efforts have been undertaken in the past to manage this area effectively, the efforts have been insufficient, leading to unfortunate incidents in the past, he added.



“Sometimes, over 100 tourists swim after a single whale shark; there is no set policy. Even speedboats venture into this area,” the Minister noted.

The Minister said the new regulation requiring propeller guards is not limited to SAMPA, and the protocol has to be followed in other areas where whale shark activity is observed. The protocol will be implemented within the next three months, and special speedboat will be active in these areas to monitor the activity of other vessel that take tourists to these sites, he added. Furthermore, all vessels that go to these areas must be registered within three months. Including these measures, the special regulations on protecting whale sharks and their habitats will be gazetted soon, he said.

Last year, a legal framework was formulated to protect whale sharks and their natural habitat. The policies include precautions that must be taken in interacting with these creatures and how to manage an injured or unwell whale shark. As per the policy, a distance of 250 meters around a whale shark is considered a contact zone, where only three vessels can be active at a time. 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. However, in emergency situations where the contact zone must be immediately exited, speed restrictions do not apply.

SOURCE : PSM



## Information on 1,400 Migrant Workers Collected in a Day Under Operation Kurangi



The Ministry of Homeland Security and Technology has collected biometric data on 1,455 migrant workers during a programme conducted in Male' under the Operation Kurangi, the Ministry revealed.

The programme ran from 8:00 am until 6:00 pm, with 75 officials from the Ministry involved in the task. It focused on migrant workers employed in the education sector as well as those active at the Gulhifalhu site where the Thila-Male' Bridge project is underway. Biometric data on 697 migrant workers employed at educational institutions in the Male' area and 758 employees of Afcons Infrastructure Limited, the company leading the Thila-Male' Bridge construction, were collected. Among these, no workers were identified as residing in the Maldives illegally, according to the Ministry. The programme also included a human trafficking screening component, which will be incorporated into all future activities under Operation Kurangi.

In a social media post, the Minister of Homeland Security and Technology, Ali Ihusaan stated that President Dr Mohamed Muizzu in November revealed that the biometric data of 10,000 migrant workers had been collected under Operation Kurangi. Over the past two months, data on over an additional 15,000 workers have been recorded, bringing the total to 25,483. The Minister expressed confidence that the issue of undocumented migrants in the Maldives will be effectively resolved under a three-year plan, in alignment with President Dr Muizzu's pledge, with the matter expected to be fully addressed by April 2027.

Operation Kurangi, launched on 2 May, 2024, aims to provide a permanent solution to the issue of undocumented migrants in the Maldives. As part of the operation, fingerprints of migrant workers are recorded and checks are conducted to ensure that they are employed in the Maldives in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations. The data collected from across the Maldives through island and atoll councils will be compiled into a unified registry, the Homeland Security Ministry has previously said.

SOURCE : PSM



## Closer Collaboration Can Resolve Challenges Faced by CSOs: Minister



Closer collaboration and consultations can provide the solutions to the challenges faced by civil society organisations (CSOs), the Minister of Youth Empowerment, Information and Arts, Ibrahim Waheed said Sunday. The Minister made these remarks at a consultative meeting held to identify how the ministry can help create a better environment for the effective functioning of civil society activities.

Speaking during the meeting, Ibrahim Waheed admitted that CSOs in the country are currently facing numerous challenges. However, he insisted that closer collaboration and constructive dialogue can help overcome such obstacles. Highlighting that most CSOs are facing lack of an office space for effective administrative functions, the Minister admitted that it was an issue the government needs to address.

Minister Ibrahim Waheed also said major renovations and modifications are needed to the Zuvaanunge Third Space, to effectively utilise it as administrative space for CSOs.

"There needs to be major changes. The place needs to be redesigned and turned into a place where organisations can operate. It can be modified to suit a lot of needs," he explained.

The consultation was attended by over a 100 CSOs operating across the country. The Ministry in May last year, launched a new initiative to provide financial assistance to CSOs for community empowerment projects.

The programme aims to offer not only financial support but also technical expertise and access to the ministry's resources. The initiative's primary purpose is to enhance the role of financial organisations in national development by recognising and supporting their efforts in community empowerment and societal development.

SOURCE : PSM