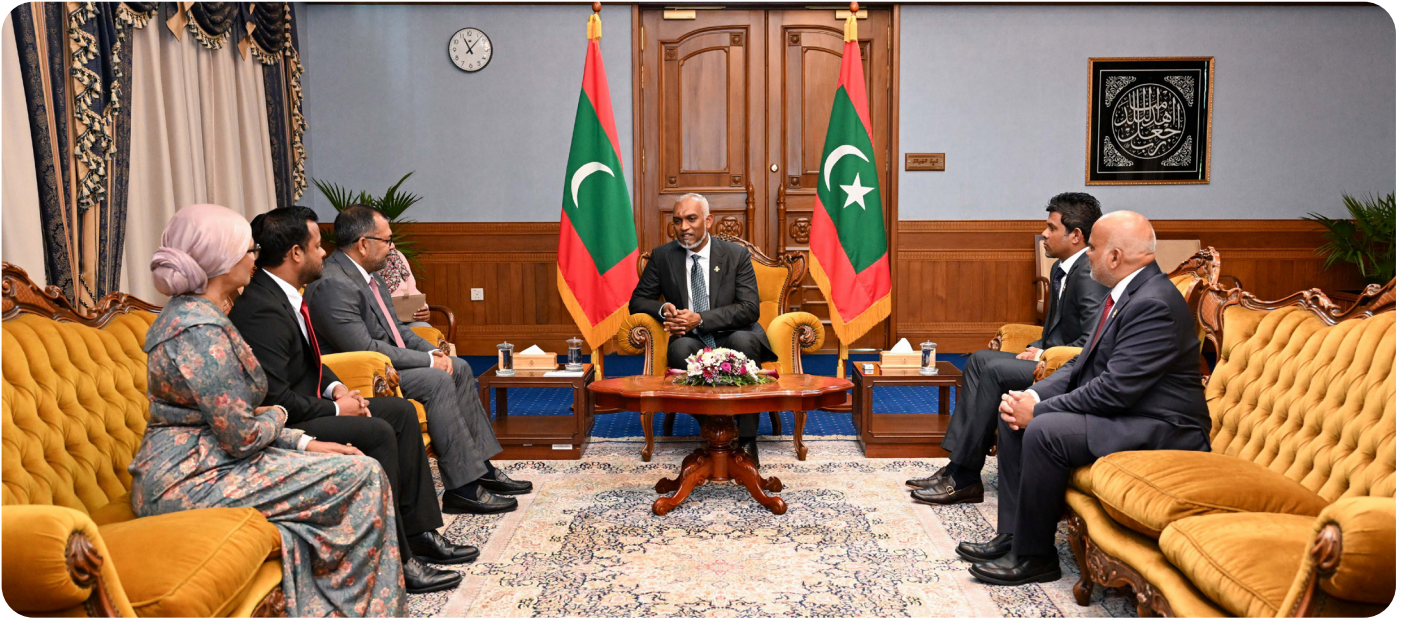


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President Changes Cabinet Composition, Renames Several Ministries

President Dr Mohamed Muizzu has changed the composition of the Cabinet, renaming and renewing the mandate of several Ministries. The letters of appointment were presented to the Cabinet Ministers at a ceremony held at the President's Office on Thursday morning.

During the ceremony, the President appointed:

1. Moosa Zameer as Minister of Finance and Planning
2. Dr Ali Haidhar Ahmed as Minister of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development
3. Dr Maryam Mariya as Minister of Agriculture and Animal Welfare
4. Dr Abdulla Muththalib as Minister of Construction, Housing and Infrastructure

Supreme Court Justice, Hon Uz Ali Rasheed Hussain administered the oath for the newly appointed Ministers, following which they signed their declaration of the oath.

With this change, the President has disbanded the Ministry of Housing, Land and Urban Development and transferred that Ministry's operations and services under Ministry of Finance and Planning and Ministry of Construction, Housing and Infrastructure.

The President held a meeting with the four Ministers after the ceremony. During the meeting, the President stressed that the coming year was



vital for the development of Maldives, with many developmental projects in the pipeline. The President also appealed to the Ministers to organise the operations of the new Ministries in a manner that minimises impact on the staff that are to be transferred.

SOURCE : The President's Office



The Maldives Reaches Another Monumental Tourism Milestone



Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC/ Visit Maldives) is proud to announce that the Maldives has reached another monumental milestone in the history of our tourism industry with the arrival of the 2 millionth tourist of 2024. Astrid Dirnegger, an Austrian national, arrived in the Maldives that morning, 26th December 2024, officially achieving the target set by His Excellency President Dr Mohamed Muizzu for this year. This is her third visit to the Maldives, and she is here on vacation with her family to Raffles Maldives Meradhoo.

This milestone underscores the continued success of the Maldives tourism sector, following a record-breaking month of February 2024 that saw over 217,394 tourist arrivals, the highest number of arrivals ever achieved in a single day. February of this year also saw the Maldives breaking the record for the most arrivals in a single day, with 10,214 arrivals on 10th February 2024.



"Welcoming our 2 millionth tourist of 2024 is a source of pride for the nation, and a testament to the hard work and dedication of the entire tourism industry. This milestone is a result of the collaborative efforts of our stakeholders and the industry as a whole. I extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this success." CEO & MD of MMPRC, Ibrahim Shiuree, stated.

This year, the Maldives tourism industry has expanded significantly with MMPRC's proliferation of various new markets such as Azerbaijan,

Georgia and Bangladesh. MMPRC further initiated several initiatives towards making a foothold in new segments such as sports, film, medical tourism and more.

Visit Maldives also conducted a first-of-its-kind 'DATA 2024' conference, the largest held in the Southeast Asia region, presenting an impressive lineup of industry leaders and data experts from around the World. This was followed by another milestone, the Visit Maldives Tourism Symposium 2024 that brought together significant figures, including policymakers, industry leaders, and stakeholders, in the Maldives tourism industry delving into critical topics such as sustainability; diversification; health and safety; collaborative dialogue; and exploring innovative solutions for the challenges facing the tourism sector.



Moreover, Visit Maldives Club was inaugurated August 2024 leading to the launching of the much-anticipated sport fishing competition to be held next year.

The Maldives tourism industry was further honoured on the global tourism stage with our fifth consecutive win as the World's Leading Destination and our first time being awarded the title of World's Leading Green Destination.

SOURCE : Visit Maldives



Development of Country’s First Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy Demonstrates the President’s Policy Priority: Vice President

Vice President Uz Hussain Mohamed Latheef has stated that the development of the country’s first Maldives Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy in the early days of this Administration demonstrates the priority President Dr Mohamed Muizzu places on this matter in his policy agenda.

The Vice President made these remarks whilst speaking at the opening ceremony of the ‘Resilient 20’ exhibition held at the National Art Gallery, organised by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to mark 20 years since the tsunami disaster.

At this ceremony, he noted that the nation’s recovery from the tsunami’s devastation and progress toward a resilient dawn was achieved through the light of Islamic guidance that Allah has bestowed upon this nation. In his speech, he highlighted the exemplary unity shown by Maldivians during the disaster and acknowledged the sacrifices made in national service by security forces, volunteers, and the general public, who drew courage from one another. He also highlighted the work of the NDMA, which was established in response to



this disaster.

During the ceremony, the Vice President launched the book ‘Maldives Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2024-2030,’ which was approved by the National Disaster Management Council on Tuesday, December 24.

At the ceremony, he listened to a special song composed for the Day of Unity. Afterwards, he toured the exhibition and wrote a special

message related to the tsunami in the ‘Honoring the Lives Lost’ segment. He was then presented with the photo book of the ‘Resilient 20’ exhibition.

The 2004 tsunami, which remains the most dangerous disaster to have faced the Maldives, occurred 20 years ago, at 09:23 a.m. on Sunday, December 26, claiming 82 lives and displacing more than 29,000 people across the archipelago.

SOURCE : The President’s Office

20 Years Later: Honouring the Unbreakable Unity of Maldivians Post-Tsunami



On December 26, 2004, at 5:58 a.m. Maldives time, a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 9.1 struck the Sumatra region of Indonesia. The tremors reached the Maldives, where residents felt the ground shake for 8 to 10 minutes. Despite no immediate damage, some Maldivians noticed the vibrations in tall buildings.

As people continued their daily routines, unaware of the impending disaster, the sea withdrew briefly before returning with massive tsunami waves around 9:23 a.m. This catastrophe is one of the darkest days in Maldivian history.

The tsunami took 82 lives and left 26 people missing. It severely damaged 23 islands, completely destroyed four, and left over 15,000 people homeless. The waves caused extensive damage to infrastructure, disrupting communications and plunging the nation into chaos.

Survivors recall this day as a turning point, with many losing their homes and belongings. They found solace in the unity of their fellow citizens. The Atoll Offices depended on boat radio sets to maintain contact with the capital, Malé, and other islands.

These efforts highlighted the tradition of unity in the Maldives. Government offices, the army, and the police quickly mobilised to provide aid. Collection centres were set up across Malé and other islands, gathering donations for those who lost everything. Fishing vessels and all available resources were used to transport aid to the affected areas. Every citizen, setting aside differences, helped rebuild lives and restore normalcy.

National Unity Day reminds us of the importance of disaster preparedness and the strength of community. It underscores coming together in adversity and fosters a spirit of brotherhood and solidarity.

SOURCE : PSM



Maldivians are People Who Show Unity in the Face of Adversity: President

Maldivians are a people who have shown unity in every adversity faced by the country, President Dr Mohamed Muizzu said Thursday.

The President made these remarks in a post on social media platforms on the occasion of the National Unity Day.

President Dr Muizzu said the Maldivians are brotherly, friendly, kind and compassionate and a people who have shown immense strength and unity as one family in every adversity faced by the country.

Vice President Uz Hussain Mohamed Latheef, in his message to mark the occasion, had also insisted on the importance of unity to overcome adversity and accelerate national development efforts. He also noted the significance of national spirit among the Maldivian people to achieving these goals.

In addition, former presidents and political leaders in separate messages remembered the incredible spirit of unity and solidarity demonstrated by Maldivians in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami.



National Unity Day, marked on 26 December, serves as a reminder of the incredible spirit of unity and solidarity demonstrated by Maldivians in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. On that fateful day, massive tsunami waves hit several countries in the Southeast Asia region, resulting in an unprecedented scale of death and destruction.

As a low-lying island nation, the Maldives bore the full impact of the tsunami, which devastated islands, infrastructure, and livelihoods. The

catastrophe claimed 82 lives, left 26 individuals unaccounted for, and rendered over 15,000 people homeless.

In the face of this tragedy, Maldivians came together in an extraordinary show of unity and harmony, proving that togetherness is key to overcoming such challenges. The nation's resilience and solidarity in the wake of the tsunami demonstrated to the world the strength and unity of the Maldivian people.

SOURCE : The President's Office

Several Undocumented Foreigners Taken into Custody in Male' Raids

Maldives Immigration has detained 25 foreign nationals violating Immigration laws on Wednesday, following operations conducted in the local market area and Heenaamaage parking area in Male' City.

In recent months, Immigration has ramped up efforts to identify foreigners living illegally in the Maldives. A reporting platform, Immigration Watch, has also been launched by the authority for the public to make reports or send in tip-offs regarding such cases.

Immigration said that the Immigration Watch portal had received information of a significant foreign presence in the local market area and the Heenaamaage parking area. In raid operations targeting these two locations, the Immigration Task Force vetted 137 foreign nationals, of whom 25 were found to be undocumented. They have since been taken into Immigration custody.

The operations saw active participation from Controller General of Immigration Mohamed Shamaan Waheed and Deputy Controller Ahmed Ashfan. A raid video publicised by Immigration showed foreigners running away from the local market as Immigration officers entered the area. However, Immigration officers are seen catching up to them.

Addressing the challenge of undocumented foreigners living in the

Maldives is a top priority for the Government. Whilst efforts are underway to collect information on foreigners residing in all inhabited islands, resorts, industrial islands and agricultural islands, operations are also being conducted to ensure public health safety, particularly in food production involving foreign workers.

Maldives Immigration had previously revealed that over 5,000 foreign nationals have been deported since President Dr Mohamed Muizzu took Office in November 2023. While efforts to identify undocumented foreigners have been expanded across the Maldives, the Government hopes to consolidate information on foreign nationals into a centralised database. The aim is to bring a comprehensive solution to the illegal foreigner issue within three years.

SOURCE : PSM





Health Ministry Launches Child Health Portal, MIHIS



The Ministry of Health has launched the Maldives Integrated Health Information System (MIHIS), a digital portal which provides access to all information in relation to child-health from infancy onwards.

The portal, developed in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) was inaugurated by the Minister of Health Abdulla Nazim.

MIHIS integrates data from all health sector information collection systems into a single platform. The portal will provide access to information on children born from January 1, from the vitamin supplements and injections they receive to their growth charts.

According to the Health Ministry, parents can monitor their children's development and growth through the portal. The system features automated SMS alerts to parents when vaccinations become due for their children.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Minister of Health Nazim described the newly launched portal as a step forward in efforts to improve the quality of health services provided to the Maldives' geographically dispersed population. He highlighted ongoing efforts to create health architecture blueprints, revealing that the plans will be ready for implementation by mid next year.

"Once this blueprint is prepared and enforced, it allows every citizen to securely access their vital health information from infancy. Consequently, every citizen will be able to take precautions for early disease prevention, assess the risks to their health, and monitor their health. This will empower individuals to take control of their health and seek treatment when necessary," the Minister said.

Speaking at the ceremony, WHO Maldives Office Head Dr Padmal De Silva said the public portal will empower people to access their health information and improve their health. He assured that the WHO would continue to support the Maldives in important initiatives in the health sector.

The Health Ministry has plans to further develop MIHIS. In future, the portal will be further enhanced to store health information on pregnant women, and eventually, every Maldivian citizen. The portal will also provide information collected from the primary health care system in the future, according to the Ministry.

SOURCE : PSM



Immigration Chief Reveals 5,000 Deportations This Year, Plans to Double in 2025

Controller General of Immigration Mohamed Shamaan Waheed has revealed that over 5,000 migrant workers have been deported to their home countries so far this year, adding that Maldives Immigration aims to double that figure next year.

Controller General Shamaan shared this information during an interview with PSM News, which followed an immigration operation aimed at undocumented migrants in the local market area of Malé.

He stated that the agency's Immigration Watch portal had received numerous public complaints and tips regarding the involvement of undocumented migrant workers in illegal activities. The agency is actively investigating these complaints and taking appropriate actions, such as conducting raids, he said.

The recent raids in the local market area were a direct response to complaints received through the portal. The Controller General observed that this area, including the vessels docked nearby and the local market, serves as a common workplace for a large number of migrant workers who engage in various business activities.

"Despite initially slow progress when we commenced this work, we subsequently managed to execute our tasks at the desired speed. Next year, we plan to enhance our efforts and expedite our work even further," he elaborated.

Highlighting that the agency had been expediting the deportation process of undocumented migrants, the Controller General explained that this initiative aims to address the challenges posed by undocumented workers and those involved in illicit activities. The agency also plans to expand its efforts to the outer islands next year to locate undocumented migrant workers in the atolls, he added.

During the raid in the local market area, immigration officers gathered information about migrant workers on vessels docked at the harbour as well as those working in the market. The operation led to the detention of a significant number of undocumented migrants.

SOURCE : PSM



ADFD Provides Another USD40 Million for Maldives Airport Project

The Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD) has announced a new loan of USD40 million to support the ongoing development of the Maldives' main airport, Velana International Airport.

This follows an earlier loan of USD50 million provided by ADFD in 2017 for the project's initial phases, underscoring the airport's significance in driving tourism.

The agreement was signed on behalf of the Government by the Minister of Finance Moosa Zameer while Director General Mohamed Saif Al Suwaidi signed on behalf of the ADFD.

The Velana International Airport expansion includes the addition of up to 26 aircraft gates and a new terminal building for international flights, enabling the airport to handle up to 7.5 million passengers annually.

Minister Zameer expressed gratitude for the continued support of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Maldives, highlighting the importance of the funding for the airport's modernisation.

"This project is a significant step towards establishing a state-of-the-art international airport with world-class facilities. It aligns with our national objectives to boost tourism revenues, enhance the travel experience, and advance sustainable development in the Maldives," he said.

ADFD's Director General Al Suwaidi emphasised the fund's commitment to transformative infrastructure projects that foster economic and social development in partner countries.

"This funding reflects the critical role of ADFD in driving development through key initiatives. The modernisation and expansion of Velana International Airport will enable the Maldives to meet rising demand from its growing tourism sector, a vital contributor to the country's economic growth," he said.

He added that the initiative aligns with the Maldivian government's broader development goals: "ADFD is dedicated to deepening its partnership with the Maldives, advancing projects that enhance employment opportunities, improve infrastructure, and promote sustainable development."

ADFD has been an active partner in the Maldives' development since 1976, funding strategic projects across the transportation, energy, tourism, and housing sectors. These investments have significantly improved living standards for local communities and contributed to the country's economic resilience.

The new terminal spans 78,000 acres and will significantly expand VIA's capacity. The current international terminal, which handles 1.5 million passengers annually, will be replaced by the new facility, designed to accommodate up to seven million passengers each year.

The upcoming terminal will feature advanced amenities, including aero boarding bridges and the latest baggage handling systems. It will address the space limitations of the existing terminal, providing expanded areas for food and beverage outlets, retail shops, lounges, and other passenger services.

Once operational, the new terminal is expected to enhance the overall passenger experience and support the Maldives' growing status as a global tourism hub.

SOURCE : PSM

