



MALDIVES MEDIA

Ministry of Information and Arts

Republic of Maldives

2007



The current environment in which the media operates

A politically motivated gathering in the capital Male'



A political party meeting

PART 1 - Current Situation

For the first time political parties became functional in the Maldives in June 2005. Constitutional Assembly began its debate over the main features and principles of the new constitution. Parliament turned into a truly representative forum. Party rallies became a regular feature. Newspapers and magazines that had to queue for months and years for registration were allowed to instantly function. Administrative obstacles to registration and publication of newspapers and magazines were dismantled. Administrative penalties imposed by the Ministry of Information were uninstalled.

As expected, the Government having relaxed its cautious hold on the print media, dailies, magazines and newsletters started to spring overnight into existence. As also expected, almost every person able to write became a journalist, a writer, or a columnist, and instances of irresponsible journalism reached alarming proportions.

The need was felt to create a legal framework and a more conducive environment to help a free and responsible press flourish, and contain assaults on public morals, privacy, and national interest. This is encapsulated in the efforts undertaken now to create and enhance the “Institution of the Maldives Media”.

The Institutionalization of the Maldives Media is happening on 4 separate but parallel tracks:

- i. Instituting confidence building measures
- ii. Introduction of private media
- iii. Creation of the legal framework
- iv. Imparting of necessary training

*“Maldives opened for
private broadcasters on
28th March 2007”*



Signing ceremony of the private broadcasting license agreement 14 June 2007

PART 2 - Instituting Confidence Building Measures

Main confidence building steps taken so far include:

a) A weekly news conference organised by the Information Ministry where a different government authority meets the press. The press is facilitated a forum to raise issues of concern to the public related to the authority they meet each week.

b) A monthly meeting is organised on the 3rd day of each month beginning with the World Press Freedom Day 2006 where the senior management and editorial staff of each media outlet is invited to come into dialogue with the Ministry of Information.

c) Eight papers have been presented by the Ministry of Information in these monthly dialogues for discussion and decision with the press. These papers include:

- i. Forming a Maldives Media Association
- ii. Deciding a Maldives Media Code of Ethics
- iii. Creating a Maldives Press Club
- iv. Establishing a Maldives Institute of Mass Communication
- v. Providing a mechanism to recognize and award media products and performances
- vi. Outlining the rules of accreditation and registration of media personnel
- vii. Creating a media grievance unit at the Information Ministry
- viii. Framing channels of distributing publications to outer atolls and islands
- ix. Exchanging information and photographs amongst different mediums of the media

d) As a result of these monthly rounds of dialogue the Maldives Media Association came into being on 2 October 2006. The association is run by the local press themselves and is currently in the process of electing its office bearers.

e) A uniform code of ethics has also been agreed upon by the press. The code is to be adopted by the Media Association once it elects its office bearers.

PART 3 - Introduction of Private Media

Broadcast Media

On 28 March 2007, the Maldives opened for private broadcasting. Minister of Information and Arts Mohamed Nasheed made this announcement in parliament.

Just over two months after this announcement on 14 June 2007 the first three private broadcasters were licensed. Capital Radio 95.6 signed their agreement facilitating them to operate FM radio for the Male' region. The second to sign was, DhiFM 95.2 who would provide FM radio services nation wide. The third party to sign was Atoll Television who are licensed to provide nation wide and international TV services. A fourth party Far Away Holidays Private Limited signed their agreement on 3 July 2007 licensing them to provide FM radio to the Male' region, their station is known as Faraway.FM 96.6 3.

Broadcasting is allowed in the Maldives under a contract which is signed by the Information Ministry and the party interested in Broadcasting. There are three categories of broadcasters, i.e. State Broadcaster, Private Broadcasters, and Community Broadcasters.

A prospective broadcaster need not have a broadcasting infrastructure to obtain a broadcast license in the Maldives. A broadcaster could have established its own infrastructure and operations, or be a content producer/developer/provider who uses another party's infrastructure to broadcast content.

The broadcast content may be own/domestic productions

or acquired foreign content. However, all broadcasters are required to maintain a minimum floor of 12% local content for the later six months of the first year of broadcasting, and maintain a steady increase of 7% every year for ten years by the end of which, 75% of broadcast content would comprise of local content.

The Content Adjudication Committee consisting of nine members from different walks of life, will deliberate over contentious issues relating to broadcast content. In the event of a breach of broadcast rules listed in the contract or standards and guidelines given in the Code of Conduct, Classification Code, and Advertising Code, this committee would decide on the matter.

Once when the broadcasting bill in parliament is passed, broadcasting in Maldives would be governed by this law. Among several other things, the bill on broadcasting will also create a National Broadcasting Corporation that will amalgamate the state media of Television Maldives and the Voice of Maldives, allowing the state media to migrate into a full-fledged public service broadcaster enjoying editorial independence, independent management, statutory existence and guaranteed funding.

Print Media

As a gesture of the new open-door policy, the Ministry of Information had on 17 July 2005 registered within the same day all pending applications lodged for the registration of newspapers and magazines.

Today, there are six daily newspapers, 15 magazines and over 70 other publications registered. Out of this altogether 25 registered publications are in regular circulation including six daily newspapers publishing articles both in Dhivehi and English.

The Ministry is also playing a facilitator's role for the newspapers. Whenever there is a complaint or an obstruction, the Ministry tries to mediate with other departments to rectify the circumstances. Release has been secured for individuals arrested; press have been allowed to move with the police in covering protests and rallies; entry has been facilitated for papers who are not allowed into certain briefings; equal treatment of all papers irrespective of content has been advocated.

A set of six different bills related to the media have
been sent to the parliament
by 2006.



Members of the independent media and Information Ministry working on drafting one of the bills

The bills include:

- “Right to Freedom of Information”
- “Freedom of Press”
- “Maldives Media Council”
- “Broadcasting”
- “Registration of Publications”
- “Cable TV Services in the Maldives”

PART 4 - Creation of the Legal Framework

A set of six different bills related to the media have been formulated during the past two years and sent to the Parliament.

These include bills on:

- i. Right to Freedom of Information
- ii. Freedom of the Press
- iii. Maldives Media Council
- iv. Broadcasting
- v. Registration of Publications
- vi. Cable TV Services in the Maldives

Freedom of Information Bill

The purpose of the freedom of information bill is to eliminate the obstacles faced by reporters and the general public in obtaining information from government authorities. The new legislation would facilitate press freedom and would have a wider impact in the sense that it confers a general right on members of the public to seek access to information held by government authorities.

Bill on Freedom of the Press

The bill on freedom of the press prescribes the rights accorded to the citizens while publishing written work. It defines what is meant by the freedom of press and provides the constituent elements of the freedom. The bill also highlights what is not deemed to be part of the freedom and what offenses could be committed in contravention of the bill. It also brings within the meaning of press, both the print and electronic media.

Media Council Bill

The Maldives Media Council bill will facilitate the creation of an institution to work towards the enhancement and the establishment of press freedom in the country, enforce the code of ethics, and attend to various complaints against the press. It is to comprise of eight editors appointed by the press and seven responsible citizens elected by those eight editors.

A self regulatory body, the Media Council is created through legislation in order to give it acceptance and credibility within the society. An important function of this council would be to provide out of court settlements in relation to complaints against the media. It does not necessarily replace the powers of the judiciary, but the person who approaches the Media Council will have to wave his legal rights to involve any judicial process thereafter. The work of the Media Council will be to solve disputes through annulment, apology and publication of corrections. This Council is to act, not in substitution of the courts, but in addition to the courts.

The Maldives Media Council bill was drafted taking into account four different models which include the Australian Press Council, British Press Complaints Commission, Press Council of India and the Human Rights Commission of Maldives.

Bill on Broadcasting

As highlighted earlier in this paper, once its passed the bill on broadcasting would replace the agreement through which private broadcasters are currently allowed to operate in the Maldives. It would also provide for the current state broadcasters, Television Maldives and Voice of Maldives, to convert into Public Service Broadcasting, and also form the Broadcasting Commission.

Registration of Publications Bill

The bill mainly focuses on administrative requirements to obtain registration for newspapers and other publications. It defines the qualifications and responsibilities of editors. It outlines how extra editions, regional editions and supplements may be brought out. The bill also decides the least number of copies to qualify as a newspaper or publication and provides against the recycling of information.

Bill on Cable TV Services in Maldives

This bill focuses on how cable TV services can be provided in the Maldives. Some of the special focus areas in the bill is regulating the content which is aired, regulating cable TV service providers and determining the rates for cable TV services.

Till now there has been no substantial regulation or rules to govern cable TV services in Maldives. This bill would also look into creating a framework whereby monopolies and exclusivity would be kept under check and control in relation to cable TV service providers.

Current Standing, Media Bills

The first two media bills to be tabled in parliament are the Freedom of Press Bill and the Registration of Publications Bill. Discussions on these two bills are to begin in the month of July in parliament.

Recommendations and amendments proposed by International Media organisations on these bills would also be discussed in parliament.



First training programme for this year :
Political, Parliamentary and Court reporting, January 2007



Participants of the course from local media organisations with the trainer Mr. Terry FitzPatrick



PART 5 – Training

Press Forward Maldives

A campaign by the Ministry under the name Press Forward Maldives was launched on 21 January 2007. This campaign aims at strengthening the media environment in the country. Press Forward Maldives has three components to it which are:

- a - Conducting monthly training programmes for media personnel
- b - Publishing literature related to the media written in Dhivehi
- c - Conducting Media Sensitisation Workshops

The first training programme conducted under the Press Forward Maldives campaign was parliament, political and court reporting. Media personnel from both state and independent media organisations took part in this training programme. All the monthly training programmes under the Press Forward Maldives campaign is open for state as well as independent media personnel working for any registered media organisation in the Maldives. And all the training programmes carried out under the Press Forward Maldives campaign is free of charge for all participants.

PRESS FORWARD MALDIVES, Training Programmes 2007

No	Month	Topic	Info Ministry In collaboration with
1	January	Political, Court and Parliamentary Reporting	International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ)
2	February	Ethics of Journalism	- International Media Support - Sri Lanka Press Institute
3	March	Intensive Language Training (Dhivehi)	-
4	April	Photo Journalism	Commonwealth Broadcasting Association
5	May	- Intensive Language Training (English) - Reporting on Gender and Children's issues	- - UNICEF
6	June	- Feature Writing	Asia Media Information Communication Centre, AMIC
7	July	- News Reporting - Principles of Journalism	- American Embassy - Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development
8	August	- Creative Programming - Investigative Journalism	Open for negotiation
9	September	Profiling, Interviewing and Column Writing	Open for negotiation
10	October	- Environment Journalism - Media Management	- Ministry of Environment, Energy and Water/ InterNews - Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development
11	November	- Good Governance - Human Rights reporting	Open for negotiation
12	December	Elections Reporting	Asia Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development

Broadcast Training

As far as broadcast journalism is concerned, already a second round of training has been concluded, and a third round has begun for TV Journalists. It was in the month of April that VOM concluded its first training programme. These training programmes produce multi-tasking journalists for the requirements of Voice of Maldives and Television Maldives. The main aim of training personnel in this area is to station them in the TVM and VOM bureaus which operate from the atolls of Maldives.

Majority of the news broadcasters who have completed this course have been dispatched to the field. Stationed in different atolls of the Maldives, they engage in producing news reports from the different regions for broadcast through the state media.

It is also expected that, with the creation of the private broadcast media some of these trained people would be finding employment in the private sector.

Community-Based Broadcasting

In June 2007, UNESCO together with the Information Ministry and Voice of Maldives conducted a one day seminar and a training programme for parties interested in community based broadcasting. A first in the Maldives, community-based broadcasting is seen as a vital tool which can be utilised in the development of island communities.

Maldives Institute of Mass Communication, MIMC

A white paper on the creation of a Maldives Institute of Mass Communication in the year 2007 is being finalized after discussion with the private media. The government will create this institute to carry out the process of media-related training and research. This institute will follow the model journalism education curriculum released by UNESCO in June 2007.



A Special Focus is currently being given to producing literature related to the media in Dhivehi

PART 6 - Maldives Media – The Way Forward

The Maldivian media scene is currently enjoying an environment of freedom of the likes which they have never experienced in the country before. The Government has shown extreme tolerance and abstained taking any criminal proceedings. The underlining belief is that when total freedom was given to a community which never had that opportunity before, the media should be given a period of immunity in order to let the hitherto oppressed heat to be released through trial and error giving them time to become responsible and mature.

Already a level of maturity is being seen in the print media scene, where after the initial hype of expressing anger and venting out frustrations, is slowly giving way to a more balanced form of reporting.

Also a historic media milestone was reached on 28 March 2007 when the Maldives opened for private broadcasters.

Till then, Maldives only had the state broadcasters, TV Maldives and Voice of Maldives. From 28th March 2007, a new age in the Maldives media environment has begun. Currently there are four licensed private broadcasters in the Maldives. Atoll Television is licensed to broadcast nationwide and international TV, DhiFM 95.2 is licensed to provide nation wide FM radio, Capital Radio 95.6 and Faraway.FM 96.6 are both licensed to provide FM radio to the Male' region.

Looking at the broadcasting scene till today, TV Maldives, opened its 20th bureau on 20 March 2007. This bureau was opened in the island of Thulusdhoo in Kaafu Atoll. This means that every atoll in the Maldives, now has a TVM bureau.

The young newscasters stationed in these bureaus have been connecting the islands of Maldives through the stories they cover which are aired on national TV. Now the people in the

northern most island of Maldives have the possibility of seeing what is happening in the southern most island of the country and vice versa.

Moving to the area of producing media literature in Dhivehi, on 1 January 2007 the Ministry of Information launched a book titled “Principles and Standards the Maldives Media May Aim At”.

This book is mainly aimed at providing the local journalists with a guide in Dhivehi, especially for new journalists joining the industry and those journalists currently in the industry who are not fluent in English language. This book could also be utilized by students of journalism.

A book each was provided by the Ministry to all editors from the print media and state broadcasters.

A second publication, “Handbook on Journalism” is in its final stages of production and would soon be launched by the Ministry. Work is also in progress of finishing a book on broadcasting. The work of producing Dhivehi literature related to the media is a part of the Press Forward Maldives campaign run by the Ministry.

As a totally new venture exploring new mediums and methods of involving the public in the policy making process, the Ministry in February 2007 launched a blog titled “HYPHEN”. The first government blog to operate in Maldives, HYPHEN carries with it the slogan “Help Shape Policies.”

HYPHEN was launched with the thinking that more informed decisions could be made after assessing and considering public opinion through their comments, suggestions and constructive criticism which can be posted on this blog. “HYPHEN” since its creation has been acting as a link between the Ministry and the public, with its easy access to the local and international community and also to Maldivians who are living outside the Maldives.

[–]YPHEN can be reached at www.hyphen.gov.mv

Apart from a blog, the Ministry is currently in the process of launching a website where working journalists could join to post their stories, giving them an international forum to operate in. This news website would have its focus on providing up to date and credible news. An online forum would also be available for anyone interested to interact and contribute to the growth of the media environment of the Maldives, and this could be done from anywhere in the world.

While the year 2007 would go down in the media history of Maldives as the year when broadcasting was opened up for private parties, another important date on the media calendar for this year is 3 May, the World Press Freedom Day.

This year UNESCO and Asian Media, Information and Communication Centre, AMIC with the cooperation of the Maldives government held the South Asian Regional World Press Freedom Day in the Maldives. Close to 70 local media personnel and 15 foreign delegates from the region attended this conference. This two day event had the theme “Press Freedom and Development in South Asia.” Many topics related to the media and the region were discussed in the conference.

Other media related international and regional conferences held so far this year in the Maldives include the ABU Sports Group Meeting in June, the AIBD Annual General conference in July. The South Asian Media Summit is to be held in October.

Also this year has been an exciting one in terms of the many changes and progress which is shaping the current Maldives media landscape. Much work is currently on going to facilitate the way for establishing a stable media environment in the Maldives.

*World Press
Freedom Day
2007*



Press Freedom and Development in South Asia



Contact Info

Ministry of Information and Arts

Hon. Mohamed Nasheed, Minister of Information and Arts
Minister's Bureau: Tel: 3334330, Fax: 3334335,
Email: bureau@maldivesinfo.gov.mv

National Centre for the Arts

Hon. Hussain Shihab, Minister of State for Arts
Email: msa@maldivesinfo.gov.mv
Office: Tel: 3313456, Fax: 3316955, Email: nca@maldivesinfo.gov.mv

Television Maldives

Ali Khalid, Chief Executive Officer
Email: ali.khalid@tvm.gov.mv
Office: Tel: 3323105, Fax: 3325083

Voice of Maldives

Badhuru Naseer, Director General
Email: badru@vom.gov.mv
Office: Tel: 3322840, Fax: 3317273, Email: voiceofmaldives@vom.gov.mv

National Library of Maldives

Habeeba Hussain Habeeb, Assistant Executive Director
Email: habeebahh@nlm.gov.mv
Office: Tel: 3323945, Fax: 3313712, Email: nlm@nlm.gov.mv

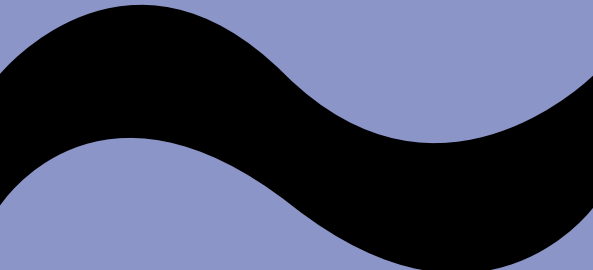
National Art Gallery

Mohamed Mamdooh Waheed, Arts Co-ordinator
Office: Tel: 3337724, Fax: 3337728, Email: gallery@dhivehinet.net.mv

National Bureau of Classification

Mohamed Hilmy, Assistant Director
Email: mhilmy@nbc.gov.mv
Office: Tel: 3312900, Fax: 3315351, Email: info@nbc.gov.mv

HELP SHAPE POLICIES
[-] HYPHEN
WWW.HYPHEN.GOV.MV



Ministry of Information and Arts
Rehendi Higon, Male',
Rep of Maldives,
Tel: 960 3334333, Fax: 960 3334334,
Email: informat@dhivehinet.net.mv
Website: www.maldivesinfo.gov.mv