

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



Date: 31 December 2020



Honorable Speaker of the People's Majlis, President **Mohamed Nasheed's New Year Message**

I wish everybody a Happy New Year.

2020 was a year like no other. The pandemic put normal life on pause. Tourism collapsed, thousands lost jobs and incomes, children missed schooling, some of us lost loved ones. Few of us will miss 2020.

The new year brings hope: of the speedy roll-out of the vaccine, and the eventual end to this horrible virus. I urge all Maldivians to take the coronavirus vaccine as soon as it becomes available.

I was pleased with the Majlis this past year, and the speed and efficiency of how it conducted its work, passing a number of important bills. The Majlis has come of age; it is now an institution that holds the Government to account, protects the Constitution, debates issues of national importance, and passes legislation crucial to our country's success.

I am particularly pleased that Majlis's efforts with the government and helped ensure the international border re-opened early to tourism, in July. In hindsight, re-opening the border — before almost any other country — was a good decision, and led to the mini-boom in tourism we currently enjoy. We would have been in a much worse position if we had kept the border closed. In addition, Majlis's resolutions helped oversight of Covid finances.

I also hope that 2021 sees our country come together and unite behind a peaceful and more tolerant vision for the future, without the bigotry and hatred we have sometimes seen in past months, particularly on social media. Instead of polarisation, I hope the year ahead can be one of compromise and reconciliation, with honest conversations with those whose views may differ from our own.



I look forward to the next year also seeing continued peace in our country, and peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region. We must work constructively with all our international partners, especially our neighbours and traditional friends and allies.

I am also excited about upcoming plans for our country's energy sector, and the promise that we can finally do away with dirty, costly, imported fossil fuels such as oil and gas. Instead, we should power our economy with what we have in abundance: the Maldivian sunshine. Given how fundamental it is to our future, we must have an open debate about our energy needs, with public consultation and complete transparency.

While there is a lot to look forward to in 2021, not everything will be smooth sailing: even if the resorts enjoy 80% occupancy and we sell more than 150k tonnes of tuna, our national finances will remain in terrible shape. The previous administration took on a mountain of debt — we would not have been able to pay it back even in the good times, let alone the bad. We are hopeful that China will be kind and give certainty to their verbal expressions of debt relief.

Despite our challenges, I remain optimistic. Maldivians have always persevered and prospered, in spite of the odds. I have every confidence in the character and ingenuity of our people and believe that our best times are yet to come.

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