

**Transparency Maldives condemns the continued Abuse of State Resources
during the official campaign period of the 2024 Parliamentary Elections**

4 April 2024 - The routine of promises and pledges ahead of an election has become customary and influences the voters' right to freely choose a candidate. We continue to observe the abuse of state resources, undermining the democratic competitive nature of elections and skewing the level playing field in favour of the incumbent. Transparency Maldives calls on the incumbent administration to halt the continued abuse of State resources and bring necessary legislative changes to make public officials more accountable and ensure a level playing field.

Since the start of the official campaigning period for the 2024 Parliamentary Election on 21 March 2024, it is concerning that multiple development mega projects are being announced back-to-back, especially during campaign visits. The stark increase in the number of political appointees and the use of State-owned enterprises to garner political support, further reinforces the concerns raised by Transparency Maldives ahead of the 2023 Presidential Election, paving way for a patronage and clientelist system through SOEs. This system poses a subtle yet more systemic and potentially more impactful threat to the electoral level playing field in the future, unduly favouring the incumbent.

Additionally, it is highly concerning that the scope and scale of infrastructure projects and socio-economic policies are being modified close to the election period, without a clear and transparent long-term plan or development strategy. The trend in changing and amending policy decisions ahead of an election, without the consideration of the needs, socio-economic and environmental impacts and in the absence of consultative processes raises further concerns especially in ensuring equitable and sustainable development, in addition to how much undue influence this has on voters' right to freely choose a candidate.

To ensure a level electoral playing field, we reiterate our calls on:

- The incumbent administration, including elected public officials, to stop the abuse of state resources and positions of power for electoral gain;
- The Anti-Corruption Commission to proactively enforce its guidelines on the abuse of state resources; and
- Relevant authorities including Anti-Corruption Commission, the Attorney General's Office and the Parliament to work together to strengthen the legal framework to address loopholes in holding the public officials to account for the abuse of state resources, including stipulating a timeframe for announcement of new projects, and ceremonies for the completion and inauguration of projects during an electoral period.

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