

GREEN TOURISM: WILL MALDIVES BECOME THE FIRST CARBON FREE NATION?



The Maldives is going to tax all tourists in order to gain funds for sustainable programs and save the island from sinking.

The Maldives, the smallest Asian country, is now planning to tax tourists. President Mohammed Nasheed wants the island Muslim country to become the **world's first carbon neutral nation**. It would not change the fate of the planet that much because the Maldives have only 309,000 inhabitants. Nevertheless, global warming and the climate change are worrying locals. The thing is that it is expected that most of the state will end up under water by 2100 because of the rising sea levels. The president would like the country to use only renewable energy sources instead of fossil fuels.

The new green tax would be \$3 per each tourist a day. It is a tax that definitely would not put off regular visitors of Maldives' luxury resorts. Rich visitors of this island nation are paying up to 15,000 dollars a night so 3 dollars is no big deal for them. Based on average numbers this tax would bring \$6.3 million annually to the Maldives government's coffers.

Right now, however, the Maldives' economy is ailing. They have recorded a sharp decline in tourism arrivals since this January. The tourism ministry expected the industry, which represents approximately quarter of Maldives GDP, to decline by 11 per cent in year-to-year comparison. The situation has improved a bit lately with positive August numbers. Such development made the experts to change their prediction to "only" a 7.4 per cent decrease.

President Nasheed claims there was too much spending in the past. He also wants to reduce the numbers of civil servants to cut government expenses. He might reduce the number of public servants by half. There are, however, fears that the president will use the lay-off plan to get rid of his own political opponents. One way or another to achieve their plans to become a carbon free nation Maldives will need foreign investments.

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