

PRESS RELEASE

MATATO Raises Serious Concerns Over Potential TMA Pilots' Strike and Its Implications for Maldives Tourism

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The Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) expresses deep concern over the reported plans by pilots of Trans Maldivian Airways (TMA) to suspend flight operations beginning 26 July, in strike of changes to their salary disbursement structure. Given TMA's crucial role in domestic air transfer logistics, any disruption could have immediate and widespread ramifications for the tourism sector — the backbone of the Maldivian economy.

TMA operates the world's largest seaplane fleet and serves as the primary mode of transportation between Velana International Airport and the country's many island resorts. A strike or suspension of flights would bring this critical link to a standstill, stranding travelers, causing logistical bottlenecks, and compromising guest experiences across the country.

This is not merely an internal labour dispute; it poses a serious threat to the national tourism ecosystem. The Maldives' entire tourism model is built on seamless arrivals and departures, and a disruption in this system could jeopardize the country's reputation as one of the most reliable and luxurious travel destinations in the world.

Tourists affected by such a strike would be at risk of missing international flights, being stranded at the airport or on island resorts, and facing significant inconvenience and unplanned expenses. Resorts, travel agencies, and airlines would be forced to manage a crisis far beyond their control, including rebookings, compensation, and reputational fallout.

Beyond immediate passenger issues, the broader economic impact could be severe. With the Maldives having won numerous global tourism accolades, including the title of World's Leading Destination, a disruption to service excellence could damage industry confidence and long-term visitor trust — especially in a highly competitive global travel market.

While MATATO acknowledges the right of workers to raise valid concerns, we urge all parties — TMA management, pilot representatives, and relevant government authorities — to engage in urgent dialogue and reach a resolution that avoids any operational disruption.

MATATO also emphasizes the need for broader regulatory clarity regarding foreign currency regulations and their downstream effects on tourism operations. As this situation reflects a larger challenge facing tourism companies under new monetary rules, MATATO stands ready to facilitate constructive dialogue between private sector operators and government authorities to find sustainable solutions.

The Maldives cannot afford a breakdown in its tourism transport infrastructure. MATATO calls for immediate action to ensure business continuity, protect the national brand, and preserve the Maldives' hard-earned reputation as a world-class destination.

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