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Printing In The Maldives

By

Adam Abdulla
PRINTING IN THE MALDIVES

Records indicate that printing started in the Maldives about 96 years ago. It is known that the first work in printing was done at Hulhudhoo, an island in the southernmost atoll of the Maldives, mainly for the purpose of providing certain printed matter needed in the field of education.

At approximately the same time, the government also got involved in the activity of printing, mainly for the purpose of keeping records. Due to various reasons, this activity was of a sporadic nature. There being, at times, no felt need for great amounts of printing to be done. The most efficient machine used at that time was the Litho-printing machine. The largest newspaper ever published in the Maldives was printed by this method. Other printing needed by the government was also done by this method. In addition, Gestetner and Ronco stencil duplicators soon came into use.

Even though the work of printing was done by the Government, books that needed to be published in good quality were printed abroad. In this manner thirteen books were printed abroad. Even though government-sponsored printing also progressed, the private sector got involved and advanced in the field.

The biggest printery in the Maldives now, Novelty Press, came into existence in 1965, with a Gestetner 264 as its sole hardware. They reached a satisfactory level in 1971. In 1975 the gift of a letter-press machine and embossing machine to Novelty ushered in the days of modern printing in the Maldives.

In 1977, the Moonlight Weekly Press, a privately-owned press, imported an offset printing machine. After about two years of newspaper printing, those facilities were presented to Novelty Press. This marked the beginning of the advance Printing by Novelty who now provides services in the nature of laminating, embossing, typesetting, hot-foil stamping and color printing. Machinery used include two-color offset machines, binding machines, folding machines, automatic letter-press and thread-sewing machine.

The private printing industry

Although as a whole moderate in scale and although each separate firm may have its full share of...
a healthy and thriving printing industry exists in the capital Male*. This industry may be described as follows:

- The largest press offers a full range of graphic services, from business card with raised printing up to prestigious 4 -colour process pictorial publications. Its market-orientation lies in the opportunities offered by the tourist industry: picture postcards, full-colour pictorial books of the natural beauty of Maldives, and the like. In this the company reaches the highest quality in printing. An emerging interest is catering for the packaging needs of the local industry, notably the fish-cannery.

The management considers to enter the export market.

- The main activities of the second-largest press are packaging (labels), business stationery, and social printing. The management considers to invest in equipment suited for 4-colour process printing, so as to acquire a part of the tourist industry-market.

- There is a new (one A2 offset press) operation -the main activity of which is the printing adn publishing of a daily newspaper; 10 to 12 pages tabloid, some of them in English but mainly Dhivohi, 1200 to 1500 copies sold in Male' everyday.

- There are three very small presses, engaged in the production of business stationery and social printing.

Journalism in Maldives

The first daily newspaper was published by the Government of Maldives fortyfive years ago in Lithopress. Within this fortyfive years period twelve newspapers were published. This includes weekly newspapers, fortnight papers were printed by using stencil duplicators.

The first offset printing was introduced by the governing body of Moonlight weekly papers. As a result of an attempt made to improve its quality in the years of nineteen seventees. The first newspaper printed in offset was Moonlight weekly in 1977.

Now we have two regular new papers. They are "Haveeru" and "Aafathis". Out of this two only Haveeru is printing in offset by Island Printers. Aafathis still prints by stencil duplicators.

I would like to bring up to your notice that we have only one newsletter which publishes weekly for the youths. Somehow this newsletter also publishes daily during the national soccer tournament and freely distributed to the spectators in the stadium.

Journalism in Maldives was progressing within this fortyfive years period. Circulation of papers were increased. This is very clear evidence that the reading habits has gone up in the country.

I do hope this great gathering of AMIC will give us benefits and hope.
It is my pleasure to thank the organising body of AMIC and participants who are with us today. Thank you all once again.