

REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

The Republic of Maldives, 400 miles to the south-west of Sri Lanka, consists of some 2,000 low-lying coral islands (only 220 inhabited), grouped into 12 clearly defined clusters of atolls but divided into 19 for administrative purposes. Area 115 sq. miles (298 sq. km). Population (census 1971), 118,818. Estimate (1975) 123,000. Capital Malé (15,000 inhabitants). The people are Moslems, and Islam is reflected in the constitution and the judicial system. The islands are covered with coconut palms and yield millet and fruit as well as coconut produce.

The official language is Divehi, which is akin to Elu or old Sinhalese.

President and Prime Minister:: Amir Ibrahim Nasir.

British Ambassador: H. Smedley, CMG, MBE (resides in Colombo).

National flag: Red with a green panel bearing a white crescent.

The islands were under British protection from 1887 to mid-1965. They now enjoy complete independence under the agreement signed in Colombo on 26 July 1965. The Maldives became a republic on 11 Nov. 1968. The President is elected every 4 years by universal adult suffrage and is assisted by a cabinet of his own choice. The cabinet is responsible to the *Majlis* (House of Representatives) which consists of 54 members elected every 5 years.

The 1965 agreement confirmed the agreement of 1956, which allowed the British Government staging and communications facilities on Gan island and part of Hittadu island in Addu atoll, the southernmost of the group. The RAF staging post on Gan will close down in 1976. There is another civil airstrip at Hulule in the Malé atoll, some 300 miles from Gan.

The Maldivian economy is based on the fishing industry. Bonito ('Maldive fish') is the main export commodity. In addition, Maldives run a merchant fishing fleet of over 40 vessels. Tourism, introduced in 1972, is expanding. There is no direct taxation.

US Ambassador: Christopher Van Hollen (resides in Colombo).

Pell, H. C. P., *History, Archaeology and Epigraphy of the Maldive Islands*. Ceylon Govt. Press, Colombo, 1940

MALI

République du Mali

AREA AND POPULATION. The frontiers of the former territory were readjusted in 1904, 1933, 1948 and 1954 (see THE STATESMAN'S YEAR-BOOK, 1959, p. 1011). The Republic now covers an area of 1,204,021 sq. km with an estimated population of 5.6m. on 1 Jan. 1974. The most densely populated and richest of the 19 districts are those of San, Mopti, Sikasso, Koutiala, Bamako and Ségou. Bamako, the capital (population, 170,000), Mopti (32,400), Kayes (28,500), Ségou (28,100), Sikasso (21,800), Gao (15,400), San (14,900) and Tombouctou (9,000) are important towns.

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNMENT. The Republic of Mali became independent on 22 Sept. 1960, after having been the territory of French Sudan and, from Jan. 1959 to 22 Sept. 1960, a partner (together with Senegal) of the Federation of Mali. The Republic was admitted to the UN on 29 Sept. 1960.

A National Liberation Committee assumed all political and administrative functions on 21 Nov. 1968.

Prime Minister: Moussa Traoré. *Foreign Affairs*: Jean-Marie Koné.

National flag: Three vertical stripes of green, yellow, red.