

Maldives: Film in a Bollywood Colony

By Sophia Purekal

From the first under/above water film produced in the Maldives in 1957, foreign filmmakers have come to love this country of about 1,200 small islands for shooting underwater film, coral reef footage, and surfing shots. Hindi films are a hit there, and the country does appear to have at least one production house, EMA, that emulates Bollywood.

All forms of Maldivian media are controlled through the centralized government. The past decade has seen strident opposition against President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who has kept himself in power for almost thirty years now. A government censorship board silences any media critical of Gayoom. Only just this year, in June 2005, has the one viable opposition party – the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) – been allowed to establish a domestic headquarters. One of their young members, Jennifer Latheef, is an artist and independent film producer who has focused on the prevalence of sexual abuse in the Maldives. She was illegally detained in September 2003 after a pro-democracy rally, most likely because of her work and her outspokenness against government censorship. She is free now, however, and the political situation has been improving.

Sources

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