

Seychelles looking to diversity economy beyond tourism post-Covid

By [Omar Mohammed](#)

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NAIROBI, Kenya - Seychelles said on Wednesday it is looking to diversify its economy beyond its mainstay of tourism into areas such as fisheries after visitor numbers were battered by restrictions to arrest the spread of Covid-19.



A general view of Seychelles beach February 29, 2012. REUTERS/Ahmed Jadallah/File Photo

The Indian Ocean archipelago saw revenue from tourism plunge by 61%, a loss of \$322m last year, as tourist arrivals dropped by 70%. Authorities closed off the island nation early in the coronavirus pandemic to stem its spread.

The move starved resorts, cruise ship ports and nature reserves of visitors.

"It's been a massive challenge," Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Sylvestre Radegonde told the Qatar Economic Forum on Wednesday.

"The economy depends still on tourism. We are looking now at diversifying the economy, moving into other sectors like fisheries," he said.

"Overnight we saw the airport closed, no planes coming, no visitors coming in, and the economy just was on its knees."

Other sectors of the economy which rely on tourism to thrive were at a standstill.

"That is why we pushed for vaccination, maximum people vaccinating, so we could reopen the borders as we did on March 25 this year," Radegonde said.

Seychelles has been called one of the highest vaccinated nations in the world, employing the Sinopharm, Sputnik and Covishield shots.

It has administered close to 138,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine so far, which, assuming every person needs two doses, is enough to have inoculated about 70.5% of the country's population, according to a Reuters analysis.

But the archipelago has also seen a surge in infections.

Radegonde said the high rates of vaccination had led some people to relax their guard. "People became a bit over-confident, dropped their guard and forgot about social distancing, started partying," he said.

An increased rate of contact tracing may also have contributed to the reporting of more positive cases, he added.

The country is now concentrating on vaccinating the remaining 5,000-6,000 people who are still to be inoculated before it can contemplate any booster shots that might be needed, Radegonde said.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reporting by Omar Mohammed; Editing by Jan Harvey

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