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DOMESTIC

The extraordinary genesis and uncertain destiny of Derrick's Sandbank | 29 August 2023



The 'Derrick's Sandbank (Photo: Contributed)

An enchanting tale of nature's dynamic forces unfolds as we witness the remarkable growth of a newfound land.

Born from the embrace of tropical cyclone Fantala in the midst of April 2016, an island of unprecedented origins has graced the Farquhar Atoll.

This remarkable phenomenon, meticulously monitored by the Island Conservation Society (ICS), continues to captivate as this nascent landmass defies expectation and expands.

Bestowed with the name 'Derrick's Sandbank' by the Islands Development Company (IDC), a venerable institution of the state, this burgeoning land carries a name steeped in maritime history. It pays homage to a relic of the seas, a cargo crane affectionately referred to as a "Derrick," which found its resting place amidst the remnants of a once-mighty vessel.

Situated in an ethereal location, Derrick's Sandbank is nestled some 16 kilometers to the southwest of the IDC settlement on the cherished north island of Farquhar.

Its coordinates place it six kilometres westward from the tranquil shores of Goëlettes.

From humble beginnings encompassing a mere 0.3 hectares in the annals of 2015, this emergent isle has blossomed into a realm of magnificence, now spanning a staggering 7.8 hectares as attested by the latest comprehensive data gleaned in 2023.

Seychelles NATION had the chance to speak with the director for conservation and science of ICS, Gregory Berke to get his input on the situation.

He noted that there could be a whole number of different factors involved.

"With atolls such as Farquhar, you often have sandbanks forming in shallow areas and recently, there were two major storm events that hit Farquhar, and during these events you get large amounts of sand going around," he stated.

"So it is not uncommon for large amounts of sandbank to form, some of the other islands constantly have a shifting number of sandbanks."

He explained that the sandbank that is on Farquhar island has now remained as a sandbank for a considerable number of years.

He also commented that in a sense it can be attributed to climate change due to the intensity and frequency of large storms and large weather events are in sync.

When asked the question of whether it should be the opposite due to climate change often being linked with rising sea levels to devour islands rather than brand new ones being created, Mr Berke explained that it "does not mean the sea level is not rising, the sea level on average is rising in Seychelles, however, when you get large amounts of sand it builds up similar to sand dunes."

Mr Berke underscores the profound concern posed by severe climatic conditions, foreseeing the potential peril of the island's eventual submergence into the depths.

Sunny Esparon

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