

The islandchief

your trusted independent travel news

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SEIZE THE MOMENT WITH
AMIR MANSOOR
OWNER, THE STANDARD, HURUVALHI MALDIVES

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IATA AND PASSUR AEROSPACE LAUNCH
ITOP GLOBAL CONTINGENCY PORTAL
TO ASSIST AIRLINE INDUSTRY IN
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HOW MALDIVIAN TOURISM CAN
SURVIVE COVID-19

By Sonu Shivdasani

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Dear Readers,

One of the many things this extraordinary plight we are currently facing has taught us about is our “human-ness”. The non-discriminatory nature of the coronavirus puts each and every one of us at risk of being affected by it, although to varying degrees, regardless of our socioeconomic status, class, race, geography or age – quite the thought-provoking concept. However, it's true, our biggest and most necessary transformations typically come in the wake of crises, and I'm sure we can all relate to it at this moment in our lives.

All over the world people are shoving their differences aside to support a friend or family member, the community or a country. The “noise” that usually emanates from politics, the media and various other divisions within a society has changed its rhythm. Now we hear the sound of consoling words being exchanged, people carrying out acts of kindness that they wouldn't have done before – like the young helping out their elderly neighbours with the groceries, people calling up their families more often, nations sending each other medical supplies, and citizens cheering on from the bottom of their hearts for health workers and first responders putting their lives at risk each and every day, working hard to save the human race. What we are collectively going through at this moment in time invites a whole new world order of the greatest levels of global collaborations. It provides us with a prototype of the lengths we can achieve when we work together on a large scale. If we let it, this could even open up opportunities for world peace.

This month, The islandchief highlights a few measures taken by companies to support citizens and bring communities back together; such as airlines reuniting the stranded with their families, an online lodging platform facilitating free housing for healthcare workers around the world, and international organisations working together towards one goal.

What's more, we had an interesting conversation with Mr. Amir Mansoor (pg. 12), owner of super-luxury glamour property The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives and the amazing Carpe Diem liveaboards, about his philosophy, creating a sense of community for guests and employees, the evolving boating industry, and how he achieves a work-life balance.

For the explorers at heart, Shipwrecks of Maldives (pg. 18) guides you through seven fascinating shipwreck sites spotted around the ocean bed – the perfect guide for those who dream of feasting their eyes on the psychedelic marvels beneath the Maldivian waters. The article also introduces a brand-new segment to The islandchief; Connecting the Dots, covering stories from the far-flung archipelago, its people, history, culture and the country's natural beauty.

Welcome to the April issue of The islandchief, reminding you during these rather unprecedented times, not to give in to widespread panic. The COVID-19 crisis might be causing stress and fear, but it has also ignited a wave of kindness around the globe. Ironically, while tackling coronavirus requires physical distancing, it could very well bring us all closer together. By sticking together and supporting those around us, we can hopefully make the uncertain weeks and months ahead a little easier.

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MALDIVIAN to Charter Special Cargo Flights

The national carrier - Maldivian - has announced that a special charter service will be launched to fly cargo freighters amidst global pandemic, COVID-19.



The cargo flights will be chartered to the following destinations; Trivandrum and Chennai of India, Thailand and Dubai. Additional destinations will be included to the current line-up based on demand, informs Maldivian.

Addressing the local media on the occasion, Managing Director of Maldivian Mr. Mohamed Rizvee stated that the cargo flights and airline staff

are prepared to provide any assistance that the government may require during this slope in the Maldives' economy. With this decision, Maldivian plays a key role in the COVID-19 response by transporting essential supplies, medical samples and personnel.

In light of the global pandemic, the airline had previously also announced changes to the call

centre and Viber platform service's operating hours commencing 19th March onward. Both services will be available Sundays through Thursdays from 1000hrs to 1500hrs. These services will be closed on Saturdays and Fridays, while the Maldivian ticketing office is closed until further notice. However, customers also have the option to book their tickets via the Maldivian app downloadable from Google Play and the App Store.

Maldivian is the flag carrier of the country and the leading domestic carrier in the Maldives. Maldivian currently operates flights to 15 airports, which include international airports; Velana International Airport, Hanimaadhoo International Airport, Gan International Airport, Villa International Airport, Maafaru International Airport, and domestic airports; Baa Dharavandhoo, Raa Ifuru, Thaa Thimarafushi, Dhaalu Kudahuvadhoo, Gaaf Alif Kooddoo, Gaaf Dhaal Kaadedhoo, Laamu Kadhdhoo, Haa Dhaal Kulhudhuhfushi, Gnyaviyani Fuvahmulah, and Shaviyani Funadhoo Airport.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

Qatar Airways: Keeping the Skies Open and Getting People Home



Qatar Airways is continuing to keeping the skies open and getting as many people home as the airline possibly can in these challenging times.

Their state-of-the-art aircraft with the most advanced air filtration systems, equipped with industrial-size HEPA filters that remove 99.97% of viral and bacterial contaminants from recirculated air, provide the most effective protection against infection. This, combined with strict bio-security screening of staff will provide safe continued operations of a significant number of flights to reunite people with their loved ones.

Qatar Airways' commitment to getting people home stepped up on 24th March with; 10,000 extra seats added to its network; The provision of charter services to Europe and the US from Asia; The addition of extra flights to Paris, Perth and Dublin from Doha; Upgrading services to Frankfurt, London Heathrow and Perth with the

addition of the Airbus A380 on those routes.

"Figures for the last seven days show load factors of over 80 percent for flights to the UK, France and Germany, with a fall to 36 percent for outbound services from those countries, illustrating the demand for homeward travel.

"Qatar Airways has flown more than 100,000 passengers home in the last seven days while 72 percent of passengers carried on 24th March were nationals flying to their country of origin.

"Working with embassies around the world, the airline has operated one-off services from destinations such as Phnom Penh, Denpasar, Manila and Kuala Lumpur to Europe. More than 5,000 passengers were flown

home by these services over the last week, a number that is expected to more than triple over the next week.

"Qatar Airways is currently operating flights to 75 destinations, though this number may reduce as nations introduce tighter restrictions."

A full list of operational routes can be seen at <https://www.qatarairways.com/en/travel-alerts/COVID-19-update.html>

Additionally, Qatar Airways recently launched a new commercial policy to allow all passengers the flexibility to alter travel plans up to three days prior to departure for flights booked till 30th September 2020. For more information visit qatarairways.com/travelwithconfidence.

IATA and PASSUR Aerospace Launch ITOP Global Contingency Portal to Assist Airline Industry in Managing COVID-19



PASSUR® Aerospace Inc., a global leader in digital operational excellence, has responded to a request from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) by developing a global portal to assist the airline industry in managing disruptions caused by COVID-19. The ITOP Global Contingency Portal (GCP) will share critical aviation operational information around the world in real time.

ITOP GCP is modelled on the existing IATA Tactical Operations Portal (ITOP) solution, developed and maintained by PASSUR. A collaborative information and advisory service, ITOP GCP notifies aviation stakeholders globally about critical updates, news, directives, and developments related to COVID-19. Registered users receive alerts ranked by severity and priority on any device, and have access to the GCP website providing a variety of

additional resources and information including, but not limited to: COVID-19 airport closures, airspace restrictions, international and domestic passenger admittance and screening rules, national travel restrictions, and more.

In order to accelerate adoption and provide much needed assistance to the air transportation community, IATA and PASSUR are providing access to ITOP GCP at no charge to all qualified industry stakeholders. There are currently more than 1,700 registered users, representing 202 airlines, 59 airport operators, and 18 Air Navigation Service Providers (air traffic control organizations) using this system as of 1st April 2020. Furthermore, IATA in partnership with PASSUR has opened registration to the ITOP GCP service to non-IATA members. Access is available to aviation professionals and is governed through an established, secure qualification process. Further information on how to access ITOP

GCP is being distributed through established industry trade group channels.

"We are honoured to be in a position to support our industry at this very challenging time," said Brian Cook, CEO of PASSUR Aerospace. "ITOP reminds us all of the power of collaboration, information sharing, and common operational awareness across regions, time zones, cultures and organizations – the industry's most critical problems can only be addressed when we work together."

"We are pleased to be partnering with PASSUR to support the airline industry with a platform to enable sharing of critical real-time operational information, and thank PASSUR for agreeing to waive any associated charges during this grave crisis," said Gilberto Lopez Meyer, IATA's Senior Vice President, Safety and Flight Operations.

NEW OPENINGS

Fari Islands to Open in Fourth Quarter

Fari Islands – a lively integrated Marina Village & Resort Destination – is set to open in the fourth quarter of this year. Developed by privately held luxury real estate developer and hotel owner based in Singapore Pontiac Land, the four-island Utopia will provide world-class super-luxe living & recreation facilities.



In line with Pontiac Land's defining hallmarks of excellence and exceptional service, luxury hotel operators The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company and Capella Hotel Group will manage properties on Fari Islands. Recognised for their tailored approach to hospitality, each brand offers complimentary but distinguishing experiences, ensuring that every visit to the archipelago is uniquely perfect, for any occasion. Spaces have been masterfully designed by renowned architects; Studio Mk27 (by Marcio Kogan), Kengo Kuma & Associates and Kerry Hill Architects to create a delicate balance of serene and social.



This will be Capella Hotel Group's first luxury opening in the Maldives. Capella Hotel Group is affiliated with Pontiac Land Group, who owns and develops a collection of luxury properties including hospitality, commercial, residential and medical office properties. Capella Hotel Group will be debuting their new brand, Patina Hotels & Resorts in the Maldives' Fari Islands. Patina Maldives Fari Islands will be their very first launch, while properties in Ubud, Bali and Sanya, China, are also being developed.

Patina is a sophisticated lifestyle brand that offers an engaging and authentic experience in a positive, vibrant setting that is distinctive, stylish, and always immersive. The resort will feature 90 beach and water villas, ranging from one to three bedrooms, and 20 Fari Studios.

Part of Marriott International, The Ritz-Carlton will be opening their first Maldivian property. The Ritz-Carlton Maldives Fari Islands will be joining Marriott's other properties St Regis, W, Westin, Sheraton and JW Marriott already represented in the Maldives.

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives Fari Islands will feature 100 luxurious land and over water villas, and 5 food and beverage outlets that will take guests on an awakening culinary experience. Recently, the highly experienced veteran of the Maldivian resort industry, Mark Hehir from The Small Maldives Island Co. (TSMIC) was appointed as the General Manager of the resort.

Guests at either resort will have access to the picturesque Fari Marina and Beach Club. Built around the vibrant Beach Club,

Fari Marina features charming boutiques and a selection of handpicked, upscale food and beverage options. Fari Islands will push the boundaries of Maldivian hospitality, pursuing creative collaborations with renowned names in art, music, culinary arts, photography, fashion and design. Programmes are designed to foster a sense of community, whilst maintaining a deep appreciation for the Maldives' natural beauty.

Fari Islands is the second integrated tourism development in the Maldives. The four-island Rah Falhu Huraa lagoon development in North Male Atoll is 45 minutes away from Velana International airport via speedboat and 10 minutes by seaplane.



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IN A NUTSHELL

Seaside Finolhu Kick-Starts Exciting Transformation Project

Maldives' luxury island resort, Seaside Finolhu, announced on 24th March its temporary closure to bring forward its anticipated transformation project starting from 25th March 2020. The resort is set to complete its major upgrade and welcome its guests in July 2020.



This much-anticipated transformation will cover guest villas, restaurants, public areas and a state-of-the-art indoor golf studio. Aiming to modernise the property and its facilities, Finolhu will be developing a distinctive barefoot-chic atmosphere that combines Maldivian-inspired touches with ultra-luxury modernity.

Marc Reader, Seaside Finolhu's General Manager says: "Our passion and cordiality as hosts is to bring the finest guest experience. We see the importance of offering spaces that make people feel elegant and cherished, along with providing exceptional hospitality. This transformation project is perfectly in line with our vision to be a design-driven resort that appeals to international high-end affluent travellers. We're excited to see the anticipated innovative developments during the first half of the year."

The resort recently earned its place as the first and only resort in the Maldives to be included in Design Hotels' prestigious international portfolio. The transformation is a key milestone for the resort as it successfully meets the Design Hotels' criteria of embodying quality, style, and holistic hospitality concepts. With award-winning London-based design studio Muza Lab in charge of the resort's redesign, Finolhu's new look will embody a mesmerising mélange of colours and symmetrical patterns that complement the luxury island resort's pristine natural beauty in a stunning representation of joy, wonder and a feeling of escaping time.

Muza Lab's co-founder Nathan Hutchins shared their vision of the resort's new concept, "Our new design direction focuses on the lens of the "Kaleidoscope"; the changing colours, patterns and textures representing moments of discovery, wonder and delight".

Throughout the resort, vibrant pops of colour are incorporated and distinct areas are assigned to a unique colour spectrum.

Further elaborating the planned improvements, Muza Lab's co-founder Inge Moore explained: "This playful alternation of patterns, geometry and colours is what guests will now experience when they visit Finolhu. They will be surprised and will marvel at what they see. Artisans from all over the world have created special works for the resort. Artistic tiles from Turkey, chandeliers and wickerwork from South Africa and wooden craftwork from Java transform the villas, bars & restaurants, the fitness room and, last but not least, the Oceaneers kids club into an exotic playground."

In line with the resort upgrades, Finolhu will also introduce the new names and concepts for its four restaurants and spa. Operated by the German luxury hotel chain, Seaside Collection, the resort's new developments in all aspects are set to align with the Seaside Collection brand, introducing Finolhu as a new market leader in the Maldives.

Translated as "sandbox", Finolhu is one of the finest island resorts located in the UNESCO-protected Baa Atoll, 30 minutes by seaplane from Velana International Airport, or 20 minutes by domestic flight to Dhavandhoo Airport followed by a short speedboat ride. The resort comprises of 125 stylish beach and overwater villas, four beachside restaurants, fully-equipped spa and wellness facilities, and the first Beach Bubble in the Maldives. Whilst popular with honeymooners, the extensive resort is very family-friendly with plenty of activities and is famous for its entertainment.



Raffles Maldives Meradhoo Offers Buyout Package of 1 Million USD

The ultra-luxe Raffles Maldives Meradhoo in Gaaf Alif Atoll now offers guests unprecedented privacy with its 'You Run Raffles Maldives' buyout package.



Priced at a well-rounded 1 million USD, the four-night, five-day stay includes all 21 luxurious villas and complete access to the resort's bars, restaurants, wellness facilities, and yacht for up to 70 guests. The resort will also offer an abundance of exclusive experiences and special privileges, as well as allow guests to tailor their stay to meet precise specifications.

Accessible by a 55-minute domestic flight from Velana International Airport followed by a 15-minute speedboat ride from Kaadedhdhoo Airport, Raffles Maldives Meradhoo lies in one of the most remote and unblemished corners of the Maldives. On top of being a beautifully lush private island, it also boasts the legendary service of Raffles, complete with Raffles Butlers.

As part of the You Run Raffles experience, guests will be given access to an additional 'deserted island' that can be transformed into an epic

celebration or adventure space. The resort's event planners will be on-hand to create any experience you wish, from a tropical playground to a sunset beach party with a celebrity DJ. Additionally, romantics have the option of a night-time champagne-and-stargazing session guided by a personal astronomer.

Food will also play a central role during the experience. The culinary team at Raffles Maldives Meradhoo will be on-hand at all times to create special menus and tailored dining experiences. Guests will be invited to dine whenever and wherever they like. The resort boasts three restaurants including The Firepit – a beautiful alfresco barbecue space overlooking the Indian Ocean.

The adventurous will be invited to jump aboard the resort's very-own Azimut yacht. Guests can choose from a variety of adventures from dolphin-watching to snorkeling on the

resort's house reefs. The two reefs are home to scores of fish species, from fluorescent parrotfish to handsome blacktip sharks and 22 gentle hawksbill turtles.

For those coming to relax, the package also includes incomparable treatments at Raffles Spa. Guests can choose from Biologique Recherche® facials, Aromatherapy Associates massages, and many more bespoke treatments.

As part of the resort's charitable nature, the rate includes a five percent charitable donation, split between the Maldives' Marine Center and the Olive Ridley Project, an NGO that works to protect sea turtles.



Sheraton Maldives Fullmoon Resort and Spa: Coastal Conservation



Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa has teamed up with environmental consultancy Reefscapers to develop a tailored marine biology programme where coral frames are placed around the resort's house reef, which will offer guest-oriented activities to save these underwater ecosystems.

As part of the initiative, coral frames are placed around the resort's house reef which, as a result of the 2016 El Niño, saw unusually warm waters globally causing widespread coral bleaching. The initial stages of the artificial reef project were successfully completed in February 2020. Fifty new coral frames were transplanted around the resort by the experts from Reefscapers, representing an impressive 3,000 coral fragments harvested from healthy donor colonies on the natural reef, and successfully transplanted to the coral frames located in the shallow lagoons around the island.

Marriott has announced a new programme for 2020 to save some of the most diverse ecosystems on our planet; coral reefs.

Sheraton Maldives will also appoint a marine biologist to be stationed at the resort to lead weekly interactive frame building activities, conduct marine life educational workshops and guided snorkelling tours.

A statement by Reefscape read: "It is hoped the coral from these frames will eventually grow onto the natural reef substrate and will improve the coral cover to build the marine habitat, increasing the number of species of fish and sea life."

The structures are built locally in Baa Atoll Fulhadhoo, providing an alternative business to the 250 inhabitants whose previous source of employment was solely fishing.

In line with the resort's sustainability focus, it has also launched complimentary speedboat transfers to and from Velana International Airport – a first for the Maldives – which takes a quick 15 minutes.



90%

of airlines worldwide
are in distress



90%

of crew are idling
due to no trips



200+

Artists remains with no work



80%

of supply boats with no traffic



85%

Speed boats without movements



120+

Resorts temporarily closed



100+

Tour guides with no work



150+

Photographers with no shoots



100%

Guesthouses closed



100%

of souvenir shops with no visitors



over
500

Airport reps with
no one to meet and greet



over
2000+

Dive & Water sports professionals
with zero activities



Drop of
75%

Daily income



96%

Seaplanes no longer at sea



95%

of cargo clearance workers
with no work

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ANTHONEY'S CHICKEN

New Anthoney's Farms (Private) Ltd. (NAF), Is one of the leading chicken food manufacturing and poultry farming companies in Sri Lanka being in the business for more than 30 years. Since then NAF has advanced its production and has formulated a strategic expansion to accommodate ultra-modern development in the poultry farming and processing technology to stand above the world acclaimed standards. NAF is one of the largest exporters and the certified chicken meat food supplier to world's renowned franchise food chains. NAF's utmost endeavor is to cater the pain of hunger of the people to have the "right" food for nourishment which NAF is engaged in producing Anthoney's "HarithaHari" Chicken.

SEIZE THE MOMENT with AMIR MANSOOR

Amir Mansoor, a former accountant and professional tennis player-turned-businessman is the owner of super-luxury glamour property The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives and the amazing Carpe Diem liveaboards. Amir is also known as the leading Food & Beverage Supplier to the island nation, and the first to launch international food franchise outlets in the Maldives - Marrybrown and Secret Recipe.



Please tell us a little about yourself.

During the early days of my career, I was actually a professional accountant. This was before I ventured into my own business and joined one of the leading trading business brands in the Maldives, Lily Enterprises Pvt Ltd. Our focus at Lily was sourcing unique products from the food and beverage sector around the globe to the nation's growing hospitality industry through Lily F&B Suppliers. I was the Managing Director then and handled daily operations.

I also enjoy playing Tennis and have received tremendous achievements in sports during my younger days as the National Champion for a continued period of time. I still continue to have a balance and keep the spirit of sports alive in addition to being engaged in business.

How has your past experience influenced your management philosophy?

Well, most of my experience and knowledge comes from the trading sector; food and beverage to

be exact, where I supply as well as own outlets. Besides that, I also own some of the finest liveaboards – the Carpe Diem fleet – and our most recent addition, The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives. I believe that when it comes to management, things have to be focused and the latest trends must be embraced in a small and competitive market. So, we always assure to monitor, be aware and adapt to the global and local trends in the businesses my companies are involved in.

What were the key challenges during the pre-opening of The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives?

I think the biggest challenge faced in the tourism industry is rather similar to other segments and businesses; hiring and retaining staff. There is always a need for qualified and professional staff at all fronts whether it is in administration, maintenance, kitchen, housekeeping or front desk – but a lack of skilled and educated graduates is always a challenge. Our population is a mere 400,000 people, serving over 1.6 million tourists each year.

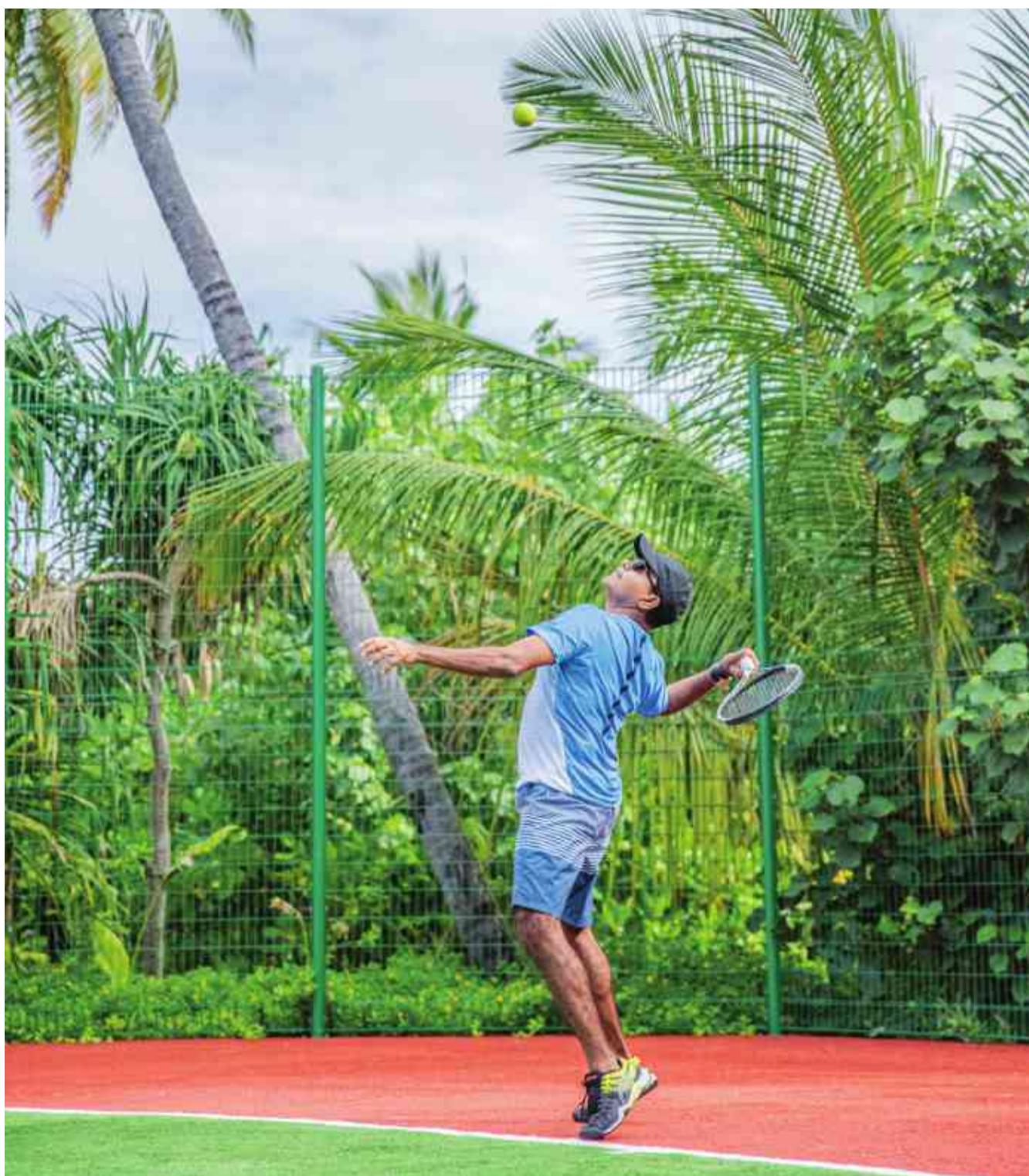
As a hotelier, how do you create a sense of community for your guests and employees?

I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to create a good and comfortable environment for the staff as well as guests. Employees are the driving force behind every business, and they are part of the success. We ensure to have the best teams in all areas, though it can be quite challenging. Nevertheless, our businesses have sustained the numbers and we have employees who have been with us for many years in our companies and ventures. At our companies, salaries and incentives have always been paid on time no matter what as we believe that assurance and security are crucial. Some very good examples are our boats, our trading division and the food outlets where we have some of the most long-serving employees. We make sure that all our employees know they are important to our operation. Likewise, they feel that the business is their very own.

In terms of our guests, we have always looked into their every little requirement during their stay with us. We also ensure that they have a wonderful time in the Maldives which they can carry back as treasured memories. Although the Maldives has traditionally been seen as a couple's destination, The Standard approached it with a fresh set of eyes. The resort offers an unmatched combination of relaxation, social life and vibrant cultural programmes that welcome groups of friends or singles looking to meet others or just reset and recharge in paradise. No Standard stay is ever complete without a night to remember; so whether dancing to tribal beats at a beach bonfire or at the glass bottom, overwater nightclub, the only thing that will end the fun is the sunrise.

You pioneered opening the first franchise restaurant in the Maldives almost a decade ago. What impact would the franchises coming in now have on local businesses, and will these brands be able to survive in the Maldives? What effect would these franchises have on the Maldivian economy?

Marrybrown was the very first franchise food outlet in the Maldives which opened in 2011. Then in 2016, the second brand – Secret Recipe – was launched in Male' and in 2018 at Velana International Airport. We strive to maintain the same taste, service and experience from day one till date. That's where we stand different. Now, there are a few other franchise food outlets opened and I believe that



this gives our constant customers the chance to have a variety of food experiences and compare taste and value. Customer-loyalty is based not only on relationship, but on the value of what's being offered. The impact to all brands would be the same, each would have a lot of customers in the beginning. What's been offered to the customer could only retain them. Food is something very personal.

As an Executive Board Member of the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM), how do you see the boating industry evolving?

I've been in the boating sector for a good period of time and invested in evolving styles, standards and services of boats. I have my concerns over the market, which has become quite challenging due to allowing foreign-owned, lower standard boats to operate in Maldivian waters as "bare boats". These bare boats don't have to pay any import duty and can enter with limitless mounds of supplies stocked up to compete with local boat owners. It's not only about the boat owners and operators, but the local craftsman who lose their business in boatbuilding. Maldives have become one of the finest destinations of leisure boat building. Our liveabards built in the Maldives has been benchmarked to serve the most ultra-luxury tourists. These are fine vessels built by locals with state-of-the-art designs, in line with European luxury yachts. There should be somewhat protection for boat builders, owners and operators. In every country, there are regulations to protect

certain types of businesses and I believe that this industry falls into medium business category.

With this window, the number of vessels brought in as bare boats have increased in the market, and the price war on services has driven it to an extent where some operating in the market have demanded for new activities, which might even harm the fragile industry. These issues arise mainly because they are unable to fill vessels and get a good return. Unlike most liveaboard-operating-countries, the Maldives is most popular for the scuba diving and surfing segment. But the challenge goes up in getting new clients, as the bare boats in the market operate with lower selling prices.

This current situation makes it quite strenuous for significant growth to take place in the industry. Yes, the industry has evolved a lot, but unfortunately the competition has not taken a healthy route.

Everyone is talking about the need for hotels and resorts to become more sustainable. How does The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives stack up on the sustainability front?

'Sustainable Green Resorts' are globally trending and modern-day tourists – especially millennials – want and demand conservation models to be integrated into operations. The Standard, Huruvalhi Maldives strongly believes in less plastic and cleaner oceans. It is committed to the conservation of marine life and preserving coral reefs – the lungs of our oceans. The resort has sustainability

“

Employees are the driving force behind every business, and they are part of the success.

programmes and apply best practices in all areas. On top of that, the resort houses more than 3000 juvenile corals in its very own coral nursery.

You have a fantastic boat fleet at Carpe Diem Cruises. Do you plan similar brand expansions?

Our very first vessel was the Blue Lagoon, it has stood out in terms of design and features, changing the face of boat designs in the Maldives. After some time, I sold the Blue Lagoon and started the Carpe Diem Maldives brand with its very first vessel – Carpe Diem. The brand has since been expanded as per demand and now consists of three vessels; Carpe Diem, Carpe Vita and Carpe Novo. We have sustained an excellent team on all our vessels and we are blessed to have locals in all areas of operation including Dive Guides.

How has the definition of luxury changed over the years, especially in the context of luxury hotels and resorts?

With the fast development of the tourism industry, a good number of star-class resorts have opened up and keep opening every year in the Maldives. Every brand is unique in perspective and experiences offered, but it won't be able to survive in the fierce competitiveness of the market, unless luxury is well-defined and aligned with an outstanding service.

I'm happy to have associated with a unique brand such as The Standard, the team and talent, to provide a unique service and distinctive experience-based tourism.

How do you achieve a work-life balance?

Despite the fact that work can take up a lot of time and energy, I believe it is very important to have a work-life balance. I spend time with my family and try my best to engage in a healthy lifestyle. Although I don't play tennis professionally anymore, I still play it as a hobby and do my regular exercises daily as Tennis has taught me to play fair and win many.

What are the most exciting launches, developments and projects you are planning for next year?

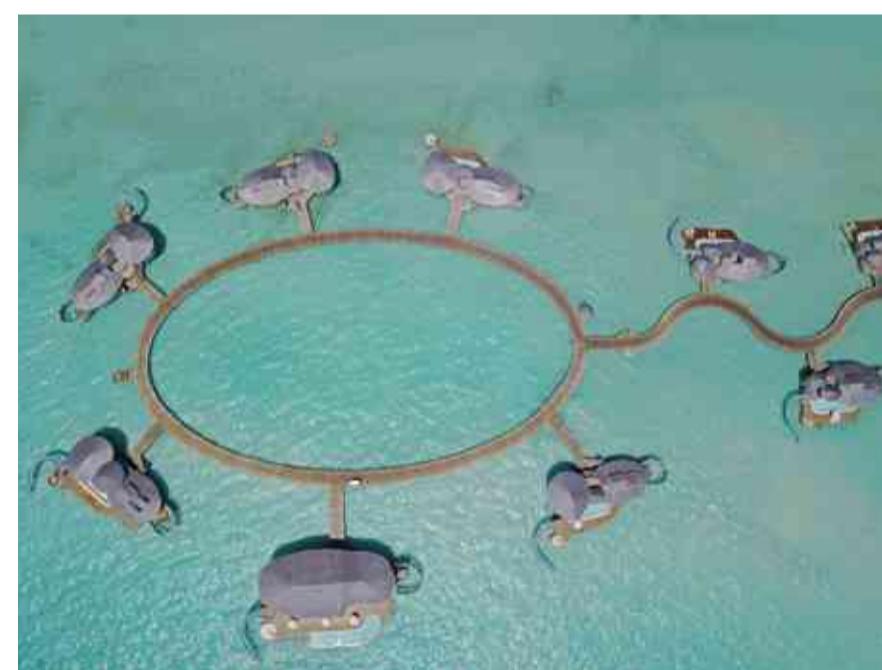
Every day is a new day with new challenges globally. As I mentioned earlier, we stay up-to-date and are aware of the changes in market trends and demand, and adapt ourselves. We will have to wait and see what comes next.

OPINION PIECE

How Maldivian Tourism Can Survive COVID-19

By Sonu Shivdasani

The Maldives appears to have dodged a bullet. With just 19 cases of the novel coronavirus at the time of writing (with 13 people having already made a full recovery), the country is in an enviable position. As the United States and Europe groan under the strain of major outbreaks, with tens of thousands of deaths, the Maldives looks forward to completely eradicating the virus within a few weeks.



In some respects, the Maldives is lucky. The archipelago straddles the equator, where temperatures rarely dip below the high 20s. We know the virus doesn't like heat, and it's notable that the only major contagions have occurred in cold countries, during winter. The Maldives' unique geography also lends itself towards containment: The Government can, and has, rapidly shut down islands and resorts when a suspected case has emerged. If people test negative, the island is immediately reopened. If someone tests positive, the entire island is placed under quarantine to prevent a spread across the country.

But luck has only been the half of it. When other world leaders wasted precious weeks dithering, questioning the science, or dismissing the coronavirus as a hoax, the Solih administration got to work to protect the country: suspending flight routes, conducting widespread testing (the highest per capita testing in South Asia), and eventually closing the border completely. In a country wholly dependent on foreign tourism, the Government's willingness to act decisively, in spite of the huge economic cost, almost certainly saved lives.

During the pandemic, the Government also found its voice. The daily televised briefings by Mabrook Azeez, an undersecretary at the President's Office, have been clear, consistent and comforting. The contrast with President Trump's erratic and misleading press conferences couldn't be starker.

But the question remains: if the Maldives is soon to be virus free, and contemplating reopening its borders, how best to do it? The last thing the country needs is a flood of infected tourists descending upon Hulhule', forcing another costly shut down.

A good place to start might be with the super-rich. Beginning the process of opening up by allowing private jets to land has a number of advantages: there are few passengers onboard, who can be immediately isolated in the airport's VIP lounge and tested for the virus upon arrival. If they test negative, they can go on their way. If they test positive, they can proceed to one of the resorts that have been converted into (arguably the world's nicest) quarantine and isolation centres. Key to this will be rapid testing kits, that can deliver a result in minutes rather than days.

High end clients spend large sums of money compared to other tourists, so even

allowing in a few private jets generates considerable revenues. Soneva has received around 20 enquiries from people who would like to travel to the Maldives by private jet. They intend to stay in our resorts for upwards of a month, to escape lockdowns back home. Although they amount to less than a couple of hundred people, these guests will likely spend around \$5 million in total, generating some \$600,000 in GST for the government.

Looking further ahead, the Maldives will need to start reopening commercial air routes. But testing a handful of private jet passengers at the airport is one thing, testing hundreds of people descending an A350 is quite another. The Maldives will probably begin opening direct flights to other coronavirus-free countries. China looks like a good bet, having all but wiped out the virus. It also has the advantage of being the Maldives' biggest tourism market, with a number of existing direct flight routes, operated by Maldivian or Chinese carriers, between the two countries. At the moment, however, all Chinese tourists returning from aboard have to spend 14 days in quarantine in China - not a particularly attractive prospect for would-be tourists. The Maldivian government will have to work with its Chinese counterpart on a bilateral agreement, that allows Chinese tourists returning home from the Maldives to avoid quarantine.

Similar arrangements will have to be made with other countries. It might help to categorise them: "A" group countries could be those, like the Maldives, that have completely eradicated the virus. There is no reason not to operate direct, commercial flights between such destinations. "B" group countries might be those with very few remaining active cases — the Maldives might allow flights to and from such countries, but with added precautions. Then there are the "C" group countries with high numbers of cases — where the Maldives should keep in place travel restrictions.

The Maldives has avoided a coronavirus outbreak, although the economic price has been severe. In order to avoid the collapse of its tourism industry, however, the country must now plan to re-open. If the Government approaches this challenge with the maturity and competence with which it has handled the crisis thus far, the Maldives may be spared much of the economic, as well as the human, pain of this pandemic.

UNWTO Appoints Minister of Tourism Hon. Ali Waheed to Global Tourism Crisis Committee

Minister of Tourism of the Maldives Hon. Ali Waheed has been appointed to the Global Tourism Crisis Committee led by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).



The crisis committee was convened during the high-level virtual meeting held on 19th March 2020 which brought together key UN agencies, the chairs of its Executive Council and Regional Commissions, and private sector leaders.

Since the start of the pandemic, UNWTO has been working closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) to guide the tourism sector as it faces up to the COVID-19 challenges. The meeting, hosted in Madrid but conducted virtually for public health reasons, further emphasized the call for international cooperation to underscore a united response – based on the latest public health recommendations, as well as reflecting the deep economic ripple effect and social cost of the pandemic. According to the UNWTO, tourism is the economic sector that has been hardest hit by COVID-19 and all participants of the virtual meeting accepted the invitation from the UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili to be part of a Global Tourism Crisis Committee, formed as UNWTO prepares to launch a global guide for recovery.

At the virtual meeting, Minister of Tourism and Chair of UNWTO's South Asia Regional Commission Hon. Ali Waheed stated: "Maldives will beat Covid-19 with the support from the rest of the world and we will welcome you all in a not-so-far-away future."

"We encourage the private sector, the international community and fellow citizens of the world to help each other, work together in solidarity and stay positive in these challenging times to defeat the virus," he added.

Participants of the meeting agreed that this is "a shared challenge that can only be tackled by working together, with recovery dependent on a joint effort on a scale never seen before".

The committee will continue to conduct regular virtual meetings which will reflect the need for coordinated and efficient action by the private and public sectors, governments, international financing institutions, and the United Nations to alleviate the repercussions of the pandemic on the tourism industry. In line with that, UNWTO will be releasing a set of recommendations for recovery in the coming days, highlighting the steps needed to be taken by governments and other authorities to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector and to accelerate recovery. This will be complemented by a dynamic component aimed at engaging with innovators across the world through an innovation challenge centred on tourism's response. Launched with the support of WHO, the innovation challenge will identify new ideas that can be implemented to help tourism return back to sustainable growth.

UNWTO's Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili stated: "This unprecedented public health emergency has already become an economic crisis which will come at a social cost."

In the Maldives the outbreak has been managed positively by authorities, mainly thanks to quick and efficient action, and the fact that the Maldives is made up of many tiny islands which aid in containing the spread. Non-essential travel has come to a pause in a bid to control the spread of the coronavirus which has infected a total of a total of 19 individuals as of 1st April 2020 (2 of which are Maldivian citizens who are out of the country). 13 individuals have fully recovered, reading a total of 4 active cases in the Maldives at present.

Tourists are allowed to check-in to resorts and safari boats, which have no direct contact with local communities due to the destination's geographical formation, and conduct strict health and safety measures in accordance with global and local health protection agencies, including the World Health Organisation. The Maldives is world-renowned for its "One-Island-One-Resort" concept, while speed boats and seaplanes are used to transfer guests. Safari boats are also allowed to operate without visiting local inhabited islands.



IN THE NEWS

NBAM Initiates Survey to Identify Key Impacts of COVID-19 on Boating Industry and Teams Up with MATATO, GAM and ATA to Meet Relevant Authorities

An online survey was initiated by the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM) and shared throughout the industry with major areas of concern due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



The survey was kicked off in order to collect crucial data and provide easier access to communicate with relevant authorities in order to effectively tackle challenges and prioritise efforts based on matters which are of utmost importance.

Meanwhile, the NBAM, the Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour

Operators (MATATO), Guesthouse Association of Maldives (GAM) and the Association of Travel Agents (ATA) have teamed up to meet with relevant authorities regarding the challenges and to work towards a fitting solution together. The organisations met with the Minister of Tourism Hon. Ali Waheed and the Minister of Economic Development Hon. Uz

Fayyaz Ismail on 18th March 2020.

The key topics discussed were the ways in which the industry can be sustained with minimal risks and various strategies to overcome the challenges. Both ministers have agreed to provide all assistance in any way the government can during this difficult time.

Highest Score For the First Time by a Maldivian from SABA International Butler Academy

Ali Akram, 22 years, received the highest scores from the International Butler Training course by SABA International Butler Academy, graduating top of the class. He is the first Maldivian national to complete the course in South Africa and the first Maldivian ever to achieve the highest scores.



"The skills I gained from the Butler Academy is priceless and I would not have gotten these skills anywhere else. I am very grateful to Mr. Cross and everyone at the academy and I strongly recommend this programme to anyone who wishes to follow this career path – it is such an amazing opportunity" said Akram.

Akram has 4 years of experience in the hospitality industry. Upon concluding his studies, he carried out his apprenticeship with the Four Seasons Maldives at Kuda Huraa, after which he worked in Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa where he first met Mr. Newton Cross the Director of Butler

Training at SABA International Butler Academy, and then at the Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi. Following the completion of the International Butler Training with SABA, the Academy aids the newly trained butlers by acquiring the best possible job placements for them. Akram is currently awaiting his placement.

The SABA International Butler Academy's 8 weeks of Modern Butler Training came to an end last Friday, 6th March 2020. The perfected training is set within one of the most picturesque mansions in the exclusive Constantia area providing students with a mere glimpse of the luxurious and lavish

world that they will soon be entering. The Butler Mansion is the most advanced Butler Training facility in the world and the Butler Academy ensures maximum quality, first-class technology and lectures that are extremely practical. Trainees at the Academy develop not only as an individual, but they also obtain an exceptional skill set that serve indefinitely. A butler provides a seamless and professional lifestyle management service to their elite clients ranging from members of royal families, presidents, dignitaries, celebrities and the wealthy, whether it be in their residences, private jets, yachts, hotels, luxury resorts or in corporate environments. At the Butler Academy trainees are immersed in the crucial duties and lifestyle of a butler.

SABA is the finest and the most pro-active Butler School in the world, and it has been appointed by the British High Commission of South Africa. Numerous hotels, resorts, residences, villas and privately owned luxury jets turn to the Butler Academy for training and support. The Butler Academy's approach in educating their students is to ensure they will thrive in their new profession, offering an engaging and tailor-made program, which will deliver far beyond one's expectations. Students who enrol have the option to live and study at the Butler Mansion or reside with friends and family.

The next Butler Training will be held on 18th May 2020 - 8 weeks of Modern Butler Training. Interested candidates can apply via www.thebutlerschool.com

Airbnb-Hosts to Help Provide Housing for 100,000 COVID-19 Responders

On 26th March 2020, Airbnb announced its new global initiative to help connect those responding to the COVID-19 pandemic with "free or subsidised" places to stay that are safe and convenient while they carry out their critical work. The company's goal is to help house 100,000 healthcare professionals, relief workers, and first responders around the world.



The company is partnering with the International Rescue Committee, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Medical Corps and other non-profit organisations to connect 100,000 people on the frontlines with clean and convenient places to stay that allow them to be close to their patients and safely distanced from their own families.

A statement by Airbnb's Co-founder Joe Gebbia read: "Medical workers and first responders are providing lifesaving support during the coronavirus outbreak and we want to help,

"We've heard from countless hosts

around the world who want to provide a comforting home to heroic first responders. We are connecting our non-profit partners, government agencies and others with our incredible host community to work together in these extraordinary times."

Airbnb will be working with non-profits, various businesses, governments and emergency management agencies supporting these responders in some of the most impacted countries. The company has already been working on a smaller-scale pilot programme in both Italy and France where nearly 6,000 hosts across both countries made their spaces available for doctors, nurses, caregivers and other medical support

staff. This extended program is partly the result of many requests from hosts to the platform about how they too could volunteer their spaces and help with the effort. Airbnb will be making it possible for hosts to offer their spaces for free – though hosts who want to participate but keep a stay charge in place won't be charged any fees by Airbnb itself.

Airbnb has also developed advanced cleaning protocols in line with guidance from leading national health authorities including the CDC, and Airbnb states that they will evolve as updated guidelines become available. Other enhanced rules to help try to ensure safety include listing entire homes and agreeing to a number of

safety requirements which include maintaining proper social distancing from guests and allowing a minimum of 72 hours between stays. To learn more and to open their homes, hosts can go to airbnb.com/covid19relief.

Airbnb also has a fund established for those who want to provide monetary support, with 100 percent of all proceeds going to non-profits working on COVID-19 relief. These funds will help further subsidize housing costs for any responders in the case of hosts making housing available at a fee. To donate, go to airbnb.com/openhomes/covid19relief?donate.

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Shipwrecks of Maldives

Parrotfish swim past shoals of Moorish Idols. Moray eels slide through the lagoon. Groupers make goliath appearances amidst the rainbow of butterflyfish and damselfish, while the resident Hawksbill turtle glides in for a visit; the underwater world beneath the Maldives azure waters is absolutely teeming with life. At times, you'll be questioning reality when you have stumbled onto a scene straight out of Finding Nemo.



For a country made up of 99% ocean, the seas have always been the lifeblood for its people, an integral part of their existence, but the rising tourist numbers have also contributed to a scuba diving boom. Then again, it's not just the visitors who have pulled on a wetsuit, thrust a regulator into their mouths, and ventured to the Maldivian waters.

According to underwater explorer and former dive instructor of Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF), Mohamed Shafraz Naeem, locals have become regulars on the diving scene as well. "I've been diving since 1994, and right now there's a lot more opportunity than there used to be," he said. "There's so many talented local divers now, and there's also the presence of Maldivians in several dive expo's that are held abroad. The rise of social media has helped

promote diving in the country as well. However, despite the calls for climate change, there's so little that has been addressed and we have a long way to go. I hope the Government of Maldives view this more seriously."

Many a ship have met a watery grave and lay scattered deep in the Maldivian waters, meaning some exploration-worthy wrecks lie on the ocean floor of this tropical diving paradise. Here's a roundup of our favorite wrecks for an exciting underwater adventure:

British Loyalty, Addu Atoll

Located 33-meters beneath the turquoise blue waters of Addu, lies the wreckage of the 5.5 ton oil tanker, the British Loyalty. It was torpedoed twice during World War II, and today it rests on her starboard side, with the port side at 16m. Dense hard and soft corals now grow all over the ship, including on the propeller which sits at 28m. Divers can also swim through the large hole made by the torpedo to explore the ship's interior. The site harkens back to an incredibly interesting point in Maldivian history and is a must for those interested in the British presence in the country.

Kuda Giri Wreck, South Male' Atoll, between Maafushi and Dhigufinolhu

To the west of Dhigufinolhu island lies a small, submerged patch of coral known locally as a giri, (kuda translates small in Dhivehi). On its south-west side, lies a wreck of a steel fishing trawler, which has been lying on the sandy bottom at 35m for more than a decade. The vessel lies upright with its bow pointing towards the reef at about 18m. The deck slopes down towards the stern, which is at about 30m. Both soft and hard corals adorn the outside of the vessel, and divers can find a resident school of batfish, glassfish, wrasses and jackfish. There's also the chance to spot frog and leaf fish, as well as on the reef itself, which is extremely pretty and well worth exploring after the wreck.

The Shipyard, Lhaviyani Atoll, East of Felivaru Kandu

The stern of the upright ship lies 29 meters at the bottom of the ocean. The wrecks have inundated in a remarkably short period in soft and hard coral - consequences from strong currents streaming through the channel. In the wrecks are many morays, which glance inquisitively at divers from the protection of their metallic refuge, and in every recess are huge schools of yellow sweeper that glisten blindingly in torchlight. The wrecks have become home to a multitude of fish, including boxfish, pufferfish, porcupinefish, Napoleon, emperor, angelfish, surgeon, and red bass. A school of tallfin batfish allows divers to come close and lying on the bottom of the wreckage it is often possible to see a nurse shark. In the channel, pelagics and grey reef sharks are regularly sighted.

Kudhi Maa, Machchafushi House Reef, South Ari Atoll

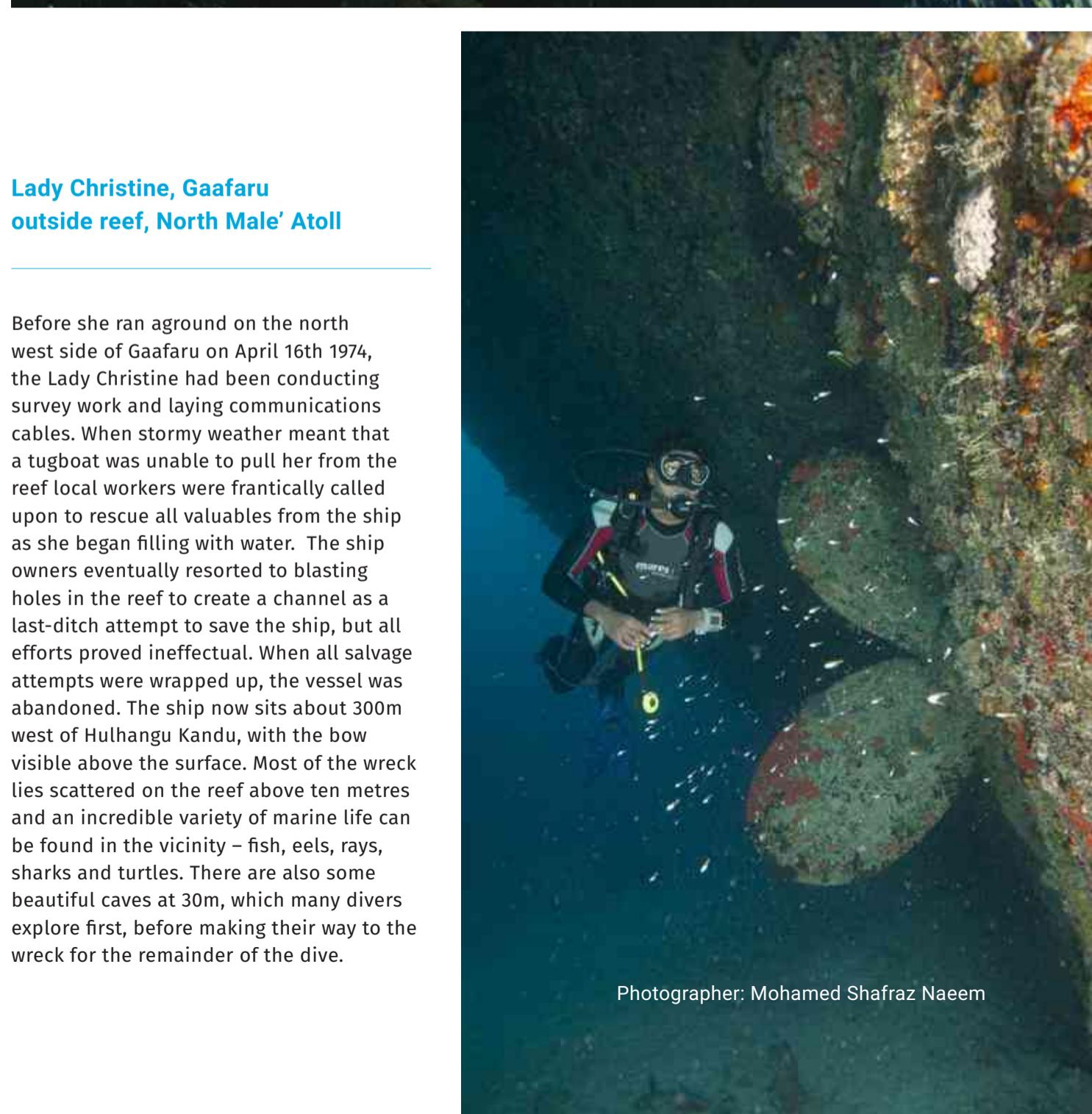
This steel, Japanese cargo vessel, sometimes also simply known as Machchafushi Wreck, was sunk in 1998. Since then the vessel has been inundated with life – both soft and hard corals compete with sponges, algae and sea squirts for space on this 30m ship, making this a fantastic spot for observing and photographing macro life. In addition to a profusion of critters, divers can find large lionfish, boxfish and pufferfish around the vessel. Diving enthusiasts wishing to explore the interior can easily do so from access points on either side of the hull.

The SS Sea Gull, Location: North east of Gaafaru Island North Male' Atoll

In 1879, the SS Sea Gull, a 1012 tonne steamship, was travelling from London to Calcutta when she ran aground outside Gaafaru. Today, the anchor sits on the reef at one metre and can be spotted at low tide. The rest of the ship split in two and other pieces are scattered across the reef, such as the two-cylinder engine. Due to the length of time in the water, the wreckage parts are almost entirely covered in coral, which at times makes it easy to miss. There is also a cave at 30m, where it's possible to spot nurse sharks. Elsewhere, divers can often see barracudas, jacks, eels and stingrays.

The Corbin, Location: Goidhoo Island House Reef.

The Corbin, a French ship which ran aground on the reef of Goidhoo Island in 1602, is best known in the Maldives for being the vessel that brought French sailor and memoirist François Pyrard de Laval to the country. A survivor of the wreck, Pyrard was held in captivity in the Maldives for five years, only managing to leave when a band of marauders from India helped him escape. He then went on to publish an account of his time in the country and the journal provides one of the richest historical insights into the Maldives' past. Although nothing remains of the vessel, the site still prompts intrigue, especially amongst those who know that the vessel's cargo of many thousands of silver coins is still scattered across the ocean floor, waiting to be retrieved.



Lady Christine, Gaafaru outside reef, North Male' Atoll

Before she ran aground on the north west side of Gaafaru on April 16th 1974, the Lady Christine had been conducting survey work and laying communications cables. When stormy weather meant that a tugboat was unable to pull her from the reef local workers were frantically called upon to rescue all valuables from the ship as she began filling with water. The ship owners eventually resorted to blasting holes in the reef to create a channel as a last-ditch attempt to save the ship, but all efforts proved ineffectual. When all salvage attempts were wrapped up, the vessel was abandoned. The ship now sits about 300m west of Hulhangu Kandu, with the bow visible above the surface. Most of the wreck lies scattered on the reef above ten metres and an incredible variety of marine life can be found in the vicinity – fish, eels, rays, sharks and turtles. There are also some beautiful caves at 30m, which many divers explore first, before making their way to the wreck for the remainder of the dive.

Photographer: Mohamed Shafraz Naeem

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Bank of Maldives Announces New Director of Operations

Bank of Maldives announces the appointment of Ms. Laura Jamieson as its Director of Operations.

Laura brings over 30 years of experience in retail financial services and is an industry specialist in customer experience, operations and business transformation. During her career, Laura has held senior management positions in financial services including the Head of Customer Experience Improvement and Head of Operational Excellence for Barclays Bank's retail and business division in UK.



She was also the Director of Business Operations at Ivobank Ltd, and Head of Operations and Continuous Improvement at Santander, UK. Laura was most recently a Transformation Programme Director for Anglian Water where she led a large scale operational and IT transformation programme.

Commenting on the appointment, BML CEO and Managing Director Tim Sawyer stated, "Laura's expertise will help us transform and strengthen our operational processes to ensure we meet and improve on the service standards that are expected by our customers. I wish Laura

every success as she joins the team."

Bank of Maldives is the largest bank and one of the largest employers in the Maldives. The Bank takes great pride in implementing forward-looking human resources policies to ensure the highest professional standards of employee recruitment, development and reward. The Bank holds regular events to honor its top performing staff and to recognize their loyal service.

Nabeel Abdulla named Director of Sales at The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives has appointed Nabeel Abdulla as its Director of Sales, commencing his duties from 18th March 2020.

Born in Addu Atoll Maldives, Nabeel has 15 years of experience in the hospitality industry, and was involved in the opening and launching of four top-tier resorts and one city hotel in the Maldives.

Nabeel joins The Ritz-Carlton Maldives pre-opening team from The Small Maldives Island Co (TSMIC) as Group Director of International Sales and Distribution, where he spearheaded the sales and distribution division of Amilla Fushi and Finolhu resorts for the past 7 years.

He started his journey in the hospitality sector at an early age working in various front office and reservations roles at Six Senses, for Soneva Fushi and Soneva Gili, and eventually moved into sales and marketing. He previously worked as Sales and Marketing Manager for Huvafen Fushi per AQUUM in 2006. After spending almost three years at Huvafen Fushi, Nabeel joined the highly anticipated opening of the Maldives capital's first international hotel, Holiday Inn Male' (rebranded now as Hotel Jen) as opening Director of Sales and Marketing in 2009.

After the successful launch of the IHGs' first hotel in the Maldives, Nabeel moved to Anantara Group in 2010 to open its flagship property Anantara Kihavah Villas Maldives, where he was responsible for the launch and establishment of the resort in key international markets.

Known by almost everyone in the wider circle of Maldivian tourism and a friend of marketers in the industry, Nabeel is often tipped in the industry as one of the best sales and marketing professionals in the destination. He was a recipient of multiple industry and community awards for his efforts in the hospitality arena. Additionally, Nabeel was featured on the Corporate Maldives (leading business & hospitality magazine of Maldives) 20 Most Influential Sales and Marketing Professionals in the Maldives of 2018.



BON APPÉTIT

Kanamadhu & Gabulhi Tart

Chef Aminath Hameed, Chocolatier at the Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi since its pre-opening in March 2019, is specialised in both desserts and chocolates. She's achieved a handful of accolades during her four years in the hospitality industry, including (but not limited to) 1st place in HILTON SEA F&B Masters Dessert Challenge hotel level and 1st Runner Up at country level against 7 hotels from 3 countries in 2017 held in Sri Lanka, and Most Promising Talent award in the Asian Pastry Cup 2018 held in Singapore.

"My inspiration behind this dish comes from wanting to create something with my favourite two local ingredients; kanamadhu [sea almonds] and gabulhi [young coconut]. Since childhood, I have always loved hunihakuru [Maldivian sweet coconut pastry] made from gabulhi, and that's what I had in mind when I came up with the combination."



Sweet Dough for Tart

Base

320g	cold butter
120g	icing sugar
1	egg
400g	flour
3g	baking powder

Mix the butter, sugar and egg together. Add in the flour and baking powder and mix just until combined. Rest in the chiller for an hour before using.

Gabulhi Filling

250g	young coconut (gabulhi)
75g	sugar

Scrape out the coconut with a spoon. Pulse it in a blender for a minute. Use coconut water if you need any liquid while blending. Cook gabulhi and sugar in a small pot over medium heat until all the water dehydrates. The mixture should feel a bit sticky at this point.

Almond Cream

50g	almond powder
50g	sugar
50g	butter
1	egg
10g	flour

Mix everything together to form a paste.

Kanamadhu Crunch

45g	butter
45g	sugar
20g	milk
15g	liquid glucose
100g	sliced kanamadhu

Heat all the ingredients except kanamadhu in a pot over low heat. Once the butter and sugar are dissolved, mix in the kanamadhu. Roll it between two sheets of baking paper using a rolling pin. Freeze it for an hour. Remove the baking sheet from one side and bake it at 170°C for 8 mins or until golden colour. Let it cool down.

Kanamadhu & Gabulhi

Tart

Roll out the sugar dough thinly and line the tart ring. Half bake the empty tart shell for 10 minutes at 170°C. Let it cool down. Fill 1/3 of the shell with almond cream. Arrange kanamadhu nuts on top of the cream. Bake it for another 15 minutes or until the almond cream is baked. Fill the other half of the tart with gabulhi mixture. Finish with kanamadhu crunch on top.

Keep your worries away



Courtesy of Chef Aminath Hameed – Pâtissier
/ Waldorf Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi

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Frankly Speaking

In the midst of the worldwide coronavirus outbreak, various countries around the world are offering tax relief and coronavirus stimulus packages to support their local economies. On March 15th, Bank of Maldives in association with the Tourism Ministry and Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI), announced a short-term financing solution to support the tourism industry. Are these viable to help the Maldives' economy recover over the next few months?



Yoosuf Riffath
President
Association of Travel Agents

It depends on the interest percentage they take, then it will be fine and will help the industry recover. Also how it applies to travel agents will matter. Not everyone will have a good financial record as per requirement, but a relief package must look into way in which it can help the industry.



Mariyam Visam
Registrar of Companies

We rely on the tourism sector for the sustenance of our economy. Government's stimulus package is timely in order to keep the economic engine running. However, each entrepreneur should reassess their business model, focus on business continuity and protect workers to minimize the overall economic impact and support recovery.



Moosa Nasih
President
Guesthouse Association of Maldives

This sudden wave hits badly to community tourism. Guesthouse industry is still in infant age. None of us has huge saving unlike other related sectors. Most of us are already trapped with bank loans with high interest rate. Guesthouses are located in local islands & within the local community. Local tourism distributes revenue starting from airport transfer to excursion boats, grocery stores, souvenir shops, local cafe's & restaurants. We won't overcome this situation without state support. This will collapse thousands of small investments along with guesthouses. Considering to all these factors, government should include prominent amount of funds to secure guesthouses & related businesses. I believe we should get grants along with low interest rate loans & flexible terms for pending utility bills to utilise the best out of cash flow.



Mohamed Riyaz
Vice President
Maldives Association of Yacht Agents



Abdul Latheef
President
SME & Entrepreneurs Federation of Maldives (SEF-M)



Ahmed Afrah
President
National Boating Association of Maldives

In this kind of situations. The government should understand the impact on our vulnerable economy. Private sector cannot use funds under loan or commercially at this stage. It will not sustain private businesses in any mean. Funds has to be on zero interest and government has to carefully analyze which sector can bring back cash flow fast to the economy to sustain our Nation. Situation is critical and action delay will hit on more loss to the economy.

It's a matter of planning and implementation. I think they should be provided a little more and be encouraged to grow. Guest houses, liveaboards and travel agents remain a very crucial part of our tourism. Local SMEs should be protected. They employ majority of the local workers and most vulnerable people. With local SMEs, our GNP grows. They should be supported and protected. Regulators should also ensure competitive fair-trading opportunities for local SMEs and it is part of their fundamental rights. If we can do things right, For Maldives, I feel (God willing) the recovery from covid-19 would be easier than the Tsunami (2004) we experienced.

The unprecedented impact of Covid-19 has brought even the most developed countries around the globe down to their knees. Maldives being a nation heavily dependent on tourism and having a huge dependency on imports is going to be impacted a lot. The short-term financing solutions which BML announced will definitely assist some companies who are eligible to get the loans but in order to ensure businesses (especially small and medium size businesses) survive and get through this period we need the government to take extraordinary measures to inject cashflow into the businesses at a very low interest rate, with a good grace period and with minimum eligibility requirements. We greatly appreciate government's work in pushing all commercial banks to grant moratorium to existing loans. We hope this will be followed by the government's planned economic relief package which will be essential for the survival of many businesses.



PHOTOGRAPHY



Double Dot

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MENU

Prime cuts!

Ready to cook!

Ready to eat !



MENU introduces a wide range of cuisine ranging from Prime Cuts (Fresh & Frozen), Ready to Cook and Ready to Eat products. Each product is carefully prepared using quality ingredients and finally frozen to retain the mouth-watering taste for you and your family—anytime, anywhere.



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