



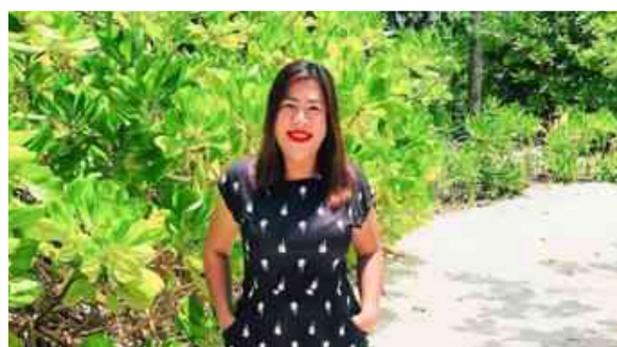
SLOW LIFE WITH
FATHIMATH SHAAZLEEN
RESORT MANAGER – SONEVA JANI

PAGE: 12



THE MALDIVIAN NEW NORMAL
By Sonu Shivdasani
CEO & Co-Founder of luxury
Resort Chain Soneva

PAGE: 5



PERSONALITY OF THE MONTH
CONNIE GALVEZ
Sales & Marketing Manager
at Fushifaru Maldives

PAGE: 08



IN CONVERSATION with
MONA SEDGHI
Marketing & PR Manager at LUX* South Ari Atoll
Resort & Villas, Maldives

PAGE: 18

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The word 'unprecedented' has been used time and again to describe the coronavirus pandemic, simply because there is no better synonym.

Last year, the Maldives saw a record number of tourist arrivals with 1.7 million visitors, a 14.7 percent increase compared to 2018. For 2020, a target of 2 million tourists was set by the government. However, COVID-19 is set to dash hopes of achieving this goal. The modern world, let alone the travel industry, has seen little of its kind or scope before. It has brought economic turmoil and travel restrictions that few would ever have imagined possible. The nature of our industry means the pandemic and its fallout has deeply affected every one of our lives, both on a personal and business level.

In a bid to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the country, the Maldivian government on March 28, halted the issuance of on-arrival-visas and closed its borders to incoming tourists. The government estimates a dramatic drop in tourist arrivals due to the global pandemic, and a shortfall of approximately USD 450 million (MVR 6.9 billion). With the closure of over 50 tourist resorts across the country, the Maldives' economy continues to face severe repercussions due to these measures that had to be put in place following the outbreak. Nevertheless, the resort industry of the Maldives is not one to give up so easily.

This May, we spoke with some of the individuals in the Maldives' resort industry, continuing to keep the spirit of the islands alive until the world becomes a safer place for travel. Resort Manager at Soneva Jani, Ms. Fathimath Shaazleen, known to the Soneva team and guests as Shaaz, shares her experiences that helped shape her as an industry stalwart, the biggest challenges faced and insights into the ultra-luxurious hotel brand (p. 12). We also had an enlightening conversation with Ms. Mona Sedghi, Marketing & PR Manager at LUX* Resorts & Hotels, where she spoke of the defining elements in the DNA of the LUX* brand, the evolution of social media in the travel industry, and her thoughts on how the global health crisis will shape post-pandemic travellers (p. 18). Additionally, our Personality of the Month Ms. Connie Galvez, the Sales & Marketing Manager at Fushifaru Maldives, answers a few fun and intriguing questions revealing some of her exciting personality traits (p. 8).

Additionally, don't forget to check out the opinions of various key stakeholders in the industry regarding this month's gripping question on Frankly Speaking (p. 23).

Today, most of us around the globe have a bit more time on our hands, though not necessarily by choice. Let us utilise this gift of time to make positive changes that we never would have had time for before, across every area of our businesses so that once travel gets going again, we are ready.

Until then, stay safe and keep the fire of hope alive.

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AirAsia launches PPE suits for Cabin Crews



With low-cost carrier AirAsia restarting flights in May, the airline has unveiled new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be worn by its cabin crew amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

The PPE suits, launched on the 24th of April during a recovery flight from Bangkok to Manila, are designed in collaboration with Filipino fashion designer Puey Quiñones.

The protective gear embraces the airline's signature red-hot colour and have been approved by the Philippines' Department of Health, according to The Jakarta Post.

Following the outbreak of the virus, the Los-Angeles based designer has been continuously designing and manufacturing PPE suits for hospitals as well as brands including AirAsia.

On 17th April, AirAsia announced it is set to resume scheduled domestic flights commencing with Malaysia on

Wednesday (29th April), followed by Thailand on Friday (1st May), India (4th May), Indonesia (7th May) and the Philippines (16th May), subject to approval from authorities.

AirAsia's mission is to allow everyone to fly. Since 2001, the company headquartered in Kuala Lumpur has been delivering world-class service at low fares to more than 600 million guests across Asia Pacific, proving that low cost does not mean low quality and air travel does not have to be costly. It is the largest airline in Malaysia by fleet size and destinations. AirAsia Group operates scheduled domestic and international flights to more than 165 destinations spanning 25 countries.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

SriLankan Airlines launches dedicated cargo flights to Europe, Middle East, Far East, Indian Subcontinent

Sri Lanka's National Carrier SriLankan Airlines is making a decisive move to rescue the country's much troubled export industries by launching dedicated cargo services to a host of destinations and throwing a lifeline to the nation's economy at a time of peril.



Mr. Ashok Pathirage, Chairman of SriLankan Airlines said: "SriLankan Airlines has always considered the nation's interests foremost in every crisis situation during the past 40 years. We are keenly aware of our duty to support the Government of Sri Lanka and the nation as a whole, even at a time when our Company itself is facing a difficult situation."

"We have no doubt that every single export industry will benefit from this bold initiative that we plan to launch on May 18th, at a time when most other airlines are keeping their fleets grounded and

global trade by air is under a lockdown situation. The Government is extremely keen on restarting the country's export industries at the earliest possible moment, and we at SriLankan Airlines have been intent on restarting our services from the day that we reluctantly suspended regular operations in the face of the global pandemic," he added.

This reminder of the important role a national carrier must play during crises, comes in the global airline industry's gravest period, when airlines around the world are staring at bankruptcy and laying off thousands of employees.

Accordingly, SriLankan will commence 27 dedicated cargo flights per week out of Colombo that will connect Sri Lanka with major cities in Europe, Middle East, the Indian Subcontinent and the Far East. Destinations include London & Frankfurt in Europe; the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai & Guangzhou (Canton); Melbourne in Australia; Singapore & Tokyo (Narita) in the Far East; Doha & Dubai in the Middle East; and in South Asia the Maldivian capital Male', the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka and several cities in India where SriLankan has for many years been the largest foreign carrier.

The cargo flights will be a vital link for Sri Lankan exporters to take their produce to new and existing international markets, while enabling the importation of much needed raw materials required for the production of export goods. This includes the apparel industry, which has long been one of the cornerstones of the nation's economy. The airline's existing fleet of Airbus A320 and A330 aircraft will be utilized for these flights and SriLankan has enhanced cargo carrying capacity of the aircraft beyond the usual capacity of cargo holds.

SriLankan Airlines is also the sole handler of all ground services at Sri Lanka's International Airports, including cargo. It has a state-of-the-art cargo warehousing complex at Bandaranaike International Airport that handles all types of cargo, ranging from raw materials, dangerous goods, courier items, mail, live cargo and valuable cargo. Sri Lanka's award-winning carrier is a member of the oneworld global airline alliance.

Etihad Airways distributes Ramadan Boxes to those affected by COVID-19 in Abu Dhabi

Etihad Airways has launched the Etihad Ramadan Box initiative to bring Iftar meals to homes across the UAE.

The airline has partnered with Zomato, the world's largest restaurant search & discovery platform and one of the UAE's largest food delivery apps, to deliver meals to those affected by COVID-19 including hospitals, essential workers, volunteers and communities in need. Those affected through sickness or financial impact can request for an Etihad Ramadan Box through the Zomato app, and a freshly prepared meal will be delivered directly from Etihad's Catering facility in Abu Dhabi.

Robin Kamark, Chief Commercial Officer, Etihad Aviation Group, said, "Ramadan is a traditional time for gathering with friends and family, but with the impact of COVID-19, this year it is more challenging to do so. In these extraordinary times, we wanted to bring a touch of our signature inflight hospitality to our local community and recognise the incredible efforts of the UAE's medical staff and essential workers."

In addition to the ready prepared meals, selected volunteers, healthcare and key workers will receive a box filled with fresh ingredients and an easy-

to-follow recipe, providing the chance to create themed cuisine from around the world at home. It has been designed and curated by Etihad Airways' world-class Inflight Chefs.

Karl Baz, Regional Director, Zomato, said: "Zomato's motto is 'Better food for more people', and we have always been very committed to being the type of company that gives back to the community. We understand that there are people that may need some support right now, and this partnership with Etihad Airways is one more way we can do our best to help. Whether a person is sick, recently lost their job, or simply needs a helping hand, the Etihad Ramadan Boxes are offered purely on trust, and are a gesture of goodwill at this challenging time. We are proud to be working with Etihad Airways on this."

Etihad's Inflight Chefs are also offering their culinary expertise in a series of cooking demonstrations featured in the Etihad@Home series on the airline's social media channels.



The Maldivian New Normal

By Sonu Shivdasani

It has been a torrid few days in the Maldives' battle against COVID-19: we've seen spikes in new cases and, unfortunately, the country's first victim. In much of the rest of the world, though, the news has been more positive. Many countries, which are also big tourism markets to the Maldives, have flattened the curve and slowly started opening back up.

Life is starting to resemble a sort-of-normal in places such as Austria, Switzerland and Germany (although there is still no date for when international borders will reopen). Hopefully, the Maldives will flatten its curve over the next couple of weeks and bring the virus outbreak under control. This begs the question: what might the 'new normal' look like here?

There are many unique aspects to the virus. One of the most unexpected relates not to epidemiology, but to politics. In every global crisis since the Second World War, the United States led the global recovery effort. But under President Trump, America has turned its back to the world, and shunned international co-operation. Under Obama or Bush, the world could have sat back and allowed the superpower to lead efforts to combat the virus, and set international protocols about air travel and reopening borders. In the absence of US leadership, the Maldives, alongside everyone else, will have to figure this out on their own.

With travel and tourism accounting for a huge slice of the Maldivian economy and generating most jobs, clearly a 'new normal' has to include the re-opening of the country to tourists. But how can this be done safely?

We will have to work closely with other countries and organisations. This means striking bilateral agreements with our major tourism markets in Western Europe, India, and China, as well as working with international tourism bodies such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to establish a way forward. One of the tricky issues will be establishing new protocols on how people can travel, how they are screened upon arrival, and how they can avoid the requirement to quarantine for two weeks when they return home.

For the Maldives, testing and screening passengers upon arrival and departure will have to become part of our new normal; it is difficult to see how we can reopen safely without it. This will pose challenges and require strict new protocols at the airports, but testing will become progressively easier as test kits become quicker, cheaper, and more reliable.

Hygiene will become a major consideration, or 'qualifier', for holidaymakers. Nobody wants to stay in a dirty hotel room, but in the COVID-19 era, hygiene will take on a whole new meaning. Travel and tour operators will compete fiercely on



providing a safe, hygienic holiday, where social distancing can be maintained. Last week brought news of a partnership between Bureau Veritas, a testing, inspection and certification company, and Accor, a major hotel chain, which will establish standards for hygiene in hotel operations.

Other hotel companies are bound to follow suit, tying up with inspection agencies in order to reassure would-be travellers that their hotel rooms, restaurants and communal areas are properly sanitized, and the property isn't overcrowded.

In an era where guests are as preoccupied about safety and hygiene as they are about the quality of the food, Maldivian resorts are well placed. The country is one of the few to operate a policy of 'one island one resort' – a geographic advantage that makes it much easier to prevent and contain a coronavirus outbreak, because each resort can strictly control who steps onto their island. In fact, the English word 'isolation' and the Italian 'isola' both derive from the Latin 'insula', which means island. Island = isolation. Perhaps the country's tourism strapline The Sunny Side of Life needs to change to reflect the safe, isolated nature of its resorts.

At Soneva, we've been thinking through our own 'new normal'. We believe that customers' fears over safety will be allayed by a rigorous new testing regime. Soneva plans to give everyone who arrives at our resorts a quick coronavirus test. After completing the test, guests will be escorted straight to their villa, or staff to their host accommodation, until the result comes through. If the test is negative, the guest or host can carry on as normal. If the test is positive, we will follow government rules, which likely means moving people to an isolation facility – which are fortunately some of the world's most luxurious, located in resorts.

If such a testing policy was introduced across the Maldives, it will reassure tourists that the country is

safe to visit, and also reduce the likelihood of future virus outbreaks. Robust testing also provides the Maldives with the opportunity of creating something truly unique: virus free resorts.

By testing everyone who comes onto an island, we can ensure that everybody on it is clear of the virus. This would render social distancing, and no-touching rules, unnecessary within that particular island. Maldivian resorts could thus transport guests back to the heyday of 2019, without constant coronavirus reminders spoiling their holiday. This could be a major 'differentiator' for Maldivian tourism compared to other holiday destinations.

For the rest of the world, largely made up of bigger countries adjoined to each other by land borders, it is almost impossible to create virus-free havens. The threat of infection will always lurk in the building across the street, the hotel staff who travel to work each morning on crowded public transport, or from the neighbouring country with a porous border.

The 'New Normal' in the Maldives will be different to the normal life we enjoyed before COVID-19. But the country remains extremely lucky because of its unique geography. If the right testing protocols are established, the Maldives will enjoy a significant competitive advantage – something that could underpin its future prosperity, even during these troubled and turbulent times.

About the author: Sonu Shivdasani is the CEO and Co-Founder of luxury Resort Chain Soneva



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Personality of the Month



Connie Galvez Sales & Marketing Manager at Fushifaru Maldives

How are you finding Maldives?

That is a good question. Maldives has been my second home ever since I came here in 2009. There is something magical about Maldives that will keep you coming back. I decided to go back to my country last 2015 for good, but here I am still staying in the Maldives.

What's your favourite spot at the resort and why?

The lovely swing in front of our beach near the jetty, overlooking the ocean. I find it so relaxing, sitting and sipping drinks while admiring the lovely view of the ocean and hearing the soothing sound of the waves.

What do you most like, and dislike, about your work?

What I like most about my work is that, I am continually motivated by the challenge of being in Sales and Marketing. It's a nonstop learning opportunity. Also, not only did I gain new agents, but I also made new friends as well. I don't consider it a dislike, but I find it challenging to work with someone who doesn't share the same passion and optimism as I do. I understand we are all unique individuals, and part of my job is to share knowledge and passion with the team. Also, to impart something to my team that will help them grow into a better person and employee.

Biggest lesson in life: Lots of struggles and hindrances will come your way. Things that will make you or break you. For as long as you believe you can do all things and you trust God that nothing is impossible, you can make it. Believe in yourself.

If you can change anything in your life, what would it be?

It's when the time, that I wished I still have my parents who already passed away. They are my life coach, especially my mom. She was a cheerleader to me and would pushed me always to be a better person. I still missed her so much and wished that she was still here with me to celebrate life and success.

What makes you happy?

I realized that my happiness is not dependent on external things, but a choice I make in every moment. I practice being happy everyday no matter what life brings me.

Who are you listening to at the moment?

Lany, Katy Perry and Taylor Swift. Hehe

Favourite motto or saying: "Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none" is my motto that I live by.



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Velaa Private Island Donates Medical Equipment to Maldives

Owners of the luxurious Velaa Private Island, Daniel Kretinsky and Jiri Smejck donate various medical equipment and supplies to the Maldives, supporting the government's efforts to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the community.



Five ventilators, 10,000 test kits, 100,000 face masks, 200 respirators and 500 personal protective equipment (PPE) kits are included in the donation made by Daniel Kretinsky, the owner of a \$7.8 billion Czech energy conglomerate EPH, and Czech financier Jiri Smejck.

Regarding the generous donation, Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid stated: "Grateful to Jiri Smejck and Daniel Kretinsky, the owners of Velaa Private Island for donating test kits to help Government's efforts to contain COVID-19. The virus hit Maldives tourism the hardest and it's heartening to see resort owners helping the Government's efforts."

Earlier, on 12th March it was revealed that Daniel Kretinsky had been diagnosed with COVID-19,

however, he has made a full recovery since then. Daniel Kretinsky runs and owns Energetický a průmyslový holding (EPH) the biggest energy group in Central Europe.

Czech financier Jiri Smejck purchased the 50-year lease on Velaa from the Maldivian government in 2010. Today, Velaa Private Island stands as a "beyond luxury" hideaway, located in Noonu Atoll, a 45-minute seaplane flight north of Malé.

Comprised of 18 overwater villas, 25 beach villas, houses and 4 four-bedroom residences, each serviced by a personal butler ready to accommodate guests' desires. One of the resort's greatest assets, is being able to ensure that guests will experience the island as their own private paradise.

20th Four Seasons Maldives Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony Highlights Ongoing Dedication to Social Investment

On 17th April 2020, 54 graduates (18 from Four Seasons Kuda Huraa and 36 from Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru) raised their diplomas during a graduation ceremony held at Four Seasons Kuda Huraa and Four Seasons Landaa Giraavaru respectively, ready to dive into a hospitality career.

These 54 rising stars of the Maldivian hospitality industry take the total number of graduates to 651 since the program's inception in 2001, with 2020 marking the 20th anniversary of the program, making it one of the most successful and long-running of its kind in the Indian Ocean.

In previous years, the graduation ceremony has been held in Malé's Dharubaaruge Exhibition Hall for graduates from both resorts. Due to the current restrictions, however, each resort held a separate event. Both classes of graduates were surprised by guest of honour, His Excellency the Ambassador of the Republic of Maldives to the European Union, Mr. Hassan Sobir, who appeared via video link. A supporter of the program since its inception, H.E. Mr. Hassan Sobir was also guest of honour at the program's first graduation ceremony 20 years ago. Additional highlights from the ceremony in both Resorts can be viewed on <https://www.facebook.com/fsrmapprentice>.

"For two decades, we have proudly invested in local talent. So many young men and women have become and will become the backbone of the Maldivian hospitality industry in years to come thanks to this Apprenticeship Program," shares Four Seasons Resorts Maldives Regional Vice President

Armando Kraenzlin. "In these uncertain times, it is more important than ever to keep investing in the future of the Maldivian island communities. This is to ensure the youth have the training, skills and qualifications necessary to secure future jobs not only when the travel industry rebounds but for the long-term success and longevity of the Maldivian hospitality industry as a whole".

Aimed towards 17 to 20-year-olds, the government-accredited Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Apprenticeship Program equips enthusiastic Maldivian youngsters with the expertise required to excel in the industry. Whilst living, studying and working onsite at Four Seasons two resort islands of Kuda Huraa and Landaa Giraavaru, apprentices gain hands-on experience in their chosen discipline; Food & Beverage Preparation or Service, Safe Maritime Transport, Housekeeping & Guest Services, PADI Dive Master, Water Sports Attendant, Marine Biology, Engineering (2nd year) and Front Office (2nd year).

The program is open to female and male Maldivians who meet a number of entry criteria including O-level certifications and fluency in both written and spoken English. No previous work experience is required and apprentices are recruited from

throughout the country for the fully-funded course, recognised in 2010 as the Maldives' first TVET certified Apprenticeship scheme.

Through a combination of intensive practical on-the-job training and regular classroom sessions, apprentices are trained to become solid professionals in their vocational field.



IN A NUTSHELL

Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences Introduces a Special Re-opening Offer

Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences has introduced a special offer for its re-opening in July 2020.



This offer is applicable for guests staying at the resort between the dates 1st July to 19th December 2020. Direct bookings are available with rates starting from USD 700 per night.

The package includes return transfer by domestic flight plus speedboat transfer as per standard villa occupancy, daily breakfast, 2-course lunch & 3-course dinner at either Barolo, Wok, Nanu, Joe's Pizza or Baa-Zaar Bar, a onetime 3-course dinner at Feeling Koi for every 4 nights booked (beverages not included), and Resort Credit of USD 300 per room per stay (minimum 4 nights stay) which can be used to settle extras on Food & Beverage and Spa treatments.

Complimentary services provided to the guests consists of selected non-motorized watersports, Wi-Fi in all Villas and public areas, and bicycles provided to all Villas.

Located on the crystalline waters of the Baa Atoll UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, just 30 minutes' flying time from Velana International Airport, Amilla Resort and Residences offers 23.5 hectares of lush island with 67 luxurious rooms – the vast majority over-water.

Dining at Amilla Resort and Residences is an adventure around the globe; with international gourmet cuisine, as well as vegan/keto/special diet options. From Maldivian curries to seafood extravaganzas, the cuisine at Amilla is both simple and indulgent.

Amilla offers a holistic approach with its unique 'Wellness Your Way' concept which includes an abundance of organic homegrown cuisine, fresh from the Mystique Garden, special dietary and 'lifestyle eating' cuisine, probiotics, yoga, personal training, pro tennis coaching and massage therapies, to name but a few.

Endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtle lays eggs on Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives beach

Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives has announced the very first sea turtle nesting event at the resort.



In the early morning of 23rd April 2020, the resort was visited by a very special guest; a female Hawksbill Sea Turtle looking for a suitable nesting site to lay her eggs.

A statement by the resort read: "We are delighted to have been able to witness such an important event; Hawksbill Sea Turtles are a critically endangered species and our staff has kept a proper safety distance without disturbing the long nesting procedure and pictures were taken without flash. After the sea turtle had left our beach, the nest was promptly secured and protected with a fence and a sign was placed close by to remind all to not disturb or touch the nesting ground."

Based on reports from the marine biologists at Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives and professional divers stationed around the Maldives, the Hawksbill is the most commonly encountered sea turtle species in the water, however the number of Hawksbill

turtles nesting in the Maldives appears to be much lower than the number of nesting Green Sea Turtles.

Hawksbill Sea Turtles reach sexual maturity at around 30 years of age and lay an average of 160 eggs in each nest that take about 60 days to hatch. Follow Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives on Instagram @grandparkkodhipparu and stay updated in the days to come.

"Interestingly, every two to three years, female Hawksbill Sea Turtles return to the same location on the very same beaches where they themselves hatched, referred to as natal beaches to lay their own eggs. A female doesn't reproduce every year, but will make 2-5 nests every 2-4 years, making it extra special for Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives to be a sanctuary for a new generation of Hawksbill Sea Turtles in North Malé Atoll, Maldives," read a statement by the resort.

Raffaele Solferino, the General Manager

of Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives says: "We look forward to welcoming our first sea turtle hatchlings by the end of June at Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives. This event rewards the extraordinary efforts of our green team members who are daily processing environmental activities, keeping our reefs and shores safe and clean, as well promoting sustainable educational modules to both guests and staff".

Located on North Malé Atoll and a mere 20 minutes by speedboat from Velana International Airport, Grand Park Kodhipparu, Maldives is a luxurious one-island-one-resort destination featuring a collection of 120 beach-front pool villas, breathtaking overwater villas and spacious two-bedroom villas. Designed by world-renowned hospitality firm, Hirsch Bedner Associates, the resort is an oasis of luxury and tranquillity featuring open public spaces alongside modern interiors inspired by the Maldivian islands, local traditions and crafts.



ANTHONEY'S launches HarithaHari Chicken



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ANTHONEY'S CHICKEN

New Anthony'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 Anthony's "HarithaHari" Chicken.

SLOW LIFE with FATHIMATH SHAAZLEEN

RESORT MANAGER SONEVA JANI

Soneva Jani is a name synonymous with nature and enhanced by the caress of luxury. From its majestic overwater villas to its equally striking lagoon of crystal clear waters fringed by pristine beaches and islands blanketed in lush tropical greenery, it promises an azure spectacle that inspires a sense of calm. Fathimath Shaazleen, the Resort Manager shares her experiences that helped shape her as an industry stalwart, the biggest challenges faced and insights into the ultra-luxurious hotel brand.

Tell us about yourself, the challenges you face as a working woman and how you overcome them?

Born in Lhaviyani Naifaru, Maldives, I spent my early childhood there with my family. After completion of my primary education, I moved to the capital city Malé where I continued my education and received a National Diploma in Hospitality Management. From then on I started working at various resorts. My first job was a telephone operator at a resort, and here I am today. While working, I completed my MBA in 2016. In January 2020, I got the opportunity to attend the General Managers program at the prestigious Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

The road has not always been easy, however I would not say it was because I am a woman, especially at the beginning of my career. I was fortunate enough to get the opportunities to learn and grow. The opportunities come and at the end of the day, hard work and dedication become the factors of success.

The challenge came much later. Having a child at a very critical time of my career, I did face rejection. I had many interviews, but companies were reluctant to offer me a job, because

I have a one year old child. Then Soneva happened. This company not only offered me a job, they also allowed me to take my son with me to the resort.

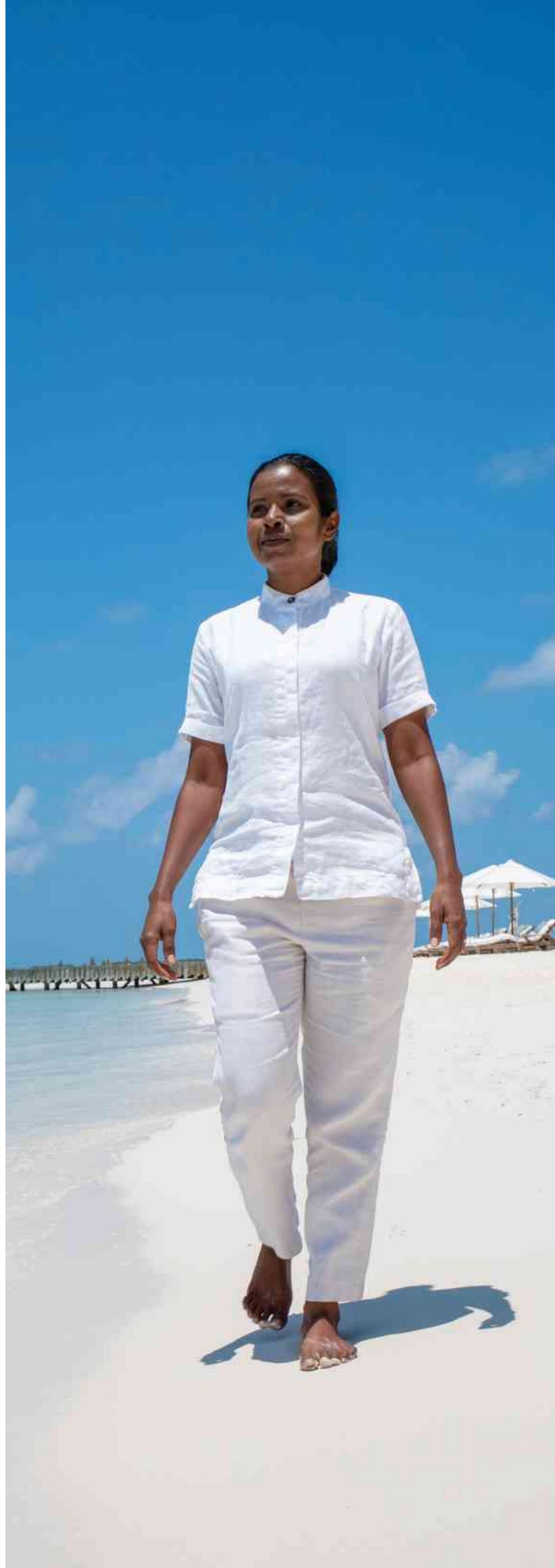
I believe there will always be challenges. It is the decisions we make with the opportunities available that enable us to overcome these challenges.

What has been your source of inspiration?

My biggest source of inspiration to join this industry was the beauty of the Maldives.

Did you always know that you wanted to be a Resort Manager and General Manager? If so, why?

I have always believed that I am in this industry to further my career, and not only as a series of jobs to help me get by. Being a General Manager has always been my goal and I believe the Resort Manager position is a much needed stepping stone to get there.



“I am delighted that you mentioned SLOW LIFE as a movement, as this is exactly what we want to achieve. SLOW LIFE comes from Sustainable, Local, Organic, Wellness, Learning, Inspiring, Fun Experiences. This is the guiding philosophy behind all what we do as a brand.”



Are there any Resort/General Managers or mentors that you worked with in your career that you attribute some of your success to?

I truly believe that all the General Managers I have worked with, in one way or the other, have contributed to my learning and growth. Yes, each one of them has played an important role as a mentor, and my experience with each one of them has contributed to my success.

How do you achieve a work-life balance?

Working in a resort is challenging and requires some long hours, yet the surrounding is highly rewarding. I am fortunate to be able to have my son living with me at the resort. I try to get out of the routine and engage with some fun activities, be it a quick swim or a walk in our organic garden with him. These moments have become both the norm and the highlights of our days.

Living in a resort also creates a community feeling, the team becomes more than colleagues and becomes lifelong friends and family. Taking part in staff activities is always fun.

Wherever you are it is important to be in touch with family and friends. Today we live in a world where there

is no limit to the different mediums available for a quick call or a short text message.

Personal development is an important aspect for me and it is important to give time and attention to myself. I love reading and studying new subjects which will broaden my knowledge and experience. We must never stop learning and always strive for growth.

Everyone is talking about the need for hotels to become more sustainable. Tell us some of the ways that Soneva Jani stack up on the sustainability front?

I think Soneva has come a long way in this front. Be it getting rid of plastic bottles and not using straws, measuring carbon foot print or achieving zero carbon as a company. For us, waste management has become an art, finding creative ways to deal with our food waste, glass bottles, styrofoam, etc. It is good to see many companies now participating in this journey.

Soneva is all about the “Slow Life” movement. What is the meaning behind it?

I am delighted that you mentioned SLOW LIFE as a movement, as this is

exactly what we want to achieve. SLOW LIFE comes from Sustainable, Local, Organic, Wellness, Learning, Inspiring, Fun Experiences. This is the guiding philosophy behind all what we do as a brand. Starting from the very initial stages of design and building of our resorts, sustainability is at the very core. Wellness is an equally important part for us in everything we offer at the resorts. Healthy options are the staples on our menus. We want every experience we offer to our hosts and guests to be inspirational and they take away a better understanding of the culture and the surrounding we live in.

What would you consider to Soneva Jani’s USP, which sets it apart from the competitors?

The design of the villas, the beauty of the natural island, the experiences we offer, and the renowned concept is unique and is what sets Soneva Jani apart from our competitors. The water slides and the retracting roof are the first things which come to mind. For me, it is also the team behind the unforgettable service that makes us unique and distinctive.

In what ways do you engage with the community?

We do a lot of work with local schools from nearby islands. Inviting young

students who are about to enter the work force, we show them the opportunities available at the resorts. We also organize and take part in other activities such as children’s activities, island clean ups, marine awareness sessions, and much more. We also take these opportunities to educate students and parents about our sustainable practices. It is important for every individual to do their bit to conserve the environment, and the best place to start is educating young minds on the importance of the environment.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself, your career, and your experiences?

This industry has taught me a lot and has become a part of me. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had in reaching this height. I can only thank all of my colleagues and anyone I worked with during my career. I wouldn’t be here if not for the support and encouragement I have received from my family, friends and colleagues. I am humbled that I have inspired many young girls to join this industry. It is my dream to see even more women thrive in the hotel industry.

EVENTS & AWARDS

South Asian Travel Awards has extended its online voting until October 2020

The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) has extended its online voting until October 2020 amidst the Covid-19 global crisis.



Online voting for SATA nominees is carried out via the website; www.southasiantravelawards.com

Earlier, SATA also postponed Jury Evaluations due to the crisis while it is progressing to do the evaluation virtually.

This year's SATA has received over 1000 nominations for over 40 categories from the region. Hotels and Hospitality service providers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives compete in the annual South Asian Travel Awards, the most prestigious hospitality service recognition award in the region.

SATA has been endorsed by multiple regional and national bodies such as:

- Association of Professionals in Tourism (APT),
- Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, India (ATTOI),
- Association of Travel Agents (ATA),
- Colombo Chamber of Commerce (CCC),
- Confederation of Accredited Tour Operators (India),
- Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry in Sri Lanka (FCCISL),
- Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB),
- Kerala Hotel General Managers Club (KHGMC),
- National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM),
- Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO),
- Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC),
- Nepal Tourism Board (NTB),
- Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO),
- The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL),
- Bangladesh International Hotel Association (BIHA)

The South Asian Travel Awards has been recognizing the best of South Asia's hospitality and travel industry since 2016. The prestigious annual event honours stellar organizations and individuals in a wide array of categories. SATA aims to encourage and raise service standards within the region's tourism industry.

The SATA Team unveiled the 2020 South Asian Travel Awards Platinum Partner as Gulf Craft Maldives, and Gold Partner as The Hawks Pvt Ltd, and looks forward to hosting the prestigious Grand Gala in the Maldives during the last quarter of 2020.

MACL celebrates 54th Anniversary of Velana International Airport

Maldive Airports Company Limited (MACL) marked the 54th Anniversary of Velana International Airport (VIA) on 12th April 2020.

Demonstrating social distancing and wearing masks, a flag hoisting event was held at VIA to mark the occasion on Sunday morning 12th April 2020. The operator of VIA, MACL's Acting Managing Director (AMD) Mr. Moosa Solih, the management team & staff participated at the event.

Speaking at the event, AMD Mr. Moosa Solih congratulated the employees on the occasion and highlighted that last year (2019) was a successful year as air traffic movements had a 16% increase and a 13% increase in passenger traffic. The west apron first phase and east apron were also open for operations in 2019. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, VIA has been hit hard with fewer flights. He further stated that the 40 international flights per day had been reduced to two airplanes, and one domestic operations, around five flights fly against 50 flights per day earlier. Mr. Moosa Solih applauded the efforts taken by MACL on taking preventive steps against COVID-19 at VIA at a very early stage with guidance from Health Authorities.

Mr. Moosa Solih stated: "I always believe that the most valuable asset of our company is our employees. Today, I especially applaud all the dedicated and hardworking staff who are working at

the airport during the current global crisis." He further stressed that during the current pandemic, the employees who are working on the frontline at the airport are not only doing their job for the company, but it is their service for the nation.

The event was concluded with a special prayer.

VIA was opened by former President of the Maldives Mr. Ibrahim Nasir on April 12, 1966. The airport reaches its 54th year during a period where the whole world is face-to-face with a global health crisis.

The majority of the flights in the airline industry have ceased operations to limit the spread of the disease, resulting a heavy drop in bookings and passenger arrivals. Around the world, varying measures of control continue to be imposed; travel bans, suspension of flights to various regions and more.

MACL is a 100% government owned limited liability company incorporated under the Companies Act of the Republic of Maldives. MACL is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Privatisation

& Corporatisation Board of the Maldives. The Corporate Office of MACL is on the island of Hulhule' where Velana International airport is also located. MACL is the operator of Velana International Airport and has been massively involved in destination marketing and bringing in new airlines to the Maldives to boost up the tourism industry. Today, the airport is well connected with major airports around the world, mostly serving as the main gateway into the Maldives for tourists.



Ooredoo Maldives Offers Bill Extensions & Flexible Payment Plans to Ease Financial Strain on Customers Amidst Covid-19 Pandemic



Ooredoo Maldives, as part of its efforts to assist the government of Maldives in easing the financial burden on people amid the COVID-19 crisis, has put in place key measures offering bill payment flexibility and support to its customers. Under this:

- Ooredoo Maldives customers can request for bill pay extensions up to two months from bill generation date.
- Ooredoo will continue to assist customers who are facing financial difficulties at this time, with payment plans and additional flexibilities upon request.
- Ooredoo will not disconnect service for customers who are registered as unemployed due to the covid-19

pandemic, till the end of June 2020, unless the situation is resolved or alternative means of financial support become available to them. We will also facilitate payment plans for them, once they are required to start paying their pending bills.

- Customers requiring support due to financial hardships can reach out to us via <http://ore.do/billsupport>

Minister of Economic Development, Hon. Uz Fayyaz Ismail said: “The government of Maldives is working closely with all essential service providers to ensure accessibility to quality services at this critical time. Digital access has become more important than ever, and my sincere

thanks to Ooredoo Maldives for taking an important step to ensure access to customers. This will undoubtedly bring ease to many who are facing financial hardships at this time. Most industries in the Maldives have been strongly impacted due to the pandemic, including telecommunication, primarily due to the losses to the tourism and corporate sector. The government appreciates the measures of support that are being extended to customers and emergency response teams at this time, despite these challenges.”

Ooredoo Maldives MD & CEO, Najib Khan said: “Across the globe, we are facing unprecedented challenges due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. While we work to overcome the strong challenges that the company is also facing during this crisis, our biggest priority remains the support we provide to our customers. Understanding the vital role of telecommunication in overcoming the current crisis and adjusting to the new way of life, our team will continue our immense efforts to provide quality and accessible services to communities across the nation.”

As part of the ongoing collaborations between Ooredoo Maldives and the Government, Ooredoo Maldives also introduced a special offer on 1st April 2020, which provides a daily 5GB allowance for SuperNet Broadband Customers upon reaching their package inclusive data allowances. Once the package limit is reached, customers will continue to get an additional 5GB bonus every 24 hours until the renewal of their data allowance for the next month. This is over and above the 25% free data allowance already announced for our SuperNet customers.

Ooredoo Maldives has continued to respond to various issues that has surfaced during the coronavirus pandemic, with special offers for customers, free connectivity and additional forms support for emergency responders, as well as collaborations with multi-sector partners to provide urgent assistance to those in need. For more information about Ooredoo’s response to the current crisis, please visit www.ooredoo.mv/covid-19.

MTCC to Operate Specialized Cargo Ferry Boats Between Islands

Maldives Transport and Contracting Company Plc (MTCC) has announced to carry out cargo operations via ferry boats between the islands of Maldives with support from Atoll Councils.



Due to the outbreak of COVID-19 across the country, the government has banned travel between the islands for most vessels and aircrafts except a minority with permission from the authorities.

MTCC Managing Director Adam Azim said that this special operation to transport cargo was settled by the company as a means of lending a helping hand in delivering goods to islands amidst these trying times. The ferry boats will be scheduled according to the dates fixed by the atoll councils.

Adam Azim added that these cargo operations can be scheduled to carry out weekly, upon the wishes of the councils. On Monday, 11th May 2020, MTCC commenced the first specialized cargo ferry boat delivering goods to the islands.

Informing that the former passenger ferry boats are being operated for this purpose, Adam Azim said that these special ferry boats can transport goods to all atolls except Fuvahmulah and Addu.

MTCC had previously continued its scheduled operations, however with the fast spread of COVID-19 in Male’ City, the company has ceased majority of its operations. Most recently, disinfection and sanitization procedures were conducted at both ferry terminals used in Vilimale’ ferry operations, along with all ferries used for operations after one of the frontline workers tested positive for COVID-19.

IN THE NEWS

The Hawks Expects Very First Landing Craft to be Deployed by Third Quarter of 2020

The Hawks Pvt Ltd has announced that the company's very first landing craft, which is being built at The Hawks Boatyard, is expected to be launched during the third quarter of 2020.



Located on the industrial island Thilafushi, The Hawks Boatyard Services include dry docking, professional boat building according to clients' needs, fibre works and refurbishments of existing vessels.

The Hawks Pvt Ltd is one of the leading importers and distributors of high-quality fuel products in the Maldives. With more than 13 years of experience in the area of fuel supply, the company has developed an extensive product portfolio. The Hawks' excellent customer service, on-time delivery and certified products provide an ultimate satisfaction to clients across the Maldives.

Services provided by The Hawks Pvt Ltd include fuel supply, fuel terminal, speed boat service, ferry service, tug boats, boat yard services, lathe workshop, bricks factory, construction, as well as activities in the hospitality industry.

Meanwhile, The Hawks has also been continuing its fuel and bunkering services to supply boats, fishing vessels, and speedboats for anyone who requires the service during this difficult time in lockdown due to the global health crisis.



**South Asian
Digital
Travel Conversation**

Gulf Craft



SATA hosts South Asian Digital Travel Conversation with Key Industry Stakeholders

The South Asian Digital Travel Conversation is a virtual conversation organized by the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) with a full focus to discuss in-depth, to create awareness and to voice the challenges that are being faced in the Travel Trade & Hospitality Industry of the South Asian region.

The conversation has been purposefully designed as a series, spread across multiple episodes of 45 minutes each, with special guests from the South Asian region's Travel Trade & Hospitality Industry. Each episode will highlight a specific topic, and industry professionals will be sharing their voice with regional factual data.

The conversation will be guided by a moderator who will ask questions based on the topic of the day, and the guests will share their views, experiences, opinions and hindrances. Each episode will be presented by diverse industry stakeholders and moderators.

Moderated by the Vice President of South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) Mr. Suraj Khan, Episode 1: Reviving South Asian Travel Trade took place on 2nd May 2020. Participating in the first episode, Managing Director of Maldives Marketing & Public

Relations Corporation (MMPRC) Thoyyib Mohamed relayed confidence that the Maldives will overcome the challenges and be back in business for tourism. MD Thoyyib further pointed out that, during the last 20 years, Maldives' tourism industry and global tourism had faced major challenges due to tragic events such as September 11, Global Financial Crisis in 2008 and 2009, and the 2004 Tsunami. However, the Maldives tourism sector had bounced back stronger in the following years despite the harsh impact of these events.

Thoyyib stated: "All should consider contributing to the sustainable development agenda and build resilience while learning from this crisis."

Speaking in Episode 2: International Business Travel Trade and the Impact on Hotel Industry, former President of Maldives Association of Tour Agents and

Travel Operators (MATATO) Abdulla Ghiyas has stated that the aviation industry will bounce back given that right actions are taken at the right time. However, the world may not be the same afterwards. He also informed that Maldives' borders will open in July 2020 as planned by the government only if the current situation in the Maldives remains controlled, and the virus – contained.

"The biggest priority is the safety of the people, doctors and health authorities are putting their utmost effort to prevent further spread of the virus in the community," says Ghiyas.

The South Asian Digital Travel Conversation will be webcasted via mainstream social media every Saturday at 11:30 AM GMT (04:30 PM GMT+5 MALDIVES TIME), with the repeat of the program broadcasted on Raajje TV at 06:00 PM GMT (11:00 PM GMT+5 MALDIVES TIME).

MATATO and NBAM with Support from Coca-Cola Maldives, Salsa Royal & Manta Air Provide Food for 500 Locals and Expats Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic

The Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO) and the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM) with support from Coca-Cola Maldives, Salsa Royal and Manta Air continue to show an outstanding example of community support and dedication, providing food for locals and expats in temporary shelters during the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.



All residing in the capital Male' are faced with the challenging situation of the lockdown leading to difficulty in securing food and other necessary supplies. Especially during the holy month of Ramadan, hundreds of individuals are left without shelter and a consistent source of sustenance.

Together with the Coca-Cola Maldives, Salsa Royal and Manta Air, the two associations are providing food packages for 500 people whose lives have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and are being taken care of and sheltered by the Maldivian Red Crescent and the government in various locations. The collaborative work which commenced a few

days before the lockdown will continue until the end of Ramadan.

About 15 dedicated employees of Salsa Royal work in two shifts, cooking three meals a day prior to Ramadan, and twice daily during Ramadan providing meals for Iftar (breaking the fast) and Suhoor (midnight / early morning meal before fasting commences).

Manta Air extends support in delivering meal packages to these individuals, who are currently residing in shelters and have been in quarantine facilities, taken care of by the government and

the Maldivian Red Crescent. Airline staff, including pilots, are reported to be participating in the delivery service.

Since the start of this service, 15,000+ meal packages have been delivered as of 12th May 2020, and over the coming 30 days of Ramadan 30,000 meal packages are estimated to be produced and delivered. Doors are open for those interested, and who work in areas of logistics, delivery and sourcing, to support and make any contributions to this service.

Sun Travels & Tours Celebrates 30 Years in Business

Sun Travels & Tours Pvt Ltd has reached 30 years of service since its establishment in 1990 by Mr. Ahmed Siyam Mohamed.

As one of the leading tour operators and travel agents in the Maldives, Sun Travels & Tours mainly focuses on inbound tourism. Over the years, the company grew tremendously from being a relatively small business to one of the top ranked inbound operators in the country with strong ties with the resorts in the Maldives, as well as tour operators worldwide.

Sun Travels & Tours' portfolio of properties includes their own exclusive resorts and safari boats. The company owns and operates The Sun Siyam Iru Fushi Maldives (5-star Boutique), Sun Aqua Vilu Reef Maldives (5-star Boutique), Olhuveli Beach & Spa Maldives (4-star deluxe), Sun Aqua Pasikudah Sri Lanka (5-star Boutique) and Sun Aqua Iru Veli Maldives (5-star Premium All-Inclusive).

The company also offers services such as arranging diving, surfing, safaris and special packages for honeymooners, groups, weddings as well as meet and greet service. Furthermore, Sun Travels & Tours is a sales agent for Island Aviation, providing reservations and ticketing, and airline ground handling service to several charter flights.

Services within the boundaries of tourism including:

Safari Operation – Luxury cruiser Sunset Queen offers 9 luxuriously appointed cabins and support facilities for the wellbeing and comfort of the guests. Including a beautiful salon and sun deck with open Jacuzzi, Sunset Queen provides ample opportunity for space and relaxation whilst travelling the Maldivian waters.

Outbound Travel Service – for locals who wish to travel abroad on holiday or business, the company offers a complete service from flight arrangements, to accommodation.

Agency Service – The Company represents several International tour operators as the ground handling agent in the Maldives. **Meet & Greet Service** – as a handling agent, we offer the first welcome to thousands of visitors who travel to our country to bask in our hospitality.

Airline Ground Handling – The Company offers its services to several charter flights that operate into the country year-round. In 2009 the company secured GSA for Oman Air in Maldives.

Transport Service – The Company has a fleet of high-speed transfer boats with passenger capacity ranging from 18 up to 80. This service is mainly provided to the tourism industry to transfer clients from the airport to the resorts and back.

To maintain the existing markets and develop new markets, the company regularly organizes familiarisation tours to agents throughout the year as well, while also participating in various international travel exhibitions.





In Conversation with Mona Sedghi

**Marketing & PR Manager
at LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas, Maldives**

With any hotelier, communicating a purpose and offering is important, that way it can operate productively and build relationships. The Islandchief spoke to Mona Sedghi, Marketing and PR Manager at LUX* Resorts & Hotels to get an insight into the brand's two iconic properties in Maldives, LUX* South Ari Atoll and LUX* North Malé Atoll.

“

As ethical living becomes a lifestyle choice, travellers will value green, personalised, inconspicuous luxury experiences above traditional statements of wealth. Social, environmental, and cultural awareness will be the social capital for today's aspirational class. Additionally, we see a growing trend of mental health, self-love, self-improvement and digital detox retreats.”

How did you decide on PR as a career?

Communication and creative arts have always been close to my heart. I started off studying advertising and graphic design at Linnaeus University in 2007, followed by a six-month internship at Universal Music Group in Stockholm, Sweden, where my career took off. My hobby became my full-time job and I completely fell in love with marketing and PR.

You have been with Universal Music Group and Sony Music Entertainment for more than a decade. After this tremendous experience, what brought you to the sunny shores of Maldives?

You know that poking gut feeling telling you that it's time to move on in order to evolve and make room for a new chapter? It was simply time to travel in the direction my heart was singing. Hospitality has always been something I've wanted to step into, and Maldives a destination I've felt connected to. Combining my expertise with the endless possibilities of hospitality in Maldives came very naturally to me. 8000 kilometres, a pre-opening of LUX* North Malé Atoll Resort & Villas and two years later, here I am, grateful and proud of my journey with LUX* Resorts & Hotels so far.

How would you position LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas and LUX* North Malé Atoll Resort & Villas?

The products cater to different target audiences and tastes. LUX* South Ari Atoll Resort & Villas is one of the bigger resort islands in the Maldives, including 197 keys and a traditional Maldivian style to its thatched roof villas, surrounded by lush gardens, eight restaurants, five bars and a multi-award-winning LUX* Me Spa. The endless menu of activities caters to all segments of travellers, including solo travellers, couples, groups of friends and families alike. The resort, with its 600 staff members from all around the world, is accompanied by the whale sharks gently roaming around the reefs all year round.

LUX* North Malé Atoll Resort & Villas is a new, ultra-luxury resort, first of its kind in the Maldives catering to a high-end clientele looking to elevate their holiday experience. The 67 white-washed, double story penthouse villas, starting at 350 square metres, are all crowned with their own private rooftop terrace and infinity pool. The 1000 square metre, three-story LUX* Retreats on the beach or over water are breath-taking, with floor-to-ceiling windows and spectacularly designed spaces to play, relax and retreat with friends and family. The unique combination of powder-white beaches and the house reef just metres from the shore, as well as the exceptional culinary offerings of fine dining, profoundly sets the resort apart from other resort.

What are the defining elements of the luxury DNA of your brand? Which do you consider your competitive advantages?

When LUX* Resorts & Hotels set sail nine years ago, we identified a niche within luxury travel, a window of opportunity at the very top end of the market for a resort operator that wasn't as predictable and static as the more conventional luxury brands. We wanted to move away from the formal and expected sea of sameness. We wanted to challenge the status quo and rewrite the rules to stand out, banish thoughtless patterns, keep it simple, fresh and sensory as well as to make the ordinary extraordinary, fun and relaxed. All in all, LUX* means

light and that is the essence of our DNA – a lighter and brighter experience. We have seen significant growth in demand for our brand. As a rather new brand, the ability to move and adapt at a high speed is something the big brands can't do, as they often times have thick operating manuals to abide by. It's completely the opposite with LUX*, which is one of many reasons that attracted me to the brand.

To what extent do discerning travellers seek experiences and the utmost in personalisation? Please tell us more about your view.

To the maximum extent. Authentic, customised and unique experiences as well as transformation are the new currency for today's travellers who seek self-fulfilment through green travel, while doing good for people and the planet. Following the COVID-19 crisis, I personally think we will see the vast majority of travellers looking for a deeper sense of intention, an urge to connect with people and nature, realise what truly matters to them and be very mindful when making decisions.

Will customers become more transactional with hotels on social media, or will it remain primarily for engagement?

Oh yes, no doubt about it. Social media builds brand awareness and engagement, but we are already seeing how social media channels are slowly but surely taking over new shapes and forms in their functionality and how they simplify the way we live our everyday lives. Consumers are looking for effortless ways to shop, so technology will naturally follow and advance to where people actually are and what they need. However, I think it is key, as with any approach, to stay subtle and give your audience the opportunity to seamlessly get what they want as opposed to desperately forcing sales. Who knows, maybe social media channels will overtake websites as we know them today.

Can you tell us about your upcoming property in Mauritius?

We are so excited about this one! LUX* Grand Baie Resort & Residences will open in the second half of 2021 and become the flagship property for LUX* Resorts & Hotels. The property is located in the popular Grand Baie neighbourhood in the north of the island, known for its picturesque beaches, vibrant downtown village and favourable year-round climate.

The property will offer sophisticated beachside living for the upscale, modern traveller. Contemporary architecture will see the resort blend into its tropical surroundings, whilst interiors have been conceived by renowned London-based designer Kelly Hoppen.

The property will house 86 spacious suites, eight two-bedroom villas, 24 luxurious residences and the signature three-bedroom Beachfront LUX* Villa. All rooms overlook the resort's pristine sheltered beach and lagoon with floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive terraces to maximise the views Grand Baie is famed for.

The culinary offerings are well thought through, with the signature Beach Rouge offering locally-sourced cuisine, as well as eye-catching Ai KISU offering best-in-class Asian cuisine in a lively atmosphere, to name a couple of highlights. The jewel in the resort's crown will be its expansive rooftop, affording

spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding Indian Ocean. The adults-only area will be home to a 30m infinity pool surrounded by cabanas and plenty of natural greenery. I am personally looking forward to trying Bisou, an inventive raw restaurant and bar; a cookery school showcasing the best of Mauritius' vibrant flavours; and an open-air wellness space for sunrise meditation and yoga classes.

What do you think about sustainability as part of the strategy of any top luxury hotel nowadays and in the long run?

I firmly believe we are past the era of mentioning sustainability as a unique selling point. A sustainable approach should be at the core and centre of any business plan. Luxury brands making sustainability a natural part of the guest experience will have great advantages, not just to make up for a good look and profit, but because they actually care. Today's savvy consumers can distinguish authentic sustainability and greenwashing in the blink of an eye. What does this mean in practice? Everything from encouraging a healthy lifestyle, rethinking waste, supporting local communities, innovating and supporting a circular economy, where the aim is to achieve sustainable development through a better balance between the planet, people and economic growth. When circular thinking is embraced by the high-end travel industry, we can build sustainable projects which maximise resources and meet travellers' minimum expectations.

What are the key travel trends you are seeing emerge?

As we touched earlier, an overall trend to watch is the redefinition of high-end luxury and the travel industry as a whole. As ethical living becomes a lifestyle choice, travellers will value green, personalised, inconspicuous luxury experiences above traditional statements of wealth. Social, environmental, and cultural awareness will be the social capital for today's aspirational class. Additionally, we see accelerating trends when it comes to mental health, self-care, self-improvement and spirituality. Anti-excess consumerism and digital detox are also something to watch. A prediction is that people will seek out and choose unconventional brand actions who put responsibility ahead of profit.

If you had one piece of advice to give to someone starting out, what would you say?

Your worth is not determined by someone's ability to appreciate it' is one of my favourite quotes. For me, success is to possess the feeling of total freedom to go where my heart sings and to stay true to what I believe is right, regardless of other's opinions. Listen to and trust your gut feeling and let that lead the way. Don't be afraid to take risks, to be vulnerable or simply human. The best leaders I've had the pleasure of working with so far, all have three important things in common: they are extremely firm, incredibly compassionate, and once in a while they let their goofy side come out to play.

Practice the art of staying focused and don't sweat the small stuff. Feed your mind with what you want to become, remember that good things take time and that you will make a lot of mistakes along the way. Forgive yourself, blossom and surround yourself with people who want the best for you at all times. And lastly, always be kind but set boundaries.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Marco Den Ouden appointed as General Manager at Patina Maldives, Fari Islands

Marco Den Ouden brings with him over 20 years of global experience in the luxury hospitality industry.



recognized as one of the top three fine dining restaurants in Rotterdam. In 2009, Marco returned back to the hotel industry as International General Manager of Jin Jiang Hotel in Chengdu. He also worked as an F&B Hospitality Consultant for the Les Amis Group. Between 2012 and 2014, he filled the role of General Manager at Huvaafen Fushi by Per AQUUM, Maldives, leading a ten-week renovation project to enhance guest offerings. Fluent in Dutch and English, Marco is also able to speak German, Mandarin, French and Italian.

Marco joins the Patina Maldives pre-opening team from his role as General Manager of Soneva Jani, Maldives, the flagship property for the esteemed Soneva collection.

Before his move to the Maldives, Marco spent four years with Alila Hotels & Resorts, as General Manager of three of their properties across Indonesia and China.

Starting off his career with NH Hotel Group, Marco later opened his own restaurant in Rotterdam. Coopvaert was a highly regarded farm-to-table concept, which was consistently

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.

SAii Lagoon Maldives welcomes Nasrulla Ali as Resort Manager

S Hotels & Resorts has welcomed Nasrulla Ali (Nasru) as the Resort Manager for SAii Lagoon Maldives.



SAii Lagoon Maldives is the first property of Curio Collection by Hilton in the Maldives. Just 25 minutes from Velana International Airport by speedboat, the property consists of 198 rooms and villas with generous interiors and alfresco spaces, appealing culinary concepts and hallmark resort lifestyle features. After checking in at SAii Lagoon Maldives, guests are invited to drop by Snap: Snack Box where they can choose, mix and match their own in-room treats from a complimentary collection of healthy, family-friendly refreshments. The light bites at Snap: Snack Box range from local tapas to fresh fruit juices, nutritious nuts and energy bars; youngsters will be delighted with the separate kids' section, full of delicious, appetising goodies.

Praised for his excellent managerial skills, Nasru has previously held positions at renowned luxury properties including, the Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, One&Only Resorts, Velaa Private Island, Velassaru Maldives, Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spa, Coco Collection, Radisson Hotel and most recently, Grand Park Kodhipparu.

He started off his hospitality career in the year 1994 as a receptionist at Angsana Ihuru, formerly Ihuru Tourist Resort, bringing with him over 25 years of experience in the international luxury hospitality industry.

The resort connects directly to The Marina@CROSSROADS, a dynamic destination with a variety of dining, shopping and leisure activity offerings. SAii Lagoon Maldives is part of CROSSROADS Maldives, the first integrated resort in the country. The resort offers a collection of overwater and beachfront villas decorated with artisanal furniture, scattered across a picturesque island paradise.

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands appoints Juliana S. Salla as Resort Manager



The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands has appointed Juliana S. Salla to the position of Resort Manager (pre-opening), commencing her work starting from 1st July 2020.

Juliana brings years of experience and extensive knowledge, along with 3 years working with Marriott and a career spanning total of 17 years with assignments in the US, Europe, Middle East, Asia Pacific and China. Juliana joined the W brand (previously owned by Starwood which was later acquired by Marriott) in 2007. During her 10-year journey with the W brand, she held various senior leadership roles at properties in Qatar, Indonesia and China, and has played major roles in the pre-opening of W properties.

At present, Juliana is the Executive Assistant Manager at The Ritz-Carlton Bali, overseeing the rooms division and security operations. At The Ritz-Carlton Bali, she was responsible for having increased guest satisfaction at the property by seven per cent year-over-year.

Scheduled to open in the fourth quarter of 2020, The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands spans 4 islands with 100 island- and over-water villas, plus 5 food & beverage

options dotted around the islands. On top of the all-day dining option, guests can enjoy Italian, Chinese and Japanese teppanyaki specialties. Uniquely design facilities include an experiential Kids Club, a Recreation Club and the Spa. Guests will have the unique opportunity to live in a purpose-built village campus, with luxury accommodation, its own beach, and tons of entertainment. The Fari Islands is 50 mins away from Velana International Airport by speedboat and 10 mins via seaplane.

BON APPÉTIT

PURPLE GNOCCHI

with truffle parmesan cream, fried leeks and green oil.

Chef Roberto D'Adduzio is from Torino Piemonte, Italy, a region rich in some of the best products exported around the world such as white truffle, hazelnut IGP, and Barolo red wine D.O.P. He spent time in various high-end luxury hotels cooking with some of the best chefs around Italy, Sidney and Doha. In the Maldives, he off at Kanuhura Maldives' Bottega Restaurant, and now thrives in his role as Specialty Italian Chef at Joali Maldives. This recipe was created by Chef Roberto to share the experience, simplicity and

taste of something rarely found in the Maldives and Italy: "I wanted to play with the colours in the plate to satisfy customers. I combined the truffle with the parmesan cheese because they are two of the most famous ingredients from my country and recognized all over the world, we finish the plate with fried leeks to give volume and crunch, creating a balance, and finally a drizzle of fresh green oil, made with fresh ingredients from our garden in Joali."



INGREDIENTS

Gnocchi Dough

- 1kg purple potato
- 1pc whole egg
- 5g salt
- 125g flour
- 50g flour for working on the table

Garnish

- 50g leeks
- 1g corn flour
- 1g parsley

Parmesan Truffle Sauce Recipe

- 400ml fresh cream
- 100ml milk
- 200g parmesan cheese
- 30g truffle oil
- Salt, black pepper as your taste

How to make the Gnocchi

- Take a small piece of dough and start to rolls from the middle to create 1in cylindrical shape.
- Cut the dough into 1inch long. It should have 1inch square size.

for the garnish

Cut the leeks in julienne (from the long part) add the corn flour and fried the leeks in hot sunflowers oil at the temperature of 180C. Fry till it become crispy.

Parmesan Truffle Sauce

- Combine all the ingredients for the sauce in a pan except cheese.
- Cook it on low heat
- After it starts to boil add cheese and remove it from the fire and blende the sauce.
- Blanch the 100g of Gnocchi in salted boiling water. (1litre will need 50g salt)
- Heat the sauce and place in a deep serving bowl, on top put the boiled gnocchi.
- Garnish it with Crispy leeks, parsley and truffle oil.

METHOD

Gnocchi dough

- Fill ¾ of a deep pot of cold water, place the purple potato and start the boiling. Let it cook until soft, check with the knife if it is done.
- Once the potato is cooked, remove it from the water and let it cool down.
- Remove the skin.
- Mash the potato, place the mix into a clean and dry bowl.
- Combine rest of the ingredients to make soft dough. Knead the dough for 10 minutes.
- If the dough is loose adding little flour to bring the tight consistency.
- Cover the dough with cling film and keep rest in the chiller for 30 min

In this waiting time you can start to do the Parmesan Truffle cream

This recipe is enough for 10 portions, every single portion will be 100g each.



Courtesy of Chef Roberto D'Adduzio, Specialty Italian Chef at JOALI Maldives



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Frankly Speaking

The Maldives closed its doors for tourists on March 27, 2020, as a measure to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the country has been on lockdown, the government’s decisive measures have proven effective compared to most Asian countries and is expected to be one of the first countries to curb the virus. Considering the process of re-opening the borders for tourism, is it a wise decision to only allow entry for tourists from the high-end market?



Mohamed Ali Janah
President,
Maldives National Association of Construction Industry (MNACI) &
International Federation of Asian and Western Pacific Contractors
Association (IFAWPCA)



Abdulla Salih
Managing Director
DAMAS



Nimad Ibrahim
Managing Director,
Plumeria Maldives



Mohamed Khaleel
Chief Executive Officer
Manta Air

I am not sure how we could open our borders anytime soon. The health and safety of the people of the Maldives should be the number one priority and what the government is doing now on these aspects so far is absolutely right. This is a global pandemic and in order to protect our people, we have to sacrifice our economy. There are very few countries like us where an entire economy is dependent on mainly one industry. So, we can't do this alone anymore. I believe that we should be prepared to be in this crisis for a considerable amount of time, unless a vaccine is found or a reliable medication is found, people won't be at ease to travel like pre pandemic.

So, instead of half-hearted or piecemeal decisions, we have to get ready to take the big hit for about 18 months. I believe because of this we as an individual nation can't manage the economy alone like many other countries similar to us. An international collective effort should be made to help countries like us. The international financial agencies must come to inject monies to our economies. It's only a collective international effort that can take most countries out of this crisis. A few private jets will not save our economy, but may help some resorts and a small amount of money to the government, but with a lot of risk again. Opening the borders again must be a well-calculated decision.

Europe, the Middle East, USA and Far East are still very bad. The earliest signs of any reasonable recovery for these countries will take many more months if not a year. China is still struggling four months into this. So, we have to be prepared to be in this situation for the long haul. The reason I mentioned 18 months is that scientists are saying a reliable vaccine will take another six to 18 months to be approved and available for mass production. So, any hope of having a normal situation is still very far away. We have to now find ways how we could all manoeuvre and manage these turbulent months that are ahead of us. Crisis management experts from various fields should be brought in.

Opening our borders will also depend on many factors and that also should now be a collective decision made regionally and in consultation with the wider international community. Advise from WHO is very important before taking such a decision now.

Well, I personally think without a vaccine for this virus people will be reluctant to travel freely. It is risky as well. Take Singapore for example; they are trying hard to live with this, but with enormous resources they are unable to do this. So, we still need time to decide.

A rapid test might work and help the cashflow. For the smart and wealthy, the value is often more meaningful than a discount, so I think an offer such as book now & stay within 6 months & enjoy 3 nights free in the next booking subject to stay within a year should represent great value.

There is no way to rebound without serious value. We cannot open all at once too. The quarantine resorts will be continued for months. Guesthouses and liveboards will take more than a year even if private islands are opened.

And of course, in the very worst-case scenario, if the virus prolongs for more than a year, you always have the option to market Maldives as an "Isolation Destination", one month minimum stay at reasonable prices. These are all options for policy makers to decide.

I can't imagine budget travellers rebounding – having lost jobs & with family and friends in financial difficulty, I really can't imagine the 'buffet all-inclusive crowd' is going to show up any time soon in Maldives.

Having said all these, I think the resorts with ADR below \$300 will find it difficult to rebound compared to upmarket resorts.

My estimate is it will take full 3 years for us to enjoy our good old rates.



Mohamed Waheed
Resort Manager
Equator Village

No! It's not important only for the rich, because many of our clients are waiting too, and they are not high-end clients.

Indeed! It is a good idea. The government needs a source of income, so that it could support SME, stimulus and other relief programs. This will also reduce the burden on the government.

But before they permit as such, they have to ensure that the airport is fully prepared with the necessary hygiene, safety and health related standards and measures.

I don't think the government has the capacity to support all the businesses across the Maldives in the long run if our borders are closed.

Then again, this will also attract the wealthy to the Maldives and that would generate a significant amount of income. We need to sell them long-stay, and let them fly in their own jets. If our airport is well equipped with safety measures, this is very possible. This will also help to spread the news that Maldives is a safe and well managed heaven for travellers.



Alex Bryant
Managing Director
Emperor Divers Maldives

Well unfortunately I am not sure what the "high-end" market means. Being rich doesn't make someone immune. Many celebrities and even the Prime Minister of the fifth largest economy of the world have been extremely sick. Why take the risk to allow tourists to potentially harm the people of Maldives until this virus is controlled with either a Vaccine or medication?

For many countries, the pressure on governments to reopen their borders, societies and economies is intense: many are desperate to get back to work and re-establish some normality in their lives.

The main pre-requisite for opening the border will be that the government should have a credible strategy in place to screen properly at the airports and how to deal with positive cases when they encounter one, because they surely will. Putting entire islands under quarantine for weeks and trapping guests there will not be a solution

There has to be a strategy which builds confidence amongst the guests that Maldives is a safe destination and that if something does happen they will be looked after well.

Just opening a small airport in an adhoc way for the sake of a few billionaires is not the solution and the government should focus on finding a solution quickly for the entire industry. We cannot afford to turn tourism off for them next 12 months.

The biggest driver will be the willingness of the source countries to allow their citizens to travel and return without having to go into quarantine back home. Hence giving confidence to those countries that Maldives has the situation under control is key. A proper dialogue between Government to Government with the key source market is a pre-requisite

When tourism returns people choice of destination will be driven by safety and hygiene rather than who has the cheapest price. The industry must coordinate to avoid a race to bottom and we should stagger the openings so that the full inventory doesn't come to the market at the same time.

For this to happen the government needs to find a solution for those resorts and their staff who would delay their reopening



Daiya Devilled



Fiery Goodness in a Bowl