

# The islandchief

your trusted independent travel news

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It all starts with a  
**NESCAFE**



## EMBRACING TALENTS with AFEEF

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF TRAINING,  
DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE  
OF LUX\* RESORTS & HOTELS

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Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Seaside Finolhu

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Dear Readers,

*The Maldives is open for tourism, and we are just as excited as you are!*

*They say, "Heaven is a place on Earth", and we couldn't agree more, because if there's a place on the face of the Earth that has built its reputation on the promise of romance, it's the islands of Maldives. World-class resorts float above the clearest of lagoon waters. Dramatic sunsets frame picture-postcard vistas. An island nation that has granted many a fatigued, stressed and over-worked soul, inner bliss, solitude, peace and tranquillity. Get enthralled by the richly colourful coral reefs renowned the world over, for their great bio-diversity. You'll fall in love again and again with the rapturous feeling of swimming with dolphins, gazing at the majestic Manta Rays underwater, catching a gnarly wave, dancing the night away at a beach party under the starry skies, indulging on the scrumptious tropical and multi-cultural food on offer or just plain lounging on the beach sipping on a refreshing cocktail. And from there, the reasons to visit the Maldives go on and on.*

*Recurrent visitors would know exactly what we are talking about and to them, we first wish a hearty welcome back and remind them of the fact that they'll always discover something new and wondrous about these pearl-like islands on each different visit.*

*In this issue of The islandchief, we had a very encouraging chat with LUX\* Resorts & Hotels' Regional Director of Training, Development and Quality Assurance, Afeef Hussain (p. 12), who offered some compelling advice for ambitious HR professionals and hospitality industry strivers.*

*Head over to page 19 for August's Personality of the Month, Earle Enriques, Marketing and Public Relations Manager at Seaside Finolhu, and don't forget to check out Serenity (p. 18), for wellness tips by JOALI Maldives to get you feeling your best.*

*Now sit back, relax and let our island and sea spirits give your mind, body and soul that heavenly high you've come seeking for once again. Always remember: the Maldives can be fiery and unpredictable, and has many more enchanting tales to tell, and is ready to star in your next memorable story!*

**Until next month,**

**The islandchief Team**

**Rediscover Maldives... the sunny side of life**

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# MACL Offers Rent Waiver and Discounts to Airlines and Tourism Associates at VIA

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) has observed significant impacts on all types of businesses at Velana International Airport (VIA) attributable to zero commercial activities resulting from flight cancellations.

A statement by MACL read: "As a foremost airport service provider in the Maldives, our accomplishment has always been the success of our business partners."

Upon monitoring and analysing the effects on partners, the management of MACL has decided to offer rent waivers and discounts to COVID-19 impacted airlines and airport partners, as well as tourism associates at VIA.

MACL announced that the rent invoices raised in the aforementioned duration will be adjusted by issuing a credit note for the discount to take effect.

During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, as an incentive to support and boost up the tourism industry in the Maldives, MACL had further offered attractive discounts from airport charges to international airline operators on June 2020.

Maldives Airports Company Limited (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 President of the Maldives. The Corporate Office of MACL is on the island of Hulhule, Republic of Maldives.

Category	DISCOUNT %	APPLICABLE DURATION
- Airline Office, Airline Engineering Office & Storage spaces	50%	1st March - 15th July 2020
- Other Office spaces	25%	16th July - 15th October 2020
- Telecom Outlets		

Category	DISCOUNT %	APPLICABLE DURATION
- Tourist Representative Counters (TRCs)	50%	1st March - 15th July 2020
- Resort Pavilions	25%	16th July - 15th October 2020

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## ACROSS THE SKIES

# Maldives Welcomes Back First Tourists via Qatar Airways

After almost four months since the suspension of on-arrival tourist visas, the Maldives' tourism industry has reopened with enhanced precautionary measures against COVID-19. Qatar Airways was the first international airline to resume services to Velana International Airport (VIA); Malé, Maldives from July 15, 2020.

The first tourists arrived at VIA on the morning of July 15, 2020, onboard Qatar Airways. The airline flew in 107 foreigners and 24 Maldivians. Qatar Airways scheduled the flights to connect seamlessly via its award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), being one of the only global airlines to have maintained a significant schedule throughout this crisis.

Qatar Airways Country Manager, Sri Lanka and Maldives, Yu Cha An Terence stated: "Our passengers can travel with peace of mind knowing their safety on board is our utmost priority, and with the recommencement of these daily flights to Velana International Airport; Malé, our passengers will have greater choice and flexibility when planning a holiday getaway. Qatar Airways' wide network of flights during these challenging times has ensured we have implemented the most advanced safety and hygiene measures on board our aircraft and in our home and hub, Hamad International Airport. We have been the airline passengers can rely on during this crisis and we will continue to ensure the safest experience for our passengers as global travel slowly starts again."

The occasion was attended by Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Honourable Aishath Nahula, Acting Minister of Tourism Honourable Uz. Fayyaz Ismail, Acting Managing Director of Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) (now former) Moosa Solih, and senior dignitaries of government and industry stakeholders. Arrivals were greeted to a brand-new normal with precautionary measures such as social distancing, minimal touch points and mask regulations to ensure safety of all visitors and staff at VIA.



Acting Managing Director of MACL (now former) Moosa Solih stated: "As the operator of Velana International Airport, we are happy to start our scheduled operations on July 15th after three and a half months. We are delighted to receive Qatar Airways as our first flight and we are glad to receive a number of airlines in the coming days. At Velana International Airport we have taken all viable safety measures and precautions, as safety is our utmost priority."

Travellers can plan their travel via Qatar Airways with peace of mind as the airline extended its booking policies to offer even more choices for passengers. For full terms and conditions visit [www.qatarairways.com/RelyOnUs](http://www.qatarairways.com/RelyOnUs). Qatar Airways has further enhanced its on-board safety measures for

passengers and cabin crew. For full details of all the measures that have been implemented onboard and in HIA, please visit [qatarairways.com/safety](http://qatarairways.com/safety).

With the gradual lifting of travel restrictions and the resumption of flights around the world, the Maldives is excited to welcome back travellers to its shores. The unique 'one island, one resort' aspect of the tourism product, which has always been sought after by visitors, and the naturally distanced geographical formation of the islands have been ideal as the world seeks new ways to travel. Last year, the country registered a record breaking 1.7 million tourist arrivals – the highest number of tourists to arrive in the Maldives within a year. H. E. President Solih has announced a target of 850,000 visitors by the end of 2020.

## Trans Maldivian Airways Resumes Its Service - #TravelConfidentlywithTMA

For over 30 years, Trans Maldivian Airways (TMA) has navigated the Maldivian skies as the link between guests and their dream island home, serving as the backbone of tourism infrastructure in Maldives.



Due to the Global health crisis, TMA ceased all operations to ensure the safety of all passengers. However, despite hardships faced during the pandemic, the company has recommenced its service to take passengers to their luxurious vacation spots once again.

TMA welcomes holidaymakers to experience its unique scenic seaplane journey with enhanced levels of flight safety and superior hygiene. The seaplane-giant has added stringent measures in accordance with the new normal of air travel and ensures that guests can feel comfortable and travel with confidence.

All staff members will wear masks and gloves while practicing social distancing. Furthermore, all vehicles including cars, buses and passenger planes are disinfected, and social distancing measure will be in place with seats marked for passengers.

According to the newly implemented measures, passengers joining the flight from Male' and Hulhumale' will have their temperature checked and will be handed a complimentary travel hygiene kit before boarding. Additionally, departing passengers joining from resorts will also have their temperature checked at the terminal.

Commenting that the health and well-being of guests are the top priority, TMA is committed to making the journey as safe as possible, while venturing into a new world with new rules and regulations. TMA is ready to fly anywhere to complete your dream Maldives vacation in style and confidence.

# Soneva Fushi & Soneva Jani Chapter 2: New Water Retreats to Open



## SONEVA FUSHI

Soneva Fushi's new One Bedroom Water Retreats are scheduled to be ready by August 1, while the Two Bedroom Water Retreats will be ready on September 1, marking the start of a remarkable new chapter for the iconic Maldivian resort. Accessed via a gently curving jetty near Dolphin Beach, the Water Retreats have been designed to ensure utmost privacy for guests.

Both, the 584 sqm. One Bedroom Water Retreat with Slide, and the 857 sqm. (9,224 sqft) Two Bedroom Water Retreat with Slide come with a private pool and a curving slide that plunges directly into the Indian Ocean. With a choice of sunrise or sunset views, the villas feature a large alfresco deck, including plush sun loungers, a sunken seating area and catamaran nets over the ocean. Both villa types feature a spacious upper level with a dining area

and day bed, along with Soneva's signature outdoor water garden bathroom with direct access to the sea.

The design and choice of location of the Water Retreats followed a comprehensive environmental assessment within the resort to ensure that the Baa Atoll's terrestrial and marine ecosystems remained unharmed by construction activity and the subsequent use and maintenance of the villas.

Soneva Fushi inspires the imagination with 63 spacious beachfront villas, ranging in size from one to nine bedrooms, hidden among dense foliage and located within the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Choose from nine different dining options, five hundred wines and 11 types of pillows.



## SONEVA JANI CHAPTER 2

In December 2020, Soneva Jani will be adding an additional 27 Water Retreats to its inventory as well as opening its second spa complex and gym: Soneva Spa. The new Soneva Spa will have two indoor treatment rooms and three outdoor ones, two consultation rooms, two pods for different types of fitness styles, a salon, and retail area.

The newest collection of Water Retreats will feature similar designs and construction elements as the Soneva Fushi Water Retreats. The main difference between them is that while Soneva Fushi's Two Bedroom Water Retreats have all bedrooms on the ground level, the Soneva Jani Chapter 2 Water Retreats (2-4 bedrooms) will have additional bedrooms on the upper floor, with the interiors in line with Soneva Jani's original Water Retreats: a whitewashed finish with a colour palette of whites, purples, blues, and greens.

The first Water Retreat on the curving jetty, Villa 81, is a Two Bedroom Water Retreat that has been specifically designed to cater to differently abled guests with a ramp from the pool deck area to the bathroom, a properly fitted toilet, grab bars and rails. There will be 20 One Bedroom Water Retreats (with and without slides), 5 Two Bedroom Water Retreats with Slide and 1 Four Bedroom Water Residence with Slide.

Inspired by a word that means 'wisdom' in Sanskrit, Soneva Jani is located on a collection of five islands, and a beautiful, 5.6km lagoon. The resort currently comprises 24 overwater villas and three island villas, with additional villas to be built in Chapter 2. Each Water Villa opens to its own stretch of sparkling lagoon and is complete with a private pool and a retractable roof to stargaze from the master bedroom, while many villas also have slides from the top deck into the water below.

### Below is a list of improvements to the design and construction of the Soneva Fushi Water Retreats and Soneva Jani Chapter 2 Water Retreats:

- Architectural energy-saving measures: extended overhangs, double roofs, improved thermal insulation on the ceilings, redesigned doors and windows to reduce losses.
- MEP energy-saving measures: air conditioning with a heat recovery system for the production of hot water.
- Increased resilience against weather changes: upgraded selection of sustainable timber materials beyond the prescription of the most stringent standards; the timber has been treated with the appropriate sealants; redesigned doors and windows; redesigned bracings and below ground floor structures.
- Redesigned retractable roof that uses aluminium frames instead of steel. The aluminium frames ensure they do not warp in the heat and the mechanism moves silently.
- The ground floor level has been raised higher above the waves which will make the villas quieter.
- Upcycling Styrofoam as a wall thermal insulator.
- State-of-the-art technology: lighting system by PLH Italia, variable refrigerant flow air conditioners that have a heat recovery system.
- Sewage treated through naturally sustainable systems, inside Biolytix BioPods, where tiger worms feed on the waste exactly as they would in nature.
- The jetty deck planks have been installed along the traffic direction to reduce noise from buggies and bicycles.
- Bigger and wider privacy walls.



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## IN A NUTSHELL

## Amilla Maldives Resort Partners with Manta Air to Fly Guests in Style



The luxury Baa Atoll resort is currently preparing to reopen in October 2020 after the temporary halt due to the global health crisis. The resort announced that guests travelling to Amilla will now be arriving in-style on board Manta Airways' sleek fleet of blue and white seaplanes.

The Maldives' newest seaplane and domestic aircraft operator Manta Airways has already carved out a fine reputation for reliability and warm Maldivian hospitality. The Amilla team seized the opportunity to work with an enterprise that shares the same ethos as the resort. Manta Airways aircraft offer customized seats providing optimum comfort and legroom for everyone on board. The planes feature distinctive white, vermillion and turquoise livery, with the manta emblem on the tail.

A statement by the resort read: "It seems very apt for Amilla Maldives to be working with the company named after the Maldives' magnificent manta ray hub, Baa Atoll UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. In fact, manta ray season is just kicking off in Baa Atoll and private guests arriving over the next few months before the reopening for self-contained stays stand a good chance of being able to spot some of these magnificent creatures gliding through the water at cleaning stations and other manta ray haunts."

According to the resort, both Manta Airways and Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences will be operating with coronavirus health and safety protocols in mind as international guests return to the Maldives. They have implemented rigorous COVID-19 prevention plans for the peace of mind of all guests.

## Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas Continues Quest for Excellence with Recent Award Wins

**Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas has been awarded two globally-renowned awards adding to its collection of top awards amassed since the resort's opening in 2011.**

Anantara Kihavah received the title of 'Favourite Beach Hotel (International)', by the readers of Condé Nast Traveller Middle East in its annual Readers' Choice Awards, the premier travel industry awards in the GCC. The online poll invites readers to vote for their favourite travel experiences across several categories. This year's win bears testament to the pristine beach conditions of the resort's private island location in the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Baa Atoll, married with the multitude of resort facilities designed for the ideal beach vacation. Having launched newly refurbished two-, three- and four-bedroom beach pool residences at the start of this year, the resort is also home to SEA, the underwater restaurant, as well as the most powerful observatory in the Maldives, offering guests spectacular views of the night sky.

For the fifth-consecutive year, Anantara Kihavah's acclaimed underwater dining experience, SEA Restaurant & Wine Cellar has received the prestigious 'Best of Award of Excellence' from Wine Spectator, the world's leading influential wine publication. Winning lists are awarded based on displaying an "excellent



breath across multiple winegrowing regions and/or significant vertical depth of top producers, along with superior presentation". This recognition demonstrates the restaurant's continuous and consistent approach hailing from 2013, when SEA first received the 'Award of Excellence'. As the world's first underwater cellar housing over 450 labels and vintage treasures dating back to the 17th century, this accolade is an affirmation of the restaurant's commitment to creating a carefully curated wine programme for connoisseurs.

Situated within the Baa Atoll in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, discover an idyllic Indian Ocean retreat at Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas, just a 30-minute seaplane ride from Velana International Airport. The resort comes with 80 spacious private pool sanctuaries and cool open spaces. Poised either over the water with sweeping ocean views or nestled along a pristine



stretch of private beach, each hideaway boasts large infinity-edge pools, dining pavilions, expansive wooden sun decks and ample lounging areas complete with swinging daybeds, hammocks and sun loungers. All villas feature his and hers walk-in wardrobes, rain showers, outdoor showers and over-sized bathtubs big enough for two, whilst sunken glass bottom bathtubs in the over water villas and residences offer a mesmerising view of the crystal-clear ocean. All villas and residences are serviced by a personal Villa Host 24 hours a day.

Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas is passionate about bringing story collecting travellers closer to the natural, cultural and historic allures of this fascinating island, and nowhere is it more perfectly articulated than in the greatest aquatic paradise on earth.

IN A NUTSHELL

# Four Seasons Introduces 'Blue Skies Ahead Offer' for Visitors as Maldives Borders Reopen

The Four Seasons new global 'Lead With Care' programme and contactless chat experience offers visitors the ultimate reassurance in a new era of travel. During the border closures, Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru remained open as a virus-free home for visitors to the Maldives who were unable to travel back, while Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa – although closed to new arrivals – remained a virus-free bubble.

**Landaa Giraavaru's** soaring spaces and vast villa compounds make it a sanctuary of seclusion. The team has made the most of the quieter time, tending to the Turtle Rehabilitation Centre; launching a partnership with The NOW Force for Good Alliance and EarthCheck; and working on exciting "planetary wellbeing" changes as The Spa evolves to "AyurMa." Moreover, the Forbes five-star rated **Kuda Huraa** in close

proximity to Malé, is gleaming following an extensive refurbishment. Highlights include al fresco dining Mediterranean-style at Reef Club, marine-inspired treatments at The Island Spa, and new Deluxe Beach Pavilions with Pool.

**Four Seasons Explorer** – the "floating resort" that cruises between Kuda Huraa and Landaa Giraavaru – is available for private charters only at present. With its own Five-Star PADI Centre, sleek interiors and on-board spa, the 128-foot, three-deck catamaran is the Maldives' fastest and most luxurious liveaboard, a timely choice for groups of up to 22 seeking a private yacht experience. Additionally, a fully bespoke escape in the most private of paradises, **Four Seasons Private Island Maldives at Voavah** offers guests the ultimate limitless living experience: an exclusive-use five-acre (two hectare)



playground, complete with seven bedrooms, the Beach House, dive school, Oceans of Consciousness Spa and a 62-foot yacht, the ultimate retreat for totally tailored family reunions, weddings and celebrations.

Commenting on the border reopening, Regional Vice President and General Manager Armando Kraenzlin says: "Our islands haven't felt the same without our guests, but in their emptier states one thing has been more apparent than ever before: the need for us to work together to protect not only the health of ourselves and our communities but nature as a whole. Having spearheaded resort-based marine conservation in the Maldives for 20 years, we now look forward to inspiring our teams and guests with a new era of sustainability-minded operations that prioritise the wellbeing of people and planet."

Be the first on the guest list at Four Seasons Resorts Maldives at Kuda Huraa and Landaa Giraavaru with the Blue Skies Ahead offer. Book by September 30, 2020 to enjoy stays valid until December 16, 2020.

**The offer includes:**

- 15 percent off published rates with a minimum stay of 4 nights
- Daily breakfast for two
- A romantic dinner for two in the embrace of nature, respecting space, serenity and safety
- A Call of the Earth couple's spa experience (60 minutes) delivered with enhanced care and trust
- Manta-on-Call, snorkelling safari or dolphin cruise for two
- An added bonus of 20 % off a second room for families with children
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## IN A NUTSHELL

# Sun Siyam Resorts Launches its Sun Siyam Cares Programme and Announces Reopening Dates of its Properties

Sun Siyam Resorts, the luxury Maldivian hotel and resorts brand, comprising of The Sun Siyam Iru Fushi, Sun Aqua Vilu Reef, Sun Aqua Iru Veli and Olhuveli Beach & Spa in the Maldives and Sun Aqua Pasikudah in Sri Lanka has announced the reopening of their five properties in phases as written below:

From July 15, 2020

**OLHUVELI BEACH & SPA MALDIVES**



From August 1, 2020

**THE SUN SIYAM IRU FUSHI MALDIVES**

**SUN AQUA IRU VELI MALDIVES**



From October 1, 2020

**SUN AQUA VILU REEF MALDIVES**



From July 1, 2020

**SUN AQUA PASIKUDAH, SRI LANKA**

For domestic travel, as Sri Lanka's borders for international travellers are set to open later



The Sun Siyam Resorts brand continues to remain committed to ensuring the highest standards are in place to ensure the safety and health of all staff and esteemed guests. The group has implemented and launched the Sun Siyam Cares programme combined with expert advice, guidance from the WHO and government-compliant health and safety measures. This has been designed to offer guests a minimal contact experience implemented with the utmost safety, health and wellbeing of guests in mind to ensure a safe and luxurious, authentic Maldivian experience.

## Sun Siyam Cares programme consists of:

### Check-in & front desk operations

- To ensure a smooth and seamless check-in and departure, resort team has been trained to deliver high standards of service with minimal physical contact.
- All guests are required to check-in online through resort website for a contactless check-in.
- Guests will receive a temperature check upon arrival and randomly throughout their stay and team has been trained to identify any guests with respiratory symptoms.
- Floor markers for safe distancing at front desk and all major outlets will be placed.
- The team will provide guests with safety amenities such as mask, gloves and sanitizers upon request.

### Public areas

- A dedicated sanitation team has been employed to frequently disinfect and sanitize all public areas.
- Sun Siyam Resorts will be using Ecolab cleaning products. These are environmentally friendly and comply with the stringent WHO and Maldivian government guidelines.
- Placement of hand sanitation dispensers at points of entrance in all public outlets.

### Restaurants & dining

- All restaurants and bars will have social distancing in place, with tables at least 1.5 meter apart from each other.
- Restaurant menus will be available through QR code scan, on request iPad and printed menus will be made available. Buffet restaurants will require prior booking. A team member will assist with the food service as there will be no self-service.
- Sunbeds in pool and beach areas will follow social distancing protocols.

### Housekeeping services

- Each room will be cleaned and then sealed as there will be a 24-hour vacancy period between each guest arrival to ensure each room is kept scrupulously clean and hygienic.
- The air conditioning systems in each of the occupied rooms will be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each guest vacates the room.
- A sanitizer will be placed in each room for guests' convenience and comfort.
- All surfaces, including identified high touch points such as door handles, drawers, TV remote and bedside tables will be cleaned and disinfected.
- Removal of in-room amenities such as pens, notepads, menus and directory for further safety, and available upon request.
- Daily housekeeping service will be discontinued for safety assurance, and will be available upon guest request only.

### Spa

- Pre booking will be required through our designated messaging or by dialing the spa

extension, we would prefer to limit walk-in guests to minimize the traffic at spa front desk.

- All guests will be required to shower prior to any treatment.

### Recreation & activities

- All our outlets including water sports, diving centre, gym will be available in compliance with social distancing.
- Group activities will have limitations in number of participants to be able to implement social distancing.
- Some of the activities will only be available for private sessions, please do check with the relevant outlet for further details.

### Well-being & care

- Resort will have a resident medical officer on site who is certified by HPA.
- A resident doctor is available at each of the Maldivian islands within the Sun Siyam Resorts portfolio.
- The doctor is available to all guests and there is no extra charge for the consultation service.

### Team members

- The programme follows strict WHO and national guidelines and is further elevated for our guest and teams' wellbeing.
- A Sun Siyam Cares Manager is appointed at all Sun Siyam Resorts to implement, monitor and audit the guidelines.
- All team members will be going through a comprehensive training on the safety measures on a regular basis, during and after reopening.
- Frontline team members will be required to wear protective gear on duty.

### Kids club

- There will a limitation on the number of children allowed at the facility at any given time, hence early booking is recommended.
- All children will be required to shower prior to using the facility.
- Children below 4 years will not be allowed at the facility.
- Babysitting service will cease until further notice in line with government guidelines.

Sun Siyam Resorts is a privately-owned company, established in 1990 with a selection of four luxurious four-star deluxe and five-star properties in the Maldives and one boutique resort in Sri Lanka. Designed for families, friends and couples with a wide variety of stylish rooms, suites and decadent villas all Sun Siyam properties offer an authentic experience, award-winning spas, and variety of dining options. Siyam World is due to open in Winter 2020 and will be the newest, extraordinary experiences filled resort in the Maldives.



# THE NEW **CIP/VIP** TERMINAL

@ Velana International Airport (VIA) is under Development to meet the needs of today's modern traveller. The total transformation of CIP/VIP Terminal in terms of its infrastructure and services has made the Terminal stand out in terms of its services and ambience and takes care of all the airport formalities for its guests in an atmosphere of comfort and luxury.

# EMBRACING TALENTS with AFEEF

REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE OF LUX\* RESORTS & HOTELS



“ This is an industry that's always evolving and growing. I mean, in tourism and hospitality, especially in the Maldives, what was relevant yesterday is not relevant today – it's constantly getting outdated, which means that anyone who wants to join, whether it's right after school or higher education, must enter this industry with a very open mind. ”

The battle for talent is an ongoing, not to mention frustrating, challenge as HR leaders strive to seek out candidates with the skills they need to keep ahead of the competition. The islandchief sat down with Afeef Hussain, Regional Director of Training, Development and Quality Assurance of Lux\* Resorts and Hotels, who offered some compelling advice for ambitious HR professionals.

*As an industry veteran for the past 17 years, tell us a bit about your journey, as well as the challenges and obstacles you have overcome in your career.*

I started working right after high school. I had my exam on a Wednesday – I still remember it – and on Thursday morning, I was reporting for work in Malé.

I have always loved serving people. I think that sort of nudged me in the direction of the hotel industry with my first experience being in Bandos Island Resort.

I then had the opportunity to work with some international brands like the One&Only, Four Seasons, and of course, now with LUX\*. I also spent two years working in Dubai at one of the largest integrated resorts in the city – Atlantis, The Palm. I was a part of the opening team and spent two-and-a-half years or more there. So, I have to say, it's been a great journey.

I think that my passion to serve people and my desire to see how people grow, develop and become better because of my presence and because of what we do as a team, is what brought me to where I am today.

When I look at the challenges and obstacles; I've experienced the tsunami; I've experienced the recession back in 2008. In fact, that was quite a big

challenge in my time, because in 2008 Atlantis, The Palm, opened their doors. I was one of the first staff at the 1.5 billion-dollar resort, and we had hired about 4,000 people when the crisis hit! We really tried our best, but unfortunately, we had to lay-off about 1,500 people. It was tough, and quite the challenge to be involved in those layoffs. When things got better though, we were able to hire almost everybody back again.

However, I would say the biggest challenge in my career, I suppose is bringing people together and trying to create a great organisational culture. As humans we will not always be on the same page. People have different standards, different ways of thinking, and everyone is unique. So obviously, at the very beginning of any organisational culture change, we are not always able to bring everybody together. But then again, teaching people about developing a growth mindset and having the right attitude which, in turn, leads to changes in the results of a company from where it was before, to where it is today, is a big part of my 17-year career, and a challenge that I love.

*As Regional Director of Training, Development and Quality Assurance at LUX\* Resorts & Hotels, what is the most exciting aspect of your profession?*

You know, this is my eighth year with LUX\* Resorts & Hotels, and I have always been someone who loves working for leaders rather than brands. I'm currently working with Paul Jones, the CEO of LUX\* Resorts & Hotels. I had worked with him before at One&Only, so we had a very good work-relationship, and we had the trust. So, when I was asked to join LUX\*, I obviously didn't have to think twice. I am also close to the current COO Dominik Ruhl who is always very supportive. This is the most exciting aspect for me – working for good leaders.

In what I do, I not only oversee training and quality, but also look after the overall experience of guests as a part of the quality assurance. Plus, I work towards increasing human capital. So right now, the entire human resource aspects come under me. But the most interesting part really, is when I can grow people and guide them to their next level. Even when I started with LUX\*, I remember we had people who had been here for quite some time in the same job. So, we initiated specific development programmes for succession planning, and looking back now, we've all come quite a long way. Of course, in the last few years, the industry definitely changed – many new resorts came into the market; a couple of them left – and, you know, my take is that even if people leave because they found something better for themselves, we are always happy for them and their career as long as they're happy and can progress further with their new role.

So, I'd have to say, really seeing people grow to becoming the best version themselves, whether it is over here or even after they've moved on to another company, and having the opportunity to develop people are the most exciting aspects of what I do.

*The tourism sector has been expanding steadily over the past years. Total tourist establishments in operation amount to 946, including 155 resorts, 13 hotels, 622 guesthouses, and 156 safari vessels by the end of February 2020. What are the key qualities and characteristics that interested youth and millennials should possess?*

I could speak about this subject for hours, but I'll narrow it down to three main components. First, is open-mindedness. This is an industry that's always evolving and growing. I mean, in tourism and hospitality, especially in the Maldives, what was relevant yesterday is not relevant today – it's constantly getting outdated, which means that anyone who wants to join, whether it's right after school or higher education, must enter this industry with a very open mind. Another reason that you have to come with an open mind is that, for example, you may apply and receive the position of a waiter. However, serving guests at the restaurant may not be the only job you have to fulfil, you may have to do a variety of other related tasks. Plus, you will be asked to work with people from many different countries, different cultures and different backgrounds. All of this – in a remote location, a remote work site. So, if you don't have an open mind, it will be quite the struggle.

Second, one must have a curiosity as to “What can I learn from the people that I work around?”. I think that if there's an industry in the world that actually makes

people better, it's going to have to be the hospitality industry. Because, for example in the Maldives, every resort will have at least fifteen different nationalities working there. So, imagine if you had an open mind and a sense of curiosity – you could actually learn a lot from the people around you.

This brings me to my next and most important point; the growth mindset. You know, you've got to be a continuous learner. Sure, joining the hospitality industry with a Master's Degree gives you great credentials and it definitely counts, but that shouldn't stop you from being open to learning even more. You have to be open to continue building your capacity, attending workshops and trainings. What happens a lot of the time to the youth of society is that they want that top management position right away, but you have to start somewhere and give it time. Be patient and don't rush. Take your time and go through the process by making sure you do what is required, working your way up. You will get to your goal. What we see right now is that a lot of the youth, at times, don't want to accept a job because that's not the job or level that they want. I mean, for sure we're all entitled to our expectations, but I think if you want to reach a great level, you have to start somewhere.

I'll tell you a story that really changed me. When I was working in a hotel in Malaysia, we had to serve 3000 meals in one night. Back then, I was a restaurant waiter, and we were a team of ten waiters. One of us was chosen to be a steward, however he didn't show up that night, and we only realised it once we opened the restaurant for dinner. It was a fund-raising event and of course, somebody had to wash the plates. So, my Restaurant Manager delegated that task to me instead. I couldn't say no, because then I would be putting my team down. Of course, anyone can wash plates, but I wasn't mentally prepared for it. And that night I washed all 3000 plates. Washing those plates made me realise that in life you have to expect the unexpected. I'm still very proud of that job – I know that because of what I did that night, the waiters, chefs, everybody; we all survived as a team.

You see, in the hospitality industry, literally everybody has to do everything when it comes to serving people, because we all have one goal at the end of the day, which is to serve our customers, our guests, and of course, serve each other.

***With the recent global crisis, the turnover rate of employees in the tourism and hospitality industry has been at its peak. How can we ensure and motivate current employees to maintain the same high-quality customer service and standards?***

It's really good timing on that question, because I literally sat down the other day to brainstorm the training programme that I'm developing for all our employees regarding the new mindset, once they get back – I prefer the term “new mindset” over “new normal”. So, I was writing a couple of points and a particular notion hit me; if we thought that the last four months have been about survival, we're wrong. The last four months have been about coming to terms with, and getting through this crisis. The survival actually starts now. The economy has reopened, people are getting back to their jobs, but of course, most companies will not be able to pay the same salaries, perks and benefits that they used to – pre-pandemic. We will eventually get there over time, but the most important thing right now, is that we need to get the message out to all employees that we have to work much harder than before for the next two months or so, in order to get through this as a team, together. Employees who are getting back to work with the reopening have been with their families for a



LUX\* North Malé Atoll - Beach Villa

very long time, having been disconnected from the work environment and it will definitely take time to adjust and get into the new mindset. Teach them, train them, but train them with compassion and care. You may even have to repeat a few things, but that's okay. Train them over and over again, and have patience towards them. I believe that if we care enough about our employees, even with low pay, we'll get through it. It would be impossible for anyone who is not well-looked after to deliver high quality service. You see, all these new hygiene standards and preventative measures that have been put in place, we need to make sure that they are in place for the employees first, before the guests. We need to be careful and ensure that all the leaders are out on the floor checking everything. Most importantly, we need to create what I call a “circle of compassion”; be caring, be kind, and smile.

***There is a current deficit in getting experienced and qualified Maldivians for senior positions in the hospitality industry. As an industry expert, how do you think we can overcome this challenge?***

I believe that HR departments in all resorts need to come up with talent-growth programmes internally, by not just training high potential people, but by doing follow-up programmes – create a succession plan.

Another point is that there is a responsibility of locals who are already at senior levels; instead of questioning various authorities regarding the lack of locals in senior roles, I think the question we need to ask ourselves first is, “What are we doing as individuals with our knowledge and resources to contribute towards a solution?” Even a Resort Manager could influence, guide and groom many people. How many people are you mentoring and coaching on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to get them to the next level. For example, at the Maldives Association of Human Resource Professionals (MAHRP), which I am currently President of, one of our key mandates are to help the industry grow people. Within MAHRP we manage lots of virtual learning programmes, and are trying to do our best to contribute towards building human capital. In fact, we just ended the Maldives' first virtual learning and development conference with around 200 participants from across the country. It was amazing and insightful. I believe we need to be encouragers, rather than critics, because there's no country where all the policies are a hundred per cent correct or favourable. Certainly, I feel that where we are

today is not very good – we should have been in a much better position with more Maldivians in the industry's senior roles – but right now, we must focus on what can we do as individuals. You've got to take your personal leadership into account and ask yourself, “What am I doing to resolve this problem?”

***What are the career opportunities available for individuals who complete an apprenticeship programme with LUX\* Resorts & Hotels?***

We were actually about to start a fantastic apprenticeship programme in February with both properties – LUX\* South Ari Atoll and LUX North Malé Atoll. Everything was lined up and ready, when the world came face-to-face with this health crisis. But that's not going to stop us. In fact, we're going to start off the apprenticeship programme online in September, and hopefully by October we can bring our apprentices on board to start their practical work. We're actually getting ready for this as we speak. Each property will have about 6-10 apprentices, and we're going to be taking them through the disciplines of F&B Kitchen and Production, F&B Service, Front Office and Housekeeping.

Over the last few years as well, we didn't have a formal apprenticeship programme, but we had regular local internships in support of the local community. Every year, about twenty to thirty interested locals get trained at LUX\*. We're keen and excited to do this on a more formal platform. I'm also currently in touch with TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) to certify our training facility as a TVET-registered training academy. Hopefully then, we'll be able to provide national level qualifications for our team members.

***What would be the future trends and challenges in Human Resource Management?***

The future of human resources is moving towards a more service-oriented direction. Before, the HR sector was more of an administrative department. Those days are gone. In HR, one of the future trends are about how the HR department can be a service department; how can you serve people, I suppose, the same way the customer service department of a company would look after their customers. To be a part of this trend, it's all about changing the mindset that HR is an administrative department, to realising that it is internal service department. HR staff need to be out there talking to and guiding people, because when you really see what is

going on outside, you can provide a much better service.

Now, the second trend is HR digitalisation; there is a ton of new technological transformations and ideas that are coming up. We have to learn to adopt these changes and really make sure that we use this aspect to our full advantage. Not only will this simplify processes and reduce the time spent on repetitive tasks, but it will also maximize employee-experience.

The final trend I'd like to point out is prioritising the wellbeing and wellness of employees. This has been a huge developing trend for the last 5 years, but in our region it's quite new and it is something we really need to practice. Organisations need to have specific initiatives for the wellbeing and wellness of people and really look after them. For example, when we reopen the hotels and companies, why not allocate somebody from HR as a Wellness Officer, and have them conduct wellness activities? Get employees' medical check-ups done, encourage them to go to the gym, review the staff canteen or restaurant and give out delicious healthy food. If people are not mentally or physically well, they cannot perform at their optimum rate and cannot provide good service.

I'd like to add something in the perspective of training; upscaling of employees and teaching them new skills are very crucial. The pandemic has left us with a huge challenge, plus it's been an eye-opener. If you were to cut down your employees, you have to choose who you want to let go – it's a very tough activity and the last thing we want to do is to actually let go of people. A way to be more resilient due to such cases in the future, is to teach people skills that they may not necessarily have to use now, but can utilise in the future. For example, if you have one fitness instructor at your resort, why not find another employee who is interested in fitness? Train that person, so if your fitness instructor is not available, you can have them fill the job. Multi-skilling of people leads to a much better future.

***With the development of brand-new luxury resorts and international chains, how would you position LUX\* Resorts & Hotels in the market?***

At LUX\*, we position ourselves as all 5-star properties, all packed with world-class competitive products. One thing we actually always look for when discovering new destinations, are places that are not too crowded. For instance, we're going to open a property in Phú Quốc, Vietnam, which is a new developing area. It is an island off the coast of Cambodia in the Gulf of Thailand, and

more than fifty per cent of the island is part of the Phú Quốc National Park with dense tropical jungles, wildlife, hiking trails and mountains.

Our approach is also about light luxury. At LUX\*, we try not to make luxury too complex. Our goal is to make it lighter and gentler, where the guests feel the smooth flow of the experience and our service. Wherever we open, our main focus is the guest-experience and not just the physical product – it is the feeling that they leave with at the end of their stay. An experience personalised and tailored to each individual guest. Our properties are not just for the extreme luxury, they are for everyone. Whatever level of traveller you are, you'll get the same level of service. This is where we stand in the market.

***With your extensive knowledge and experience in the industry, what are the milestones you have achieved at LUX\* Resorts & Hotels?***

I'm blessed to work with LUX\* and I'm, of course, very grateful. I think the last eight years with LUX\* have been some of the best times for me in terms of my own growth and development.

I love speaking to international audiences; I have travelled to over forty-six countries and spoken to fifty-seven audiences. Before I joined LUX\*, I had done maybe around five to six speaking engagements, but after joining, I've had the chance to travel to more places than in my entire life and speak to a variety of audiences. I strongly believe that it's all thanks to the encouragement from the leadership of the company, especially our COO Dominik Ruhl; I really want to highlight his name, because he has always encouraged me to get out there and do it. Our team at LUX\* loves seeing their brand represented by fellow team members. The global exposure generated by my travels around the world sharing the story of LUX\*, and speaking to international audiences are definitely some of my achievements.

I also had the opportunity to create a culture at LUX\* where people come to work every day, not because they have to, but because they want to. I remember when I first joined the company in August of 2012, we had a wonderful crew over here, there was sort of a culture, but it was evolving. So, I took responsibility of leading that culture in the right direction. I remember at the beginning, LUX\* South Ari Atoll was ranked at 37 on TripAdvisor, and with our changes, we shot up to number 5, and there was even a time when we were at

number 2 in the Maldives. We're still in the top ten, and it's all because of the service we provide.

You see, at LUX\*, we don't say that we have the best product in the world – I mean we have a very competitive product in terms of the world market, but when it comes to our service, we will argue that we provide the best service. This is what we teach employees. When somebody visits our resorts, we want them to leave feeling like "Wow, I came to LUX\* and got something more than I expected". Of course, there are times we have failed – we're all human – but we make sure to get it right the next time.

I actually joined LUX\* at the very early stages, when it used to be called Naïade Resorts. LUX\* is basically a brand that was born out of Naïade Resorts' bankruptcy. Together with our leadership team, we took this company to becoming one of the most admired hotel brands in the world, and to do that and be part of this leadership team, I believe has been a lifetime achievement for me, so far.

***With the revival of LUX\* properties, how would you redefine luxury and what's next for LUX\*?***

So, looking at the LUX\* brand right now, I would say, as we re-open the property, we're actually looking at three key elements;

One is how can we give more care for our people; our guests and our colleagues. I think it's very, very important that we understand the context of the word "care". It's a word that everybody knows and understands, but at times, we may not fully grasp it for what it is and the way that we define it may vary. At LUX\* we think of care as feeling concern and interest regarding someone's future wellbeing. Caring should be present even when dealing with difficult situations. I like to think of one of my favourite statements which I heard from a coach of mine, "Listen to the wish behind the complaint"; when someone gives you a tough time or a challenge, just listen very carefully to understand what the person cares so deeply about; if we genuinely care for this person and the service we provide, we will learn what it is that they are wishing for, and then cater to it.

Now, the second point is that we want to create more terrific experiences, and I think LUX\* has been a brand that has constantly created great experiences for guests all the way through. We're going to be looking at how we can create brand-new experiences given the current situation, whereby the guests don't have to stay in the villa all the time – they can go around the island and engage in some fun activities.

The third aspect is the wellbeing and wellness of our staff and guests which I mentioned earlier. We, as a brand, are growing and we have new properties coming up in China, Vietnam and the UAE, plus two properties in the pipelines in Italy and France. So, we are constantly developing, and wherever we go, our priority towards the wellbeing and wellness of staff and guests, as well as our service excellence will always stand out. We have a very high benchmark for the service we provide – it is the culture that we have created here. Now, when talking about wellness and wellbeing, a fragment of this very much includes sustainability and having an environmental focus. For instance, by providing healthy food for people – your food waste is bound to be less and you're contributing more towards sustainability.

I believe our way of redefining luxury is encircled around these three areas; how we can give more care and really do things for the future wellbeing of our guests, how we can create unique experiences given the situation, and of course, focusing on the wellness of our staff and guests.



LUX\* South Ari Atoll - Signature Pool Water Villa

EVENTS & AWARDS

# Cocoon and You & Me by Cocoon Maldives Wins 2020 Traveller's Choice Awards on Tripadvisor



Every year, TripAdvisor pulls together all the reviews, ratings, and saves that travellers share from across the globe

Every year, TripAdvisor pulls together all the reviews, ratings, and saves that travellers share from across the globe

— and uses this information to spotlight the very best hotels that exceed customer-expectations. The Travellers' Choice Best of the Best awards celebrates them all.

With both resorts having been selected as 2020 Traveller's Choice Award Winner on TripAdvisor, Cocoon stated: "Providing an impeccable service to our guest is our number one priority and this accolade which is based on the customer reviews and ratings from TripAdvisor represents our consistent hard work, and we must continue on our path for excellence and professionalism. It is indeed a huge

accomplishment for us to be presented such an award."

Cocoon Maldives, located in Ookolhufinolhu Island in Lhaviyani Atoll, blends the best of Italian design with Maldives' stunning natural beauty. Cocoon's interiors are exclusively designed by Lago, one of Italy's finest design companies.

You & Me by Cocoon Maldives is a private, rustic and romantic island located in Raa Atoll. The adults-only island, targeting couples, honeymooners and friends is a quiet, relaxing retreat – far away from other resorts.

# WTM London – Set to Take Place in November 2020

The UK Government has announced the resumption of the exhibitions industry in the country as of October 1, 2020, meaning that England can once again welcome international business delegates from around the world.



WTM London – the event where Ideas Arrive – is set to take place between November 2 and November 4, 2020. It promises to be one of the first major exhibitions to take place globally since the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's event is centred on the concept of recovery, rebuild and innovate, as global travel and tourism leaders will meet to discuss the future of the industry and begin its resurgence.

The show will reflect the diverse needs of the travel and tourism industry by incorporating both a live event as well as a virtual event taking place online the week after.

Furthermore, the leading travel technology exhibition,

Travel Forward, which is co-located with WTM London at the ExCeL Centre, will also be taking place this year inspiring visitors to embrace the latest technology that will help rebuild the industry.

Encompassing both WTM London, Travel Forward and the myriad of industry events taking place across the capital, London Travel Week will happen in 2020 embracing flavours and experiences from around the world giving attendees the chance to learn, network and socialise to accelerate their business needs.

The highest standards of health and safety will be followed across all elements of the shows this year with WTM London, Travel Forward and London Travel

Week adhering to UK Government guidelines on social distancing and all other aspects of COVID-19 prevention. Visitors can be safe in the knowledge that not only will they have the chance to meet other travel and tourism professionals in person for the first time since the outbreak of COVID-19, but they will be able to do this in a safe environment as well.

WTM London will be once again taking place at the premier exhibition space in the UK, ExCeL London. ExCeL has been working with the AEV (Association of Event Venues) and other key stakeholders to develop the All Secure Standard, an industry wide benchmark to enable the safe return of organised events.

## IN THE NEWS

## MMPRC's Initiatives to Increase Maldives' Brand Presence



To commence the reopening of borders for all nationalities in the Maldives, and to launch the “Rediscover Maldives... the sunny side of life” campaign, the Maldives Marketing & Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC) hosted a virtual press conference on July 15, 2020. Top international media from 21 countries including the main source markets – China, Italy, India, Germany, Russia, UK, France, Saudi Arabia and Japan – participated in the live conference with almost 300 attendees in total.

The campaign “Rediscover Maldives... the sunny side of life” aims to strengthen the country’s market presence and welcome back tourists. All marketing activities will be carried

out under this tagline for the rest of 2020.

Managing Director of MMPRC Thoyyib Mohamed spoke about the collaborations between the government and private sector to ensure high-calibre safety and hygiene standards for travellers in the new normal. The Minister of Health, Honourable Abdulla Ameen provided reassurance that stringent health and safety measures have been put in place across the country to ensure an enjoyable vacation for visitors.

The virtual press conference, translated into three languages in real time – Chinese, Russian and Korean – ended with a Q&A session where

speakers clarified enquiries of journalists from around the globe.

The conference and the campaign are among the first initiatives of promoting the destination with the reopening of borders. As tourism adapts to the new normal, MMPRC has a variety of activities planned for the year under proper safety precautions. H.E President Solih has announced a target of 850, 000 visitors by the end of 2020. July 15 further marked the arrival of the first tourists since the closing of borders on March 27, 2020.

Additionally, MMPRC further showcased ‘the sunny side of life’ during the Dream to Travel Festival – an online event organized by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) which took place from June 22 to July 17, 2020. The event provided valuable insights and enabled the travel trade community to meet and speak with industry experts.

During a one-hour live session on July 16, the audience was virtually engaged with the activities showcased by the Maldives. This session started at 0800hrs (GMT 5+) with an introduction by MMPRC followed by a virtual yoga session at a unique overwater pavilion at Coco Bodu Hithi. Viewers also got to see award-winning Chef Ishag, from

Paradise Island Resort & Spa prepare a Maldivian classic - ‘Banbukeyo Bogaru’ (Breadfruit curry). The Maldives further participated in the live Games & Giveaways segment held on June 26 with the top 3 scorers receiving a special gift pack from the Maldives.

Adding to the initiatives taken by MMPRC in a bid to increase brand presence of the Maldives on digital platforms across the globe, the tourism promotion officials kicked off a global advertising campaign with renowned TV network CNN, right in time for the reopening.

According to MMPRC the three-month campaign will focus on highlighting aspects that are unique to the Maldives, adding that it will also provide a platform for local personalities and talents to showcase their passion and narrate their stories. The campaign will commence with the launch of a vignette, named “5 reasons to Insta love Maldives”. Prominently, the destination will be featured on the CNN weather watch during the campaign period which will be viewed by a substantially large audience across the globe. The campaign with CNN will be the one of the first global campaigns to launch post-reopening of Maldivian borders.

## Speaker of Parliament Mohamed Nasheed Appointed as Thematic Ambassador of CVF

**Selected due to his outspoken advocacy towards climate change, Nasheed has actively called out for immediate action against the odds of global warming.**

The former President of the Maldives and Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Mohamed Nasheed has been appointed as a Thematic Ambassador of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF). In 2009, the first CVF meeting was held in the Maldives during the regime of President Nasheed, where he spoke of the common crisis, climate change and its effects faced by the diverse countries as well as initiating the commitment to carbon neutrality. He further represented the country in the forum held in 2018, advocating for ‘a clean energy future’.

The Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) is an international partnership of 48 countries highly vulnerable to a warming planet and serves as a South-South cooperation platform for participating governments to act together to deal with global climate change.



The Forum has a rotating chairmanship that has been held by Maldives, Kiribati, Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Philippines, Ethiopia, and the Marshall Islands. Bangladesh assumed the presidency for a second tenure in June 2020.

The former president made headlines in 2009, when he held the world’s first underwater cabinet meeting, emphasizing on the threat of sea level rise to the low-lying island nation.

# Ooredoo Celebrates 15 Successful Years of Enriching Lives in the Maldives with Exciting Offers for the Month of August

On August 1, 2005, Ooredoo started its journey in the Maldives under the name Wataniya and revolutionized the telecommunication industry in the country.

Today, Ooredoo Maldives celebrates its remarkable success, growth and many milestones achieved in the past 15 years. Ooredoo has provided its customers with an improved network, affordable and competitive prices and continues to enrich the lives of its customers and the people of the Maldives with continuous introduction of leading-edge technologies and telecommunications solutions, connecting the community with new opportunities and enabling the businesses, entrepreneurs and the youth to reach greater heights.

“Today we have reached another milestone, we celebrate 15 years of service and we cannot be more excited about our journey here in the Maldives. As we mark this prosperous occasion, we thank our beloved customers for the continuous support which drives us to continue to provide world class internet services and bring new technologies to establish a digital Maldives. We hope that our customers will enjoy this little gift, to celebrate this wonderful milestone with us.”  
Managing Director & CEO, Najib Khan.

As part of Ooredoo Maldives 15th Anniversary celebration and to thank its customers for the continuous support throughout the 15 years, Ooredoo has launched an exciting anniversary promotion offering up to 50% bonus data to its Prepaid customers, 20% Extra Data on all Postpaid monthly data packs, 15% bonus data on all recharges for new Faseyha Mini customers, and 15% discount on IDD rates for all SAARC nations.

Ooredoo Maldives provides an innovative range of voice, data, broadband, content and enterprise services tailored to the growing needs of today’s consumers and businesses. Guided by its vision of enriching people’s lives and its belief that it can stimulate human growth by leveraging communications, Ooredoo has transformed the digital lives of communities across the Maldives.



**Up to 50% Extra Data on all Monthly Data Packs**  
All Prepaid customers can enjoy up to 50% extra data when activating any monthly data packs throughout the month of August. To activate visit: <http://ore.do/app>



**20% Extra Data on Monthly Data Packs**  
All Postpaid customers can enjoy 20% Extra Data on all monthly data packs for the month of August. To activate the monthly data packs, visit: <http://ore.do/app>



**15% Bonus Data – Faseyha Mifi**  
Customers who activate a Faseyha Mifi device during the month of August can enjoy 15% Bonus Data on all recharges made throughout the month. To activate visit: <http://ore.do/app>



**15% Discount on IDD rates**  
Customers can enjoy staying connected with friends and family with 15% discount on IDD calls to all SAARC nations. To enjoy the discount, customers should dial 011 before the country code when making the call.

This anniversary promotion is available to all Ooredoo customers starting from today till end of 31st August 2020. Customers can easily subscribe to these products at any time, from anywhere via Ooredoo App: <http://ore.do/app>  
For information, please visit: <http://ore.do/15yrs>

## IN THE NEWS

# Dr. Abdulla Mausoom Appointed as Minister of Tourism

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has appointed Dr. Abdulla Mausoom as Minister of Tourism on August 6, 2020.



Water in the former President Maumoon Abdul Gayyoom's regime, Dr. Mausoom comes with immense experience in the industry. Additionally, following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami crisis, Dr. Mausoom led the board of Maldives Association of Tourism Industry (MATI).

In 2009, Dr. Mausoom represented Haa Alif Kelaas as a Member of Parliament while also working as a senior member of the Maldives Tourism Promotion Board. His tourism related experiences also include serving as the General Manager of the renowned Sun Island Resort.

Hailing from a respected background, Dr. Mausoom completed his Master of Science in Hotel and Catering from the University of Ulster, UK and secured his doctorate in Philosophy in Urban and Regional Studies from the University of Birmingham, UK. He was the first Maldivian to attain a PhD in tourism development.

During a special ceremony held at the President's Office this afternoon, Dr. Mausoom accepted the letter of appointment extended by President

Solih. Prior to his recent appointment, Dr. Mausoom served as the High Commissioner of Maldives to Singapore.

Having filled various roles in the government including Deputy Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, and Minister of Environment, Energy and

During the absence of the Tourism Minister, Minister of Economic Development Uz. Fayyaz Ismail oversaw the Ministry of Tourism as the acting head.

## SERENITY

## 4 WELLNESS TIPS IN ORDER TO FEEL YOUR BEST

By JOALI Maldives

- 1 A breath of fresh air – whether it's a garden, balcony or even a smaller window, feeling the air on your skin helps clear your mind and brings a smile to your face
- 2 Remember to breathe – it might sound silly, however focusing on your breathing is a really important strategy in terms of mental and physical wellbeing. When you start to feel stressed, take a deep breath in through your nose and exhale through your mouth, allowing the breath to reach down to your diaphragm
- 3 Reiki Principles to live by:  
Just for today, I will not worry or get angry  
Just for today, I will work honestly  
Be graceful  
Be kind to all living things
- 4 Make aromatherapy part of your day – When it comes to scent and the way this affects your moods, scent has very powerful qualities. For a more peaceful sleep, a small phial of lavender oil on your pillow will do wonders.



# Personality of the Month

## How are you finding the Maldives?

I love it! No doubt, Maldives is a paradise on earth. I am grateful to have the opportunity to live in this slice of heaven. I regard being surrounded by the beautiful colours of the ocean and white sand beach with awe. Spending a few hours listening to the sound of the waves while appreciating the view with soothing music is therapeutic. I like chasing sunsets too, which is perfect as I stay only at a distance from the best sunset viewing spot. Adding to the great experience, I am also grateful for meeting the people and my team at Seaside Finolhu where everyone is treated like a family.

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

Tough one, as almost everywhere at Finolhu is Instagrammable. But my favourites are — first is the Crab Shack. I love the toes-in-the-sand dining atmosphere, and spending a laid-back lunch there while marvelling at the view. Second is the Beach Bubble. As the first ever beach bubble in the Maldives, it is truly special and couples would find the 'dream eclipse' experience here spectacular. Lastly, and my personal favourite, is the upper deck at the Beach Club. It presents an elevated view of some of the main areas of the island. Imagine seeing a stunning vista with sights of the sandbank, the pool, the beach and the swaying palm trees in one area.

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

I like that I am able to express my creativity and passion in what I do, and continuously grow and improve on my craft. As a travel-lover myself, I find it motivating to create compelling stories for a luxury lifestyle resort such as Seaside Finolhu and be able to promote the destination at the same time. There is more to the island than the mesmerising views and beautiful nature. For example, the warmth of the people, their experiences, the community, the culture, as well as the life under the ocean all contribute to what makes this destination great. Moreover, I believe there are a lot more great stories out there to share. There is nothing that I



Beach Club - Seaside Finolhu



## EARLE ENRIQUEZ

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER AT SEASIDE FINOLHU

dislike. There are things that I find challenging, but challenges exist to contribute to my experience, learnings and personal growth.

## What are the positives and the opportunities which you have gathered from the pandemic?

Without ignoring the realities we've been facing during the pandemic; the spirit of togetherness is evident. People all over the world reach out to each other through social media and use these platforms for community and emotional support. Take for example the towns and cities performing songs on social media to help lift spirits, or the inspiring messages of hope that we had received past the challenging times. Also, the entertaining posts sharing ways on how people creatively deal with quarantine. All these create a sense of positivity and encourages solidarity.

There are a number of opportunities to grasp and learn from the pandemic — one of them is how to quickly respond to the crisis and adapt to the changes. The value of delivering relevant and timely information has been essential more than ever. In hospitality for example, resorts deliver messages, information or relevant advice whether concerning travel advisories, safety procedures or other important

announcements, and use the appropriate communication platforms available. Businesses are also coming up with innovative ideas to attend to the needs and wellbeing of customers and team members exhibiting a sense of responsibility.

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

There is nothing I would change in the past. Each experience and choice I made have moulded me to become the person I am today. Every decision, regardless if right or not, if it worked or not, have contributed to my growth and made me become stronger. The most important part is not only to learn from the mistakes but also to act on it. That kind of mindset is what helps me to become a better person day by day.

## How would you describe the DNA of your brand?

Seaside Finolhu is a barefoot chic resort bringing comfort and luxury to modern travellers. It offers a stylish seascape where guests can create special moments and enjoy the luxurious comforts for that home-away-from-home feeling. Translated as "sandbank," Finolhu lives up to its name as it boasts spectacular white-sand beaches spread across four islands — ensuring there is more space to enjoy. Here, guests can unwind in a

secluded Maldivian paradise, savour beachside indulgences and marvel at the vibrant tropical island playground. To top it all, Finolhu's one-of-a-kind lively atmosphere leaves a distinct feeling to the guests making their holiday extra special.



Beach Bubble - Seaside Finolhu

## Who are you listening to at the moment?

I have a diverse taste in music. I listen to classical music, such as those of Mozart's or Vivaldi's when I like to concentrate. I also listen to songs from Red Hot Chili Peppers, Coldplay and The Beatles on usual days. For pop playlist, Ed Sheeran, Bruno Mars and Ariana Grande would be my go-to.

## Favourite motto or saying:

It is something that I learned in my early career life from a GM and I still live by it, "Tough times never last, only tough people do."

BON APPÉTIT

## RAAN KEBAB



Hailing from Northern India, Sous Chef Raj Singh started his culinary journey in his childhood where he learnt the art of homemade Indian food from his family. After graduating in Hotel Management, he moved to the 'City of Dreams', Mumbai, to pursue his dream of becoming a chef. 17 years on, he is now at Four Seasons Kuda Huraa where his connection and love for his homeland is reflected through his deliciously authentic Indian recipes available at the resort's Indian restaurant Baraabar, which has been rated by CNN as one of the best in the Maldives: <https://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/maldives-best-restaurants/index.html>

Raan Kebab, a delicacy consisting of a whole leg of lamb slowly cooked in a tandoor oven, vibrantly brought to life with Indian spices in this recipe. True to its name, Baraabar – which means 'excellent' in Dhivehi – presents homemade, authentic Indian cuisine inspired by the Chef's native country century-old traditions.

### Ingredients

(Serves 2)

- Lamb leg 1.2 kg
- Ginger 8 g
- Garlic 12 g
- Salt 11 g
- Chilli powder 8 g
- Yogurt 120 g
- Lemon juice 74 ml
- Coriander seeds 14 g
- Black peppercorn 11 g
- Cumin 16 g
- Ground almonds 8 g
- Ground cinnamon 8 g
- Shallots 75 g
- Cardamom 12 g

### Method

- The day prior to serving the dish, score the leg of lamb with a sharp knife, making deep cuts and crosses on both sides. Set aside.
- In a spice grinder, or pestle and mortar, grind the cumin, coriander seeds, black peppercorns and cardamom together. Put the spices into a large bowl, then add the yogurt, garlic, ginger, almonds, lemon juice, chilli powder, ground cinnamon and salt.
- Rub the marinade onto the lamb and into the grooves, then transfer to a large casserole dish and cover. Leave in the fridge overnight. The next day, around 3 hours prior to serving the Raan Kebab, preheat the oven to 180°C/350°F/ gas 4.
- Transfer the lamb to a deep roasting tray, pour 125 ml of water into the tray and loosely cover with foil. Cook for 2 hrs 15 minutes until the lamb is pink in the middle. Alternatively, should you prefer the lamb well done, continue cooking for an additional 15 minutes.
- Forty-five minutes before the lamb is cooked, add the unpeeled shallots to the pan and lightly drizzle with oil. With 20 minutes to go, remove the foil so that the lamb browns nicely. Take the meat out of the oven, cover with foil and allow it to rest for 15 to 20 minutes before carving.

Enjoy!



Courtesy of Sous  
Chef Raj Singh

Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa



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## MOVERS &amp; SHAKERS

## Coco Collection Appoints New Assistant Director of Sales

Ahmed Mauroof has been appointed as the new Assistant Director of Sales at Coco Collection, Maldives.



With his latest promotion, Mauroof will play a key role in developing effective strategies and planning, whilst managing the marketing efforts of Coco Collection and following the best practices required of the challenging times currently faced by the industry.

Mauroof holds a Bachelor's Degree in Marketing and International Tourism from Victoria University, Australia, as well as a Master's Degree in Marketing from Durham University, UK.

Starting off his hospitality career with Coco Collection in 2007, Mauroof has spent over 12 years working with the luxury resort chain. Initially joining the award-winning hospitality brand as Marketing Executive, he was promoted to Senior Marketing Executive in 2010, where he actively secured sales objectives of the luxury properties of the brand. Prior to his recent appointment as Assistant Director of Sales, Mauroof was responsible for driving new and existing business development of Coco Collection as the Business Development Manager.

Coco Collection was formed as a subsidiary of award-winning Sunland Hotels & Resorts, a Maldivian company with over 25 years of experience within the hospitality industry. Since then, the brand has developed and managed desirable Maldivian destinations, catering for those who have a passion for holidays that are stylish, sophisticated and sustainable. Today, Coco Collection is becoming the region's premier luxury resort brand with a collection that includes Coco Privé, Coco Resorts : Retreats, Coco Palm.

## NBAM President Ahmed Afrah Appointed as a Board Member of MMPRC

President of the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM) Ahmed Afrah has been appointed as a Board Member of state-owned destination promotion organisation, Maldives Marketing and Public Relations Corporation (MMPRC).



management team over the past decade. Besides that, Afrah is the Executive Director of Canopus Maldives, one of the leading safari operators in the country that owns and operates luxury yacht – Dhinasha. He is also the Managing Director of Canopus Retreats, a leading guesthouse developer in Maldives. Afrah is equipped with over 13 years of experience, along with a Master's degree in International Business and a Bachelor's degree in Business Management & Marketing.

According to the NBAM, members of the association are grateful and happy with the appointment as it enables the industry's interests to be shared and included in the national tourism promotions, plans and strategies.

In addition to role as the current President of the NBAM, he is also one of the founders of the association and has served actively on the Executive Board and

The NBAM is a Maldivian association representing the Liveboards of the country. The association has been the voice of liveboards since its formation in 2007. With the purpose of helping the association members grow their businesses successfully and sustainably, NBAM further helps clients and operators to select the appropriate company while choosing a cruising vacation in Maldives.

## Soneva Appoints New Director of Sales for Maldives DMCs and GCC Market



**Soneva, the award-winning luxury resort operator, has appointed Aisha Ali as the Director of Sales – Maldives DMCs and GCC Market. Aisha will be based in Malé, Maldives.**

Aisha's career in the hospitality industry started off in the year 2006 in reservations at Soneva Gili (now Gili Lankanfushi). In 2009 she joined the Six Senses Resorts & Spas team as a Sales & Marketing Executive, working on sales for Soneva Fushi, Soneva Gili, and Six Senses Laamu until June 2012, when Six Senses was sold. She continued working in the roles of Sales & Marketing Executive and Sales Manager for Soneva Resorts until 2016.

Aisha then went on to work for Anantara as the Assistant Director of Sales for Anantara Kihava in the Maldives, where she spent two years developing the resort in the Middle Eastern, Chinese and Indian markets, whilst supporting three other Anantara resorts. Later, Aisha joined a new B2C travel company called Premier Destination, where she was responsible for launching the brand and establishing it as a high-end,

luxury B2C travel company in the Maldives. She also led the overall operation of the company for over three years.

Nationally, only 4% of the workforce in resorts in the Maldives is female, compared to women constituting 45% of the workforce in industries such as education, healthcare and the civil service. The 'Women in Soneva' initiative is a recruitment drive aimed at achieving a more balanced representation of female Hosts at Soneva in the Maldives and Thailand. Currently at Soneva Fushi female Hosts make up 14.3% of the workforce, while the target is 30%; Soneva Jani is at 18.26%, with a target of 30%; and Soneva Kiri is at 38%, with a target of 45%.

For Soneva to meet its target of being the best employer of women in the Maldives, the resorts have been

implementing the following measures:

- Aim to improve conditions in the workplace for women and beat the trend of low ratios of female employees in Maldivian resorts.
- Make Soneva Jani and Soneva Fushi feel as secure and safe as possible for women Hosts.
- Offering secure women-only accommodation, sitting room and washing areas.
- Ensuring appropriate structures and processes to deal with issues surrounding sexually inappropriate behaviour and sexual harassment.
- Offer Gender Awareness training for all Hosts to understand the responsibility they have to their fellow men and women, and act accordingly.
- Ensuring at least one women's activity a month in the Host Activity Calendar.
- Providing a wide selection of women's products at resort canteens.

# Frankly Speaking

**We have heard recently from several industry players that the virus is creating dollar liquidity concerns. To what extent is liquidity tightening in trade? How is trade changing as the world moves into the “new normal” post-COVID?**



**Yoosuf Riffath**  
Chairman  
Astrabon Maldives

*It's not about being heard – it is happening. And prices for the end-customers will become very high, as it becomes a challenge for the trading sector to get dollars.*



**Mohamed Ali Janah**  
Chairman  
Hotel & Resort Construction

*I believe it is speculation; because of the current situation and uncertainties caused due to the pandemic, no one can say for sure whether the markets will remain steady, or go down drastically. This is what's creating panic and thus, the speculation affecting the foreign exchange market.*



**Abdulla Salih**  
Managing Director  
Damas

- Our dollar demand arises mainly from import requirements and other outflows.
- The dollar supply arises mainly from tourism revenues & fishery exports.
- Tourism arrivals have been at zero for three months and export volumes also have been down.
- Therefore, it is inevitable that there is bound to be a dollar shortfall in the economy.
- This shortfall is now manifest in the rise in market prices.



**Mohamed Firaq**  
Managing Director  
Inner Maldives Holidays

*While countries like China has opened up at a crucial time when many remain in lockdown, the Maldives is striving all means to position itself where it used to be, and also create demand as an early opener. But, we are yet to learn on the recovery pace and process since it will be influenced by factors such as how lockdowns are gradually relaxed and the consumer behavior of other countries that are opening up for tourism.*



**Shaaz Waleed**  
Managing Director  
Resort Life

*This issue is not a problem of today; every affect to the Maldivian tourism industry will reflect on the whole country, as long as the country uses and accepts dual currency. Even now, if we implement a single currency policy by today, an ordinary citizen or the SME Sector will not be affected due to it, and I believe that a healthier forex market can be established with the country.*



**Ibrahim Ali Jaleel**  
Vice President  
SME & Entrepreneurs  
Federation of Maldives

*There is an uncertainty in tourism revenue with the bookings being slow – most bookings are in the fourth quarter, with very few bookings in the third quarter. However, we have hope for 2021. Import in the last 3 months has also been low – 50% compared to 2019. Our import cost is USD 3 billion per year (USD 0.75 billion per quarter), but in last 3 months import was USD 0.35billion only. Though resort land rentals deferred, the state will receive the 2019 BPT this month which will give some breathing space. I believe the government will get forex support from financial institutes abroad. Together, we can maintain the forex issue, and limit expenses during these 4 months.*



**Moosa Rasheed**  
Managing Director  
Aimo Travels

*As our imports depend on foreign currency, we very much rely on tourism dollars. Now, it's extremely difficult to get USDs at an even higher rate, because the dollar-generating tourism industry has been completely at a halt. Therefore, imports are significantly affected. The private sector does not have a USD reserve, and Central Bank does not disperse enough USDs in the market. The trading sector needs a solution for this at earliest.*



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# Daiya Devilled



## Fiery Goodness in a Bowl