

The islandchief

travel news

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Gracious Hospitality

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with
Ms Prapaijit Thongma
Area General Manager,
Centara Maldives

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Dear Readers,

How have we arrived at our November issue already? While it is an oft-used phrase, time really does fly! And at least for us, 2022 has felt exceptionally fast. Before you know it, Thanksgiving will be here. Then the holiday madness begins followed by New Year's Day just around the corner. So, where are your travels taking you to cap off 2022?

As always, The islandchief continues to choose passionate and dedicated people who thrive in the pursuit of achieving their dreams. Our aim is to support emerging talent on a global scale and create the next level of high-quality content. The people featured in our cover are an essential part of the tabloid-magazine content and will provide tips on how they take inspiration.

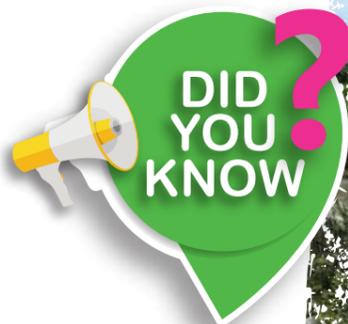
In this issue, meet Prapaijit Thongma, Area General Manager of Centara Maldives. She has been actively engaged in the hospitality industry for more than 35 years and brings a high level of understanding and knowledge of many aspects of the industry. We sat with Prapaijit to hear about her journey and career success.

The Islandchief has shaken up again the world of publication giving its viewers exactly what they are looking for, travel and hospitality industry insights at its finest.

On page 23, we asked our industry stakeholders for their take on the proposed tax increment levels and their concerns.

Until our final issue of the year,

The Islandchief Team



KURUHINNA THARAAGANDU (KAAFU KAASHIDHOO)

The island is the site of one of the largest archeological sites in the country that demonstrates the Buddhist past of the Maldives before the advent of Islam in the twelfth century.

The site known as the Kuruhinna tharaagandu are the ruins of an ancient Buddhist monastery believed to have been in use in the pre-Islamic period. The excavation conducted between 1996 and 1998 revealed the ruins of what would have been a sprawling monastery complex with multiple structures. The excavated site is almost 1900 square kilometers and revealed more than sixty coral stone structures, which archeologists believe is just a part of the whole complex. As one would expect only the lower part of structures have survived during the nine hundred years since it has been abandoned.

The island of Kaashidhoo lies about 86 kilometers from Male, the capital. Although the island belongs to the administrative region of Male' Atoll, the Kaashidhoo atoll is a separate natural atoll north of Male' Atoll, separated by the Kaashidhoo Channel. Kaashidhoo is known for its agriculture and is one the biggest suppliers of fresh fruits and vegetables to the Male' market.

Photo Credit: visitmaldives; Kaashidhoo, Kuruhinna tharaagandu

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5 UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES

Flight Operations Commenced at Velana International Airport's New Code F Runway and Noovilu Seaplane Terminal Officially Opens



Vice President of the Maldives, Faisal Naseem has officially inaugurated the new Code F runway and Noovilu Seaplane Terminal developed at Velana International Airport (VIA). At a special ceremony held at the airport, the new Code-F runway was officially commenced with the arrival of Emirates B777 aircraft at 0715hrs. The flight was welcomed with a water salute. The Noovillu seaplane terminal was officially inaugurated by Vice President Faisal Naseem, Chairman of Maldives Airports Company Ltd Mr. Mohamed Umar Manik and the Chinese Ambassador Her Excellency Wang Lixin. The two functions were attended by



Government Ministers and high-level delegates.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Vice President noted that VIA is the main gateway to the Maldivian economy and that the entire Maldivian economy is based on transport and tourism. The Vice President said that the runway opened would bring a positive change to the Maldivian economy.

In his address, the Vice President stated that VIA was being built in accordance with the airport's master plan, and he emphasized the development of the runway, fuel farm, seaplane terminal, and

passenger terminal construction. The project at VIA, according to the President, is equivalent to the construction of a new airport within an existing airport. The Vice President further stated that airport services have been maintained indefinitely during the airport's construction.

Speaking at the ceremony, Board Chairman of Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), Mohamed Umar Manik said the code-F runway developed at VIA will be used for a longer period. The chairman also noted that the runway was developed using modern drainage systems. He also noted that the Noovilu seaplane terminal was developed with high-quality services and is a state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chinese Ambassador to the Maldives Her Excellency Wang Lixin said that it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to assist the development of the airport by the

Chinese government. She also noted that China's Beijing Urban Construction Group has successfully completed the new runway project, and that the company is also carrying out other development projects at VIA.

Speaking at the ceremony, CEO and Managing Director of Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL), Mahjoob Shujau noted that the new runway is built to cater for the largest passenger airlines in the world and this is the first time in the history of the airport to use the runway and a taxiway together.

The new runway is 3,400 meters long and 65 meters wide and with the commencement of the new Code F runway, the number of flights landing and departing from VIA will increase from 8 to 21 per hour. The flight delay will also be resolved by shortening the 10 minutes spent on clearing the runway to 3 minutes.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

Wizz Air Operates Direct Flights to Maldives

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi, the ultra-low-fare national airline of the UAE has commenced direct flights to the Maldives. Its maiden flight landed at Velana International Airport (VIA) on Tuesday (October 4), with a team of Wizz Air's senior management and passengers who received a warm welcome upon arrival.

Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom, Managing Director of Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) Mahujooob Shujau and senior officials of the company participated in the welcoming ceremony.

The new route will offer travelers the opportunity to explore the marvelous destination in line with the airline's ambition to provide tourists and residents in the UAE and the region with hassle-free, affordable travel options. Wizz Air offers flights four times a week on Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday from Abu Dhabi to VIA, Malé, the main international airport in the Maldives.

Flight operations are carried out via a brand-new Airbus A321neo aircraft, which offers the lowest environmental footprint. This expansion reaffirms Wizz Air's long-term commitment to offering



ultra-low fares to a variety of diverse destinations from Abu Dhabi, whilst stimulating the local economy and job market.

Fly Dubai Announces Daily Flights to Gan International Airport



flydubai, the Dubai-based airline, continues to grow its operations to the island nation of the Maldives with the launch of a new daily service to Gan International Airport (GAN) from February 4, 2023.

flydubai started its operations to the Maldives in 2013 with the launch of direct flights to Velana International Airport (MLE) in the capital Male'. With the start of the new daily service to Gan next year, the carrier will increase its frequency to the market to 28 flights a week.

Commenting on the start of operations to Gan, Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said: "The start of our daily flights to the southern island of Gan will give our passengers more options to travel to the beautiful Maldives. This new service will reduce the commute time whether by boat or seaplane for those staying in resorts in the southern Atolls. The Maldives continues to be one of the most popular leisure destinations for our customers from the UAE, GCC and CIS. The additional frequency to the market will further support connecting traffic from Europe as well."

flydubai is the first carrier from the UAE to operate flights to Gan International Airport (GAN), which is located on the island of Gan in the southern Maldives.

Mohamed Firaq, Managing Director of Inner Maldives Holidays, the General Sales Agent for flydubai in the Maldives, said: "We are very excited to commence flydubai operations to a second airport in the Maldives, especially it being the southernmost region of the country. Addu City will also be flydubai's 100th destination. We currently operate two daily flights to Malé from Dubai and will be adding a third flight via Colombo from 30th October 2022, giving convenient and direct flights between Malé and Colombo. Passengers also have the opportunity to choose how they would like to travel whether it is in the comfort of Business Class or a customized experience in Economy Class. Customers will be able to purchase tickets from our office and appointed flydubai passenger sales agents."

He further added, "This wouldn't have been a success without the support from Addu International

Airport, especially from its Managing Director, Mr. Gais Naseer who has been continuously working on it since 2020. For the past two years, we have done a comprehensive assessment on operating flights to Gan and created awareness among many tour operators and tourist facilities in the Southern atoll region to increase connectivity and inbound traffic to contribute tourism growth in the region." Abdulla Ghiyas, Deputy Managing Director of Inner Maldives Holidays, said "This is a big moment for Southern Tourism. We have been working on this for a very long time with flydubai. We hope this opens new doors for Addu and tourism in that region having the first Middle East flight to have daily flights there."

Passengers will have the option to experience Business Class enjoying space and privacy in the cabin, a comfortable spacious seat, inflight entertainment with films and TV shows available to watch and a range of delicious snacks and complimentary hot and cold beverages.

Passengers travelling in Economy Class will enjoy a Recaro designed seat offering optimal levels of space and comfort in the air. flydubai continues to roll-out WiFi across its fleet enabling passengers to stay connected during their flight and can browse the web, send emails, use social networks and get the latest news. Passengers are able to choose between bundled (Flex/Value) or unbundled (Lite) fares depending on their travel needs.

flydubai's passenger experience has been redesigned to enable travel in a safe environment that minimises crew and passenger contact and offers passengers confidence to travel at every step of their journey. The airline has recently introduced an extended multi-risk travel insurance that includes COVID-19 cover to offer passengers greater peace of mind when travelling. Passengers are required to make sure that they are up to date with the regulations from the IATA Travel Centre for their whole journey, and follow the guidance issued by the authorities and the airline.

IN A NUTSHELL

Paradise Island Resort Initiates Coral Garden Restoration Project



As part of a continuous pledge to prioritize ocean conservation and protect the natural environment, diveOceanus at Paradise Island Resort has initiated a Coral Garden restoration programme to preserve and protect the coral reefs for the future. Leading the program are diveOceanus Manager Hussain Saanim and Assistant diveOceanus Manager, Mohamed Arzan, supported by Marine Scientist and consultant for Villa Hotels & Resorts, Azim Musthag.



located near the Italian restaurant, Farumathi, to nurture them before later transplanting them to frames which is where they will continue to flourish and create a new home for a variety of marine life.

The team have collectively kick started the coral project at Paradise Island Resort and will later introduce the program at Sun Island Resort and Royal Island Resort. The diveOceanus team will nurture and reproduce the resilient coral fragments from the Paradise Island house reef which will then be planted on designated coral frames and placed back in the house reef. The restoration programme aims to reproduce healthier coral which will be resilient to ocean temperature changes and in future foster a healthier and more robust house reef. In alignment with the necessary government and fishery ministry regulations, the diveOceanus team established the Coral Garden program in the month of September, prior to the approaching hottest months of the year from December – March when the ocean temperatures rise considerably.

Phase one started with an extensive survey of the Paradise Island lagoon to observe the condition of the coral reef. This proved successful as the team found a substantial amount of healthy coral reefs which had survived global warming and bleaching events. Collecting numerous broken coral fragments, the team placed the coral in dedicated coral nurseries in the lagoon

Following the successful installation of 30 coral frames with around 20 coral fragments in the lagoon near Farumathi Italian restaurant, the team will assess the progress of the frames before placing further frames in different areas of the lagoon and nearby the water villa jetty. The concept of creating a new coral reef will ease the pressure on the natural coral reef that is damaged and encourage marine life to inhabit the new coral frames and create a new reef that guests can also appreciate and explore, whilst the house reef renews in their absence.

The Coral Garden restoration program started with the objective to have several sustainable initiatives running at the resorts to support ocean conservation and environmental sustainability, while also involving guests that wish to make a difference towards a greener future. Through specialized education and conservation efforts, the diveOceanus team aims to introduce the Coral Garden program to local communities and schools in order to raise awareness and educate the younger generations on the importance of taking care of the Maldives natural environment.

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IN A NUTSHELL

Outrigger Maldives Announces Christmas and New Year Activities

Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort has announced details of its Christmas and New Year programme, which runs from December 19, 2022 to January 1, 2023.

A diverse and creative range of activities has been designed for guests who love to eat, drink, keep fit - physically and spiritually - chill or dance to music, learn about marine life such as manta rays and whale sharks and see them in the wild.

Guests who love to eat and drink can enjoy chef Christopher Long's Christmas market and can sign up for hands-on classes on making sushi, Vietnamese hand rolls, seafood curing, cake decoration, chocolate and wine pairing. There will also be mojito madness and margarita mash-up sessions.

Ideal for couples, guests can request private sunset dinners on the beach and a floating breakfast in their pool villa, which can be over water or on the

beach, depending on guest preference.

Surrounded by immaculately clear tropical waters, Outrigger guests can enjoy sunset cruises, big game fishing (catch & release), kayaking around the island, snorkelling safaris and guided scuba dives.

Apart from leading marine trips, the resort's resident marine biologist, Lynn Jula Kessler, will give presentations on Outrigger's ZONE - OZONE - its global nature conservation initiative.

A key feature of the festive period on the island will be physical and spiritual fitness. Outrigger's resident yoga and fitness instructor Ajay Sharma has created a thoughtful and holistic regime of sunrise and sunset hatha yoga, balance and strength sessions, pilates classes, core training, flow yoga, and cross fit.

On New Year's Eve, management cocktails early evening will be



followed by an around-the-globe gourmet journey and then a DJ session from 10.30pm onwards for guests to dance their way into 2023.

The resort will also run a festive Instagram contest. Guests who post images with certain hashtags could win a traditional dhoni sailing boat sunset cocktail for two, a 60-minute couples' massage, or a beach dinner for two.

Only 25 minutes seaplane flight from the modern and efficient seaplane

terminal at Velana International Airport, the newly refurbished Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort has been designed to regale guests with 81 bright and well-appointed opulent villas and five engaging dining outlets - the foundation of a luxury lifestyle holiday, all with the friendly touch that Outrigger is known for.

For further information, and to book Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort, visit outrigger.com or contact your preferred travel agent.

Enjoy an Island-inspired Festive Season at Alila Kothaifaru Maldives



The year-end festive season is one of the most special times of the year - a time of joy and generosity when we look forward to gathering with loved ones for moments of celebration and reflection and anticipate new beginnings.

This year, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives invites guests to immerse in new and extraordinary island-themed experiences together with family and friends. Celebrate the season of giving in intimate and sophisticated Alila style while making meaningful lifetime memories with an opportunity to give back and make a difference.

Embark on a journey of festivities from Christmas to New Year that includes unique cultural activities, a memorable Christmas celebration underwater surrounded by incredible marine life, and a world of culinary experiences, from Japanese and Indian to Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. With daily wellness activities, indulgence at Spa Alila, kids' activities at Play Alila and watersports to enhance your holiday, every member of the family will have a festive season to remember.

In the spirit of giving, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives has also launched a special Gift to Share offer, which allows guests

to contribute to the local community while enjoying the beauty of the Maldives.

Alila's Gift to Share programme is born out of the brand's vision from day one that conservation, community and commerce can and should be integrated. Alila's efforts extend beyond the operational aspects of its resorts to create a positive impact on the environment as well as the community - economically, socially and culturally. This includes employing local people who live in the surrounding areas, developing the local workforce through skills training, using products and services from local suppliers, as well as educating guests on local culture and traditions.

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In line with this vision, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives with one complimentary night for every three paid nights booked plus 20% discount on food and beverage. In turn, Alila Kothaifaru Maldives will donate 10% of one night's charge on behalf of guests to Maduvaree School, a public school located on nearby Maduvaree island, about a 15-minute boat journey from the resort. This gift will support the school's day-to-day operations as well as extending skills training opportunities, especially for those who are interested in learning more about the hospitality industry.

This Stay 4, Pay 3 Gift to Share can be booked and stays from now until May 13, 2023.

IN A NUTSHELL

Fushifaru Maldives Celebrates 5th Anniversary with an Exclusive Time-limited Offer



Fushifaru Maldives celebrates its 5-year anniversary with an exclusive time-limited offer, Fabulous 5. It includes 1 extra free night for every 5 nights booked along with 10% off for seaplane transfer.

Nestled between a national Marine Protected Area and three of the Maldives' most iconic dive sites, Fushifaru Maldives is a boutique and

intimate resort with an endless promise of adventure, excitement, discovery, and serenity all in one diverse landscape.

Merging quintessential Maldivian design with modern aesthetics, Fushifaru Maldives' 63 beach and water villas exude a sense of cosines yet luxurious in space and amenities. Each of the spectacular villas feature

open-air bathrooms with indoor and outdoor showers, double vanity, daybeds, private verandas with dining areas and breath-taking views of the surrounding crystal-clear lagoon, with their own plunge pool for some villas.

Dining experiences feature regional and international flavours to suit every taste and dietary requirement. Scrumptious breakfast buffets and palate pleasing international cuisine are offered at Korakali, while surf and turf can be savoured at Raakani on the beach and interactive dining experience can be enjoyed at Teppanyaki. Signature cocktails and detox tails are complemented by the best sunset views on the island whilst lounging by the pool at Fanihandhi Bar. A range of international dishes and snacks can be served straight to the privacy of Villa 24 hours. A range of private dining experiences such as Handhu platform dining, floating breakfast and pool dining are also available on request.

Above the Waterline - to up the on adventure, a fully equipped gym overlooks the Indian Ocean, a multi-sports court hosts regular matches between Residents and guests, a kid's club, to the water with jet skis, kayaks and catamarans. Off-island visits include the largest tuna canning factory in the Maldives and partake in numerous social and sustainable activities. Below the Waterline - Fushifaru Kan'du, a national Marine Protected Area home to three iconic dive sites including the renowned Fushifaru Thila is teeming with marine life, unique cave formations and a marine cleaning station, sits right beside the resort.

A true haven for diving enthusiasts and snorkelers alike. An extraordinary experience of weddings, picnics and desert island getaways are available at the resort's own private sandbank - only a few metres away in a crystalclear turquoise lagoon. For more information, please visit <https://fushifaru.com/>

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IN A NUTSHELL

Oaga Art Resort Launches Website with the Greatest All-Inclusive Plan!

Put your vacation hats on and get ready for the experience of a lifetime at Oaga Art Resort — now officially open for bookings with the launch of its website on www.oagaresorts.com!

Oaga has announced the opening of its website. Oaga Art Resort is gearing up for a festive opening in Q4 of 2022 — the new website will also feature its special opening offer for guests eager to be the first to experience Oaga's hospitality by booking a stay. The Oaga team is ecstatic to introduce the Greatest All-Inclusive plan in the Maldives, redefining limits of just how fun the island vacation concept can be. Guests will have the chance to create their own stories on the island with the Greatest All-Inclusive plan; your imagination is the limit! It includes special experiences, benefits, and

curated spaces that tell you the story of the Maldives. Seeped in inspiration from Maldivian history, culture, traditions and folklore, staying in the villas of Oaga Art Resort is a journey towards history with a modern twist.

The team at Oaga have had the most amazing journey bringing this product to life for guests. Oaga Art Resort is a homegrown Maldivian hospitality brand dedicated to the history, culture and tradition.

As a concept, Oaga revolves around the philosophy of organic community growth. The resort hopes that the page will act as the platform that connects guests with all the amazing journeys offered in creating stories together at Oaga.



Situated in North Malé Atoll, Oaga Art Resort is 45 minutes by speedboat from Velana International Airport. A small island with 60 cosy and intimate villas with beach and over water options, 4 dining venues and a spa inspired by Maldivian traditional healing, Oaga Art

Resort's artistic and creative spaces offer an immersive experience curated by local and visiting artists, and craftsmen from the Maldives.

Visit the website at www.oagaresorts.com to book your stay.

Beach Pro Tour Maldives Challenge Concludes at Sun Island Resort



World-class Volleyball players from around the world travelled to Sun Island Resort & Spa in South Ari Atoll for the Volleyball World Beach Pro Tour Maldives Challenge which took place from October 13-16, 2022. The event was jointly organised by the Fédération Internationale de Volleyball (FIVB), Ministry of Youth, Sports and Community Empowerment, and the Volleyball Association of Maldives. Sun Island is proud to have been the official Maldives host for the premier sport event which was held across four volleyball courts on the island's extensive stretch of beach.

Following several action-packed days, Qatari players Cherif Younouss Samba and Ahmed Tijan were dominant in the matches, defeating Sweden's David Ahman and Jonathan Hellvig in the semi-finals before going on to beat Americans Chase Budinger and Troy Field in the gold medal match and achieving victory in the Maldives. Whilst Finnish women's team Taru Lahti and Niina Ahtiainen won their first gold medal at Sun Island beating Americans Emily Stockman and Megan Kraft in the semi-finals, and then later defeating Austrians Katharina Schutzenhofer and Lena Plesiutschnig in the finals.

The eco-luxury Sun Island Resort provided extensive space and an idyllic location for the premier sport event which has previously been held in some of the most iconic beach destinations around the world. The Volleyball Maldives Challenge tour is the sixth international competition to be held in the Maldives and further affirms the island destination as a top location for international sporting events. Moreover, it is part of the presidential pledge to promote the Maldives as a sports tourism destination. President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih attended the matches including the finals held on October 16.

Beach Volleyball is ranked number one amongst Olympic sports across social media, garnering a global audience of over 400 million. The Maldives Challenge tournament was screened live on the official Volleyball World TV channel and the App as well as various social media platforms. The Challenge level tournament of the Beach Pro Tour set the bar high for the tournaments to come and is a feeder to the Elite16 level events. The teams will play next in Dubai from October 24 – 26 before heading to Cape Town in the next leg of the Tour.

Sun Island Resort & Spa, awarded Maldives' Leading Green Resort in the World Travel Awards 2022, is set on one of the largest Maldives islands measuring 1.6km long, located in the Southern tip of South Ari Atoll near the South Ari Marine Protected Area (SAMPA). A magical resort offering guests an abundance of freedom and unprecedented privacy to reconnect with nature surrounded by the azure waters of the Indian Ocean. Situated a short 20-minute domestic flight from Velana International Airport followed by a 10-minute speed boat journey, the resort is a tranquil setting where natural beauty meets vibrant interior design awash with unique features and luxurious indoor-outdoor living spaces.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Dusit Thani Maldives Appoints New General Manager



Dusit Thani Maldives has appointed Mr Jacques Leizerovici as its new General Manager. Mr Leizerovici, a dual French-Canadian citizen, brings to the role more than 30 years of experience working in senior management positions for renowned hotel brands under the Accor group across South America, Malaysia, and Canada.

Since humbly starting his career in 1984 at Le Meridien Montreal, followed

by a stint as Maitre d'hôtel and Front Office Manager at Novotel Fleur d' Epée, he has gone on to develop a well- rounded skill set across hotel operations, sales, and marketing, revenue management, and distribution. This includes serving as Regional Director of Sales & Marketing for Accor's Sofitel, Novotel, Mercure, and Ibis brands in the French Caribbean, and playing a key role in several pre- opening projects.

Alongside opening several hotels in Sabah, Malaysia, he was delighted to serve as Director of Corporate Affairs at the Yayasan Sabah International Convention Centre. Most recently, he held the position of General Manager of Pullman Vung Tau and Convention Center, an Executive Director of Dutaland Group, and President of the CCIFM (Chamber of Commerce and Industry French Malaysia). A highly motivated executive committed to excellence, Jacques has completed a training programme in finance at the University of Ryerson in Toronto, as well as modules in finance and market research at Cornell University, New York.

Mr Prateek Kumar, Senior Vice President – Operations, Dusit International, said: "Jacques's appointment is another key milestone in the journey of Dusit Thani Maldives. His energy, enthusiasm and international experience are great assets which we value enormously. His expertise will no doubt play a significant role in the continued

success of Dusit Thani Maldives, as he oversees day-to-day operations, maintains exceptional guest services, drives financial performance through strategic partnerships, and, most importantly, provides our guests with memories to treasure."

Located on Mudhdhoo Island in Baa Atoll – the Maldives' first UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve – Dusit Thani Maldives is just 35 minutes by seaplane from the capital city, Malé, or a 25-minute domestic flight and 10 minutes by speedboat from Dharavandhoo Airport.

Surrounded by a house reef full of marine life, the resort's luxurious over-water villas and residences await guests seeking island adventure, fine dining, and relaxation. The resort is also home to Devarana Wellness, which offers elevated treatment rooms among coconut trees and a wide range of well-being activities and experiences beyond the spa.

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Huvafen Fushi Maldives Announces Two Key Appointments

Huvafen Fushi recently announced the appointment of Mohamed Hamdhoon as the new Resort Manager and Ibrahim Nathif as the Executive Sous Chef into the team.

With impressive track records in the hospitality industry and a legacy with Universal Resorts, both the Maldivian natives bring strong expertise to their roles and will uplift the resort's transcendent journey to the next level.

Mohamed Hamdhoon, Harvard Development Management Program certified, joins Huvafen Fushi from Kurumba Maldives, a Universal Resorts property, where he led the Front Office Operations. With hospitality experience spanning more than ten years, Hamdhoon brings a wealth of experience focusing on outstanding levels of guest service. In his new role at Huvafen, he will manage all day-to-day operational matters along with the GM and support the iconic brand to deliver outstanding hospitality

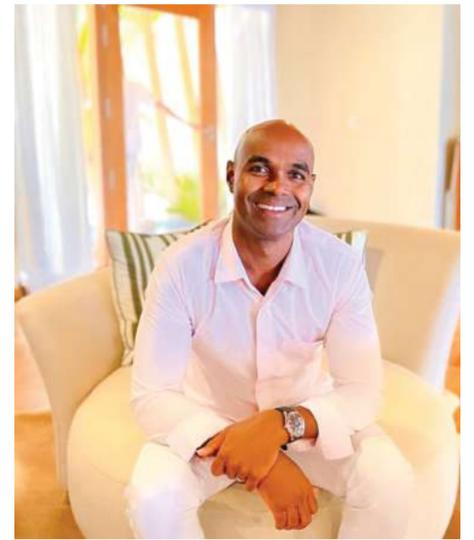
and enhance the overall guest experience, harmonious with the brand standards. Hamdhoon has also worked in different capacities at One & Only Reethi Rah, Maldives and Intercontinental Maamunagau, Maldives, positively impacting hotel performance, displaying exemplary work ethics, and exceptional attention to detail.

Chef Nathif brings over two decades of experience in international cuisine, of which 16 years were with Baros and Milandhoo, both Universal Resorts properties. As Executive Sous Chef, he will be in charge of leading all of the culinary programming and new menu developments, kitchen operations, implementing the highest kitchen standards, and sourcing top-quality produce. Chef Nathif's expertise lies in French Cuisine, and key to his success is his intuitive focus on a modernist approach, attention to seasonality and customer experience – an approach perfectly aligned with his new role at Huvafen Fushi.



Ibrahim Nathif
Executive Sous Chef

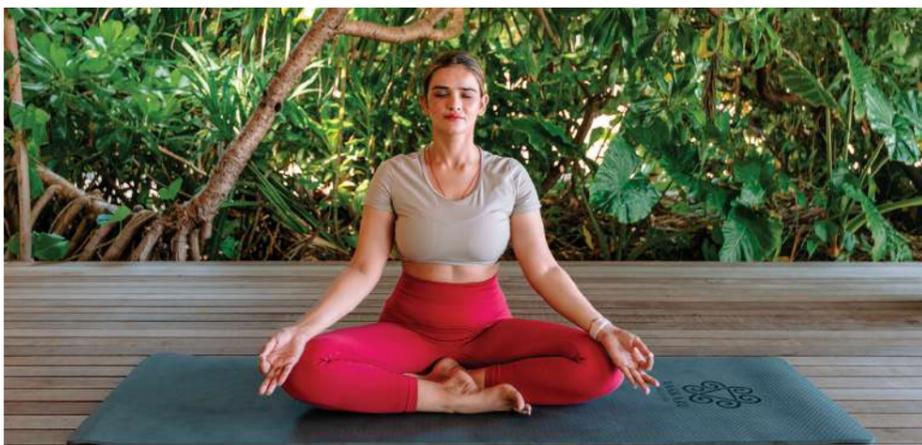
Noel Cameron, General Manager of Huvafen Fushi, stated that “Universal Resorts has always emphasized in empowering and grooming the Maldivian talent for the next level. Hamdhoon and Chef Nathif are remarkable gentlemen, each with outstanding career accomplishments



Mohamed Hamdhoon
Resort Manager

and incomparable experience, and understand Huvafen and Universal Resorts philosophy to deliver the highest levels of service and delight our guests at all levels. Both of their accomplishments and experiences are truly an asset and will be instrumental in helping the Huvafen Fushi achieve new benchmarks.”

Vakkaru Maldives Celebrates Wellness with New Appointment of Resident Yoga and Fitness Instructor



Island sanctuary Vakkaru Maldives celebrates wellness with the appointment of Anju Rathi as the new resident yoga and fitness instructor tasked with enhancing the island resort's fitness and wellness programmes. The resort's serene setting and an experienced yoga practitioner are just what guests need to harmonize mind, body and soul on their break from the outside world.

A Master in Naturopathy and Yoga Science, Anju Rathi brings eight years of yoga experience and expertise in various yoga practices and techniques.

Expanding on her role, Anju said, “The ancient practices of yoga help to restore mind and body. My job is to use yoga and its philosophy to develop body-mind-spirit awareness, physical flexibility and strength. In addition, I adopt a holistic approach to fitness training and strongly focus on execution to improve overall health and well-being in a calming and encouraging environment.”

Anju, a former athlete and natural born-teacher, is passionate about all kinds of yoga, from Ashtanga, Yin, Hatha and Restorative Yoga to

Therapeutic Yoga. She is a specialist in ensuring the programmatic delivery of all yoga therapy and wellness programmes for experienced practitioners and beginners.

She views yoga as a means to a healthy lifestyle and has created several transformational mind and body yoga programmes for guests at Vakkaru Maldives, including therapeutic Yoga and Prenatal Yoga. Therapeutic yoga is a one-on-one Yoga session that takes a whole body or holistic approach to alleviating pain, arthritis or dealing with other health issues. During the session, Anju guides guests through specific yoga postures and techniques to get pain relief and enhance health. While during prenatal yoga, she helps mom-to-be prepare for childbirth by relaxing the body and focusing on safe techniques and poses through all stages of pregnancy. A multi-faceted approach to exercise, prenatal yoga encourages stretching and mental centring with many benefits for both mother and child, including increasing

strength, flexibility, and endurance.

As the resort's fitness instructor, Anju brings a holistic approach to fitness training and creates personalised fitness and physical therapy programmes for guests based on their physical conditions and fitness goals. The training includes cardio and core training, pilates, High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT), weight lifting and barefoot beach workout.

Speaking about Anju's appointment, Iain McCormack, General Manager, Vakkaru Maldives said: “Well-being is now at the heart of our lives. At Vakkaru, we are committed to enhancing the guest experience by continually responding to guests' rising demand for experiences that speak to their overall well-being. With Anju's transformational yoga, meditation and fitness programmes, we continue to deliver experiences that positively impact our guests' lifestyles.”

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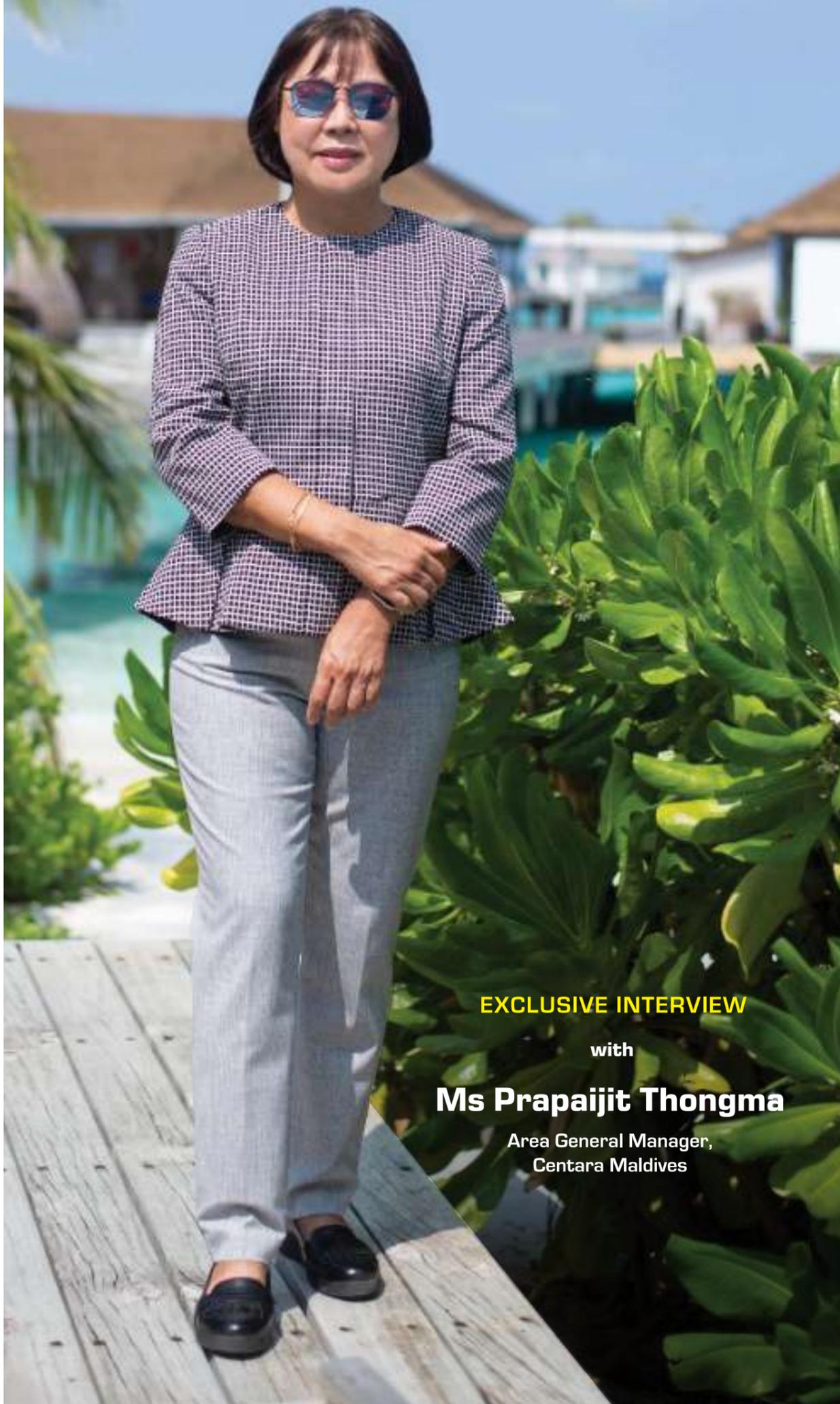
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Gracious Hospitality



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

with

Ms Prapaijit Thongma

Area General Manager,
Centara Maldives

Prapaijit Thongma is an elegant and mature hotelier who joined Centara Maldives, after having gained experience of strong hotel leadership in Africa and Asia. Having a rich pedigree in international hotel management, Prapaijit Thongma has enriched the iconic Centara Maldives with her 24 years of operational excellence. The Islandchief spoke exclusively with Ms.Thongma about her principles, ideas, future plans and, of course, Centara Maldives

“Exceeding the customer’s expectations boils down to making the guests feel good which then builds the guest confidence in your brand. The ingredients we use to deliver this has one key component and that is our “people”.”

Please tell us how you ended up finding your place and interest in the hospitality industry?

Welcoming and entertaining people brought me much joy even at a very young age. After graduating from university; in the field of business, hotel management and literature, I took a job as a secretary in Thailand working for one of the reputable Belgium conglomerates who was building the first Zinc smelter in South East Asia. Generally, one would not think of it as such, but the role of a secretary is very much like working in hospitality which intrigued me to explore about career opportunities in the industry for the future. I also had the passion to travel which gave me an extra urge to seek out avenues in travel and tourism. When it was time to decide about my future, hospitality was a straight-forward choice for the next stage in my career, as it allowed me to couple my love for travel with my desire to care for people.

What are the responsibilities you shoulder as the GM of Centara Grand Island, Maldives? Enlighten us on ‘a day in your life’ at the resort?

In 2009, I joined Centara Grand Island Resort & Spa, Maldives as the resident manager of the pre-opening team. It was the first property outside Thailand and, it remains until today the brand’s flagship resort. Been at the helm of affairs since 2013, when Centara Ras Fushi opened, I transferred as the hotel manager and, in 2014 I was promoted to general manager. I wear many hats with the help of my team as; a chief problem solver, employee morale booster, head of the complaints department, safe guarding the reputation as well as the existence of the operation of the resort and ensuring we deliver guest expectations to the best of our abilities, allowing “everlasting memories to be made in the place to be – Centara”. These are all positive

sets of challenges that I welcome with open arms.

As a problem solver to be at the forefront, guiding both properties and making unprecedented decisions as protocols and mandates are changing on a seemingly daily basis after the pandemic gives a meaningful and rewarding purpose to bear. A GM's daily tasks and role have significantly shifted since the beginning of the pandemic and will likely continue to evolve as the hospitality industry continues to redefine services, processes, and expectations.

How have your previous roles helped you to get to where you are today?

Working in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years and moving to different destinations due to my career, taught me to recognise the beauty in every country and to understand that each place has its own unique energy.

In fact, it was my first job in hospitality at Club Med working as a front desk agent that I learnt; you should always strive for excellence, to take full responsibility for your role and to never stop dreaming. The benefits you reap are truly satisfying, regardless of what your job role is when you blend; attention to detail, respect, commitment, team work, trust and compassion.

You have been the General Manager at Centara Grand for a while now. How has the resort evolved to improve services to the guests?

Exceeding the customer's expectations boils down to making the guests feel good which then builds the guest confidence in your brand. The ingredients we use to deliver this has one key component and that is our "people". Not only do we listen to and understand our guests but our team members and their challenges as well. We believe happy staff make happy customers - "One team, one goal" - which is to be the leading global hospitality group of Thai origin.

We are dedicated to providing locally relevant, Thai-inspired experiences in each of our global destinations. On this continuous journey of expansion, our traditional family values will remain in the heart of everything we do across all brands. With a unique passion for innovation, we are committed to delivering meaningful hospitality while preserving the environment through sustainable operations.

Digitalisation has also played a significant contribution in how we deliver a comfortable and memorable stay to our guests. It's also essential to get to know each destination's local cultures, customs and traditions which then helps to fine tune in the operations of what we deliver to our valued guests. "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." - Maya Angelou

When it comes to women empowerment, we have come a long way. Do you think it matches up for the women in Maldives hospitality industry?

I believe it has improved drastically in the past few

years and currently I am proud to see a large group of Maldivian female leaders in decision making roles across different industries in the Republic of Maldives. However, the future generations should be encouraged and positive mindset should be inculcated to ensure it progresses.

What are the property's sustainable commitments in regard to incorporating social responsibility to achieve positive impacts?

Centara's commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility has put the company on a path to a better, more meaningful kind of success where resources are respected, communities enjoy opportunities and support, and careers and employment are abundant for the generations to come.

Centara properties as an entirety has a global recognition aligned with the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC). We back ourselves up with the exceptional standards we meet including a water treatment plant installed from inception and usage of glass water bottles in our operations along with the usage of paper straws and treated wastewater to avoid polluting discharge used for watering our beautiful gardens at both properties.

I am proud to also mention that at Centara Ras Fushi Resort & Spa Maldives we have a total of 752 solar panels installed and solar power used to light up the overwater walkways at night. We are also committed to minimising waste production through the reduction, reuse and recycling of products and encourage our team members and guest to give back to the community and ecosystem by engaging in monthly coral planting programs.

Our properties also ensure that we build relationship with local schools/ local island authorities to take care of the wellbeing of primary school premises. Projects are also developed to conduct frequent training of tourism and hospitality education to nurture the mindsets of young adults to develop future hospitality leaders through theoretical/practical training while fostering goodwill and friendship among local islands.

With so many various properties coming up, how does Centara plan to stand out in the market?

Centara's distinctive culture and diversity allows us to serve and satisfy travellers of nearly every age and lifestyle.

Our deep roots in the Thai family values of caring, sharing and a sense of belonging helps us to specialise in bringing family-centric hospitality concepts to life.

Centara respectfully delivers and celebrates the unique fusion of exceptional hospitality and values which are distinct features in both Thailand and the Maldives. The blend of authentic attributes which we are famous for includes gracious service, exceptional food, pampering spas, the importance of families and time well spent.

The combination of each essential aspect true to the heart of a Centara property is then constantly

injected with innovative and new ideas to keep in line with the heritage but display and deliver a wow factor that resonates with our guests.

Over the years, have you encountered any barriers to your success or growth as a female in your field?

I have not experienced any barriers and I believe its because of how I have always dealt with any situation. A positive can-do attitude, with the ability to always be up front and communicate with attention to detail in a respectful manner has seen me through many stages of my life. As a female one should never be afraid to dream big and reach for the stars. Regardless of your gender we will all find hurdles in life; I don't see them as barriers but another hurdle to jump. You need to always have the right attitude and a positive mindset with the firm notion of "I will not give up". When you feel it's a bit overwhelming to handle, sometimes a small break always helps; to gather yourself, dust yourself off and get back to it.

What are your future career goals and what's coming up next for Centara?

Personally, I will love to travel more and eventually consult young budding entrepreneurs who have a passion to set up boutique hotels. I wish to help them set up their framework in order to yield not only a successful operation monetary wise but also as a best place to work with loyal employees, who wants to be part of a team that respects each other in a productive environment.

In terms of what's in the future pipelines for Centara, the company was given the green light to develop a set of new resorts in the Maldives, following successful Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in three idyllic islands in the Indian Ocean. These resorts are expected to be opened during the period of 2024 and 2025.

What lessons and advice can you share as a female leader to the new generations of women working in the hotel industry?

My experience has made me believe in people, in the power of being positive, and having a vision. People can do so much when you allow them to take ownership of their roles. It is my belief that people from all walks of life can do wonders and even surpass themselves once you provide them with a mindset to "believe in themselves"

Another factor is your leadership style. I would describe my leadership style as being based on trust and good people skills and, of course every leader has to have charisma, passion and commitment. Another crucial quality is vision, as a leader your role is not just to manage the day-to-day operations, you have to move forward with change and adapt. It will be the legacy that you leave behind.

Whatever you do, you have to follow your dream. You should seize every opportunity to learn, improve, and go above and beyond your limits to deliver excellence. Be an inspiration to other female leaders to thrive and maximize their potential and always remember empathy and compassion are pillars of success.



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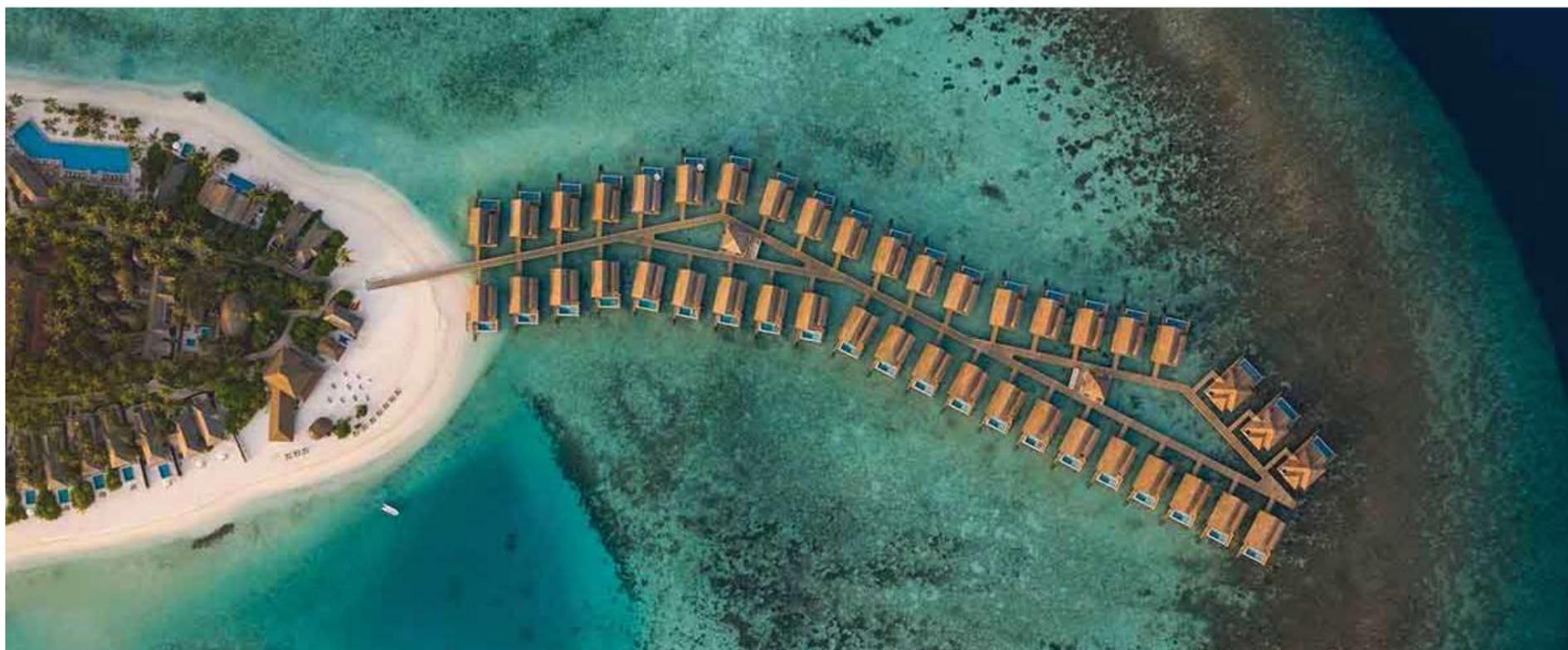
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NEW OPENINGS

Emerald Faarufushi Resort & Spa by The Emerald Collection Opens in Raa Atoll



The Emerald Collection announces the opening of its second Maldivian 5-star luxury property in Raa Atoll: Emerald Faarufushi Resort & Spa.

Immersed in lush greenery and surrounded by a 100-hectare private lagoon with natural coral reef, the new Emerald Faarufushi Resort & Spa is located on an intimate 7-hectare island, just 20 minutes by boat from the group's first property,

Emerald Maldives Resort & Spa. Both resorts are members of The Leading Hotels of the World, and offer The Emerald Collection's high-quality, signature Deluxe All-Inclusive service formula, as well as the opportunity for guests to island-hop in the Maldives, experiencing two luxury properties under the same brand.

Emerald Faarufushi encompasses 80 contemporary and independent villas, 5 restaurants offering international cuisine, 2 bars, the Emerald Spa with 8 treatment rooms in evocative treehouses, and a Sports Centre equipped with professional Technogym machines and equipment. The resort is also home to tennis and padel courts, and ensures a programme of fun yet educational activities for children and teens at the Dolphin Kids Club.

The signature experience is The Emerald Collection's Deluxe All-Inclusive formula, that allows guests to make the most of countless activities (both on water and land), à la carte gourmet dining, and an extensive selection of premium international wines, beers and spirits.

"We are thrilled to consolidate our presence in the Maldives with the opening of Emerald Faarufushi Resort & Spa", says Aldo Scarapicchia, Partner and Managing Director of The Emerald Collection.

"The new property will allow us to offer an integrated experience for international guests, with 80 additional accommodations between Beach and Water Villas, 70 of which have private pools. All our villas have been designed to comfortably host both couples and families with children. In fact our new resort is also home to the Dolphin Kids Club, a space where younger guests can really play, learn, have fun yet feel independent under the watchful eye of our multilingual professional educators.

The 'barefoot elegance' style of the resort is woven through every element of a stay, and promises excellent standards delivered hand-in-hand with a genuine sense of ease in the refined yet informal surroundings".

The group has also renewed its focus on promoting sustainable tourism by implementing green practices both operationally and for the guest experience at the 100% plastic free property. The Emerald Collection aims to leave as limited an impact on the destination as possible, with projects including a coral farming initiative, the consumption of Emerald Water bottled directly at the resort.

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EVENTS & AWARDS

7X7 Celebrations for Reethi Beach Resort at Hotel Asia International Culinary Challenge 2022

From the 9th to the 12th October 2022, Hotel Asia International Culinary Challenge took place concurrently adjacent to the Exhibition, with the endorsement from the World Association of Chefs' Societies (World chefs - WACS). The four days gastronomical-fest hosted over 700 competitors and 70 resorts competing from across the Maldives.

Reethi Beach Resort took part in 7 categories and proudly brought home 7 medals at this year's event, under the guidance of our Executive Chef Farish Mukhthar. The culinary team from Reethi Beach showcased exemplary skills and their passion towards forging flavorful cuisines that's assured to enhance our guests' gastronomical experiences, here at the property.

The four competing chefs and their awards are:

- Dishan Diluka, won the silver medal out of 179 participants in the Vegetarian Dish category.
- Dishan Diluka, won the bronze medal out of 247 participants in the Hot Cooking Fish Fillet category.
- Shehan Maduwantha, won the silver medal out of 260 participants in the Hot cooking Beef category.
- Shehan Maduwantha, won the bronze medal out of 247 participants in the Hot Cooking Fish Fillet category.
- Prabath Rathnayake, won the bronze medal out 322 participants in the Hot Cooking Poultry category.
- Prabath Rathnayake, won the bronze medal out of 228 participants in the Creative Salad category.



- Mangala Weerasinghe, won the bronze medal out of 194 participants in the Decorative Cake category.

Reethi Beach Resort welcomed its awardees from this years' event with a grand welcome put together

by the management and staff, for reassuring Reethi Beach's place in the Maldivian culinary world. We wish our chefs the very best and hope to see more from their passion for cooking, in the years to come.

Adaaran Select Meedhupparu Conferred with Multiple Awards at Raa Tourism Expo 2022



Adaaran Select Meedhupparu has been recognized for its outstanding contribution towards developing and shaping the Maldivian tourism industry at the Raa Tourism Expo 2022 Awards. Organized by the Raa Atoll Council to celebrate the individuals who have, over the years, contributed towards developing the industry through their influential spirit and hard work.

The Resort received an 'appreciation award' for its work over the years, it was also accoladed with the



Merit award under special recognition 'KOIMALA' award for contributions to the development of Tourism in Raa Atoll. The resort's continuous efforts were also applauded with the 'Best Corporate Social Responsibility Hotel' award.

Adaaran Select Meedhupparu team members were also recognized at the 'DHANDEHELU AWARD' for 20 years of service to the industry. Those appreciated thus were, Executive Housekeeper Ibrahim Rasheed, Human Resources Manager Cum Training Manager

Ahmed Anwar, Senior Chef De Partie Adulla Shareef, Restaurant & Bar Executive Mohamed Ali, Shop Supervisor Nadheem Abdul Latheef and Asst. Shop Supervisor Ali Nafiu.

Human Resources Manager Cum Training Manager Ahmed Anwar was also presented with a special recognition award 'Bathootha Award' for giving Maldives international recognition and exposure by achieving Stellier South Asia CSR Award in the year 2001.

Adaaran Select Meedhupparu takes great pride in the extraordinary success the Resort has achieved beyond financial profits. A testament to its continued efforts in human resource development and community outreach programmes, the recent wins at the Raa Tourism Expo 2022 Awards further reiterate the Resort's unstinted commitment to bettering lives and the planet through innovation, effective people management and customer satisfaction.

Heavenly Spa at Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort Recognized as 'Best Hotel Spa in the Indian Ocean' by Haute Grandeur Global Awards



The award came as recognition for the resort spa's offer that integrated service and attention to details, following Westin's commitment to wellness, allowing guests to replenish the mind and body with a personalized sensory experience.

The Haute Grandeur Global® Spa Awards recognize excellence in the provision of dependable, first-rate experiences in the luxury hospitality industry worldwide, through feedback from guests. The fair and transparent process guarantees unbiased results – a concept exclusive to

the Haute Grandeur Awards brand.

According to Brendan Corcoran, General Manager at The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort, "This recognition shows the effort of our wellness resort to bring the best version of each of our guests while they are staying with us. Nevertheless, I would like to appreciate all the guests who have shared their honest feedback and visited us throughout this year".

The awarded spa incorporates the advanced well-being approach featuring overwater treatment rooms, including a couple room treatment suite with a Jacuzzi and sweeping Indian Ocean views, which radiates a cozy and peaceful atmosphere. The treatments provided at The Heavenly Spa By Westin™ represent the resort's dedication to well-being and enable guests to disconnect from their daily routines while they are away.

The Heavenly Spa Manager Ika Khasanah says that "The holistic spa experience comes not only from the facilities,

treatments, and products, but from having the time and space to disconnect, separation from technology and as personal reflection and contemplation; something sought after by most of our guests when they come to a destination like Maldives".

The therapies provided at The Heavenly Spa by Westin™ represent the hotel's dedication to wellbeing and enable guests to rejuvenate both body and mind through a unique sensory experience. Its 90 minutes of Heavenly Sanctuary Ritual stays true to the Westin brand pillar of Well-Being: Feel Well. All types of skin can be treated, soothed, and nourished with the help of this magnificent ritual of nourishment and protection. A light body polish is used at the start of the process to exfoliate and refresh the skin. After taking an aromatherapy bath to revive one's energies, the routine is completed with a sumptuous full-body Heavenly massage.

The Westin Maldives Miriandhoo Resort website: Westin-maldives.com

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands Wins 'Best Resort' Award by Ahead Asia 2022

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands has been voted 'Best Resort' by AHEAD Asia 2022, celebrating the achievements of those shaping the hospitality industry across the region. With outstanding architectural merit, designed by Kerry Hill Architects, The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands has been commended by judges for its idyllic overwater escape in the North Malé Atoll. Standing with Asia's most compelling hospitality projects, demonstrating an array of original concepts debuted over the past year, the resort was celebrated for its stand-out design.

In The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands, Kerry Hill Architects created a design for the future, introducing the popular resort-landscape of the Maldives to a forward-looking environment in which to experience the destination. The master plan invites guests to explore a two-kilometre-long island chain along a single thread of circulation, from



total immersion in sea-scape through to its forest 'breather spaces'.

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives consists of three verdant islands and a fourth 'water' island, on the eastern rim of the Fari Islands Lagoon, forming part of the Fari Island chain of the North Malé Atoll. The simple geometric shape of the islands is a pragmatic response to oceanographic conditions, with the resort's spherical series of interconnected villas hovering over its

turquoise lagoon, representing the cyclical flow of island life.

The resort design equally masters the aesthetic challenge of retaining simplicity whilst integrating its structures and complex mechanical requirements. Its creation has challenged design expectations and allows a variety of exceptional guest experiences through its master planning. With sustainability taken into account in a holistic manner, the

resort's operating life will also ensure a low carbon footprint, existing within its natural elements.

Organized by industry-leading publication Sleeper, AHEAD comprises four regional annual award programmes from Asia, the Americas, MEA and Europe. The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands will go head to head in a global finale with regional winners in January 2023.



EVENTS & AWARDS

Six Senses Laamu Wins 2022 Skål Sustainable Tourism Award in Marine and Coastal Category



Six Senses Laamu has won the Marine & Coastal category of the 2022 Skål Sustainable Tourism Awards for the third time since 2018. The winners were announced on October 14 during the Opening Ceremony of the 81st Skål World Congress held in Kvarner, Croatia.

Founded in 1934, Skål International is one of the world's largest international networks of tourism professionals and an Affiliated Member of the World

Tourism Organization (UNWTO), whose mission is to promote reliable, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism. Following the United Nations' declaration in 2002 to highlight best practices globally, the Sustainable Tourism Awards were created to enhance visibility and recognize businesses for their efforts and initiatives within the sector globally. This year, the independent sustainability experts judged 50 entries from 23 countries.

Marteyne van Well, Regional General Manager, Maldives, says: "Being recognized for the third time by Skål International since 2018 is a big honor and achievement for our teams at Six Senses Laamu and the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI). It is rewarding to know that, although a small island in the middle of the Indian Ocean, our research, community outreach, and efforts have given us a voice and influential space in the global community."

Through innovation and continuous research, Six Senses Laamu has implemented projects on energy and water conservation, climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon footprint reduction, waste management, and recycling or repurposing materials. MUI incorporates resident resort marine biologists, in addition to partner NGOs, including the Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation, and the Olive Ridley Project. MUI's mission is to lead the tourism industry in the Maldives through meaningful marine conservation efforts based on research, education, and community outreach. Since winning its first Skål award in 2018, Six Senses Laamu and MUI have conducted 47,882 educational sessions with guests and certified 205 children through their Junior Marine Biology Program.



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Gilet de sauvetage. Porter!



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Colete salva-vidas. Use!



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Raaje TV

Villa Air launches new website as it celebrates 11th Anniversary



Villa Air celebrated its 11th Anniversary on 1st October with multiple events that took place throughout the day.

Villa Air distributed aircraft shaped cookies to all their guests who flew with them on 1st of October as a gift on the occasion.

An eventful Gala dinner was held at Villa College with over 90% of the staffs including villa air staffs from Maamigili airport and Dharavandhoo airport. The Gala Dinner was inaugurated by the company's Managing Director Mr. Abdulla Nashid with an opening speech. Mr. Nashid's speech was focused on how Villa Air has evolved over the years despite the many market, economic and political instabilities that existed and exists in its operation territories. He also provided a glimpse of the future plans for Villa Air.

Moreover, the staff gathering at the Gala Dinner saw recognising Villa Air's staffs and their valuable contribution to Villa Air. Staff recognition was categorized mainly into three areas. a) Staffs who have been with Villa Air over five years, b) Staffs who have been with Villa Air over 10 years, c) and

staffs who have been with Villa Air from the inception of the company.

Each and every staff of Villa Air was awarded with an aircraft model in Villa Air's livery.

The event also saw Villa Air launching its new website – www.villaair.aero. The new website will facilitate Villa Air's guests to book its services in hassle-free ways with loads of information that the general public can find about the 11-year-old airline.

A thanking speech was delivered by Villa Air's Strategic Planning and Corporate Communication Manager, Mr. Mohamed Rishan which mainly focused on Villa Group's chairman Honorable Qasim Ibrahim, Villa Group's Chief Executive officer Mr. Ibrahim Siyad Qasim, Villa Air's Managing Director Mr. Abdulla Nashid and most importantly for all the staffs for their excellent determinations and contribution to the company over the years.

The event was made more memorable with a lucky draw which awarded to 8 lucky winners to spend 2 nights' holiday at some selective luxury tourism establishments in the Maldives including resorts



and guesthouses. The event was concluded with a refreshment and Entertainment.

The event was a big success with most of Villa Air staff having the opportunity to interact with each other and our senior management team.

Villa Air also distributed cakes and an aircraft model in Villa Air's livery to all its main stakeholders including MACL, AveSec, DASA, MMPRC, Tourism Ministry, Maldivian, Manta Air, TMA, Air Traffic Control Service and many more.



IN THE NEWS

Bison Maldives – 20 Years of Trust and Credence



On October 24, 2002, a company that would revolutionize several sectors in the Maldives was established. Bison Maldives is proud to celebrate 20 years of success and eminence.

With humble beginnings, Bison Maldives entered the construction scene by undertaking small projects. But over the years, the company has rapidly diversified into several different businesses, touching the lives of the Maldivians every day.

In the past two decades, Bison Maldives has thrived and expanded into various business sectors including resort construction, aluminum and glass fabrication (Bison Trading), food supplies (Bison Food Supplies), hardware retail, tour operation (Bison Travel Maldives), fashion (Hameedia), and guesthouse operation (Reveries Maldives).

Bison Maldives takes pride in the superior work they have done in the avenue of resort construction. Its excellence in the field are notably visible in the



infrastructures of various luxury resort properties operated in the Maldives such as Constance Halaveli, COCOON Maldives, You&Me by COCOON, OBLU Select Sangeli and other properties by Atmosphere Hotels and Resorts, and Bathala Resort. They are also currently working on upcoming luxury Maldivian properties including Kassarfaru Lagoon and Aanugandu Island Resort.

Further, Bison takes pride in noting its appointment as the construction partner for the first homes in the Maldives Floating City by Dutch Docklands Maldives in a Kaafu Atoll lagoon accessible via a five-minute speedboat ride from the capital Malé City. Bison Maldives has already developed the first mock-up unit of the floating city, allowing future tenants of the upcoming modern and unparalleled Maldivian township to observe and imagine a new lifestyle they would accustom.

Bison Maldives is currently involved with major resort developments in Asia and Africa.



“We are proud of our footprint of best-practices in every venture we involve with. The various national and international accolades we acquired are testaments to our ethos of empowering our team members and partners, and abiding by our core values of trust, respect and innovations.”

Bison Maldives is the recipient of:

- President's Tourism Gold Award 2022
- Corporate Maldives GOLD 100 (2016-2021)
- Maldives Travel Awards by MATATO
- South Asian Travel Awards (SATA)
- Maldives Business Awards 2018

Further, Bison Maldives' Chairman and Managing Director Mr. Abdul Majeed was honored with the Corporate Maldives Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021.

Starting its third decade in service, Bison Maldives is committed to meticulous work and continuing to extend its diverse range of services with confidence and credence.

EU Support for a Resilient Recovery of SME Tourism Industry in the Maldives Extends Application Deadline

The European Union (EU) has provided EUR 2 million as grant aid for tourism sector MSMEs to recover from COVID-19 crisis, with the objective of enabling a more resilient and a diversified economy in the Maldives. The “EU Support for a Resilient Recovery of SME Tourism Industry in the Maldives” project is dedicated towards providing grant aids to local tourism businesses specifically focusing on local guesthouses and safari vessels. A total of MVR 14.2 million has been disbursed to 379 eligible establishments to date.

The project has dedicated EUR 1,400,000 for a direct transfer component while EUR 600,000 will be allocated towards technical assistance which will be directed to training programs for beneficiaries aimed at high impact areas such as improving business operations, financial management, sustainable waste management and creating access to international markets.

Furthermore, the technical assistance component will also support set-up of an OTA system which will act as a strategically important tool that is expected



to play a crucial role in retaining value created by the industry and promoting growth of tourism related MSMEs.

The application deadline for the EU grants has been

extended till February 23, 2023, 1400 hrs. local time. To apply and learn more about this project, visit the website: <https://eusupport.mfmc.mv/>.

IN THE NEWS

Ministry of Tourism in Collaboration with PHSA USA and Atoll's World Launches Instructor Training to Support Divers with Special Needs in Maldives



Maldives is one of the best diving places on earth. What's better is providing inclusivity and accessibility for the differently abled persons and tourists visiting to join recreational scuba diving and snorkeling activities while at this pristine scuba diving ocean tourism destination.

On October 12, 2022, the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with PHSA USA and Atoll's World launched the instructor training to support Divers with special needs in Maldives.

This was headed by Minister of Tourism Dr. Abdulla Mausoom who launched Poseidon Handicap Scuba Adventures training of diving instructors to make Maldives a country to support and implement differently abled people-friendly tourism. As per tourism Minister the ministry will be putting all efforts to implement safety, travel-friendly and innovative means for an overall experience for the physically challenged tourist.

The ceremony guest of honors includes Minister of Environment & Technology Minister Ms. Aminath

Shauna, Minister of Higher Education Minister Dr. Ibrahim Hassan along with Minister of State for Gender, Family and Social Services Ms. Ifham Hussain.

Tourism Minister Specially highlighted the presence of MADDO (Maldives Alliance of Dive Operators) President Dr. Sham'aa A. Hameed at the event.

High Level executives from organisations such as MATI, NBAM, NGAM, MATATO and ATA was present at the event.

For the very first time this program with Dive Centres around the Maldives is conducted to ensure Dive Instructors and professionals welcome a whole new segment of the differently abled community of the travel community to visit Maldives to enjoy ocean tourism to the fullest. The programs are holistic including ocean literacy and sessions on sustainable tourism as well.

Outlined by Mark Rausch CEO of PHSA USA, "Education and information of the benefits of health

and social well-being of recreational scuba diving is important to assist the differently-abled community to join in accessible activities while enjoying the ocean. We conduct an intense course to equip the divers to get trained with theory classes and open water modules followed by examinations to certify them to welcome differently-abled persons to diving."

Suresh Dissnayake, AVP Sales and Marketing at Adaaran Resorts says "We are glad to collaborate and welcome the differently abled people community engagement programs in the Maldives, to promote inclusivity and accessibility into our hospitality industry."

The Atolls World has always been a leader in reaching out to community causes which drive not only sustainable development but accessibility in the tourism industry, said Bassam Adam the MD (Atolls World and Authentica 360). Furthermore, he stressed out on the fact that this is not only about Atolls World, this is a much bigger cause and all stakeholders in the industry need to work together to make Maldives more inclusive!

MACL Concludes 3rd Basic ATC Training Course



Maldives Airports Company Limited (MACL) has concluded the 3rd batch of Basic Air Traffic Controllers training course.

A total of 9 air traffic controllers were trained at the 8-week long course which was held from August 21 to October 13, 2022. All the participants of the course were new members of the Air Traffic Center. (ATC).

The objective of the training is to provide the required theoretical knowledge to new recruits of Air Traffic Services and prepare them for ATC rating as this basic ATC course is a prerequisite for ATC rating training.

The course was facilitated by Maldivian trainers at ATC and the course was designed as per the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

The trained staff will be deployed to work at Maldives Air traffic control center, Air traffic control tower at Velana International Airport and other regional airports. Maldives Airports company manages all the Air traffic control towers of all regional airports.

MACL regularly conducts training and capacity-building programs to enhance the knowledge and training of air traffic control officers.

BON APPÉTIT

A marriage between Italy & Maldives

(Grilled job fish | Arborio | turmeric | coconut | kulhafila)



"I have always been fond of making risottos and the reason is quite simple as it requires skills and patience. This dish was inspired from local delicacies like "Masbaiy and Kirugarudhiya"

Mohamed Adil, head chef at Salt cafe & restaurant, male', was born and raised in the Maldives. He is a hands-on, passion-driven chef with over 11 years of culinary experience in the creation of healthy, delicious culinary masterpieces in world-class hotels. Prior to Salt cafe & restaurant Chef Adil worked at Dhigali Maldives, Faarafushi, Vakkaru Maldives and Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Landaa Giraavaru.

INGREDIENTS:

To prepare Risotto

- 2 tbsp corn oil
- 35 chopped onion
- 10gm chopped garlic
- To preference habanero Chili
- 1gm dry chili
- 3 inch Pandan leaves
- 2gm whole black pepper
- 30gm dry tuna (valhomas)
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 65gm Arborio rice
- 50gm fermented toddy
- 800ml Garudiya (clear tuna broth)
- 3 tbsp thick coconut milk (freshly squeezed)
- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp parmesan cheese

To prepare fish

- 120gm green job fish fillet
- 2gm salt
- 1gm black pepper
- 1/2 lime juice
- 2 tsp lonumirus (chili paste)

To prepare coconut cream

- 30gm sliced onion
- To preference habanero Chili
- 1gm chopped curry leaves
- 2 tsp Rihaakuru
- 1/2 lime juice
- To taste salt
- To taste black pepper
- 2 tbsp coconut powder
- 60ml cooking cream

Garnishes

- Kulhafila (Launaea sarmentosa)
- Red veined sorrel

METHOD:

To prepare risotto

- Add the garudiya to a medium pot and bring to a boil over high heat. Once the stock is boiling, reduce the heat to low or remove the pan from the heat and keep nearby.
- Heat the oil in a wide, tall pot over medium heat. Once the oil begins to shimmer, add the onions and cook, stirring frequently, until translucent.
- Add the garlic, pandan and chili's. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the garlic have cooked down.
- Add the dry tuna, turmeric, salt, and pepper, stir, and cook for 1 minute, until the garlic is aromatic.
- Add the rice and stir until fully coated in the onion mixture. Let the rice toast for 1-2 minutes, until fragrant.
- Add the fermented toddy and cook until it has evaporated, stirring occasionally.
- Add 1 cup (240 ml) of the hot stock and stir to combine. Cook, stirring frequently, until the stock is fully absorbed.
- Continue to add the stock, 1/2 cup (120 ml) at a time, stirring continuously, until the broth is fully absorbed, for 15-20 minutes. Depending on how fast the rice cooks, there may be leftover stock.
- Once the rice is al dente, remove from the heat. Add the coconut cream, butter, Parmesan and stir to combine.

To prepare the fish

- Season the fish fillet with salt, pepper, lime juice and lonumirus.
- Keep a side till you are half way through cooking risotto.
- Grill the skin side first with a gentle pressure to maintain the fish flat. Once the skin becomes little golden turn the fish and cook properly.

To prepare the coconut cream

- In a mixing bowl, add onion, chili, lime, curry leaves, salt, pepper and Rihaakuru.
- Nicely maserate them till all the onion juice and everything else is combined.
- Strain the liquid and add coconut milk powder and cream.
- Nicely whip the mixture and put them in a squeezy, keep aside till use.

For Plating

- Add the risotto in the plate, place the fish in the center and using a squeezy bottle put 5 coconut cream dots and garnish with kulhafila and sorrel.

Enjoy!



Courtesy of
Executive Chef
Mohamed Adil
Salt Café & Restaurant



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Frankly Speaking

In July 2022, the Finance Ministry along with the Tourism Ministry officials met with industry stakeholders MATI, MATATO, NBAM, NHGAM, ATA, MAYA etc. to share information on the increment of taxes in early 2023, in spite of not having an exact date of implementation. These meetings shed light on the proposed GST increments from 6% to 8% and TGST from 12% to 14% - a total increment of 2% from both the taxes. Many across the industry continue expressing their concerns on tax increment and advising authorities of the challenges in keeping up with competitive markets. What is your take on the matter?



Yoosuf Riffath
President
Association of Travel Agents, Maldives

I agree with the increase of tax. 2% of an increase is nothing. Most of the resorts reduce their rate from 20% to 55 % off throughout the year. Even our neighboring countries still charge higher taxes from 18% upto 30% taxes.



Abdulla Salih
Managing Director
Damas

I estimate that an average household will have an average 2500 rf/month because of the 2% increase in GST. GST being a regressive tax, the people who get less salary will feel the pinch more, the rich will not notice it. The GST increase is the last thing that should happen.



Mohamed Nasheed
President
Maldives Association of Yacht Agents (MAYA)

This is a serious concern which looks inevitable from how things are going right now, unless it is with a determined collaboration from the industry.



Shaaz Waleed
Vice President
Maldives Association of Travel Agents & Tour Operators (Matato)

Without considering the current situation of the world, decisions made on tax increment are a step towards breaking the main income sector. These steps by the government will economically make the ordinary peoples way of life unstable. Some statements here are things which I do not wish to make, but it's the sad reality. We all must think well and wise prior to concluding any decision, as tourism is a fragile business and any harm will lose a lot of jobs and affect the ordinary within the chain.



Ahmed Arshad
Director
Avia Maldives

Personally I don't think increasing the TGST from 12% to 14% has a negative effect on the industry. As a developing nation, our government also needs an extra income generated by the incrementation of TGST and GST. But one concern I have is the little amount of leeway given by the government before trying to implement the revised tax amounts. Additionally, destinations which can be described in the same category as the Maldives do have VAT of around 10-15% which means we are still in line with other destinations.



Mohamed Ali
Vice President
Association of Travel Agents, Maldives

While taxation is the main component of government income, timing is very important when it comes to changes in taxation. I like to believe, this is not the right time to make any changes to the current rate of TGST or GST. It certainly will not achieve what the government is aiming to achieve with this increment.

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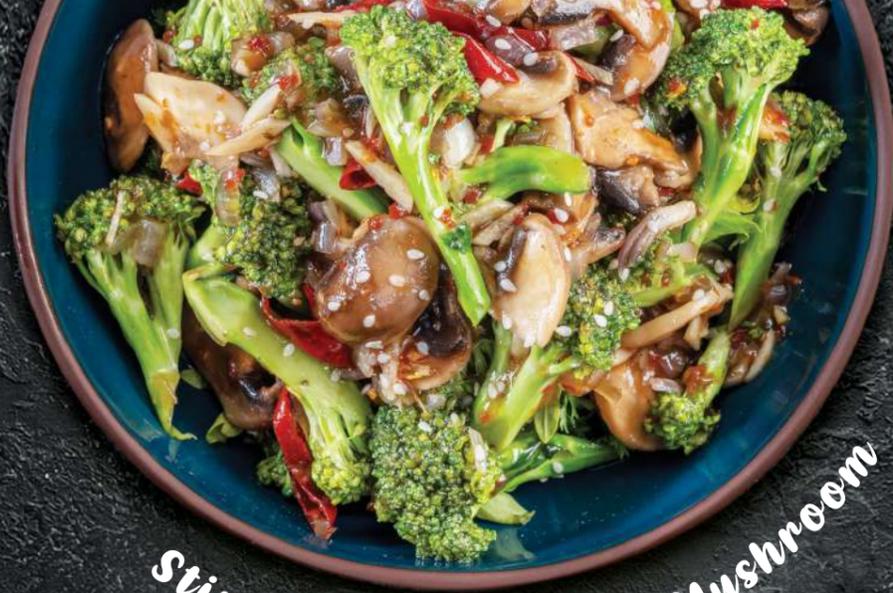
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