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travel news

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with

MOHAMED HALEEM

Managing Director, D Blue Pvt Ltd

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Dear Readers,

Isn't it incredibly amazing to see the Maldives tourism industry gone from non-existent only five decades ago, to leapfrog the competition and be regarded as truly world-class today.

Don't take our word for it. Trust instead the 120,000 visitors who put their faith into the destination during the first 23 days of 2023. Has the Maldives' tourism scene peaked? Far from it, if you do the math, a total of 122,186 tourists visited in the past 23 days, which is an increase of 27,000 when compared to the same period last year. In 2022, only 94,618 tourist arrivals were recorded in the first 23 days. Yes, Maldives' tourism growth is that of a rising tide, and it's taking various stakeholders along with it.

Over the last few months, we've witnessed various newfangled drivers of tourism emerge — if 2021 was about revenge travel, this year has everyone jumping onto the 'bleisure' bandwagon.

We are also excited for the 7th edition of the South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) as with over 15 international and government agency endorsements, SATA has opened for nominations with revamped categories, in addition to Visitors Choice Awards and Special Recognitions for the year 2023.

In this issue's exclusive interview, we sat with Mohamed Haleem or "Haleembe" as better known by his friends and peers - a pioneer of the Maldives' Marine industry who has been catering to a wide segment of the industry dealing with over 50 exclusive brands through his popular outlets ranging from, "D Blue Marine", "Lizzy" and "Honda Marine". He shared us his journey, from his humble origins to his visions for the future of his business.

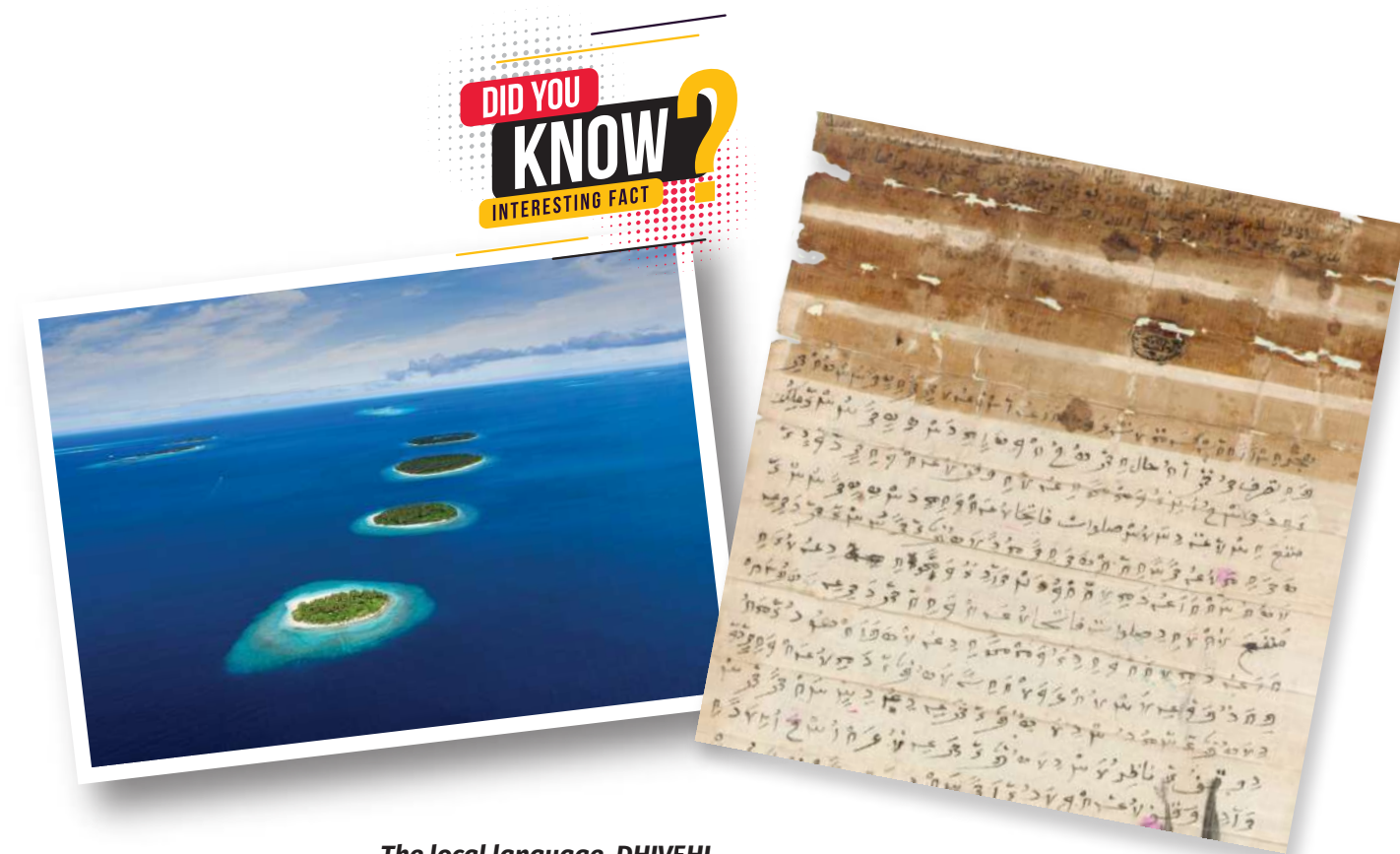
In this month's Bon Appétit section, we bring you a broth-based seafood soup, brimming with rich taste of the local Kalhu Odi Restaurant menu. The Farumahu Suruvaa by Demi Chef de Parte Shan Zuhury, Kalhu Odi Restaurant, is made from Sashimi Grade seafood which ensures the best of quality, odor, and taste.

As always, our 'Frankly Speaking' takes a look at all the angles from expert points of view. On page 18, we have their say on the outcome of welcoming back Chinese tourists with 'arms wide open' as the key market returns for the first time since March 2020 without a series of strict screening procedures.

We trust you will enjoy an interesting and informative read.

Until next issue,

The Islandchief Team



The local language, DHIVEHI

Dhivehi, the enchanting language of the Maldives, speaks of its rich heritage and cultural influences. Rooted in Indo-Iranian Sanskrit, it shares similarities with Sinhalese of Sri Lanka and other Indian dialects. Though, it's now evolved to a point where mutual intelligibility is a rarity. Written in the mesmerizing Thaana script and read from right to left, like the Arabic languages, it's a unique experience to unravel its mysteries. The archipelago's dispersed nature has led to variations in dialects, with the southernmost atolls showcasing the most distinct variations. Fun fact, the locals of Maldives are called Dhivehin, stemming from the Indian word 'deevi' meaning island, adding to the language's charm.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

President of Maldives and External Affairs Minister of India Inaugurate Hanimaadhoo International Airport Redevelopment Project

Hanimaadhoo International Airport expansion project has been inaugurated by HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih and the Minister of External Affairs of the Republic of India, Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, during a special ceremony held at Hanimaadhoo Island.

Addressing the function, HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih stated that the region would see economic prosperity by completing the airport expansion project. He added that it would increase tourism facilities, including guesthouses and city hotels, drive job creation in the northern atolls, and transform the region into an economic hub.

The historic project is the largest and most significant infrastructure project initiated outside the Malé region. Funded through an MVR2.1 billion loan from the Exim Bank of India, the project is contracted to India-based firm JMC Projects.

The project will see the development of a new 2,460-meter runway and facilities to cater to large aircraft. The new terminal is designed to accommodate 1.3 million passengers annually. Speaking about the revolutionary developmental progress spearheaded by the administration, HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih described the developmental project as well-planned, studied and executed. He added that numerous developmental projects are currently underway across the country, and while many have been completed, 41 islands in the northern region have already been connected via the RTL high-speed ferry service. Projects to develop water and sewerage networks in all inhabited islands are also progressing.

The President also highlighted airport development projects progressing



across the country. While Hoarafushi Airport and Faresmaathoda Airport projects have been completed, HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih noted that the administration had mobilized resources for the Maafaru International Airport project. He also announced that the administration had secured funds for airport projects in Bilehfahi in the Shaviyani Atoll, Thulhaadhoo Island in the Baa Atoll and Vilufushi Island in the Thaa Atoll.

President also noted that numerous



projects were being carried out across the country with assistance from the government of India and described the neighbor as an important development partner for the Maldives. The agreement to develop the Felivaru Cold Storage Complex was also signed as part of the ceremony.

Cabinet Ministers, Senior Government Officials and Members of Parliament joined the President and Dr Jaishankar at the function.



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ACROSS THE SKIES

Qatar Airways and Air Serbia Sign Comprehensive Codeshare Agreement



Qatar Airways has signed a comprehensive codeshare agreement with Air Serbia, the flag carrier of Serbia, allowing passengers seamless travel to over 40 destinations when traveling on each other's networks effective February 1, 2023.

Qatar Airways currently operates five weekly flights between its hub in Doha, Qatar and Belgrade, the Serbian capital. The codeshare agreement opens up a host of new exciting destinations for its passengers to use a single booking to continue their journey to European countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Slovenia among others served by Air Serbia.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "This partnership will allow us to expand our footprint in the Central and Eastern European markets where we are looking forward to offering additional travel choices for our customers. We are extremely proud to unveil this partnership with Air Serbia, the leading airline in this region since it was founded in 1927 and we look forward to working effortlessly together."

From its hub at Belgrade Nikola Tesla Airport, Air Serbia serves more than 70 destinations in Europe, the Mediterranean, North America, Asia and Africa. As a part of this collaboration, Air Serbia will add its marketing code on Qatar Airways direct flights between Belgrade and Doha, as well as various points beyond Doha including Adelaide, Baku, Brisbane, Tbilisi, Ho-Chi-Minh City, Hong Kong,

Melbourne, Muscat, Nairobi, Perth, Seychelles, Singapore and Sydney. Additionally, subject to obtaining all necessary government approvals and once all conditions are fulfilled, Air Serbia plans to extend its coverage to Bangkok, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Phuket, Seoul, Tokyo, Yerevan, Zanzibar and many more.

Air Serbia, Chief Executive Officer, Jiří Marek, said: "It is our great pleasure to announce the codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways, known for its global network of destinations and premium service. We are joining forces to provide passengers with new connection opportunities and access to unique destinations from both networks. Through this cooperation, we believe that we will be able to jointly bring to Serbia more traffic and opportunities for trade and tourism, as well as to increase the traffic between the two hubs."

Qatar Airways and Air Serbia have a long standing interline cooperation and the signing marks a milestone in the mutual commitment of both airlines to improving customer experience. Passengers can book their travel with both airlines, through online travel agencies as well as with local travel agents.

A multiple award-winning airline, Qatar Airways was recently announced as the 'Airline of the Year' at the 2022 World Airline Awards, managed by the international air transport rating organization, Skytrax. The airline continues to be synonymous with excellence having won the main prize for an

unprecedented seventh time (2011, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021 and 2022), while also being named 'World's Best Business Class', 'World's Best Business Class Lounge Dining' and 'Best Airline in the Middle East'.

Qatar Airways currently flies to more than 150 destinations worldwide, connecting through its Doha hub, Hamad International Airport, currently named the "Best Airport in the World" by Skytrax World Airport Awards 2022.

About Air Serbia

The national airline of the Republic of Serbia, has been operating under the name Air Serbia since October 2013, when it changed its name and identity, introducing new business concepts and services throughout its growing network. It is the successor of the first airline company in this area - Aeroput, which was founded in June 1927. From then until today, Air Serbia has been among the leaders of civil aviation and since 1961 a member of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Air Serbia flies to more than 70 scheduled and charter destinations in Europe, the Mediterranean, North America, Asia and Africa, both in passenger and cargo traffic.

Air Serbia plays a key role in the development of aviation in Serbia, and the Serbian travel and tourism industry. The company's priority is to provide exceptional quality service for passengers.

IN A NUTSHELL

The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands Announces Star-Studded Line-Up of Memorable Experiences



The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands announces an exhilarating line-up of bespoke guest experiences through personalized encounters with masters of crafts and craftsmanship that create deeply meaningful and memorable experiences. Throughout 2023, The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands will take guests on curated culinary journeys with Michelin-starred Chefs and artisanal gastronomic maven, partake in exhilarating Behind the Bar experiences with award-winning bartenders from around the world, discover the essence of balance at The Ritz-Carlton Spa through wellness retreats and enrich each stay with impactful conservation programmes.

This January 27th to 31st, Artist Partner, Louis-Nicolas Darbon who has exhibited his work all over the world from London to Tokyo, collaborates with The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, Fari Islands in a special guest appearance to unveil a bespoke painting inspired by the resort’s architecture and design. Adding to the resort’s stunning art collection, Darbon, a London-based French artist and jet-setter thriving off the visual stimulation he attains while exploring new and familiar locales, will paint the iconic Kerry Hill villas in his signature vibrant and liberating style.

Complementing our week of exploration with art and design, Leticia Stock – First Artist of The Royal Ballet in London will perform an exclusive for-guests-only recital at sunrise at the stunning Mystique Garden and sunset at EAU Bar during the resort’s Defining Moment. Stock



began dancing at the age of three and has appeared in The Nutcracker, The Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake, Giselle and most recently on Ed Sheeran’s live Tik Tok performance that drew over 5.5 million unique viewers.

From February 14th – 18th Chef Patron Tom Sellers of London’s two-Michelin-starred Restaurant Story, will curate an exclusive pop-up at Beach Shack taking guests on an exquisite 6-course literary-inspired menu. Guests will also be treated to an evening with Sellers as he reads from his first book, ‘A Kind of Love Story’ - a behind-the-scenes story about life in a world-renowned Michelin-starred restaurant. It will be an evening to celebrate the visionary mind of one of the most original chefs of our time, and discover the truth behind the tales of his brilliant food. Having honed his craft alongside culinary greats such as Tom Aikens, Thomas Keller, Rene Redzepi and more, Sellers’ Restaurant Story develops an ever-changing seasonal tasting menu. Incorporating characterful, playful and ingredient-led philosophy that breaks convention and merges fine dining with forward-thinking, casual restaurant culture, Tom Sellers’ ‘a personal journey through food’ concept, has won him huge critical and public acclaim.

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IN A NUTSHELL

Anantara Veli Maldives Resort Reopens with a Fresh, Wellness-Centric Identity



Offering a reimagined adult-only experience set amid crystalline lagoon waters, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort reopened on December 1, 2022 following nine months of extensive renovations. With revamped accommodations, including the introduction of stylish new Beach Pool Villas, a new Villa Host service for all guests, newly redesigned restaurants and a hammam added to the wellness-focused spa, the Maldivian playground is all set to cradle couples into vacation mode.

Set on a stunning natural island in the South Malé Atoll, surrounded by a pristine lagoon, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort boasts an unspoiled setting that inspired New York-based designer Yuji Yamazaki to develop a renovation concept rooted in nature and wellness. To keep guests at one with the environment while giving them a sense of intimate seclusion, Yamazaki added an extra layer of privacy to the entire stay experience – from self-sufficient villa and spa designs to restaurants infused with modern takes on no-walls tropical living.

The resort's brand-new Beach Pool Villas are set directly on soft white sands and come with sliding glass doors that open onto a private pool flanked by a cushioned daybed, an open-air living and dining space, and an island-style bedroom surrounded by tropical foliage. The most exclusive of Anantara Veli's villa categories, each of the six new Beach Pool Villas offers 148 square meters of luxurious space, with direct beach access and the utmost privacy.

Over water villas at the resort are a study in serene functionality. Both those with and without pools have been fully renovated in traditional-meets-contemporary tropical style, using a natural palette of wood and stone, cool fabrics and rattan finishes and the latest in high-tech comforts. With cool powder tones and organic patterns borrowed from nature, many of these private cocoons have a standalone tub and outdoor rainfall showers. The over water villa offering at Anantara Veli has been elevated with the addition of six brand-new

Deluxe Over Water Pool Villas, with enhanced interiors, a larger private pool and deck and an over water hammock to gaze at the glimmering waters beneath by day and the stars by night.

The relaunch of Anantara Veli also sees the introduction of a new wellness concept which allows guests to book a personalized Wellness Villa experience. Enhanced with light, sound and scent therapy that changes the ambience from day to night, the villa comes with Ayurvedic spa amenities, an earthing mat for meditation, and a wellness minibar with herbal teas, healthy shakes and wholefood snacks. All stays in a Wellness Villa include a wellness consultation upon arrival, daily yoga or personal training session, a healthy cooking class, and 20% savings on treatments at Balance Wellness by Anantara.

Offering multi-day wellness retreats alongside consultations with the resident naturopath and nutritionist, personal trainer, yoga and lifestyle coach, Balance Wellness by Anantara is an oasis of healing in the tropical heart of the resort. Surrounded by nature, the spa goes beyond the traditional spa experience with wellness options ranging from Ayurvedic and holistic treatments, to the latest in epigenetics, sound healing and IV therapies. The brand new Moroccan hammam offers authentic treatments using marocMaroc products, while its facial and body therapies use exclusive skincare brand 111Skin of Harley Street, London. Balance Wellness by Anantara features five treatment suites, a nail salon, a medical spa, Shirodhara treatment bed, steam room and sauna, indoor and outdoor showers, and a relaxation garden with hot and cold plunge pools.

With numerous dining venues, guests can enjoy the finest cuisines from across the globe while learning about old and new world wines from the resort's Wine Guru. Cumin offers dishes from Sri Lanka, India and Maldives, while the stylishly refurbished Origami serves

modern Japanese fare including teppanyaki and robatayaki. Poolside, Dhoni Bar specializes in Mediterranean tapas, with coffee and smoothies by day and Champagne and signature cocktails after dark.

Poised over water on the edge of a lagoon and outer reef, Baan Huraa delights with coconut curries from Thailand's southern provinces and spicy dishes from the north. On neighboring sister island Anantara Dhigu Maldives Resort, Sea.Fire.Salt serves expertly grilled meats and fresh fish and seafood from the local waters, whilst Aqua delivers wholesome Italian fare. Breakfast is served a la carte overlooking the ocean at Cumin, with a variety of wellness options included on the menu. Guests also have the freedom to dine outside the restaurants thanks to Anantara's signature Dining by Design experience with a private chef, butler and sommelier.

Whether seeking serenity or reconnection, travelers will find a wide array of water- and land-based activities. Guests can enjoy the thrills of underwater discovery with Aquafanatics, the resort's resident watersports partner, catch a wave during the surf season with resident experts Tropicsurf, and join the resort in its habitat preservation efforts by adopting a coral as part of Anantara's sustainability programme with the resident marine biologist.

On land, there is a fully-equipped fitness center, in addition to an outdoor gym, a tennis court and dedicated spaces for volleyball, badminton, table tennis, chess and Pétanque. Guests can also book fitness sessions with the personal trainer or try their hand in the new boxing ring. Holidaymakers looking for quieter pursuits can book a Spice Spoons cooking class, meditate or practice yoga at the ocean-facing pavilion, or lounge by the infinity-edge swimming pool.

Located 21 kilometers south of Velana International Airport, Anantara Veli Maldives Resort is only 30 minutes by speedboat, available 24 hours a day.

IN A NUTSHELL

Amilla Maldives Resort Gets Solar Energy Boost



With 2,700 hours of sunshine per year, the Maldives is the perfect place for solar energy. Since there are no electrical cables running between islands, each island has to have its own self-sufficient energy supply. Normally that means diesel generators, which are expensive and

polluting. But now the eco-friendly five-star resort, Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences, has received a boost to its sustainability efforts with the installation of new solar panels. As an EarthCheck Silver certificate holder for the second year running -

as well as a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World's elite 'Considerate Collection' (a benchmark of luxury sustainability), Amilla Maldives already met the highest sustainability standards in the hotel industry. But the arrival of the new solar panels will take Amilla's eco-efforts to the next level. The solar panels are currently being installed on the rooftops of the resort's 'Heart of House' (staff area). They will go into service in March 2023, and are expected to generate 950,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, equivalent to about 250,000 liters of diesel. This means the resort will dramatically reduce its reliance on diesel and will be even more sustainable than ever. General Manager of Amilla Maldives Resort and Residences, Jason Kruse,

said: "Sustainability is in our DNA. It's not just something we dip into every now and then, it's part of our daily lives and in every decision we make. "We are all so excited to have the support of SWIMSOL to help us undertake this solar initiative, and we are set to make more announcements about the next steps in our sustainability programme in the near future". Amilla currently has no less than 30 sustainability initiatives in motion, including an onsite recycling plant and a coconut oil processing machine. The extensive jungle and abundance of undeveloped spaces has even drawn rare long tailed tropicbirds to nest on the island - a species that normally only nests on uninhabited islands. Amilla Maldives is working closely with conservationists to ensure their protection.



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IN A NUTSHELL

You & Me Maldives Presents Water Slide Feature

You & Me Maldives by The Cocoon Collection, an exclusive adults-only resort which has been established as a favorite destination for travelers looking for a chic retreat, adds an exciting enhancement to the accommodation.

The enhancement entailed a remodel of some of the villas with the installation of an attached water slide from the terrace right into the turquoise lagoon. This additional feature is now available in the You & Me Suite and all the ten units of the resort's Aqua Suites. These water villas adopt rustic-chic design with polished wooden floors, a bathroom with rain shower and a couple's bath tub, a king-sized bed overlooking the ocean, large outdoor deck to relax and

sunbathe with lagoon access and breathtaking sunrise views.

The new feature is launched concurrently with the celebration of the latest accolades received by You & Me Maldives as the 2022 Travelers' Choice Award Winner. "We are profoundly proud to receive this accolade, earned from consistent great reviews which demonstrated our commitment to hospitality excellence. Under the same spirit, the new feature shows that we will never stop innovating and evolving to always exceed expectations," said Ahmed Jihad (Jay), the Corporate General Manager.

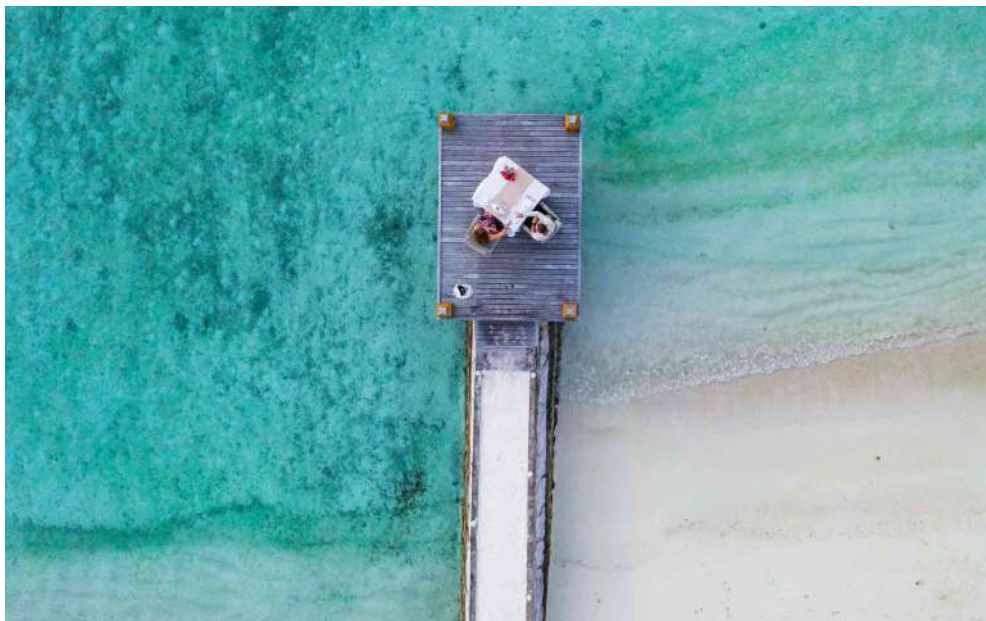
Guests who have already booked these categories can enjoy this special



surprise. Those who have not, can now book our You & Me Suite or Aqua Suite with Slide. With the newly-installed water slide, guests can enjoy their own

private waterpark. An attribute of a memorable stay at our iconic resort," added Mohammed Imthiyaz (Inthi), the Resort Manager.

Romance is in the Air at Kandooma Maldives this February with the Launch of 100-Candle Dinner



Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives has reimagined Valentine's Day and will unveil a new 100-Candle Dinner as part of their Month of Love this February.

St Valentine's Day is celebrated around the world on February 14. Mark Eletr, General Manager, Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives explains that it was a brainstorming with the Resort's marketing team that led to reimagining the special occasion by extending celebrations to the entire month of February.

"As a one island, one resort experience here in the Maldives we are the epitome of romance. Often when Valentine's day falls mid-week many people simply cannot do something special to mark the occasion due to family and work commitments. We thought why not make the entire

month all about couples, romance and togetherness," Kandooma's Month of Love celebrates romance with a focus on shared experiences, exquisite dining and creating memories. "There is also the potential for us to collaborate with our guests to create really romantic surprises and even marriage proposals," explains Mark.

"We've arranged everything from the 'Will you marry me?' sign board underwater for a scuba diving proposal to write the words in the sand on the beach so it can be seen from a tandem Parasail or in candles for a moonlight beach walk. If you can dream it up, we will do our best to make it happen," he said.

The most nerve-racking one for him, and he's seen many proposals go off without a hitch, is the diamond in the

Champagne glass.

"Diamond rings on the bottom of pools are right up there as proposals which can go wrong, but perhaps the most stressful is when the ring is hidden in food or in a glass of bubbles and the intended scoffs the food in a gulp or downs the bubbles so quickly they miss it. It's never happened, but could you imagine?"

Mark says trips to a private sandbank for an intimate dinner or picnic, and Champagne Catamaran sunset cruises are favorites at Kandooma. "New for 2023 is our 100-Candle Dinner in a secret location on the island. It is perfect to pop the question, celebrate a special milestone or just enjoy the ultimate in romantic dining," he says.

The new 100-Candle Dinner for 2023 is priced at US \$495++ per couple and includes a 6-course set menu thoughtfully prepared to delight and each course is paired with a glass of wine (or soft option). Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives is an all-villa resort and the favored room type among couples is the Over Water Villa.

"The overwater villas were made famous around the world by the Maldives and they are very popular. Many guests choose not to leave their villas and for them we can offer special in-villa dining experiences from breakfast on the deck to a private

dinner. There really are many options," Mark explains that most guests take advantage of the Couples treatments available in the purpose-built Spa villa with its own private pool, oversized tub and treatment zones.

"Kandooma Spa by COMO Shambhala is in high demand with our guests, particularly couples. I would recommend anyone keen, pre-book when they make their reservation and definitely take advantage of the couples' villa facilities and perhaps consider taking a Couples Massage class so you can take your new skill home."

The luxuriously indulgent 'Stay Romantic' couples' treatment in the private villa at Kandooma Spa by COMO Shambhala provides guests with half an hour pool relaxation time and includes a 90-minute massage for two and an invigorating bath (20-mins) in the oversized tub.

The private 'Couples Massage Workshop' shares massage techniques for both chair- and bed-based massage. The expert therapist explains the anatomy of the back and key areas to target for optimum relaxation as well as the sequence to a massage which they can master with practice.

During the February 'Month of Love' at Holiday Inn Resort Kandooma Maldives, experience an Island Romance getaway starting from US\$521++ per room, per night.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Kurumba Maldives Appoints Ali Farooq as Resort Manager and Isham Ismail as Director of Human Resources

Kurumba Maldives, the country's first private island resort, has recently appointed Ali Farooq as the Resort Manager and Isham Ismail as the Director of Human Resources.

Ali Farooq began his career at Kurumba as an intern in 2001 and has worked his way up the ranks through hard work and dedication. He has gained a wealth of knowledge about the resort and has formed strong relationships with guests, business partners, and team members. As Resort Manager, the resort is confident that he will continue to be a valuable asset to the success of Kurumba.

Isham Ismail joined Kurumba as Human Resources Manager in 2019 and has made significant improvements to the overall HR approach, team village facilities, and recreation programs. Kurumba Maldives offers guests a cosmopolitan experience with white sandy beaches, a crystal clear lagoon, and a lively house reef, as well as a wide variety of dining and entertainment options.

Additionally, Kurumba Maldives is also proud to



Isham Ismail, Director of Human Resources, Kurumba Maldives

offer guests a range of water sports and activities, including snorkeling and diving in the beautiful Maldivian waters, as well as various excursions and island hopping opportunities. The resort also boasts a luxurious spa, fitness center and yoga



Ali Farooq, Resort Manager, Kurumba Maldives

pavilion, to ensure guests can fully relax and rejuvenate during their stay. With its idyllic setting, excellent facilities and dedicated staff, Kurumba Maldives is the perfect destination for those looking for a tropical getaway.

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Villa Resorts Appoints New Sales Representatives for International Markets



Elena Boritskaia, Sales Manager for the Russia & CIS markets



Giovanni Castelli, Sales Representative for the Italian and Spanish Markets

Villa Hotels has announced the appointment of Giovanni Castelli as Sales Representative for the Italian and Spanish markets, and established sales leader Elena Boritskaia as Sales Manager for the Russia & CIS market.

Giovanni brings extensive knowledge and expertise with over 25 years of innovative sales experience in the tourism industry as a Regional Manager and Operations Director with a strong knowledge in the promotion and sales of tropical destinations. In his new role, he will be leading the strategic development of Italian and Spanish markets in alignment with the brand's transformational journey and

contemporary vision.

Prior to joining Villa Resorts, Giovanni worked within the hotel management sector for luxury hotel groups operating in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean and the Caribbean.

Joining the brand at a pivotal stage in the Villa Resorts new elevated transformational journey, Elena brings valuable knowledge and diverse experience with over 14 years of innovative sales and marketing experience in the tourism industry.

Elena began her career with ANEX Tour, one of top tour operators in Russia

and CIS region followed by various other international hotel chains such as IHG, Hilton, Marriott International, Accor and most recently as Deputy Director of Sales at Movenpick Moscow.

Highly motivated and well organized, her dedication and passion for sales drives an impressive track record of success. In her new role, she will be leading the Russian & CIS market and strategic development in alignment with the company's new strategic direction.

Villa Hotels & Resorts' collection of award-winning resorts in the Maldives

archipelago includes the adventurous and family-friendly Sun Island Resort & Spa, the All-Inclusive Premium Royal Island Resort & Spa located in the protected waters of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and the romantic and luxurious Paradise Island Resort & Spa. Villa Hotels strive to craft breathtaking moments, extraordinary journeys and lead with exceptional hospitality in each of its iconic island locations nestled by sparkling turquoise waters and fringed by lush palm trees. Villa resorts are celebrated for their spectacular natural beauty, signature Indian Ocean experiences and personalized exploration.

John Rogers Appointed as General Manager of LUX* South Ari Atoll



The Lux Collective's award-winning resort LUX* South Ari Atoll appoints John Rogers as its new General Manager.

Not new to the Group, British-born John brings along over three decades of experience overseeing award-winning luxury properties across different countries along with an impressive background in business strategy and pre-opening.

His professional journey took him to many destinations around the world such as Spain, Antigua and Barbuda, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. Now in the Maldives, John is committed to apply his hospitality expertise and creativity to the vibrant operations of one of the largest resorts in the country.

"I am happy to be back to The Lux Collective's family and to lead the shining team of LUX* South Ari Atoll to the new heights. This resort is well-known for innovative culinary offerings including the healthy yet tantalizing LUX* Keen On Green cuisine. With my team, I am excited to create unique Extraordinary Experiences for our guests, considering my food & beverage career background," said John Rogers on his appointment.

LUX* South Ari Atoll is not just about luxury and aesthetics: a spacious resort with a playful and modern soul for travelers looking for a distinctive experience and exclusive dining options in the Maldives. It is an island paradise resort to experience the 'sunny side of life' at its fullest.

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UPFRONT WITH HALEEMBE

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

with

MOHAMED HALEEM

Managing Director, D Blue Pvt Ltd

“ *Keeping a healthy relationship with the staff via inspiration and encouragement is an important decisive factor for staff retention just as much as monetary incentives.* ”

Mr. Haleem or “Haleembe” as better known by his friends and peers, is a pioneer of the Marine industry of the Maldives. He caters to a wide segment of the industry dealing with over 50 exclusive brands through his popular outlets ranging from, “D Blue Marine”, “Lizzy” and “Honda Marine”. Join us as we sit down with Haleembe and learn more about his humble origins and his visions for the future of his business.

Can you start us off by introducing yourself and telling us about how you first ventured into the industry?

Responsibility and passion for trading was the main motivation. As a teenager, I had a strong desire to become independent and earn. So, I started working in a shop at the age of 13 years, in the 9th standard. The name of the shop was Vegapoint, in Galholhu, Male'. After some time, the job gave me a sense of accomplishment, pride to have confidence and to be more responsibly independent. Hence, I decided to be an explorer.

I initially worked as a seafarer on a shipping cargo line for about 9 months and had the opportunity to travel to Europe. Close to 24 Maldivians were working on the ship with me. They had been working in the industry for about 19 years by then, and they would joke around by saying within my 9 months on the ship, I have almost faced all the challenges they had faced

during their lifetime in the industry; from pirate invasions to being forced to jump out due to inconceivable weather conditions. It was an unforgettable good experience.

After my return, I joined the Seagull Group through an opportunity from a childhood friend. Seagull Marine Masood offered me to work at Seagull Marine Shop - which is a subsidiary of Voyages Maldives. During my tenure, which was around 1994, my work included handling the shop, supplying boats, and maintaining the logistics of safari boats.

I worked with Seagull Marine for around 12 years before receiving an investment opportunity from Mr. Naeem (commonly known as Happy Market Naeem) with whom I started DBlue Marine. Till today, Naeem is the Chairman of DBlue Marine along with my two other partners, Rauf and Haneef.

What strategies did you employ to build brand loyalty from your customers?

When I started my brand, I devoted special attention to assist my customers and cater to their needs. From ordering the shipment to specific requirements, tracking the order, attending the calls and delivering to the timeline.

I made a point to be with my customers through thick and thin. Some customers will call me at the crack of dawn due to emergencies such as battery failure or pump damage etc. My customers would know that I will answer the call at any moment to find a solution. Through such services, I came to be known as a trusted supplier.

How did you come up with the name DBlue and why Honda?

My clientele knows that if I say it, I will do it. This was

also the inspiration behind the brand name.

The name was made in mind to be short and simple. A name that would be easy to speak and remain in the minds of the people as a reliable business name. Today, as we proudly celebrate 15 years of service, we represent over 50 brands that have an exclusive dealership for the Maldivian market.

While working with Seagull, I gained a lot of experiences and knowledge about Honda engines as it was the brand Mr. Solah Shihab from Voyages Maldives was operating as an outboard engine in their dinghies. I learnt a lot about Honda's qualities which inspired me to pursue the brand even after I resigned from Voyages Maldives.

Haleembe, you have a lot of experience and knowledge on Outboard Engines and the Boating industry. What are the other areas of expertise in the industry?

Over the years I have provided freelance consultancy and got good deals to boat owners. I have personally visited, guided, and assisted the team with the best of my knowledge. The whole process of boat design, build, sourcing equipment, painting, marketing, and promotions. I spent a good amount of time in boatyards and boat building islands, as I have a passion for the industry.

By maintaining constant relationships with the clients and boating community in the Maldives, I also got the opportunity to meet inspiring individuals who wanted to build their own boats; namely Falaah, Handy Hassan, Blue Shark Shad etc.

How far has the Company's Vision expanded from offering your products and services to Local Clients to International Parties?

Initially it was challenging to operate DBLue Marine Shop, as there were a lot of competitors and new brands being introduced in Male' City at a cheaper price. However, we have remained rooted and continued to work the same way, to deliver quality products - on time - at affordable prices.

Today, we have expanded our business to the Maldives islands, resorts and guided the boatyard team in different areas. When it comes to wholesaling, we have distributors in Addu, Fuvahmulah, Thinadhoo, Kulhudhufushi, Naifarun etc. Of course, considering logistics in addition to other factors, there will be a slight price variation.

I always believe that satisfied customers will be loyal and repeated clients. Till date, I haven't left any client unattended or mistreated. Even the most frustrated client who visits our showroom will find a solution.

Till date, when dealing with international parties and suppliers, it is my partners or me who would personally deal with them to source the international brands. It is vital to maintain professionalism, trust and integrity for the success of any business.

Tell us how you got the investment opportunity in a different industry and open Lizzy, to sell garments?

The idea of Lizzy was also conceived from the experience gained while working at Voyages Maldives. I was handling Sea Sports, and the items brought to be sold were chosen by myself after dealing with international clients. I was the one actively involved in all the communications to introduce Reef brand

footwear into the Maldivian market.

I loved apparel and simple brands. Hence, I always had an interest in the industry and looked forward to having my own shop in the long run. As a start, I opened Lizzard targeting to men, and this was followed by Lizzy for women.

Do you plan to expand your reach and open more outlets?

The main concern with the expansion is the limitation of passionate employees. This is a very technical industry, and we require people who can learn, apply, and deliver the knowledge to potential and existing clients.

For example, when it comes to a product like paint for the marine sector, the application of the paint is one of the key factors of sustainability and quality assurance. Keeping this in mind, we have refrained from selling paint to some market segments / clients that do not possess this expertise, to uphold our goodwill and brand value.

In terms of sales, do you think you are successful in reaching your goals? And how do you maintain your relationship with international brand franchise suppliers?

I believe we are successful. The technique we go for when acquiring any product is that we market and sell limited products to begin with and do a small market research to see the stock movements. Based on the demand, we make an agreement with the supplier for exclusive dealerships and then import a specific brand / product for the long term. This way, we ensure the products we have on hand are in line with the demands and expectations of the market which in return ensures smooth sales.

Till date we have always maintained a healthy relationship with our suppliers to ensure effective communication and a mutually beneficial association. We try to meet all our suppliers at least once a year through pre-arranged meetings or random meet-ups at international events like boat shows such as METS in Amsterdam where industry experts worldwide (US, Europe, Korea etc.) attend.

How do you ensure customer satisfaction is met?

The biggest strength in achieving customer satisfaction

is trust and integrity. I have been able to build a good relationship with most of the clients and many refer to me as a brand rather than another service provider. We have a customer base of more than 5000 and still some customers would visit our showroom and go if they are unable to meet me and would again return when I am available to consult before purchasing the product. The Seafarers and boating community is a different market and still we have the same pioneers who have been in the industry in Maldives.

Similarly, after-sales services are just as important as the sales itself. When a problem arises after the sale of the product, the issue must be addressed promptly with a solution. Not passed from person to person. I am confident to say that myself and the team practice this important etiquette in our business, which is one of the key strengths for customer retention.

How do you explain DBLue Marine's focus on the environment, health safety and security? Have you implemented any policies or are you practicing any sustainable activity in your business?

We have opted for paper bags over plastic bags, in support of achieving sustainability goals for the country. It's always on our mind, however considering the magnitude of change, it will take time for us to come up with and implement more policies supporting this agenda.

What would you say is the biggest success in the history of D Blue Marine and its products? Staff turnover and retention is a key concern for all the businesses? Do you have staff development and training programs?

My staff. That is my biggest achievement and my greatest strength. I have been lucky to have my family members, good staff and to have successfully retained a wonderful team over the years. My younger brother Hassan Haleem has been working with me for a long time and is the Manager of DBLue Marine.

Fundamental work ethics behind world-class service for international products, esp technical products for boats is attentive staff with good product knowledge and discipline. Whenever a new product or brand is launched, we make sure to convey our staff with the product knowledge, provide on the job training and encourage them in product refreshing programs, to follow up with the latest updates. So, they are always absorbing new information and the learning curve is constant. If my team doesn't know any information, they can always ask me.

Keeping a healthy relationship with the staff via inspiration and encouragement is an important decisive factor for staff retention just as much as monetary incentives. We have been fortunate enough to adapt to both altitudes which is one of the strengths for low staff turnover, and development of good staff in DBLue Marine over the last 15 years.

Last but not the least, you are known to be a very calm and composed person. What is your secret?

I always try to control my anger. It's between me and God. I try my best not to react until the person cools down so that the situation can be handled smoothly. And I always maintain my dignity. I make it a point not to deal with favours. Whatever I do for the other person aside from business trades is from my heart and with no expectation of return. Alhamdulillah, no one from the industry can point a finger at me for any sort of misdemeanor. It's a blessing till today.





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NEW OPENINGS

Soft Launch of 5-Star Resort: Madifushi Private Island



5-star resort Madifushi Private Island opens its picturesque beach with crystal clear lagoon and cozy villas to travelers looking for the ideal escape to capture the reality of genuine relaxation and pleasure. The resort was inaugurated by the Minister of Tourism, Dr. Abdulla Mausoom along with the Board of Directors of MIC and SATS, government stakeholders and leading hospitality medias, on January 16, 2023.

Located 35-minutes from Velana International Airport (VIA), by a scenic seaplane ride, Madifushi Private Island is located amongst the tropical flora and fauna of Meemu atoll. The island offers a total of 80 spell-binding villas to its guests consisting of 30 villas on the island's forefront; 26 Serene Pool Villas, 3 Two-Bedroom Pool Villas and 1 Grand Madifushi Serenity Pool Villa along with 50 overwater villas; 46 Aqua Pool Villas, 3 Tranquil Aqua Pool Villas, and 1 Grand Madifushi Aqua Pool Villa, stretched out into the vast lagoon.

The island offers an exquisite selection of cuisine choices; local, Indian, Asian, Italian, and Mediterranean, from their main restaurant; Bluefin that comes with a scenic view of the beach front, as well as steak house grills of the surf and turf from the fiery-inspired themed specialty restaurant; Fahrenheit. The guests are to be further enthralled by the Splash Bar, the island's main bar at the heart of the resort by the pool with their extensive selection of classic and tropical cocktails.

Madifushi also houses Mandara Spa that offers a wonderful range of soothing packages and Funaqua for exhilarating lagoon activities such as snorkeling and jet-ski riding. Overall, this island of serene wonders promises to provide a tranquil environment, elegantly crafted to create experiences and memories with friends, family and loved ones.

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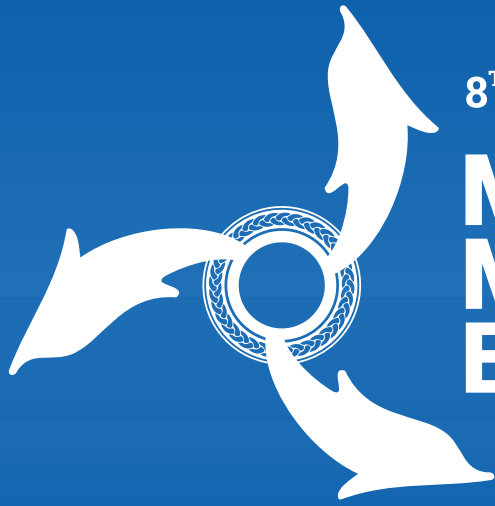
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Taj Exotica Maldives Wins at Condé Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence 2023 – Jiva Spa's Holistic Wellness Earns Global Accolade

Taj Exotica Resort and Spa Maldives has been honored at the Condé Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence 2023 in the Luxury Spas category. The prestigious award recognises Jiva Spa's holistic approach to wellness as the finest across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Oceania. Online voters across the globe and luxury travel experts have hailed the experience as a uniquely inclusive blend of "Indian healing therapies on a Maldivian private island paradise, set within a stunningly beautiful lagoon location, with impeccably trained staff and a spa offering time-honored Indian treatments".

"This esteemed global recognition of our team's effort and dedication speaks for our commitment to excellence and an exceptional legacy of wellness. The award further strengthens our promise to guests that they leave feeling refreshed and inspired in body, mind and soul," said Mr. Samrat Datta General Manager Taj Exotica Resort & Spa.

While celebrating exemplary achievement in the competitive Luxury Spa category for its yoga programme, the win acknowledges the profound impact of Jiva's roots in 5000-year-old Indian Ayurveda traditions. Its ethos of carefully-recreated treatments from India's wellness heritage integrates

standalone programmes and therapies into a comprehensive philosophy of health. Its contemporary approach to India's time-tested wellness heritage translates to sublime luxury - striking over-water spa pavilions with private sundecks and relaxation spaces looking out at the tranquil lagoon. Presenting a throwback to Indian royalty, elaborate bathing ceremonies, saunas, body masks, and aromatherapy massages draw upon the goodness of fresh fruits, vegetables, Indian herbs, sea salts and pure essential oils. Jiva spa's yoga, meditation techniques and wellness rituals are extensively researched and expertly administered to enhance guests' physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

From basic to advanced techniques of Surya Namaskar, Pranayama, Jala Neti and Yoga Nidra to lesser-known ancient practices like Antar Mouna, Hridayakasha Dharana, Laghoo Shankhprakashalana and Kunjal Kriya - administered by experienced experts - the yoga programme at Jiva Spa immerses guests in a holistic way of life. Woven organically into a Nature-first lifestyle - with underwater activities, dining on the freshest catch of the day and a dedicated spa room at the two-bedroom Beach Villa Suite - Jiva's wellness philosophy and the quest for excellence seeps into every luxurious aspect of the resort.



About Condé Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence

Honoring the finest hotels, resorts, and travel organizations in the industry. Condé Nast Johansens Awards for Excellence is the principal reference guide for independent travelers. Over 40 years' experience inspecting and recommending properties throughout the world, it has become the trusted mark of quality recognised by discerning consumers and travel professionals alike.

About Taj Exotica Resort & Spa, Maldives

Spread across Emboodhu Finolhu island in the middle of one of the largest

lagoons in Maldives, Taj Exotica Resort & Spa has established itself as one of the most glamorous and romantic 5-star resorts in the archipelago. Its pioneering over-water villas and beach villas with spectacular ocean views, plunge pools and butler service are havens of privacy and luxury. Award-winning restaurants and bars and a world-class PADI dive center keep guests enchanted. The renowned Jiva Spa, with a stunning yoga and meditation pavilion and infinity pool, harnesses the location's natural beauty with ancient Indian Ayurveda to offer guests a holistic health, beauty and spiritual wellness lifestyle.

BHM Traders Signs as the Main Sponsor of Food & Beverage Show 2023



BHM Traders comes on-board as the Main Sponsor for the 6th Edition of Food & Beverage Show. The event is set to be held from February 23 to February 25, 2023 at Central Park, Hulhumale'.

Organized by Highrise, F&B Show will bring together the food and beverage industry of the Maldives in an exclusive show, attracting domestic and international attendees from resorts, hotels, guest houses, liveaboards, restaurants and food-service operators, foodservice consultants, manufacturer's agents, food brokers, food distributors, food and beverage wholesalers, exporters / importers, equipment manufacturers, culinary experts, etc.

Food & Beverage Show is the perfect platform to explore and sample the

largest selection of foods and beverages, catering to the taste of the Maldives. F&B Show pre-event marketing and promotions will commence in a series of exciting and interactive activities from end January 2023 onwards. For the latest updates and activities of the event, be sure to follow @highrise on Facebook and @highriseint on Instagram.

BHM Traders has been an established sole proprietor business since 1982 and today BHM Traders is a driving force, a major distributor and market leader for several products in the Trading sector. Over the last 30 years, BHM has expanded to become a leading local household name, often synonymous with premium quality and affordable F&B and FMCG products such as YéYé, Coast, Foster Clark's, XL, Hosen and many more.

EVENTS & AWARDS

Six Senses Laamu Celebrates the Inauguration of the Sea Hub of Environmental Learning in Laamu (SHELL)



Six Senses Laamu announces the opening of the Sea Hub for Environmental Learning in Laamu (SHELL) on March 1, 2023. The SHELL sits on the resort's sunset beach, covering a total area of 5,952 square feet (553 square meters), with its cornerstone placed on May 6, 2022. It will house the Maldives Underwater Initiative (MUI), a marine conservation collaborative consisting of Six Senses Laamu marine biologists and partner NGOs, The Manta Trust, Blue Marine Foundation, and the Olive Ridley Project, along with a gallery exhibition space, offices, marine laboratory, cinema room, and kids' zone. Virtual and augmented reality technologies and conservation art will further enhance the space.

Marteyne van Well, Regional General Manager, says, "Healing the ocean requires understanding first. The environmentalist Baba Dioum once said, 'In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.' So, let us teach; let us educate the new generation on the importance of nature conservation. This is the vision behind the Sea Hub for Environmental Learning in Laamu; to engage the hearts and minds of our guests, our local communities, and our hosts. Our wish is for us and our owners, HPL Hotels & Resorts, to leave a legacy in the Laamu Atoll, where science and leisure come together with one goal: to discover more and be inspired to protect our oceans."

The SHELL is a multi-use space designed for guest education and for offering curated and immersive marine conservation experiences. The 2,336 square-foot (217 square-meter) central exhibition space invites guests to explore the colorful and vibrant local marine life during out-of-the-ordinary encounters. The MUI team will be offering hands-on guest activities and presentations parallel to their research, conservation efforts, and initiatives. The SHELL will also feature designated facilities for hosting world-class researchers to further expand MUI's ambitious goal to see sustainable resource management in Laamu.

Stephen Lau, Chairman of HPL Hotels & Resorts, says, "The SHELL is the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Six Senses Laamu and the resort's long record in marine conservation and community outreach. Our wish to make Laamu atoll a better place for generations to come has been our common vision of HPL, and that common vision has been the driving force behind what made this project come to life today. We hope aspiring marine biologists and budding conservationists will be inspired by the stories and research the SHELL is carrying out and that travelers and partners alike will wish to be part of the conservation journey. The SHELL helps us all give a voice to the atoll's incredible marine ecosystems and our combined responsibility to protect it, now more than ever."

With the goal of bringing an immersive experience to the guests at the SHELL, the central gallery, also called the Tank, boasts a high-resolution LED display floor and five educational viewing booths for kids and adults. It features diverse underwater scenes of the Laamu atoll to give insights into selected micro-topics on marine life. This immersive gallery, designed by Illuminate Productions in Singapore, is unique in the Maldives and seeks to showcase and educate guests on the exciting marine life around Six Senses Laamu. Inspired by a glass-bottom boat, the content will be periodically updated to reflect new footage captured by the resort's dive team and diver hosts, bringing about an ever-changing canvas for guests to enjoy during different visits to the resort.

"The opening of the SHELL at Six Senses Laamu is a milestone moment for the resort and the company overall, as it truly represents the passion for the ocean environment and biology, a key agenda item for Marteyne and her team. We are equally delighted and excited at how Six Senses, through the SHELL, is bringing to life our company values in the beautiful and fragile Maldives ecosystem," states Six Senses CEO Neil Jacobs.

The Kids' Zone is designed for young (or young at heart) and aspiring marine biologists to discover the secrets of Laamu and the underwater world. Highlights include an augmented reality sandbox which

allows the users to change and redesign habitats and topography using projection mapping technology, and the 'Draw Alive', where children will be able to color-in their favorite marine creatures and watch them come alive on a large screen with the help of advanced animation technology to watch them swim and move throughout a virtual world.

Lawrence Menz, Project Manager of the SHELL shared, "Just like the hermit crab that moves into a larger shell when it outgrows the previous one, The Maldives Underwater Initiative by Six Senses Laamu also needs a larger space to call home, as the team is growing in size and ambitions. The SHELL will showcase the stunning marine environment that surrounds us, with breathtaking visuals and immersive and hands-on interactive experiences. We will be conducting innovative research in our new laboratory facilities that we hope will help us find the answers to, at least, some of Laamu's questions."

The SHELL features a 506 square-foot (47 square-meter) amphitheater displaying stunning visuals of the underwater world as a backdrop for the team to tell their stories of the land and waters of Laamu and present their research and findings to guests and scientific peers.

Quoting Philippa Roe, Head Marine Biologist, "Over the years, the MUI team has been working to establish Laamu as a hub for marine research and become an example for sustainable marine resource management in the Maldives. Having presented 12 research papers at the 2022 Maldives Marine Science Symposium focused on research on Laamu, the center's facilities will allow us to make even greater strides toward understanding and helping the marine environment and reaching our goal. It is this information that has contributed to the establishment of six Marine Protected Areas in the atoll, and Laamu being designated a Mission Blue Hope Spot in 2021."

The team understands that conservation doesn't happen overnight, and that to be truly successful, a combination of scientific research, community support, and international understanding is needed. The SHELL aims to bring together all these elements in an innovative and exciting way to safeguard the environment and people of Laamu.

EVENTS & AWARDS

Maldives Celebrates First Direct Flight from China Since 2020 with Vibrant Ceremony



A vibrant ceremony has been held to mark the happy occasion of the first direct flight from China to the Maldives since 2020. The ceremony was held at Velana International Airport on January 18, 2023, with the arrival of flight JD455 from Beijing Daxing International Airport carrying Chinese tourists to the Maldives. This is the first time visitors from China have been able to fly directly to the Maldives following the border closure due to the global pandemic.

The arriving tourists were greeted with traditional BoduBeru, and a special gift pack along with flowers in celebration of welcoming the first visitors from China to the Maldives in the past 3 years. The event was joined by a high-level delegation, including Ministers, Ambassadors and other high-level executives from the Government of the Maldives and China.

The Chinese market consistently topped the arrival charts to the Maldives prior to 2020, when the nation closed for approximately three years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2019, China was the top source market with 284,029 arrivals (16.7%). This number fell greatly in 2020, to 6th place with 34,245 arrivals (6.2%), and fell even further over the next two years.

Speaking on this momentous occasion, the Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of MMPRC, Mr Thoyyib Mohamed, stated that today marks a bright beginning in a new chapter in welcoming outbound tourists from China.

“We are extremely pleased to be welcoming flights from China to the Maldives again. China had been our key source market for some years prior to the onset of the pandemic, and we are looking forward to Chinese travelers topping our arrival charts again.”

MMPRC has several exciting activities planned for this market for 2023, including an e-learning campaign; digital campaigns with top chinese apps such as Metiuan and Ele.me; outdoor marketing campaigns; joint promotional campaigns; familiarization trips; social media campaigns; and physical participation in fairs and exhibitions in this market for the first time since 2019.

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IN THE NEWS

LUX* South Ari Atoll Donates \$20K for Maldives Community Support

LUX* South Ari Atoll, the renowned Maldivian resort of The Lux Collective, kicked off the year of 2023 by making wishes come true.

The Tree of Wishes ceremony is the long-living tradition of LUX* Resorts & Hotels, taking inspiration from temples in Japan and China, native American tribes, and even Yoko Ono’s Wish Tree art installation. Open to all guests, the ceremony invites the participants to make a wish, write it on a colorful ribbon and tie it around a branch of the island’s banyan tree. Once a year, during the festive season, one of the ribbons is picked at a lucky draw, gifting its owner with a free holiday at LUX* South Ari Atoll.

During the weekly wishing ceremony guests are also encouraged to make a voluntary donation to the resort’s care

fund. Every year the collated amount is donated to a local social responsibility organization, allowing more precious wishes to come true. This year, the team of the Ministry of Gender, Social and Family services received a USD 20,000 fund for the needs of local children deprived of parental care.

At the official community donation event, LUX* South Ari Atoll welcomed the representatives of the Ministry: Hon. Aishath Mohamed Didi - the Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services as well as State Ministers Mr. Mohamed Shihab and Dr Abdul Malik.

Hon. Aishath Mohamed Didi commented, “This initiative is important to us not because of the fund received, but for what it symbolizes. This is about taking care



of the community. To date, we have almost 200 children under the age of 18 under state care, and they need a lot of love, care, and attention.”

“Serving the community is as important to LUX* South Ari Atoll team is delivering the best service to our guests”, said John Rogers, General Manager of the resort. “We are proud to provide continual support to the Ministry of Gender, Social and Family services in its strive to

provide equal opportunities to every citizen of the Maldives”.

With the ethos “We Make Each Moment Matter. We Care About What Matters.”, The Lux Collective is a hotel management company with a passion for service. At the heart of its purpose, It is committed to operating in a considered, respectful manner, mindful of its contribution to future generations.

SATA 2023 Open for Nominations



South Asia’s most anticipated tourism and hospitality recognition award show has opened nominations for the year 2023. The awards which were launched in 2016 recognize the best of South Asia’s hospitality and travel industry. The prestigious annual event honors stellar organizations and individuals in a wide array of categories.

SATA opened the nominations with revamped categories for properties and brands to compete, in addition to Visitors Choice Awards and Special Recognition Awards. SATA has been endorsed by over 15 International and government agencies for its work to elevate tourism and hospitality in the region.

- Association of Professionals in Tourism (APT)
- Association of Tourism Trade Organizations, India (ATTOI)
- Association of Travel Agents (ATA)
- Colombo Chamber of Commerce (CCC)
- Confederation of Accredited Tour Operators (CATO)
- Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL)
- Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB)
- Kerala Hotel General Manager Club (KHGMC)
- National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM)
- Maldives Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (MATATO)

- Maldives Marketing & PR Corporation (MMPRC)
- Nepal Tourism Board (NTB)
- Sri Lanka Association of Inbound Tour Operators (SLAITO)
- The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL)
- Bangladesh International Hotel Association (BIHA)

This year SATA celebrates its 7th year in recognizing the region’s Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Industries. The previous editions being held at Adaaran Select Hudhuranfushi, Maldives (2022), SATA Virtual (2020), Amari Galle, Sri Lanka (2019), Taj Mahal Palace, India (2018), Equator Village, Maldives (2017) and Mount Lavinia Hotel, Sri Lanka (2016).

The South Asian Travel Awards (SATA) is an annual event that recognizes and celebrates the best in the travel and tourism industry in South Asia. The awards ceremony recognizes the achievements of hotels, airlines, destinations, and other organizations that contribute to the growth and success of the travel and tourism industry in the region.

The SATA is one of the most prestigious awards in the travel and tourism industry in South Asia, with winners being selected by a panel of experts and industry professionals. The awards

are given in a variety of categories, including Best Domestic Destination, Best International Destination, Best Adventure Destination, and Best Emerging Destination.

In recent years, the SATA has become increasingly competitive, with more and more organizations vying for coveted awards. The ceremony is attended by top industry professionals and travel enthusiasts, making it a major event in the South Asian travel and tourism calendar.

The SATA not only recognizes the achievements of the winners but also serves as a platform to showcase the latest trends and developments in the travel and tourism industry in South Asia. The event includes a series of networking opportunities that provide a valuable opportunity for industry professionals to share ideas and insights.

Overall, the South Asian Travel Awards play a crucial role in promoting the travel and tourism industry in South Asia and recognizing the contributions of the organizations that drive its success.

Properties can now be nominated online via www.southasiantravelawards.com until April 10, 2023.

Elcome and Triangle Maritime Partner in Support of Maldives Maritime Expansion

Maritime systems supplier and integrator Elcome International has inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Maldives based maritime servicing and logistics group Triangle Maritime Pvt Ltd.

The partnership aims to provide Maldives' thriving maritime cluster with access to a wide range of original equipment brands, solutions and technical services.

While Maldives has an established leisure marine sector and attracts hundreds of cruise ships each year, the Maldivian government is investing heavily in its commercial shipping industry.

The Elcome-Triangle MoU is seen as an important step forward in the development of Maldives's merchant shipping and yachting industries.

Jimmy Grewal, Elcome's Executive Director, said: "Maldives is an island nation steeped in maritime tradition. In addition to recreational boating and cruise tourism, there is an emergent boat building industry and a resurgent commercial shipping sector".

"The newly formed state-owned shipping company MSS, for example, now has a fleet of vessels flying the Maldives flag and cargo ships are trading between Maldives and India. The MoU we have signed today is very much in support of the country's maritime expansion plans."

Commenting on the partnership, in particular, Grewal said: "We are delighted to partner with Triangle



Jimmy Grewal, Executive Director, Elcome International

Maritime. With a diversified maritime business portfolio and an established presence in the country, it was important to partner with a local company with local knowledge and experience on the ground. Triangle Maritime shares our values, our vision and our commitment to delivering customer excellence."

Triangle Maritime Managing Director Ahmed Mujthaba added: "By partnering with Elcome we can better support new and existing customers across the shipping, yachting and fishing fleets with quality technology-led solutions from a trusted, reliable global service provider. There is an increasing number of merchant ships visiting Maldives ports but, until now, there has been a gap in the services the country has been able to provide."

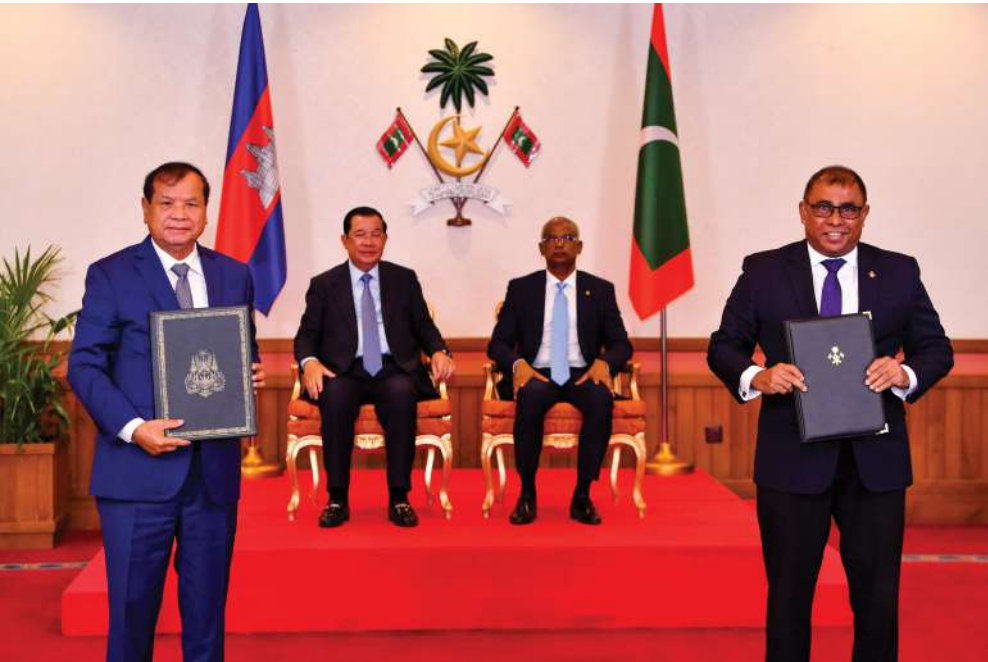


Ahmed Mujthaba, Managing Director, Triangle Maritime

Until Triangle Maritime personnel have been fully trained on Elcome's product portfolio, personnel based at its facility in Colombo, Sri Lanka, will handle sales and servicing arrangements, with Elcome's Dubai office providing technical and inventory support.

Akalanka Rathnayake, Manager of Elcome's Colombo office, furthered: "It is important that maritime companies operating in the Indian Ocean have access to comprehensive services, particularly with regards to navigation, communication, automation, safety equipment and cyber security services. There is also a trend in the Maldivian yacht market for electrical propulsion systems, which we can also provide."

MOU on Tourism Corporation Signed Between Maldives and Cambodia



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tourism Cooperation has been signed between the Government of the Republic of Maldives and the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The MoU was signed by the Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Maldives, Dr Abdulla Mausoom and the Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom of Cambodia, H.E. Mr Thong Khon. The agreement is one among the 6 agreements exchanged between the two countries on the Prime Minister's official visit to Maldives.

The agreement will pave the way for marketing and promotion of tourism between the two countries, provision of training and development, further investment opportunities, and facilitate travel between the Maldives and Cambodia.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen highly commended HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih for the Maldives' tremendous success in the growth of the tourism and hospitality industry and hoped for greater collaboration and cooperation between both countries in the tourism sector.

While noting that the Maldives and Cambodia both have great potential in tourism, the two leaders agreed to urge all relevant institutions to work closely together to organize joint promotional activities to increase tourism exchanges, tapping into the rich cultural and natural heritage of both nations. They also tasked the relevant institutions of both countries to consider creating cultural cooperation and exchange programmes.

BON APPÉTIT

Farumahu Suruvaa

(Seafood Soup)



The person that gave me the tools and the love for this Chefs world is Chef Ciro (An Italian Chef worked in Four Seasons Resort Maldives @ Landaa Giraavaru) whom I have met personally. He was nicknamed by chef SIRRAA from the big leagues as “Italian Infused Dishes” – the king of Italian sauce.

It is difficult to taste through an image, but you may certainly understand how a certain sauce can sit well on a dish. In fact, one of the worlds I have connected with most in the duration of my Apprenticeship career is the; Foreign chefs whom I have worked with.

Later I got inspired to the Local cuisine by working with a talented Maldivian Chef; Chef Siraj. His aspiration to creating new dishes helps me to go deeper into experiencing New dishes and finding more about Local Cuisine. And then I thought of using this experience and techniques by joining a Local Cuisine Inspired Establishment; Kalhu Odi Restaurant.

This is a Seafood Soup made from the rich taste of Kalhuodi Menu. In authentic Maldivian cuisine soup is consumed mixed with rice or chapatti. But, these days’ fish soup is very popular. Seafood soups can be broth-based like our seafood soup and sometimes contain tomatoes. Chowders are traditionally made with milk or cream, butter, potatoes, salt Meaty (bacon), onions, celery and sometimes carrots. Seafood Stews are chunky soups with less liquid that are cream-based or broth-based. At Kalhu Odi we use Sashimi Grade seafood’s which ensures the best of quality, odor, and taste.

INGREDIENTS:

- Prawns
- Squid
- Muscles
- Calamari
- Clams
- Fish grouper
- Fish snapper
- Fish jack
- Bell peppers
- Onion
- Curry leaves
- Pandan leaves
- Tomato paste
- Carrot
- Tomatoes
- Freshly squeezed coconut cream

Kalhu Odi spice Paste:

- Fresh grate coconut, turmeric, coriander, cumin, fennel, pepper corn, chili, ginger, cardamom, fenugreek, curry leaf, ramp leaf, cloves, sunflower oil.

Croutons:

- Cut chili, lime wedge, sliced Onion, curry leaf, butter, salt pepper, Fish stock (precooked).

METHOD:

- Pre prepare kalhuodi spice paste earlier and use a spoon of the paste to mix with the fish and cook with vegetables.
- Blend the mixture and strain the fine jus of the mixture.
- In another pot sauté onion and seafood for few seconds. Add a spoon of kalhuodi spice paste to the pot and heat it up for 10 minutes.
- Add fish stock to increase the volume.
- Add the blended fish creamy broth and mix well.
- Finally add coconut cream and adjust the thickness, by bringing to a boiling point.
- Check the seasoning and serve with croutons and lime slice.

Enjoy



Courtesy of
Demi Chef de Parte
Shan Zuhury
Kalhu Odi Restaurant



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Maldives starts welcoming back Chinese tourists with 'arms wide open' as key market returns for the first time since March 2020. Unlike several other destinations with strict screening procedures for Chinese travelers, Maldives chose to maintain normal screening procedures for Chinese tourists. What could be the outcome from this ?

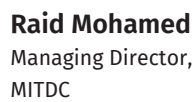


I do not believe that requesting a negative PCR certificate is going to affect Chinese arrivals or demand. I understand that it is important to welcome everyone with open arms, but it is always better to be safe than sorry.

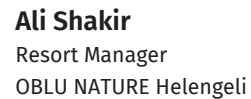


Abdulla Hasrath
Managing Director
Dive Club Maldives

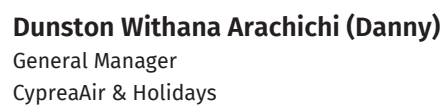
I think this looks good, we shouldn't make screening difficult and take this opportunity to recover the losses.



Before we make any such decisions, we must have regular dialogues, with key stakeholders from both countries.



In the past, even with all the measures implemented, pandemic was inevitable as COVID-19 spread across the world. In my view, life must go on... New normal.



I believe it's the resort's responsibility to take care of that. Having said that, if they want to visit Malé City or Hulhumalé there should be a proper screening procedure.

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