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## MALDIVES PROGRESSING ON CARBON NEUTRAL PLAN

The Maldives is moving towards becoming the world's first carbon neutral country, stated President Mohamed Nasheed at the Six Senses Slowlife Symposium at Soneva Fushi resort. The broad audience included entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson, actor and environmentalist Edward Norton, government ministers, journalists and global tourism industry members. Several areas in which the Maldives government has made substantial progress include:

- Publishing the new carbon neutral electricity plan online and inviting 'crowd-sourcing' comments from experts worldwide.
- Committing to generate 60% of electricity via solar power by 2020, and reducing electricity emissions by 80% without increasing power costs to consumers.
- The first contract under the new 'feed-in-tariff' between the

state electricity company and a Male' hotel chain to supply solar power onto the grid.

- A new Transport Ministry import regime to ensure future electric cars will be a third of the price of conventional petrol cars.
- New policies encouraging uptake of renewable energy and marine transport.



• Pledging 2% of national income to renewable energy deployment in the country. The SLOWLIFE Symposium discussed the tourism industry's future and how it can be more sustainable in a carbon-constrained world. Sonu

Shivdasani, Chief Executive and Founder of Six Senses, which hosted the SLOW LIFE Symposium, said: "At Soneva Fushi, we are committed to decarbonise by 2013. We are determined to provide the roadmap for other travel and tourism companies to follow – both here in the Maldives and worldwide."

## PHILIPPINES RESORT GIVES BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Atmosphere Resort in Oriental Negros sponsors a feeding program that provides 85 children with a cooked lunch five days a week. The children are from one of the most impoverished areas in Dumaguete, 30 minutes away from the resort. Their parents are part of a large community that has developed at a dump site and their income is gained through foraging through the city's refuse for recyclables to convert to cash. Rice sacks and plastic bags are collected and washed, glass and cans gathered, plus anything of the slightest value. The average family income here is around \$2 per day and family housing is provided by Scandanavian mission organisations. The aim is simple: one nutritionally balanced meal per day to school children between 6-12 years. These children often don't get even one substantial meal a day, which makes it hard to pay attention in school or even go to school if they have to spend that time finding a means to get food. The soup kitchen also provides toothbrushes to each child and dental hygiene is part of the process. The mothers of the children volunteer and run the program, do the daily preparation, serving and clean-up. Atmosphere staff visits the soup kitchen weekly to monitor weight and nutrition. There's great contrast between the squalor of the tip and the smiles of the children in pristine school uniforms. Resort guests may volunteer as helpers or servers. Donations are welcome, but children's vitamins and basic first aid items – bandaids, antiseptic creams – are needed. To help please contact Whitney Fleming, director of Atmosphere's give-back program at [whitney@atmosphereresorts.com](mailto:whitney@atmosphereresorts.com).



## DOLPHINS GET SUNDARBANS SANCTUARIES?

Bangladesh is declaring three areas in the southern Sundarbans mangrove forest as dolphin sanctuaries to protect freshwater dolphins, officials say. Conservationists state the mangrove forest is the only place worldwide where Ganges river dolphins and Irrawaddy dolphins are found, both among the world's most endangered mammals. Fishermen normally do not target them, but the animals tangle in fishing nets and drown, plus rising salinity levels and pollution are a big threat.

Tapan Kumar Dey, a senior wildlife conservation official, told the BBC the Dhangmari, Chandpai and Dudhmukhi areas of eastern Sundarbans would be dolphin sanctuaries and a safe environment. He said the three water segments were identified as dolphin hotspots by the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bangladesh Cetacean Diversity Project (BCDP), which has been doing research in Bangladesh.

Environmentalists say the Sundarbans' diverse aquatic ecosystem support whales, dolphins and porpoises. While Ganges river dolphins use the upper regions, Irrawaddy dolphins thrive in the southern parts near the Bay of Bengal. The forest department decision coincided with a new survey by the BCDP which also reported sightings of finless porpoises and an Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin in western Sundarbans. These two cetacean species, normally found along the coast, migrate upriver in Sundarbans mostly during winter, when the salinity level is high. They go back after fresh water starts flowing into the rivers.

By Anbarasan Ethirajan, BBC News, Dhaka

## NEW MARINE PRESERVES BOOK

Lonely Planet author/photojournalist and longtime *Sportdiving* contributor Tim Rock recently published *Hidden Treasures: Guam's Marine Preserves*. It contains 330+ images of Guam's five marine preserves, World War remnants, National Parks and Federal Reserves and some of the natural marine resources. There's also images of Guam's historic past including protected shipwrecks and remnants. This unique photographic record of Guam's submerged resources and special marine preserves has a great variety of stunning marine life and scenic above water habitat imagery.

Tim Rock has lived on Guam for more than 30 years and spent many hours diving here. "It's very important to me that the newly established marine preserves are supported and successful. This book has some of my favourite spots in the preserves, and we've been shooting at every opportunity for over a year. This visual record of the preserves comes at an important stage in their development." This is an ideal gift, and a unique souvenir of Guam's amazing reef beauty and diversity. Format: gloss cover, 216 pages, full colour Available from [www.mantaraypublishing.com](http://www.mantaraypublishing.com) or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) Tim Rock Publishing Website: <http://www.mantaraypublishing.com/> Email: [timrock@doubleblue.com](mailto:timrock@doubleblue.com)

## Hidden Treasures

Guam's Marine Preserves



Tim Rock