

al manag- adisson ngkok

ASIA PACIFIC, one of the world's largest privately-held hotel companies, has appointed hospitality industry veteran Samir Wildemann as General Manager at the Radisson Hotel Bangkok Sathorn, the new leading upscale, full-service hotel scheduled to open in the Thai capital by mid next year.

German national Wildemann has nearly two decades of hotel industry experience of which more than half was gained in Asia. He was previously General Manager of the Pan Pacific Bangkok and prior to that he held similar positions with the Le

Royal Meridien Phuket Yacht Club and Le Meridien Baan Taling Ngam on Thailand's southern resort island of Koh Samui. He is a graduate of Klessheim school of Hotel Management in Salzburg, Austria.

On the hotel, Lyle Lewis, Vice President of Operations, Carlson Hotels Worldwide - Asia Pacific says, "Radisson Hotel Bangkok Sathorn is expected to set a new hospitality benchmark within the city's central business district and Samir's extensive knowledge of the region as well as his leadership experience in hotels in Thailand will play an integral part in help-

ing achieve that goal."

The new twin-towered property will have 436 rooms on 37 floors which include a choice of studios as well as one, two or three bedroom suites all available for daily or long-term occupancy. The size of the rooms will be among the largest in Bangkok.

Radisson Hotel Bangkok Sathorn is within close distance to the Sukhumvit shopping and entertainment district as well as Silom, one of the city's most vibrant areas. Thailand's VCAL Business Group Co.Ltd is developing the hotel.

URE enthusiast and independent writer Marina Sham is ever passionate about the environment; the flora and fauna, its human inhabitants and their lifestyle. One of her passions is the life, including those who live off the sea, as the people of the sea, the Bajau laut. The enduring image of the sea-faring Bajau who historically roamed the seas from the Sulawesi seas, Indonesian seas to the Indian Sea, is rapidly giving way to a more sedentary routine," she shares. Once renowned for their nomadic lifestyles, moving from one fish-pond to the next in search of catch dictated by the seasons, some Bajau Laut have begun to construct houses on coastal shores throughout the



Mabul Island, an island internationally famous, neighbour of Malaysia's only oceanic island Sipadan Island, but because it holds its treasure (macro, in this sense, is used to depict life, which, although to the novice diver may be beyond the attention of more seasoned divers and photographers on coastal shores throughout the elusive nature."

In relation to diving off Mabul is muck diving, a form of diving referring to searching the seabed for life forms, she adds Underwater world aside, tourism on Mabul is unique in this area of the local community, according to her.

In 2000, Mabul is the only island off Semporna where tourism (dive operators and resorts) thrived. With strong contrast between the meticulously designed resort chalets and the rudimentary impression that the houses were built in stages when building materials were brought from both local and foreign tourists who, in between dives explore the island to take in their interest in learning about the local culture."

A prime destination with ecotourism potential. With countless definitions of the word derived from (ecological), this tourism concept has gained global momentum, taking the shape of ecotourism to minimize negative impacts on natural environments.

The impact is only one part of the equation. An equally important aspect of ecotourism is enhancing the integrity of the locals. Mabul residents, of Bajau Laut and Suluk ethnicity, share traits in their cultures that are borne from the sea."

"Their cultures are openly displayed in their daily activities such as making boats and fish nets, fishing and reef gleaning in search of sea urchins and clams, and smoking caught fish over open fire," she says adding that for Europeans who buy de-boned, individually packaged fish off the shelves in a giant Tesco supermarket, these activities is something worthy of seeing and experiencing. I concur with Marina that the main attraction of Mabul is its marine life.

"This is an undisputed fact. Its allure lies in the rewards received from being thorough and patient - spotting a motionless frogfish laying on the seabed or pygmy seahorses, camouflaged by changing their colours to match the sea fans they inhabit," she says.

"But with the limitations that come from being hooked up to a SCUBA tank presenting opportunity for above water activities, showcasing culture is befitting, ideal and beneficial, not only to the tourists for adding colour to their diving trip and to the locals for the potential of economic gain, but as an added value to the tourism industry as a whole."

I agree with Marina that the diving community, who comes to Mabul, can contribute to the local economy especially on first hand contact.

They however have to respect the environment and ensure that coral reefs are left intact and undisturbed during their (divers) visits. Without these colourful reefs, there will be nothing in Mabul to look at.- Photographs courtesy of ©WWF-Malaysia/Eric Madeja

ina on Mabul

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