

EARTH HOUR 2012 CELEBRATIONS IN MALDIVES



**EARTH HOUR BECOMES
UNSTOPPABLE AS SOCIAL
MEDIA FUELS PASSION TO
SAVE THE PLANET**

EARTH HOUR SWEEPS ASIA



**RECORD EARTH HOUR
DRAWS TO A CLOSE**



**WRECK OF 'MALDIVES
VICTORY: a site that needs
to be conserved in
Maldives**

EARTH HOUR 2012 CELEBRATIONS IN MALDIVES

Ahmed Hassaan Zuhair

Earth Hour was celebrated across the globe from 8:30 – 9:30 p.m. local time on 31 March 2012. As such, Maldives though geographically diverse and small in population, conducted several noteworthy activities in an effort to raise profile on climate change.

Although the contribution towards global green house gas emission is negligible in proportion, Maldives; the small island nation that resides in the Indian Ocean, would be among the first countries to experience the drastic effects of global warming and sea level rise. Hence Earth Hour that greeted us on Saturday, March 31 came as an opportunity to make our concerns to be heard in the international arena.

Maldives embarked on a nationwide campaign to encourage people to turn the lights off for an hour, to mark this international climate campaign. The Scout Association of Maldives and Ministry of Housing and Environment led the initiative in Maldives and organized a series of social events to encourage people to participate in this global cause. Like the previous years, government offices, private institutes, tourist resorts, schools and everyone from children to politicians and tourists, united to do a good deed for the environment. Some of the activities that were conducted include:

Understanding Renewable Energy, an exhibition of energy friendly displays

An exhibition to schools on renewable energy and how solar panels work were held on 30 and 31 March as the first activity to mark this year's Earth Hour in the country. In the event that began in Hiriya School shortly after Friday prayers on 30 March noon, 50 students from the 20 schools located in capital city Male', got the opportunity to participate. The exhibition that continued till 31 March 12:00 p.m. was led by United Nations climate ambassador to the Maldives, Mohamed Aksam Maumoon and his team of 20 students from the two higher secondary institutions in the capital city, Centre for Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) and Villa International High School (VIHS) pre-trained by State Electric Company (STELCO) and Maldives Energy Authority (MEA).

This event was jointly organized by Ministry of Housing and Environment and Maldives Energy Authority (MEA) in collaboration with the Scout Association of Maldives (SAM), State Electric Company (STELCO), two renewable energy related private companies; namely

Linear Tech and Delta, Center for Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) and Villa International High School (VIHS). Students and teachers representing different schools visited the exhibition and saw the rooftop solar panels established on roofs of Hiriya School, nearby Tajudheen School and Social Center. Students were also given information regarding the models displayed by Linear Tech, STELCO and Delta.

Earth Hour 2012 Walk

A series of rallies took place on 31 March evening across the country, to support the cause and to call everyone to participate in the voluntary effort to show their commitment to save our planet. The rallies initiated at 4p.m. were participated by school children, civil servants, politicians, employees of private offices and the general public. The rally in Male' started from Ameeneemagu near the license track area and headed north along the road, along boduthakurufaanumagu, on to Majeedheemagu and along the road and ended at Social Centre. A group of pre-school students from Mafannu Madharusa joined the rally towards the end in a spectacular demonstration of togetherness for the planet that represented people of all ages.

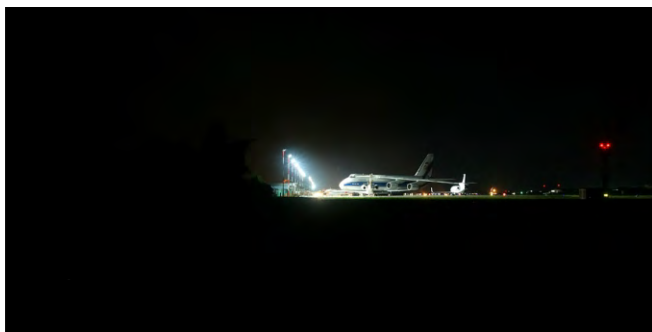
At the end of Earth Hour 2012 Walk, UN Maldivian Climate Ambassador Mohamed Aksam Maumoon gave an inspirational speech regarding Maldivians raising their voices for the rights of planet Earth, outside Social Center. A scout of Maldives also spoke, raising his views towards protecting the environment by turning off the lights and switching off non-essential electronics.



Ibrahim Nasir International Airport dimmed for one hour

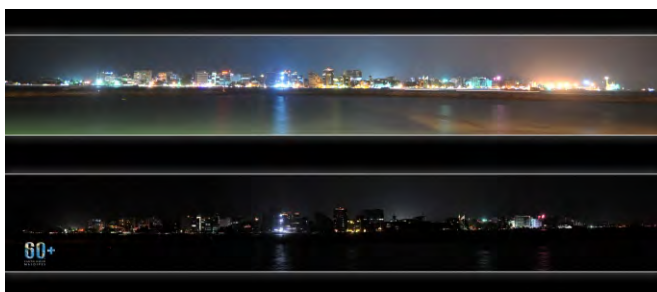
The greater part of Ibrahim Nasir International Airport was switched off for one hour on 31 March 2012, Saturday. In this event in addition to the international and domestic terminals, the terminals of the 2 sea plane operators in Maldives; Trans Maldivian Airways and Maldivian Air Taxi were darkened. Non critical parts of the runway were also significantly dimmed, in a marvelous display of candle lights that lit the usually bright and colorful Airport.

On 31 March 2012 at 8:30 p.m. the first International Airport established in Maldives during early 1960s, looked totally dark for the first time when viewed from capital city Male'. The events in Ibrahim Nasir International Airport were jointly organized by GMR Male' International Airport Pvt. Ltd, Maldives Airports Company Ltd, Trans Maldivian Airways and Maldivian Air Taxi.



Face of Male' darkened

On Saturday at 8:30 p.m. when viewed from the nearby Funadhoo island, the face of Male' looked totally dark except the national flag and the two monuments representing Islam.



Traditional Boduberu music show

A traditional boduberu music show was held at the compound of Social Centre from 8 p.m. till midnight on 31 March. Some major boduberu groups performed in this boduberu show. Boduberu shows were also held in islands in open locations allocated within the islands where local groups performed.



Electricity demand during Earth Hour updated live

State Electric Company Limited (STELCO), the largest power generator, distributor and retailer in Maldives, updated electricity demand during Earth Hour, live on their website (www.stelco.com.mv) and the national media (Television Maldives).

According to the data provided by STELCO, 1590.5 kWh of energy were saved, 418.55 liters of fuel were saved and Carbon dioxide emission reduced within an hour amounted to 1.1 Tone.

Events at schools

A good number of schools in Maldives participated in the 'lights out' event by organizing different activities in their respective institution. Students, teachers and staffs gathered in schools at a time proposed by the school management and executed the planned activities in candle light to express their concerns towards climate change.

Breathing Atolls featured fog sculpture

Japan-Maldives Contemporary Art Exhibition, Breathing Atolls featured the fog sculpture at Sultan Park on Saturday night, topped with local music Boduberu and other entertainment acts. Although this is usually performed during evening hours, to commemorate Earth Hour the National Centre for the Arts hosted a special "Earth Hour Night" that encouraged people to turn off electronic devices at homes and join the entertainment in a cooling environment.

Exquisite celebrations at resorts and hotels

Tourism industry, one of the leading pioneers in climate advocacy, also participated in this event with individual events in the resort islands. Maldives features a collection of tourist resorts with bench mark innovations in sustainability and environment protection.

Sheraton Maldives Full Moon Resort & Spa hosted their guests in a special environment to celebrate Earth Hour. This luxury private island went without electricity on Saturday night, lighting the island with candles and torch flames creating a breath-taking ambience under moonlight.

Anantara Kihavah Villas, located on a large, pear shaped coral island in the Baa Atoll was lit only by natural candlelight for one hour. A signature gourmet buffet was presented, where guest dined under thousand stars while Marzaru pool was entirely illuminated by floating candles.

Vivanta by Taj - Coral Reef joined hands in support for the cause, by turning off lights at guest and public areas for one hour while the staff cafeteria was set in a candlelight setting during dinner service. Guest communication letters were placed in each guest room for guest information while posters were displayed at the bar entrance information kiosk and a notice board communiqué was placed for staff communication to support at individual level.

Holiday Island management and staff joined this inspiring global celebration to show their collective commitment towards environmental sustainability by switching off all the lights, air-conditions and power from all guest rooms, outlets and other premises including staff area, lighting candles and lanterns for more than one hour.



The usually brightly lit luxurious Traders Hotel located at the forefront of Male' went dark for one hour to show solidarity against climate change. Azuer Restaurant and Panini lobby café fished out special Earth Hour canapés for guests. Earth Hour reminders were given to guests while posters of simple ways to conserve energy were placed in staff notice boards. The campaign extended to a movie showing of environmentally themed avatar and a poster making activity, with staff giving life and colors to their own interpretation of Earth Hour.

Several other resorts and hotels carried out similar activities while observing utter harmony in darkness, under a bright moon.

EARTH HOUR BECOMES UNSTOPPABLE AS SOCIAL MEDIA FUELS PASSION TO SAVE THE PLANET

MEDIA RELEASE: 1 APRIL 2012 Sydney, Australia: The global community has come out in force for Earth Hour as social media has energized and inspired communities across the Middle East, Africa and Europe to unite for a common cause – the protection of the planet.

From former war-torn countries to the great cities of Europe, Earth Hour is being celebrated by all walks of life as it offers an hour of inspiration to change our future to one that is sustainable.

As ESA Astronaut Andre Kuipers is watching over Earth from the International Space Station, using Twitter to share photos of areas under threat like the Amazon, Nelson Mandela, the Former President of South Africa tweeted, "Let us stand together to make of our world a sustainable source for our future as humanity on this planet" #NelsonMandela #EarthHour".

Facebook has been used to coordinate Earth Hour in Kurdistan, Northern Iraq as well as in Libya's capital Tripoli, which was run by nineteen-year-old Mohammad Nattah and Muhammad Bugashata.

Earth Hour celebrations were held at the Red Saraya Museum and Martyrs' Square - the site where thousands of men, women, and children celebrated the end of the Qaddafi regime. With the help of the local scout team, Libya's second biggest city Benghazi also took part with lights turning off at Al Daawa al-Islamiyah Trade building, Tebisty Hotel and Keash Square.

Thousands of I Will If You Will challenges have been made since Earth Hour's journey across the globe began in South Pacific Island of Samoa just over 12 hours ago. More than 100,000 individuals have already promised to adopt sustainability practices by accepting the challenges on YouTube and Facebook.

“From Beijing to Berlin, from Singapore to San Francisco, people are turning out their lights tonight to signal their concern about the future of our life on this earth,” said WWF International Director General Jim Leape, speaking from a pedal powered concert in the shadow of Castel Sant'Angelo as famous landmarks in Rome and the Vatican went dark for Ora Della Terra celebrations.

“This is a night when we come together as single global community demanding action and committing ourselves to act in our own lives. So it is a symbol tonight, but it is also a dedication to each of us taking action to do what we can do to help make life more sustainable on this planet.” Jim Leape will soon be heading to the Mediterranean to fulfill his I Will If You Will challenge of tagging endangered bluefin tuna for a long-running WWF scientific research project.

“Social media is not just connecting the world but is becoming the primary organizing tool for citizens to take action. People from over 150 countries across the globe are harnessing the power of online platforms to physically care for the future of the planet,” Earth Hour Co-Founder and Executive Director, Andy Ridley said. “If we can do this for Earth Hour, imagine what can be achieved for the planet beyond this hour.”

In the UAE, the world's tallest skyscraper - Dubai's Burj Kalifa, plunged into darkness as Dubai Municipality, the Burj Al Arab, Etisalat, and the Clock Tower also switched off their lights.

In Russia, organisers estimated that some 15 million people observed Earth Hour – a massive 40 percent more than the previous year. The country, stretching across nine time zones, records the longest participation of any country in Earth Hour.

Major celebrations were held at Vorobyovy Goary (Sparrow Hills) in Moscow, which thanks to its elevation, enjoyed spectacular views of 75 famous structures including the Luzhniki stadium just across the Moscow River, Moscow City Hall, several high-standing going dark across the skyline.

Greece used Facebook to spread the message that conservation is not a luxury, it's a necessity with its Earth Hour celebrations - warning that assaults on the environment in the name of overcoming its economic crisis were misguided. With the slogan “We Can Save”,

WWF Greece asked Earth Hour participants to upload and share a message of what they think can be saved in an effort to protect the environment.

Close to 300 cities and towns across Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Ukraine observed Earth Hour. In Austria Earth Hour gained the support of both President Heinz Fischer and Chancellor Werner Faymann, who switched off the lights of Vienna's Imperial Castle, the President's residence, and the Chancellery buildings. In Croatia, a much older centre of power - Roman Emperor Diocletian's palace in the historic city of Split - joined sites in capital Zagreb in switching off.

Germany's official celebration was centred around Berlin's famous Brandenburg Gate. More than 230 monuments and major gathering points in Paris dimmed the lights for an hour, including the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Arc de Triumph, as well as fountains and bridges over the Seine.

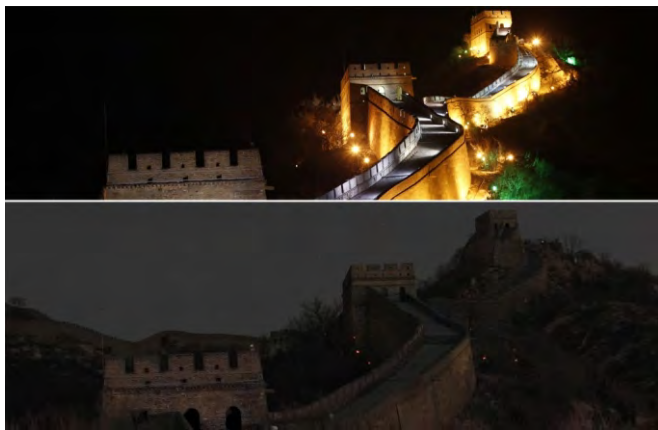
In London, a human powered dance floor lit up the UK's flagship Earth Hour event at Somerset House. Street dance troupe Flawless, stars of Britain's Got Talent and new film StreetDance 2 counted down to switch off and performed a twilight routine. As local landmarks including the National Theatre, South Bank Centre and Waterloo Bridge went dark, street band the Luminites performed to Earth Hour supporters whilst WWF ambassador Tom Aitkens and his staff served sustainable canapés.

Other iconic landmarks switched off or dimmed across the UK included Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, EDF Energy London Eye (dimmed only), Wembley, Royal Albert Hall, National Gallery, Old Trafford, Clifton Suspension Bridge, Edinburgh Castle, the Millennium Centre and the lights of Piccadilly Circus. Earth Hour 2012 is taking place in a record 150 countries and territories across 6494 towns and cities.



EARTH HOUR SWEEPS ASIA

MEDIA RELEASE: 31 MARCH 2012



SYDNEY: As the largest ever Earth Hour wraps up across Asia, Nelson Mandela has taken to Twitter to show his support for the cause to unite the world to protect the planet.

"Let us stand together to make of our world a sustainable source for our future as humanity on this planet" #NelsonMandela #EarthHour", the former President of South Africa tweeted.

At the same time, Earth Hour's I Will If You Will campaign went viral, engaging tens of thousands of people to Dare the World to Save the Planet.

The challenge platform hosted at www.youtube.com/earthhour is receiving an estimated 20,000 visits per minute from people all over the world and has reached 2 million views in the last 14 hours.

More than 100,000 visitors have now accepted the 80 feature challenges from celebrities, governments, organisations and individuals including global ambassador Miranda Kerr, Kumi Naidoo from Greenpeace International, Dr. Seuss' The Lorax, Latin American ambassador Claudia Bahamón, TV stars Giuliana and Bill Rancic, actress Isabel Lucas and local WWF ambassadors Nadya Hutagalung and Marc Nelson. More than 2000 unique challenges have been created, which will take Earth Hour participation for the benefit of our one fragile planet well "beyond the hour".

As the lights went off across south-east Asia, record participation in one of the campaign's major growth regions has ignited more passion for the movement.

The Philippines participation in the event is "hoped" to have topped last year's estimated figure of 18 million, cementing it as one of the top participating countries in the largest voluntary action for the environment.

"We believe the key to our success is the interconnected

global community," said Earth Hour Co-Founder and Executive Director Andy Ridley, who is in The Philippines for the event.

"For the first time in history we have the power to connect behind a common purpose and the ability to create a network without national borders, based on the most influential voices and the smallest voices. The growth in social media, the world's news media outlets and the digital revolution has allowed that to happen."

The main Earth Hour event at the Great Wall of China saw hundreds of university students and International Earth Hour ambassador Li Bing Bing visually pledge their ongoing commitment for the environment in 2012. The China World Trade Center and the Olympic Park's Bird's Nest Stadium and Water Cube also turned their lights off to mark Earth Hour.

Nearly 1,500 Singaporeans stood shoulder-to-shoulder to create a massive '60+Singapore' human formation along Orchard Road, one of the nation's most glamorous shopping and entertainment neighbourhoods. Over 370 major businesses across the city state made commitments in support of Earth Hour, ranging from a simple flick of the switch to broader environmental commitments.

An astounding 74,502 buildings in Korea switched their lights tonight from 8:30-9:30pm according to the Twitter account of the U.S. Embassy in Seoul.

By the time the lights off event had reached south-east Asia, 'Happy Earth Hour' became the #1 worldwide trend on Twitter.

In Indonesia, social media has helped drive the localized version of the I Will If You Will campaign, *Ini Aksiku! Mana Aksimu?*, with participants using digital media to organise grassroots action from across the archipelago. Celebrities Titi Dwijayanti (Titi DJ) and Jessica Iskandar pledged their *IniAksiku* commitments via YouTube.

Social media is again responsible for the massive turnout in India, which culminated in an alternative power sourced MTV Unplugged concert in New Delhi. A similar concert and lights off event has been held at the Mysore Palace, India's most popular tourist attraction. Megacities competed right across India for the title of Earth Hour Champion.

Nepal also celebrated its largest ever Earth Hour with dual events in capital Kathmandu and Lumbini, birthplace of Lord Buddha - with Earth Hour, supported by six monasteries, seven musicians and nearly 10,000 youth contributing to an ambitious plan to plant 1 million trees by 2020.

continued on page 6

“Through Earth Hour, we want to promote the message of conservation – starting with Lumbini and travelling beyond its borders – as the way of life for human beings not just in Nepal but across the world,” said the Venerable Maitri Mahastavir, Spiritual Advisor of the Lumbini Development Trust.

Earth Hour 2012 is taking place in a record 150 countries and territories across 6494 towns and cities.



RECORD EARTH HOUR DRAWS TO A CLOSE

Sydney, Australia: As a record Earth Hour wraps up across the world, the I Will If You Will campaign has been adopted by hundreds of thousands of people from all corners of the globe, turning their symbolic lights off action into an ongoing commitment to a sustainable planet.

Earth Hour has now completed a record journey across more than 6,525 cities, towns and municipalities in 150 countries and territories - the biggest participation growth for the largest voluntary action for the environment since 2009. As Earth Hour made its way across the Atlantic, from Canada to Chile, the excitement behind the movement began to build in the Americas. The social media shout outs for the event continued, with the likes of Yoko Ono, Gisele Bündchen and Gael Garcia Bernal tweeting their participation.

Altogether, 451 monuments across 125 Brazilian cities, including the famous Christ the Redeemer statue, switched off as Earth Hour took on special meaning in areas closest to some of the key environmental icons of Brazil.

In Colombia, TV station TeleMedellin turned off programme transmissions for an hour and President Juan Manuel Santos not only agreed to darken the Presidential Palace in Bogota, but he also took to his Twitter account to push for Colombians to take part in the event.

Latin American Ambassador, Colombian model and TV presenter Claudia Bahamon will live without electricity for one week after 500 people accepted her IWIYW challenge on the YouTube platform.

In Argentina, 30 cities and towns joined the initiative and there was a 5,000 strong turnout to the Buenos Aires recycling event launched by mayor Mauricio Macri.

Celebrations in Mexico took place around Revolution Monument, while Peru's World Heritage town of Machu Picchu, home of one of the new Seven World Wonders, also turned off its lights.

Canada saw 441 cities take part in Earth Hour this year with a highlight being the switching off of lights on Niagara Falls. Lights were also dimmed at the CN Tower, a signature of the Toronto skyline and the tallest free-standing structure in the Western Hemisphere. Toronto hosted a concert at the Distillery District where singer/songwriter, Andrew Huang performed an Earth Hour anthem, with lyrics written by crowd sourced Facebook submissions.

Dozens of landmarks and iconic buildings went dark across the US, including the typically brightly lit Las Vegas strip and the famous Las Vegas Welcome sign. In New York, the United Nations headquarters looked spectacular as it joined the Empire State Building and the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as the American Eagle Building and the NASDAQ Building in Times Square for an hour of darkness.

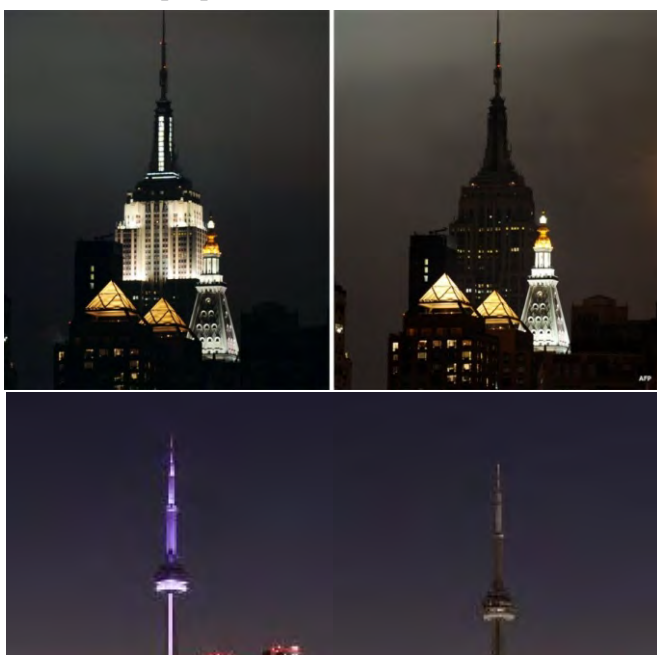
The city of Tucson, Arizona hosted a special Earth Hour celebration to launch the US Earth Hour City Challenge, which drew wide local support and put the southwestern city at the center of Earth Hour's US celebrations. “From Beijing to Berlin, from Singapore to San Francisco, people turned out their lights to signal their concern about the future of our life on this earth,” said WWF International Director General Jim Leape.

Earth Hour 2012 ended this year in the tiny Pacific island nation of the Cook Islands, on the beautiful atoll of Aitutaki. It was a fitting place for the celebrations to

finish in a country that is under dire threat from global warming and rising sea-levels. As with the original Earth Hour idea, I Will If You Will has been adopted by people across the world on their own platforms. Earth Hour's YouTube platform alone generated around 4 million hits over the weekend, with more than 4400 challenges accepted by a staggering 150,000 people committed to going beyond the hour.

Executive Director and Co-Founder of Earth Hour, Andy Ridley says that the campaign made a conscious effort to direct people to get involved in their own digital and community spaces.

“What we're seeing is the shift from the historic opportunity to connect behind a common cause to the historic opportunity to organize at a street level behind this common purpose,” he said.



WRECK OF 'MALDIVES VICTORY: a site that needs to be conserved in Maldives

Muhusina Abdul Rahman

Even after 30 years of its submergence 'Maldives Victory' still serves a great contribution to the economy of Maldives. The unfortunate events took place on the dawn hours of February 13th, 1981 the huge 35,000 tonne freighter hit the banks of the island at full cruising speed. Although the resultant damage was not extensive, the vessel sank the next day and sat up-straight on the bottom parallel to the reef. Fortunately there was no loss of life and the crew and passengers were safely rescued.

But panic spread through the island when it became known that the long-awaited foodstuffs and building materials were lying on the bottom of the ocean. Divers spent months trying to recover the submerged good and many of them were sold at low prices in the market.

Today, after 30 years, the site is probably the most popular shipwreck open for commercial diving in the country. The wreck hosts almost 75 divers a day, generating a lot of income and job opportunities to the Maldivians. The wreck lies 10 minutes from Male, south west of the airport and is the only wreck in the Male' atoll. The vessel is 110 m long and the main deck is to be found at 12 meters depth. The Maldives Victory Wreck is classified as an advanced dive, mainly because of strong currents and the many sharp objects surrounding the site. The ship that used to be the source long awaited commercial goods has gradually turned into a natural habitat for a colorful and exotic variety of marine life. Divers are often greeted by turtles, lion fish, large groupers, and exotic species of black corals. The adventure becomes more memorable as the divers can still find lot of cargo aboard; sacs of cement, some old electronics, papers, bottles, etc

This site that draws so much attention to our beautiful country now faces different environmental threats such as sedimentation and algae growth. The main reasons include the reclamation work carried out in HulhuMale', waste (mainly plastic bags) dumping, fishing, etc. For the cultural, environmental and economic benefit we get from this 30 year old wreck, the site needs to be conserved and should be declared as a Protected Area.

References: www.maldivesdivetravel.com

<http://maldives.greatestdivesites.com>

<http://www.dive-the-world.com/>



*Wheel House of the Victory
Wreck Dive in North Male Atoll
Photo Credits: Ken Knezick - Island Dreams*

Layout & Design by: Mohamed Aflah

Published by:

Environment Department,
Ministry of Housing and Environment,
1st Floor, Tinu Building, Ameene Magu,
Male', Republic of Maldives.
Email: ahmed.hassaan@mhe.gov.mv
Web: <http://pemphis.wordpress.com>
<http://www.mhe.gov.mv>