



SNAPSHOT

In a recently cemented agreement, Hong Kong actor Sean Lau will be lending his rugged good looks to global campaigns by Swiss watchmaker Frédérique Constant. A child actor who has successfully made a name on television and in film, Lau has received numerous accolades for his acting roles. Lau joins actresses Shu Qi and Eva Longoria, Miss Earth 2010 Nicole Faria and supermodel Inés Sastre in the Frédérique Constant hall of fame. In an upcoming global campaign in which he is the star, Lau sports the new Slimline Moonphase Manufacture, which features an elegant curved dial with rose gold-plated indexes meticulously applied by hand.

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BY ANANDHI GOPINATH



PATRICK GOH/THE EDGE

Fashion fielder

Cricketer Arul Suppiah is British India's new ambassador

Local fashion label British India might soon launch a collection of cricket-inspired gear, thanks to its recent collaboration. The brand has signed on professional England-based Malaysian cricketer Arul Suppiah as a new ambassador. British India founder Pat Liew says she knew Arul would be a perfect fit for the brand immediately upon meeting the 30-year-old, who also happens to be a huge fan of the brand.

"Now that we have Arul on board, we will be working with him to provide cricket workshops for underprivileged children. You never know, maybe we have the next Malaysian cricketer in our midst. All they need is the right guidance," she remarks. "We are looking forward to other things we can do with Arul in the future and, yes, a cricket-themed capsule collection for British India is definitely on the cards."

Tall and handsome with a full head of dark, curly hair, Arul's toned physique makes him the ideal candidate for British India's sporty styles as well as its more relaxed ensembles. On the day we meet, a stylist has set aside a few combinations for Arul to model and he sportingly tries each one on for size and fit. "I like British India's stuff so this is quite fun for me. I can't wait for summer in the UK so I can wear it all," he says, playfully showing off in front of a full-length mirror.

But let not his good-natured personality and humble ways fool you – unbeknown to most Malaysians, Arul is a well-known figure in the cricket world and even holds a world record in Twenty20 bowling figures. Having inherited a love for the sport from his father, Arul was discovered at the age of 12, and at 15, was the youngest-ever player for the Malaysian cricket team. He went on to enjoy an enriching 13-year county cricket career with the Somerset team, which he began while doing his A-levels in England, and continued throughout his university years.

Arul got his break when he was handpicked for a sporting scholarship at the prestigious Millfield School in England. "It was a fantastic opportunity for me, something I really am very thankful for," he says proudly. "Now with this new ambassadorship with British India, it will be nice to help other young people that way too. I am looking forward to seeing how we can work together."

The right-handed batsman has certainly trained well for this opportunity – since he retired from playing professional cricket last year, Arul has been teaching economics and business studies at Queen's College and is also the cricket director there. It gives him a chance to remain involved in a game he loves while uncovering new talent.



It's a necessary role that he plays as cricket greats are hard to come by and the sport saw three of them – Ricky Ponting, Sachin Tendulkar and Jacques Kallis – retiring last year, leaving rather large shoes to fill. Finding a replacement for such talented players with their kind of endurance is not going to be easy, Arul observes.

"It's going to take a while before anyone gets to that status, but there is a lot of talent out there," he says, indulging in a little bit of industry chatter in between fittings. "Dave Warner and Steve Smith are very good players, but the question is also about longevity. Talent is not enough – not in this sport, or in any other sport. It's a bit early in the day to spot the next Sachin, if you ask me."

It's going to be even harder with the growing popularity of Twenty20 cricket. A typical game only lasts three hours and requires just 20 overs

while traditional test matches can last up to five days – it's like comparing a meal-to-go at a café with a five-course dinner at a fine dining restaurant.

"Twenty20 is like the dessert of cricket," Arul says. "It's the fun and exciting side of cricket and financially very rewarding. But the pinnacle is always test cricket because it tests everything – talent, character and stamina. I see a lot of children liking Twenty20 and there's nothing wrong with that, but test cricket is what you are judged on, so it's important for young players to keep that in mind."

It's the responsibility of the International Cricket Council (ICC) to maintain the popularity of test cricket – a major role for the Dubai-based organisation, alongside developing the sport in countries where it hasn't been traditionally popular. Outside of traditional cricket-loving nations, including but not limited to Australia, England, India, Sri Lanka and South Africa, the sport has slowly found popularity in the US and African countries like Nigeria and Zimbabwe.

Arul says emphasis on creating awareness and popularity among schoolchildren is key to growing the game internationally and hopes to be able to champion this cause as part of his cricket career. "I'd like to see more money pumped into cricket in schools, I think, in countries all over the world, Malaysia included. Among children is where it starts. I started playing cricket in an abandoned car park as a child and I still carry those memories. That's why working with children is something so important to me – I get how much it inspires you at that age."

As happy as he is with his teaching job in the UK, Arul does have dreams to come back home one day. "I'd be very naïve to say that I will never come back to Malaysia, but obviously there has to be a really good reason." He grins mischievously, adjusting a blue sweater atop a pink shirt. "The love of a woman, perhaps, and maybe even this new project with British India." E

THE ALL-NEW INSTAGRAM HOTEL

Finally, that obsession with photo-sharing has a pay-off – Sydney's 1888 Hotel, a simply stunning boutique property named after the year Kodak launched the first box and roll camera, is giving anyone with more than 10,000 followers on their account on photo-sharing site Instagram a free night's stay.

1888 is called the world's first Instagram hotel for more than just this deal – every angle, every detail and every element of the hotel has been curated to be worthy of an Instagram photograph. The hotel, which says "every level has a view", encourages guests to take photographs of the furniture, rooms and views and post them on Instagram and the best picture of each month will land its photographer a free night's stay.

A giant digital photo frame hangs in the reception area with a revolving digital mural of Instagram images and a "selfie" space to snap a photo of yourself as you check in – the best are displayed on the hotel's walls for others to see. There is free WiFi throughout, of course, and an iPad provided in each room for the use of guests.

Originally used for wool-storage, the building that now houses 1888 has undergone extensive development and restoration over the last two years. The contemporary luxury



property boasts 90 rooms, including a rooftop penthouse overlooking the city. All fittings, furniture and accessories have been carefully sourced to give the hotel a contemporary, eclectic ambience and the design includes plenty of painfully chic accents like worn-look beams, exposed brickwork and recycled wood elements.

Follow 1888 Hotel Sydney on [instagram.com/1888hotels](https://www.instagram.com/1888hotels) or make your reservations on 1888hotel.com.au.



FLIGHTS OF FANCY

For a romantic, old-fashioned way to enjoy the stunning setting of New Zealand's North Island, a seaplane is hard to beat. Auckland Seaplanes, the country's newest tourism experience, brings a touch of romance, adventure and history to exploring the 4,000 sq km Hauraki Gulf.

Launched last week, the planes take off and land on the waters of the Waitemata Harbour in an original 1961 De Havilland Beaver, one of the most iconic float planes in

the world. Developed soon after the Second World War, Canada's de Havilland company built more than 1,600 of the planes until 1967. The plane has been described as a "half-tonne, flying pickup truck" capable of setting down on land, water or snow with its powerful single engine giving it formidable short take-off and landing capability.

The Waitemata Harbour was once the main international airport for Auckland when seaplanes were the only way to fly into the city. The company offers scenic flights over the volcanoes and islands of the Hauraki Gulf as well as vineyard lunch packages to sample the local food and wines of Waikato Island.

A basic 40-minute experience on the Rangitoto Circuit Scenic tour costs NZ\$150 (RM407.50) while coast-to-coast flights with stops on Kawau Island are NZ\$420 and go on for an hour and 10 minutes. Beginning at NZ\$390, the vineyard lunch packages include stops at Man O'War Bay and Oyster Inn. If an extended trip is up your alley, packages also include a stay at the luxurious Hurakia Lodge on Rakia Island.

For more information, visit www.aucklandseaplanes.com.

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