

# BOATING INSIDER

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER BY NBA M



PG 03

## MALDIVES TOURISM HITS NEW RECORDS

PG 09

NBAM AGM 2025

# PG 09

# MALDIVES MARITIME CONFERENCE 2026

Welcome aboard!

As the voice of the marine industry in the Maldives, the National Boating Association of Maldives proudly presents to you our monthly magazine, manifestly designed to keep you updated on the pulse of the nation's thriving marine field.

As members of this unique fraternity, dive into an ocean of articles featuring our fellow sailors and their marine-related businesses, from Safari boat operations to sellers of top-notch diving equipment and boat supplies.

Immerse yourself in a sea of knowledge and find your safe harbor within our contents.

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# Maldives Tourism Hits New Records in 2025

December 2025 marked a historic milestone for Maldives tourism, with 224,455 visitors arriving—the highest monthly total ever—surpassing the previous record of 217,392 in February 2024.

The busiest day of the year was 28 December, welcoming 9,903 visitors, reflecting strong year-end demand and sustained travel momentum.

These results highlight the Maldives' enduring global appeal and reaffirm its position as one of the world's leading travel destinations.

2025 also set a record for tourism revenue, with projected travel receipts expected to exceed USD 5.4 billion, surpassing the national target of USD 5 billion. This achievement underscores the continued growth and resilience of the Maldivian tourism sector.

According to the latest figures released by the Maldives Monetary Authority, tourism receipts grew by 15.8% year-on-year compared to 2024, demonstrating the resilience and strength of the Maldivian tourism sector amid global and regional economic challenges.

The year concluded with approximately 9.8% growth in arrivals, alongside growth in bed nights, reflecting sustained demand across key source markets. Bed capacity also expanded with the opening of new resorts and guesthouses, further strengthening the Maldives' accommodation portfolio and long-term tourism outlook.



Photo: Visitmaldives.com

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# Marine Environmental Governance: Reef Damage and Fines

An investigation by Parliament's Committee on Environment and Climate Change has revealed widespread non-payment of fines imposed on marine vessels for damaging coral reefs in the Maldives, with penalties amounting to hundreds of millions of rufiyaa remaining unpaid.

The inquiry was launched following concerns that owners of large marine vessels—mostly foreign-flagged—were failing to settle fines issued for reef damage, while continuing operations in Maldivian waters without consequence. The committee found that despite fines reaching into the millions, enforcement mechanisms remain weak and ineffective.

According to the committee's report, passed by Parliament, numerous vessels have been fined for grounding on coral reefs, yet the penalties exist largely "on paper." In one instance, a party has been fined repeatedly but has not paid any portion of the imposed amounts.

Data gathered by *Mihaaru News* shows that by December 2024, unpaid fines totalled over MVR 825 million, with only MVR 50,000 recovered from 24 issued fines. The majority of unpaid penalties involve high-value fines, including six cases where the maximum allowable fine of MVR 100 million—as stipulated under the Environment Protection and Preservation Act (1993)—was imposed.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has confirmed that most cases involve foreign vessels operating through local agents. These vessels often depart Maldivian waters before fines are settled, complicating enforcement and recovery efforts. The Attorney General's Of-

fice noted that under the current legal framework, vessels can only be detained under limited conditions, restricting the state's ability to compel payment.

The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation told the committee that current fine levels are excessively high and require review. However, both the EPA and the Attorney General's Office stated that fines are calculated using an established formula aligned with international standards for environmental damage compensation.

The report further highlights legal and regulatory gaps, including the absence of clear accountability for shipping agents, lack of authority for the EPA to pursue unpaid fines through the courts, prolonged delays in appeal proceedings, and the absence of legal provisions to act when grounded vessels are not salvaged—resulting in continued, unassessed reef damage. The committee concluded that the outdated Environment Protection and Preservation Act requires urgent amendment and noted that responsibility for initiating legislative reform has not been adequately assumed by relevant authorities.

## Committee Recommendations

To address these shortcomings, the committee has directed the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Tourism and Environment to submit amendments to the Act and relevant regulations within six months. Key proposed measures include:

- Introducing legal provisions to clearly

assign liability to vessel owners and agents

- Establishing timelines for regulatory and judicial decision-making
- Creating systems to offset fines against government payments owed to companies
- Preventing non-compliant entities from receiving government contracts
- Exploring mechanisms to suspend or revoke trade permits for persistent non-payment

The committee emphasized that without stronger enforcement and legal reform, environmental accountability in the maritime sector will remain ineffective, placing Maldives' fragile reef ecosystems at continued risk.



Photo: MV +

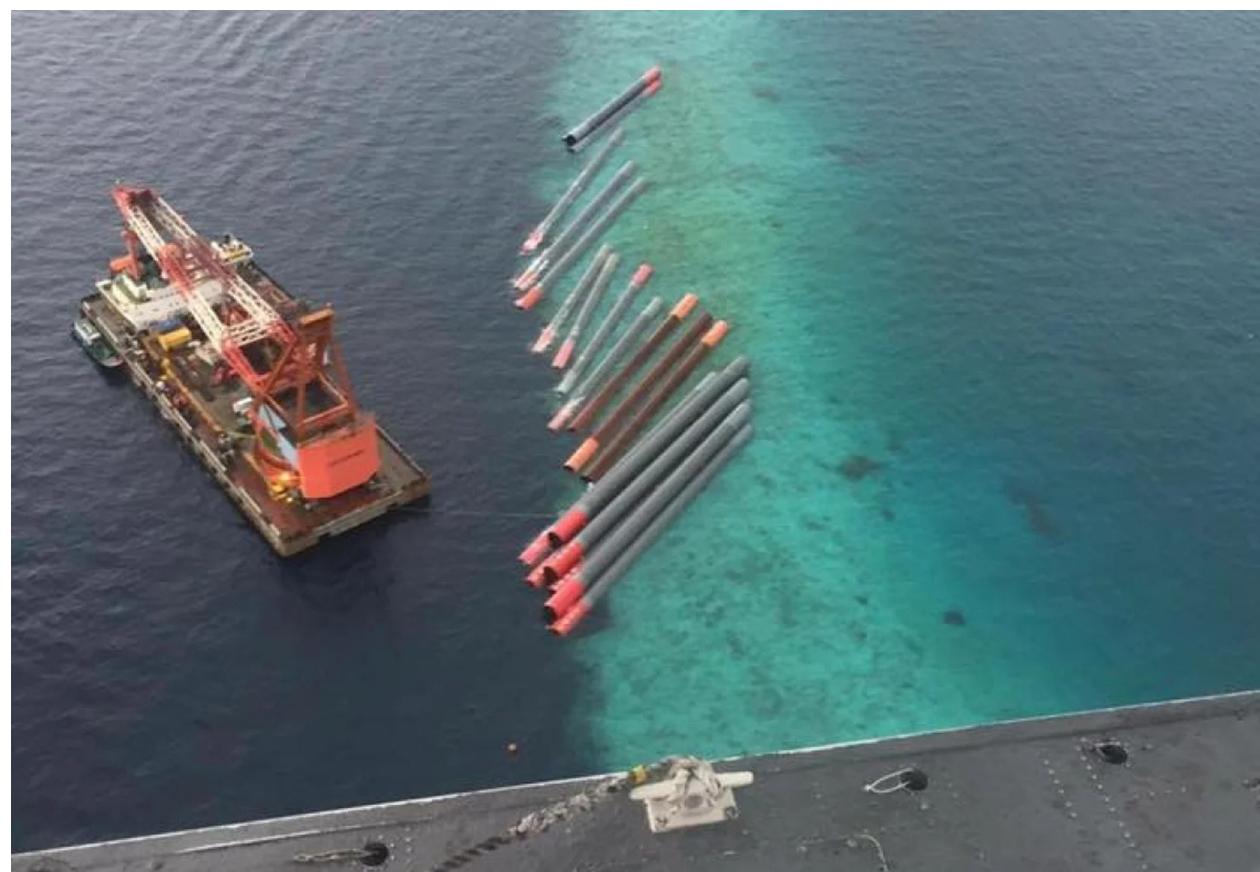


Photo: The Edition

# Haze from India Affects Weather Conditions in the Maldives

The Maldives has recently experienced hazy weather conditions due to the movement of airborne particles originating from the Indian subcontinent, according to meteorological observations. Seasonal wind patterns and atmospheric circulation have carried haze from parts of India into the central and northern regions of the Maldives, reducing visibility and affecting air quality.

Meteorological experts explain that this phenomenon is not unusual during certain times of the year, particularly during the transition between monsoon seasons. Dry conditions over the Indian subcontinent, combined with agricultural burning, industrial emissions, and dust, can result in fine particles being

transported over long distances by prevailing winds.

While the haze has led to reduced visibility and a duller sky in some areas, authorities have stated that current conditions do not pose an immediate health risk to the general population. However, individuals with respiratory conditions, allergies, or sensitivities are advised to take precautions, including limiting prolonged outdoor exposure when haze levels are noticeable.

The Maldives Meteorological Service continues to monitor atmospheric conditions closely and provides regular updates as needed. Officials have emphasized that transboundary haze is a regional issue influenced by large-scale weather systems and not a result of lo-

cal pollution sources.

Such episodes highlight the interconnected nature of regional weather and environmental conditions, reinforcing the importance of regional cooperation and continued monitoring to better understand and manage air quality impacts across South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.

Residents are encouraged to stay informed through official weather advisories and to seek medical advice if they experience any respiratory discomfort during periods of persistent haze.



Photo: MV+

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# Maldives Marine Expo 2026: Charting the Future of the Nation's Maritime Industry

The Maldives Marine Expo 2026, scheduled to take place from 5–8 February 2026 at Central Park, Hulhumalé, is set to be the country's most significant maritime industry gathering, bringing together key stakeholders from across the marine and boating sectors.

As an island nation deeply connected to the ocean, the Maldives relies heavily on a strong, innovative, and sustainable marine industry. The Maldives Marine Expo serves as a vital platform to showcase advancements in marine technology, vessel manufacturing, safety equipment, marina development, and sustainable maritime solutions, while fostering collaboration among industry professionals.

The Expo will host a diverse range of exhibitors, including boat builders, yacht and safari operators, marine service providers, equipment suppliers, and technology innovators. Visitors can expect to explore the latest products and services shaping the future of the Maldivian maritime sector, alongside opportunities for networking, business development, and knowledge sharing.

Beyond exhibitions, the Maldives Marine Expo 2026 aims to strengthen industry dia-

logue by highlighting emerging trends, regulatory developments, and sustainability practices that are increasingly important for the long-term health of the marine ecosystem. With tourism, fisheries, and marine transport forming the backbone of the national economy, the event provides a timely opportunity to align industry growth with responsible marine stewardship.

The Expo is also expected to attract international interest, positioning the Maldives as a regional hub for marine excellence in the Indian Ocean. By connecting local operators with global brands and experts, the event supports capacity building and encourages investment in modern, efficient, and environmentally conscious maritime solutions.

Organized with the vision of supporting industry growth and innovation, the Maldives Marine Expo 2026 promises to be a landmark event for professionals, enthusiasts, and policymakers alike—celebrating the nation's maritime heritage while steering confidently toward the future.



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# Gulf Craft Maldives Confirmed As Main Sponsor Of The Maldives Marine Expo 2026



Gulf Craft Maldives is proud to announce its role as the Main Sponsor of the Maldives Marine Expo 2026, scheduled to take place from 5–8 February 2026 at Central Park, Hulhumalé.

Recognized as the country's premier maritime industry event, the Maldives Marine Expo brings together industry operators, professionals, and marine enthusiasts to explore the latest innovations and trends shaping the region's maritime landscape.

Gulf Craft Maldives' sponsorship underscores its strong commitment to the Maldivian marine sector, reflecting decades of market presence, continued investment, and a clear dedication to supporting the industry's long-term growth and development.



# MALDIVES CULTURE AND FOOD FESTIVAL 2025

The Maldives Culture & Food Festival 2025 officially opened in December at Hulhumalé Central Park, marking a vibrant three-day national celebration that brought together culture, cuisine, and community spirit as the country welcomed the New Year.

Organised by Visit Maldives Corporation (VMC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Environment (MOTE) and the Housing Development Corporation (HDC), and supported by main sponsor Bank of Maldives (BML), the festival served as both a cultural showcase and a moment of reflection on a defining year for Maldivian tourism.

The 2025 edition held particular significance, as the year stood out as one of the strongest in the nation's tourism history. The Maldives surpassed the two-million tourist arrival milestone earlier than ever before, recorded its

highest tourism performance to date with travel receipts projected to exceed USD 5.8 billion, and secured the title of World's Leading Destination for the sixth consecutive year — an achievement unmatched globally. Against this backdrop, the festival provided an opportunity to recognise the collective efforts of local communities, tourism professionals, and industry partners who contributed to these milestones.

The festival programme appealed to families, residents, and visitors alike. Dedicated children's zones featured bouncy castles, climbing walls, foam parties, and gaming arcades, while food stalls and culinary showcases highlighted traditional Maldivian flavours alongside contemporary and fusion offerings from local vendors.

Cultural heritage took centre stage through live performances, with

Boduberu groups energising the venue during the day, followed by contemporary bands and live music acts in the evenings. Interactive zones across the park included vehicle displays, water sports activities, and a variety of family-friendly attractions, creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere throughout the festival grounds.

Major highlights over the three days included a spectacular drone show, a New Year's Eve fireworks display, and the countdown to 2026, bringing audiences together in a shared moment of celebration as the year drew to a close. More than a festive gathering, the Maldives Culture & Food Festival 2025 reflected a broader national narrative — one that celebrated cultural identity, acknowledged the achievements of the tourism sector, and reinforced the importance of community and collaboration.



## NBAM AGM 2025:



The National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 20 December 2025 at Water's Edge, with the participation of members from across the Maldivian boating and maritime industry. The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran, followed by welcome remarks and a presentation on NBAM's activities and achievements for the 2024–2025 period.

Members were briefed on the Association's ongoing advocacy efforts, industry engagement, and initiatives aimed at addressing key operational and regulatory challenges facing the boating sector. NBAM reaffirmed its commitment to promoting safety, sustainability, and professional standards within the maritime industry.

A key highlight of the AGM was the election of the NBAM Executive Board for the 2025–2027 term. Following a transparent voting process, members elected the leadership team that will guide the Association over the next two years.

### The newly elected Executive Board comprises:

President: Ismail Shareef  
Vice President: Mohamed Eman  
Treasurer: Ahmed Ibrahim

### Executive Board Members:

1. Amir Mansoor
2. Ibrahim Shahid
3. Abdulla Nasheed
4. Ahmed Zubair Adam
5. Ismail Hameed
6. Mariyam Maaisha
7. Capt. Adil Rasheed
8. Ahmed Afrah
9. Hussain Aman

NBAM congratulates the newly elected Board and extends its appreciation to all members for their active participation. The Association looks forward to continued collaboration with stakeholders to strengthen representation and support the sustainable development of the Maldivian boating and maritime sector.

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# Maldives Maritime Conference 2026

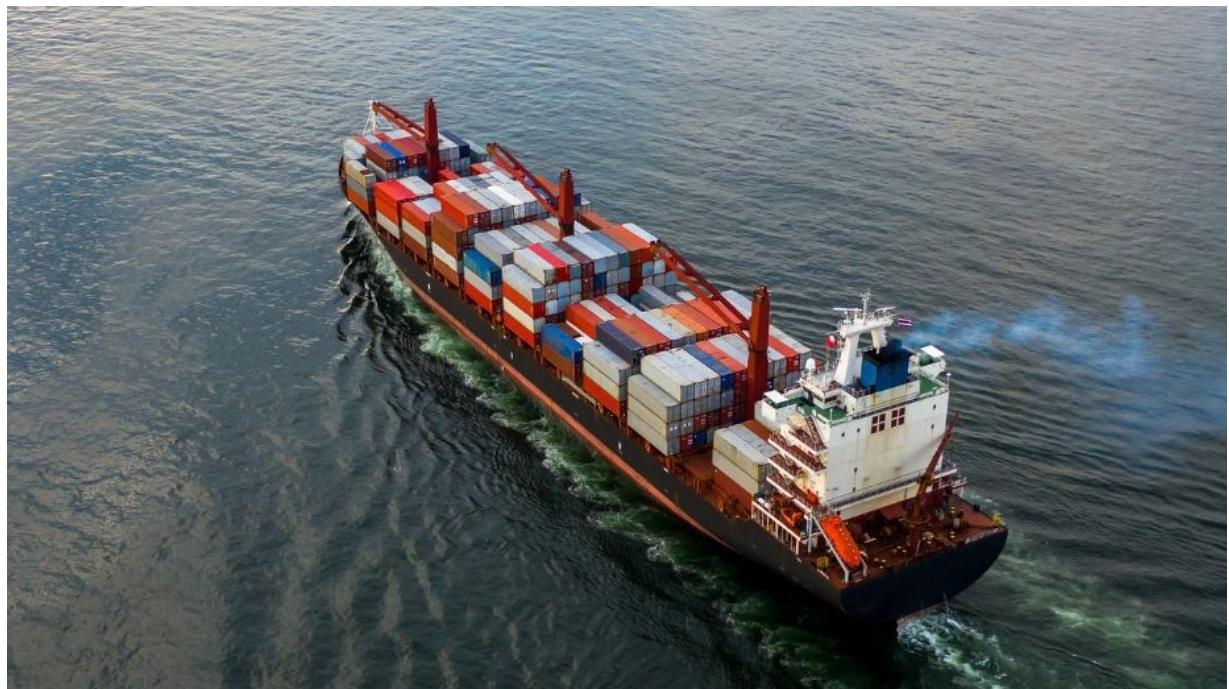


Photo: MV+

The Maldives Police Service has been designated as the Security and Safety Partner, with the agreement signed by Commissioner of Police Ismail Naveen, underscoring the importance of safety, security, and regulatory coordination throughout the event.

MPL stated that it is working closely with all partners to deliver a comprehensive and impactful conference programme that will address key industry trends, emerging challenges, and strategic priorities shaping the future of maritime development in the Maldives.

The Maldives Maritime Conference 2026 is expected to bring together key stakeholders from government, industry, and the wider maritime sector, providing a platform for dialogue, collaboration, and policy-focused discussions aimed at strengthening the nation's maritime industry.

Maldives Ports Limited (MPL) has signed partnership agreements to support the successful hosting of the Maldives Maritime Conference 2026, scheduled to take place on 15 April 2026. The upcoming event marks the second edition of the national maritime conference, following the successful inaugural conference held in 2024.

The partnership agreements were formalized during a signing ceremony, reinforcing inter-agency collaboration to ensure the conference is delivered to the highest professional and operational standards.

Under the agreements, the MNDF Coast Guard has been appointed as the Conference Partner, with the agreement signed by Brigadier General Mohamed Saleem, Commandant of the Coast Guard.

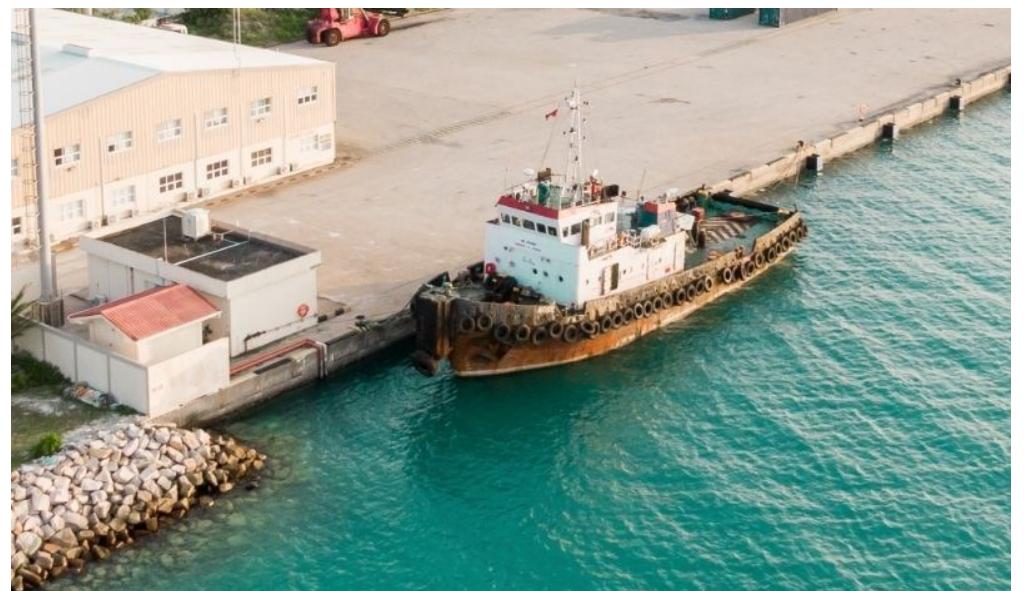


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Insights from 01\_2025-2027

## BOARD MEETING

The first Executive Board Meeting of the National Boating Association of Maldives (NBAM) for the 2025–2027 term was convened on Wednesday, 24 December 2025. This meeting marked the formal commencement of the new Executive Board's tenure and served as an important platform to align members on the Association's strategic priorities and direction for the upcoming term.

During the meeting, the Executive Board engaged in in-depth discussions on several key challenges currently affecting the boating industry in the Maldives. Among the primary concerns raised were bonded warehouse charges, persistent operational delays, and the urgent need for the development of proper loading and unloading facilities in Hulhumalé. Board members emphasized that these issues have a direct and significant impact on operational efficiency, cost management, and the overall competitiveness of boating operators, particularly within the tourism sector.

The Board acknowledged the importance of proactive engagement with relevant government authorities and regulatory bodies to address these challenges in a constructive and coordinated manner. In this regard, it was agreed that NBAM would formally engage with the appropriate stakeholders to advocate for practical solutions that support the sustainable growth of the industry.

In addition, the Executive Board discussed the importance of environmental compliance and industry awareness. The Board agreed to pursue the organization of SAMPA awareness sessions in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, with the objective of enhancing understanding, compliance, and best practices within the boating industry. These sessions were viewed as a critical step toward strengthening environmental responsibility and regulatory alignment among operators.

Further discussions focused on the long-term positioning of NBAM, including potential participation in international boat shows in 2027 as a means of promoting the Maldivian boating industry on a global platform. The Board also deliberated on the need to review and restructure NBAM's mandate, committee framework, and membership structure. These proposed changes aim to strengthen industry representation, improve governance, and enhance the overall effectiveness and relevance of the Association in addressing member needs.

The meeting concluded with a shared commitment among Board members to work collaboratively toward advancing the objectives of NBAM and supporting the sustainable development of the boating industry in the Maldives throughout the 2025–2027 term.



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