

Maldives Enacts New Trademark Act Marking a Major Shift in IP Protection

The ratification of the Trademark Act (Law No. 19/2025) by H.E. President Dr. Mohamed Muizzu on 11 November 2025 marks a significant milestone in the Republic of Maldives' efforts to enhance its intellectual property (IP) system and represents a historic shift from the earlier informal reliance on cautionary notices to a structured, statutory framework aligned with global intellectual property standards.

This landmark legislation will enter into force 12 months from the date of publication, i.e., on 11 November 2026.

Key highlights of the Act

The following are among the most noteworthy elements of the Trademark Act:

- **Broad Definition of Trademarks:** A trademark includes any sign capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one business from another. This extends to words, letters, numbers, images, shapes, colours, and combinations thereof, as well as certification marks and collective marks.
- **Priority claims:** The Trademark Act permits two types of priority claims: foreign-filing priority for applications first filed in Paris Convention or WTO member countries, and exhibition priority for marks displayed at recognised exhibitions.
- **Examination, Publication & Opposition:** Applications undergo formal and substantive examination by MIPO, followed by a three-month opposition period after publication.
- **Certification and Collective Marks:** The Act recognises both certification marks, which are used to show compliance with defined standards, and collective marks, which identify goods or services from members of an association.
- **Grounds for Refusal of Registration:** The Act sets out absolute and relative grounds for refusing trademark registration, including marks that lack distinctiveness, are misleading, or conflict with earlier rights. However, marks that have acquired distinctiveness through long-term use may be accepted, and protection is also afforded to unregistered marks used in good faith in the Maldives.
- **Registration, Duration & Renewal:** Registrations are valid for **10 years** from filing and may be renewed for successive 10-year terms, with a six-month grace period.



- **Assignment & Licensing:** Transfers of trademark ownership needs to be recorded and published with the Registrar to bind third parties, and both owners and transferees may file such requests. Licences can also be recorded, which is essential for enforceability and clarity regarding authorised use.
- **Enforcement:** Civil remedies, border control measures, and criminal penalties including fines ranging from **MVR 100,000 to 2,000,000** strengthen rights protection.

Transitional Requirements

All trademarks currently in use or relied upon in the Maldives must be re-filed under the new system within twelve months.

Key action steps for businesses

With the introduction of this formal trademark system, rights holders will have to begin preparing well in advance. Key steps include:

- Reviewing existing trademarks being used in the Maldives.
- Identifying new marks requiring filing once the system opens.
- Preparing to re-register all existing marks during the transitional period i.e., within twelve months.
- Ensuring ownership documents, assignments, and licences are updated for recordal.
- Monitoring for competing or conflicting marks.

Summary

The Trademark Act marks a major improvement in the Maldives' IP system, strengthening brand protection and enforcement. Businesses will have to align their trademark portfolios with the new framework to ensure continuous and effective protection.

