



# TradeMaker

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(L-R) The Nautical Institute's Dr Somiyeh Djavanroodi, Capt John Lloyd, and Capt Zarir Irani at the Institute's booth during the *Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East 2025* exhibition

# Maritime Minds Meet

## The Nautical Institute Navigates Progress in UAE

The Nautical Institute hosted a series of high-profile events in Dubai in May 2025, aligning its programme with the UAE Maritime Week. Organised by its UAE Branch, the Institute's Annual General Meeting, Technical Conference, and Marine Ball showcased professional excellence, environmental responsibility, and the future skillsets shaping the maritime sector. TradeMaker Magazine served as the media partner for the events.

In addition to its own events, the Institute also maintained a presence through a dedicated display booth at the Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East exhibition, fostering broader engagement with the region's maritime community.



### Annual General Meeting: Collaboration at the Helm

Held at the Dubai International Seafarers' Center on 7 May, the Annual General Meeting gathered Institute members to review progress, set future priorities, and conduct Council elections. The event served as a platform for members to reaffirm their shared goals and commitment to advancing industry standards. TradeMaker Magazine was the exclusive media presence at the AGM, capturing the essence of the event as well as the networking that followed during cocktails and dinner. The gathering reflected the close-knit yet globally connected nature of the Institute's membership.

### Technical Conference: Skills for a Sustainable Future

On 8 May, the Institute hosted its Technical Conference at the Dubai World Trade Centre, within the Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East venue. The programme featured three focused sessions:

- "UAE: A World of Maritime Skills and Opportunities" – spotlighting career pathways and talent development in the region.
- "Skills of the Future – Ensuring Maritime Sustainability" (Part 1 & 2) – tackling training, green fuels and environmental stewardship.

The sessions brought together maritime professionals, educators and industry leaders who explored the evolving demands of the maritime workforce and shared strategies for adapting to an era defined by decarbonisation, automation, and digital transformation. Discussions centred on future-ready skills, leadership, and innovation – crucial for ensuring sustainable and competitive maritime careers. The conference also underscored the UAE's growing significance as a global hub for maritime education and training.

### Marine Ball: A Celebration with Purpose

The UAE Branch's signature social event, the Marine Ball, was held on 9 May at the SO/Uptown Dubai hotel. Themed "Healthy Oceans. Healthy Planet. Protect Our Seas and Environment", the black-tie gala drew over 300 guests from across the maritime spectrum.

Blending celebration with advocacy, the evening featured a charity auction in support of marine environmental initiatives, alongside live entertainment, fine dining and ocean-themed décor. The Ball served as both a grand finale to the Institute's Dubai programme and a vibrant expression of its commitment to marine conservation and community engagement.



### Commitment Beyond Events

The Nautical Institute's participation in UAE Maritime Week demonstrated its enduring influence across global and regional maritime spheres. Through purposeful dialogue, technical thought leadership, and member-driven collaboration, the Institute reinforced its role in championing innovation, safety, and sustainability within the industry.



## Captain Zarir Irani — Leading Maritime Progress in the UAE

In this exclusive for *TradeMaker Magazine*, Chief Editor Nishit Doshi speaks with Captain Zarir Irani, Chairman of The Nautical Institute UAE Branch. With nearly 40 years in the maritime industry — including 15 years at sea and two decades at the helm of Constellation Marine Consultancy — Capt Irani brings a uniquely global perspective on shipping, safety, and maritime leadership.

A seasoned casualty investigator, industry ambassador, and business strategist, his leadership continues to shape maritime standards across the Middle East. Here, he reflects on the Institute's mission, the region's evolving maritime landscape, and the importance of collaboration, sustainability, and skills for the future.

### Please share your journey with the Nautical Institute, outlining the roles you have held.

My journey with The Nautical Institute has been deeply rewarding and spans over a decade of active involvement at both the local and global levels. I was first elected as Branch Secretary during Captain Duncan McKelvie's chairmanship and continued to serve under three successive chairmen — Captains Brian Course, Adil Moos, and Harihar Prasad — covering a continuous eight-year tenure.

During this period, I also served two consecutive terms (a total of six years) on the Institute's Global Council and contributed to the Global Assurance Committee at the NI Headquarters in London for two years. Having dedicated significant time between the UAE Branch and the international arm of the Institute, I stepped down from my local role a year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to take a well-earned sabbatical.

However, in 2023, I was invited back by then-chairman Capt Harihar Prasad — at a time when the branch had dwindled to just two active committee members. I accepted the call to duty and returned with a focused mission: to help revive and rebuild the UAE Branch of The Nautical Institute post-COVID. Today, I am proud to chair a growing and reinvigorated branch with over 14 committee members that continues to champion professional development and safety in the maritime industry.

### Kindly elaborate on your contributions to the Nautical Institute, highlighting at least five key initiatives or actions which, in your view, have had a significant and positive impact on the Institute.

Let me begin by saying — reviving a professional association post-COVID is a bit like trying to restart a ship's main engine after it's been in lay-up: you need the right team, a few prayers, and a whole lot of oil (in our case, motivation and coffee).

While any success story is always a team effort — and I've had the privilege of working with some phenomenal individuals — here are five contributions I believe helped steer the UAE Branch back into full operational status, and even cruise control:



Moments from the AGM reception

**i). Rebuilding the Crew (a.k.a. Committee)**

When I returned, we were down to two committee members — Capt Hari Prasad and Rashid Isa Rishi AlHeddi. I jokingly refer to them as “the last officers standing.” From that modest lifeboat, we rebuilt a solid vessel of over 20 active committee members representing five nationalities, including two remarkable women. The diversity wasn’t just for optics — it brought fresh thinking and cross-cultural energy to the table (and much better snacks at meetings).

**ii). Roles, Not Just Titles**

We didn’t want a committee where everyone was “just a member.” So, I dusted off the old playbook and assigned clear portfolios: events, sports, seafarer welfare, treasury, legal — you name it, we had someone responsible for it. Giving people ownership made them more accountable (and harder to dodge my follow-up messages!). It’s amazing what people can achieve when they know they’ll be asked for an update.

**iii). Diversity You Can Feel (and Hear in the Accent Mix)**

Beyond just job titles, we made sure the committee truly reflected the global maritime community. From deck officers to shore-based professionals, from fresh faces to industry veterans — everyone had a seat. The diversity wasn’t just tick-box compliance; it became our strength. The different accents in our meetings could rival an IMO assembly, but the shared values made it work.

**iv). Nostalgia Meets Action**

We brought back legacy events in legacy venues — like the Marine Gala Night at the Hyatt Regency, which hadn’t been held in nearly five years. For some, it was a trip down memory lane; for newer members, a glimpse into the vibrant culture of the Institute. It reminded everyone that the NI isn’t just about technical papers — it’s also about tradition, camaraderie, and the occasional bowtie that doesn’t match your cummerbund.



NI President with Capt Nish Wijayakulathilaka of the Institute's Sri Lanka Branch

**v). Regular Programming, With a Twist**

From cricket matches endorsed by the legendary Sir Richie Richardson to technical seminars that didn’t put people to sleep — we focused on consistency and creativity. Our events calendar looked like a well-maintained ship’s log — predictable, packed, and proudly attended. Regular visibility meant greater credibility, and before long, industry players began asking, “What’s the NI UAE doing next?”

The testimonials from seafarers and young professionals that the committee helped were very well received by our community (and we’ve only just begun).

And to top it all off — the cherry on this rebuilt cake — the NI Headquarters saw enough promise to award us the AGM 2025 and the Global Technical Conference right here in Dubai. That’s like being told your ship has just passed all audits — with compliments from the surveyor.

In the end, it wasn’t about reinventing the wheel. It was about reminding everyone why this wheel mattered — and why the Nautical Institute, in all its forms, continues to be the rudder for professional maritime development.

**You’ve shared a deeply reflective quote: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a happy life by what we give. ‘Time’ is the most precious commodity we have; I choose to give ‘my time’ towards betterment of our seafaring community – it gives me most satisfaction and fulfilment in doing so.” Please expand on what this means to you.**

Ah yes, that quote — sounds almost saintly, doesn’t it? As if I’ve taken a solemn vow to roam the oceans handing out wisdom and Wi-Fi to underpaid cadets. But truth be told, I’m not always the giver in this equation. In fact, much of what I “give” today is simply recycled wisdom, generously poured into me over the years by mentors, shipmates, and some truly selfless folks — especially those unsung heroes at the Mission to Seafarers — who kept us sane, caffeinated, and spiritually afloat during my 14 years of sailing the seven seas on tramp ships that stopped everywhere... and occasionally nowhere.

So, no, I didn’t invent generosity. I’m just repaying overdue debts — with interest. And instead of giving back in gold bars or Swiss watches, I give back the only real currency I can afford: my time.

How does this philosophy influence my work? Well, for starters, it reminds me that titles fade, job roles change, but impact lasts. I focus my time on initiatives that actually help people — especially the seafaring community that raised me, tested me, and occasionally left me stranded in ports with no taxis and a half-charged Nokia.

Giving my time isn’t about self-sacrifice. It’s about staying anchored to my values. I’m fully aware that my “legacy” won’t be in the form of a statue or a street name (though if someone insists, at least spell my name right). It’ll be in the conversations I’ve had, the young professionals I’ve nudged forward, and the teams I’ve helped stitch together when things felt adrift.

So yes, I believe in giving. But only because I’ve had the privilege of receiving far more than I could ever repay.

**What sets The Nautical Institute apart from the various maritime and professional associations you’ve contributed to?**

When people ask me how The Nautical Institute (NI) differs from the other maritime organizations I’m involved with, I liken it to comparing different roles on a ship. Each has its unique function, but together, they keep the vessel sailing smoothly. I believe that Engineers are as important as Deck officers on every ship — I say this at my diplomatic best, being a well-groomed Captain.

**The Nautical Institute (NI)**

NI is the heart and soul of maritime professionalism. As Chairman of the UAE Branch, I focus on inspiring maritime professionals, sharing best practices, and promoting safety at sea. Think of it as the lighthouse guiding seafarers through the fog of maritime challenges.

**International Institute of Marine Surveying (IIMS)**

As a current member of the Board of Directors, Regional Director ME, and former International President, IIMS is where I don my detective hat. We inspect, deduce, and ensure everything is shipshape. As they say at the Board: “Here comes trouble.” While IIMS focuses on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of marine surveying, NI delves into the ‘why’ — the philosophy behind our actions at sea.

**Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers (ICS)**

ICS is the Wall Street of shipping — deals, charters, and negotiations. As a committee member, I help navigate the complex world of business development at the local Middle East branch — one of the most vibrant



H.E. Eng. Hessa Al Malek, Advisor to the Minister for Maritime Transport, UAE Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure, delivering the keynote at the Technical Conference



Faisal Al Hussein, President of Bahri Chemicals & Products, speaking at the Marine Ball



Capt Zarir Irani, NI UAE Chairman, leading the way at the Marine Ball celebrations



Capt Trevor Bailey, NI President, speaking at the Marine Ball gala



Capt John Lloyd, NI CEO, addressing guests during the gala night

branches within the ICS stable. However, NI is more about the journey than the transaction, emphasizing the continuous professional development of seafarers.

#### World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC)

WZCC is where entrepreneurship meets heritage. As their newest Board member since March 2023 and Regional Director for the Middle East, I support Zoroastrian entrepreneurs of the region and professionals pan-GCC. While WZCC fosters business acumen within our community, NI casts a wider net, aiming to uplift the global seafaring community regardless of background.

#### Emirates Maritime Law Association (EMLA)

EMLA is the courtroom drama of the maritime sector. As a founding member and treasurer, I help control the budget and keep the purse well-strung and adequately liquidated. But NI is the classroom — educating, mentoring, and shaping the next generation of maritime professionals, while giving back to the needy seafarers out at sea.

In summary, while each organization plays a pivotal role in the maritime ecosystem, The Nautical Institute stands out for its unwavering commitment to the personal and professional growth of seafarers. It's less about titles and more about tides — ensuring every mariner is equipped to navigate the ever-changing seas of our industry.

#### Within just three days, the maritime community in UAE witnessed a bonanza of events hosted by The Nautical Institute. What are your reflections on this milestone and its significance for the maritime fraternity?

Hosting the AGM, Technical Conference, and Marine Ball within a mere three days was akin to orchestrating a maritime symphony — each event a distinct movement, yet harmoniously aligned. The success of this “bonanza” wasn't the result of a solo performance but rather a testament to the unwavering support and enthusiasm of our maritime fraternity and a dedicated committee. Special mention to our events lead, Chris Peters, and his quick decision-making ability.

A heartfelt thank you to the Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East team for providing us with a complimentary booth and an entire day on the main stage for our Technical Conference. Their generosity offered us a platform to share insights, foster discussions, and strengthen our community bonds.

The cherry on top was the gracious presence of Her Excellency Eng. Hessa Al Malek, Advisor to the Minister for Maritime Transport Affairs, UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, who honoured our personal invitation to inaugurate the Technical Conference. Her inspiring keynote set the tone for a day filled with meaningful exchanges and forward-thinking dialogues.

Culminating this trilogy of events was our grand Marine Ball, held for the first time in two decades at a new venue in Dubai's Jumeirah Lake Towers. Special mention here to the quick thinking of our immediate past Chairman, Harihar Prasad, on inviting our Guest of Honour on the day.

The evening was marked by the induction of two Emirati cadets from Sharjah Maritime Academy as NI Safety Ambassadors. Each was presented with a symbolic AED 10,000 cheque, underscoring our commitment to nurturing future maritime leaders. A special shout-out to NI's elected President who brought the UAE Branch Committee to the stage to extend his personal thank you for a splendid performance and coordination during this marathon NI event.



NI UAE Branch Committee on stage at the Marine Ball

In essence, this trio of events wasn't just a series of gatherings; it was a celebration of our collective commitment to advancing maritime excellence. It reinforced the confidence our local fraternity places in The Nautical Institute and highlighted the collaborative spirit that propels our industry forward.

On behalf of NI members and the committee, a heartfelt thank you for attending personally, covering our efforts, and leading this edition.

#### Charting the Course: Captain John Lloyd on Maritime Excellence and Global Collaboration

Captain John Lloyd, Chief Executive Officer of The Nautical Institute since 2017, brings with him decades of leadership in maritime education and operations. His seagoing career began in 1975, leading to command in 1987, followed by roles as a marine pilot and educator across the UK, Australia, and the Pacific. With over 20 years in maritime training and academic leadership, including CEO of the Vanuatu Maritime College and Professor at the Australian Maritime College, Capt Lloyd has long championed professional development and global standards in the industry.

In this exclusive interview for *TradeMaker Magazine*, Chief Editor Nishit Doshi speaks with Capt Lloyd following the Institute's presence in Dubai, where it hosted a trio of landmark events in May 2025 — the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 7 May, Technical Conference on 8 May, and Marine Ball on 9 May — marking a significant engagement with the regional and international maritime community.

#### How was your visit to the UAE? Did the experience meet your expectations and objectives?

The visit to the United Arab Emirates during UAE Maritime Week in May 2025 was a highly rewarding experience. We were honoured to host our Technical Conference during the Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East event, where we addressed critical issues affecting the maritime community. The conference featured a strong line-up of expert speakers and generated excellent engagement.

Our key objectives included sharing best practices, introducing forward-looking ideas, and strengthening our connections with the maritime community in the UAE. I'm pleased to say these goals were certainly met. We also had a display stand at the exhibition, where we interacted with many visitors and updated them on the work of The Nautical Institute — including our professional development offerings, membership benefits, and specialised training programmes.

We received outstanding support from the Seatrade team, particularly with the technical aspects of the event. The use of the venue's main stage, as well as the video and recording capabilities, helped ensure a high-quality experience for all participants. The event not only met but, in many ways, exceeded our expectations. We were delighted to be part of it and look forward to returning in the future.



Capt Rajiv Sehgal, NI UAE Branch, presents a scholarship to 2025 Safety Ambassador Abdulrahman Alblooshi during the Marine Ball

#### What are your thoughts on the Nautical Institute's AGM, Technical Conference, and Marine Ball in Dubai? What role did you play in these events?

Dubai proved to be an ideal location for our AGM, which was held at the Dubai International Seafarers Center. The warm hospitality and excellent facilities allowed for a successful hybrid event, enabling global member participation and voting. It's always a privilege to recognise our Fellows — professionals who have made significant contributions to the maritime industry. This year, we were pleased that three recipients were able to attend in person and receive their certificates from our President.

The following day, we hosted our Technical Conference on the main stage of the Seatrade Maritime Logistics Middle East event venue. The sessions focused on future skills and key challenges in the maritime sector.

A highlight was hearing from three cadets at the early stages of their careers, who spoke passionately about their training and hopes for the future.

As CEO, my role was to provide strategic direction and ensure alignment with our objectives. I was supported by an outstanding team whose dedication made each event a success.

A particularly memorable experience was the Marine Ball, organised by our UAE Branch. It was an exceptional evening — from the seamless registration and impressive entertainment to the well-managed charity auction. The funds raised will go towards supporting important maritime causes and the next generation of cadets. It was heartening to see the strong turnout and generosity from the maritime community. I extend my sincere thanks to the local Branch for their commitment and flawless execution.

### **How have your maritime and training experiences shaped your work as CEO? What are some of your key contributions since 2017?**

Serving as CEO of The Nautical Institute since May 2017 has been a great privilege. My earlier experiences across different sectors of the maritime industry have provided valuable preparation for this role.

I began my career as a deck cadet in the 1970s and spent nearly 17 years at sea, eventually taking command. That time gave me a broad understanding of maritime operations and the value of working with multicultural crews. My work as a harbour pilot, particularly in Namibia, deepened my understanding of ship handling and team dynamics under pressure.

Over the past 20 years, I've been deeply involved in maritime education — from training roles in the UK to setting up a maritime college in Angola. I also led the Vanuatu Maritime College and served as Professor of Maritime Training at the Australian Maritime College. These experiences taught me how to align training with the diverse needs of an international industry, and they prepared me well for leading an organisation with global reach.

Since joining the Institute, I've worked closely with the team to modernise and expand our efforts. Some key achievements include:

- Doubling our membership: We've grown from fewer than 7,000 members to over 14,000 in five years.
- Free student membership: This initiative encourages early-career engagement, networking, and access to professional support.
- Formation of the Younger Members Council: Launched in 2018, this council brings together maritime professionals under 35 from around the world, providing fresh perspectives on industry priorities.
- Introducing the DPVM qualification: This certification supports technical staff working on Dynamic Positioning vessels and promotes global harmonisation of standards.
- Development of NI Academy: We've expanded our continuing professional development programmes, offering training in areas like navigational assessment, ISM auditing, mental health awareness, and more. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

Our publications continue to serve as a vital knowledge resource, supported by an engaged network of volunteers and specialists. Leading The Nautical Institute remains a collaborative and deeply rewarding experience, and I look forward to continuing this journey with our members worldwide.

### **Command Perspectives**

The events in Dubai were immensely valuable for all participants, whether or not they were members of The Nautical Institute. They showcased everything the Institute stands for, and the many benefits of membership. Events such as these offer outstanding opportunities for professional and social networking, enabling the exchange of ideas and perspectives on key issues facing the maritime community.

**– Capt Trevor Bailey, President, The Nautical Institute**

The UAE Maritime Week 2025 truly redefined excellence, and The Nautical Institute's events played a central role in that success. The AGM proved a bold forum for innovation, sparking meaningful dialogue on the maritime industry's next chapter and bringing together global leaders. This momentum carried into the Technical Conference, which offered forward-thinking insights on sustainability, future-proofing maritime skills, and shaping the mariner of tomorrow. The week culminated in the Gala Charity Dinner —an elegant and impactful celebration held in honour of the 2025 IMO World Maritime Day, leaving a lasting impression in support of ocean preservation. Clean, visionary, and truly extraordinary.

**– Capt Anuj Chopra, Deputy for Events Coordination, The Nautical Institute UAE Branch; Managing Director – MaritimESG Middle East Projects Management LLC**

The UAE has firmly established itself as a hub for all types of shipping activities. The local maritime community, through the dedicated efforts of The Nautical Institute's UAE Committee, has been actively engaged in seafarer welfare — especially in supporting those stranded or abandoned at sea. These efforts have been recognised on the global stage. It was a matter of pride for the UAE to host the Institute's Global AGM and Annual Conference in Dubai. The NI Marine Ball was a resounding success, marked by the generosity and enthusiastic participation of over 300 guests, including shipowners, classification societies, and senior executives from across the industry.

**– Capt Vikram Lal Mathur, Lead for Seafarer Welfare, The Nautical Institute UAE Branch; Tanker Director – Abu Dhabi Ports Group**

The AGM was a truly enriching experience. As the first to be held in Dubai, it was an honour to be part of such a historic gathering. The presentations were insightful, offering a deep dive into the important work The Nautical Institute does — including its charitable initiatives and its unwavering support for seafarer welfare. The evening concluded with a warm dinner and excellent networking opportunities. The Marine Ball was another standout event, thoughtfully organised by the committee. Special thanks to Capt Zarir Irani for his leadership and guidance in making it such a success. It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with maritime colleagues and enjoy an evening of camaraderie and celebration. Highlights included a fantastic live band, a soulful saxophone performance, and a lively dance floor that brought everyone together.

**– Capt Farhad Nanavaty, Lead for Not-For-Profit (NFP), The Nautical Institute UAE Branch**

It was an absolute pleasure to support and participate in The Nautical Institute's AGM, Technical Conference, and Marine Ball during UAE Maritime Week. These events offered an excellent platform to engage with peers, exchange valuable insights, and celebrate the collective progress of our industry. More importantly, they reinforced the value of collaboration and professional development in advancing our global maritime community.

**– Capt Dheeraj Sharma, Head of Commercial; Vice President, ABS for Marine and Offshore, Middle East and Africa Region Business Development**

**The Nautical Institute**, a London-based NGO with consultative status at the International Maritime Organization, is the international representative body for maritime professionals, promoting high standards in nautical practice and championing seafarers' interests on the global stage.

**Its UAE Branch**, founded in 1982 as the Institute's first and largest international branch, continues to lead by example. Open to members across the Emirates and beyond, the branch actively promotes best practices, professional development, and inclusivity across all career stages—whether at sea or ashore.

Scenes from the Marine Ball evening



Highlights from the Marine Ball celebrations

