

Human security in maritime milieu: Bangladesh perspective

Commodore Khondkar Misbah UI Azim, (TAS), NPP, afwc, psc, BN



Oceans are the lifelines of planet Earth and humankind. The sea accounts for about 71% of our blue planet, and given the resource constraints and increasing demand due to depleting land resources, exploration and exploitation of the seas and ocean space is increasingly becoming important for mankind. Over ninety percent of the planet's living and non-living resources are available within few hundred kilometres of the coasts and nearly two third of world's population lives along the coastal belt. Sea is a huge reservoir of minerals, chemicals, oils, gas and energy. Unsurprisingly, like any other time of the history, people and nations are incessantly using the sea and ocean space as principal medium of trade and commerce. The ocean also influences the weather, climate, monsoon, bio-productivity and bio-diversity of the mother earth. Having so much of stakes out at the seas, human footholds at sea is growing exponentially, so does the concerns

for the human security at maritime regime. This is because various human security issues as identified in the land like food security, health security, environmental security, security against violence, crimes, and disorder etc. also equally finding their presence in the oceanic domain.

Bangladesh has a critical dependency on sea and in many ways it is a true maritime nation. Its economic activities are heavily dependent on sea as more than 90% of its international commerce flows through the sea routes. A large size of populations (about 40 million) of the country lives around coastal areas of the country and endures directly or indirectly on marine dependent profession or activities. Recently, Bangladesh has solved the maritime boundary disputes with its both maritime neighbours i.e. Myanmar and India (ITLOS Verdict, 2012 and PCA Verdict, 2014) and bestowed with a vast sea areas with enormous potentiality and the exceeding opportunity to the prosperity

and well-being of the people. This opening has given a wide-ranging prospects in exploitation & explorations of natural resources, fisheries, aqua-culture, tourism, trade, energy and other blue economy sectors. Due to these huge dimensions, the maritime domain of Bangladesh could draw much attention of the common mass and of the policy makers alike. At the same time, the increase of human activities at maritime domain has every possibilities to give rise to many associated unwanted activities such as piracy, armed robbery, human trafficking, illegal trafficking of drugs & illegal arms, degradation of marine environment, etc like 'yin and yang'. These elements may have critical implications not only for a state's security but as well for all components of human security. In this backdrop, the re-emphasising of the security paradigms towards emerging human security approaches has no doubt become an important aspect in maritime domain.

The security concepts apart from external threats covering all range of insecurities be it economical or societal came to the security milieu only at the end of the cold war. In similar connotation, the concept of 'human security' emerged as a contemporary thought in security parlance and got huge attention. The concept of human security explicitly brings the people, the citizens and the individuals under focus. today's security environment demands protection not only from external aggression but also from the economic, social, environmental and all from of threats that may create insecurities to an individual. The rapid emergence of human security related concerns naturally compels the necessities to understand them in all

forms and dimensions including that of maritime perspective, enduring the fact that the issues related to human security in land very naturally find their relevance in the maritime domain too.

The maritime zones of Bangladesh represent different types of challenges, many of which need special attention from the human security perspective. To negotiate the multifaceted threats on human security in maritime domain, there are certain legal and institutional framework do exist. However, these institutions and legal aspects generally render attention primarily toward the maintenance of the physical security of the maritime zones and on sea resource management. But, in today's security setting, the centre referent of the security i.e. involved in the domain and their very own security needs to be focused in true sense. A harmonised organizational effort among the maritime stakeholders is thereby essential for harnessing the best out of the ocean. Bangladesh has taken number of initiatives in harnessing blue economy and to meet SDG goals, which automatically looks after many facets of human security too. However, a coordinated and comprehensive approach focused towards a sustained human security in maritime domain is important. Moreover, as there has been strikingly limited study on the subject, a wide-ranging research is required to render important policy prescriptions on these aspects - which is particularly significant given the heightened interest and contemporary relevance of the subject.

