

BIMRAD International Seminar Maritime Good Governance towards Sustainable Development



Maj General Tarique Ahmed,
Sdgltque, rcds, psc (retd)

Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed,
NEP, OGP, BCGM, ndc, psc

Mr Farooq Sobhan

Prof. Dr Imhaz Ahmed

Rear Admiral A S M A Awal,
NEP, OGP, ndc, psc, MBA (retd)

The Beginning

As a littoral country, Bangladesh is located on the northern edge of the Bay of Bengal and is the largest delta in the world. The people of this land have a very long history of maritime activities which includes maritime trade and shipping, shipbuilding, fishing and port facilities for foreign and domestic trade and commerce. History suggests that the people of this land enjoyed better living when they rely on maritime resources with necessary knowledge and understanding of oceans and its contribution to a civilization. It is apparent that good maritime governance of the ocean is indeed a necessity for sustainable development of a country. Many littoral countries are now becoming more ocean centric since oceans have become more accessible due to the technological development and availability of technologies. As a result, competition arises among the littoral states for regional ocean governance to tap the marine resources.

Oceans don't belong to any particular state, but they need governance. And

different maritime authorities have made the governance complex; therefore, there is a demand for an improved understanding of oceans and related maritime activities of exploration and exploitation. It would be wise and sustainable to govern seas through international agreements and regional approaches since parties involved in the decision-making should be aware of each other's interest, priorities and needs. With an aim to create awareness among the general people about the demand, requirements and challenges of Maritime Good Governance and recommend policies for sustainable development of the country, Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD) organized its maiden international seminar on 19 November 2018 at Hotel Radisson Blue, Dhaka Water Garden on the paramount and burning theme 'Maritime Good Governance towards Sustainable Development'. The seminar opened new avenues of opportunities for international networking, expert opinions and exchange of views on sustainable maritime development.

Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique, rds, psc (retd), Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Security Affairs was present as chief guest in the seminar, Five keynote speakers from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and the USA presented their respective papers on that important topic.

An Eventful Day

The grand BIMRAD international seminar had two sessions, the first session includes the opening ceremony, speeches of two keynote speakers, and the second session consisted of three keynote speakers, policy recommendations as well as an occasion of crests and souvenirs giveaway. In the beginning, guests arrived, completed the registration procedures and took seats in the awe-inspiring seminar hall. The chief guest arrived at the seminar and was received with a classy and congenial atmosphere. Upon the arrival of the chief guest, BIMRAD Director General Cdre Kazi Emdadul Haq, (L), BSP, ndu, psc, BN (retd), delivered the welcome address before the audience. He presented a compelling paper on BIMRAD and comprehensively highlighted on the vision of the institute. With high hopes, he stressed that BIMRAD, in collaboration with other institutes, would be the nation's leading maritime institute which would work for policy recommendations to uphold the maritime interest of the country. He also briefed the participants about the ongoing activities (publication of 'PAAL', organizing a seminar on maritime issues etc), future work plan, the website and the membership policies of the institute. The Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) and the chief patron of BIMRAD Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed, NBP, OSP, BCGM, ndc, psc,

in his inspiring speech, paid the deepest tribute to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who being a visionary leader appropriately realised the enormous importance of the sea for the development of a maritime nation like Bangladesh. The CNS also recalled that under the dynamic leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh successfully demarcated her maritime boundaries and obtained maritime territory of 1,18,813 square kilometres which unfolded new opportunities for optimum usages. He said that in order to maintain good governance of this vast region, littoral nations needed to work together, maintaining a good relationship with a wide range of co-operation, collaboration, understanding and partnership for the utilization of utmost potentiality of the available resources for the greater benefit of humankind. After the CNS speech, Mr Farooq Sobhan, the president and CEO of the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), presented introductory proceedings as a moderator. Then, first keynote speaker, Admiral Jayanath Colombage, PhD (retd), Director of Indo-Lanka Initiatives, Pathfinder Foundation of Sri Lanka delivered his speech on 'Maritime Good Governance and Sustainable Development for Indian Ocean Region: The Conceptual Perspective'. Rear Admiral M Khurshed Alam, Mphil, ndc, psc (retd), Secretary (Maritime Affairs Unit), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh presented his speech on 'Good Governance in Exploration and Exploitation of Marine Resources' as second keynote speaker. At the end of the first keynote session, a Q&A session was conducted and it was summed up by the moderator. Organizers handed over the crest to the guests and speakers and, later, the

chief guest Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddique, rcds, psc, (retd), Security Adviser to the Hon'ble Prime Minister delivered his speech. In his address, he put emphasis on sustainable uses of marine resources which would allow Bangladesh to keep up steady development without tampering the nature in a deleterious way. He also mentioned the visionary planning and steps taken by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina for promoting 'DELTA PLAN 2100' which would allow Bangladesh to introduce herself as a developed country by 2041. He contemplated that BIMRAD would be able to contribute in a large scale by generating and regulating policies for the sustainable and rational usage of marine resources between different maritime stakeholders in the local, regional and international levels. The first session was concluded with a group photography arrangement.

It was around 01.00 PM when the second session started and lasted for 3 hours. At first, Prof. Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor of International Relations and Director, Centre for Genocide Studies at the University of Dhaka, presented introductory proceedings as a moderator of the second session. Capt Richard Francis Sears (retd) from Daniel K Inouye Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (DKI APCSS), Hawaii presented the third keynote speech on 'Maritime Security and Good Governance in the Indian Ocean Region'. Cheryl Rita Kaur, Head of Centre for Coastal and Marine Environment, Maritime Institute of Malaysia was the fourth keynote speaker who delivered a speech on 'Marine Pollution Control: Governance Challenges'. The fifth and last keynote speaker Admiral RK Dhowan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (retd), Chairman of

National Maritime Foundation, India presented his speech on 'Role of Law Enforcing Agencies in Maintaining Good Governance at Sea' which is considered as one of the imperative topics of the maritime arena. There was another Q&A session held after the fifth keynote speech. Later, Professor Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, as the moderator, summed up the speeches and talked about two big theories, the theory of scarcity and theory of abundance. He considered that Bangladesh was literally stuck in the theory of scarcity and the reason was that the part of the planning was done by economists. Dr Imtiaz also advocated focussing on the theory of abundance. According to him, the world has been transforming from land-centric to water-centric, and Asia-Pacific strategy is land-centric whereas the Indo-Pacific strategy is water-centric. He also recommended for the re-conceptualisation of water relating to pollution, politics, power and profit. Later, episode for summarising speech on the seminar with policy recommendations and vote of thanks was held. Based on the keynote speech of the seminar, Rear Admiral ASMA Awal, NBP, OSP, ndc, psc, MBA (retd) presented the policy recommendations and vote of thanks to the profound speakers and distinguished guests for their kind presence and making the seminar eloquent. He articulated that it was necessary to develop a shared regional strategy for rule based order in IOR for littoral and other users. He emphasised on the development of the Blue Economy with befitting infrastructure, technologies and investments involving private sectors in the context of SDGs (14 in particular). Real Admiral Awal also recommended for effective cooperation amongst all stakeholders/agencies for sustainable exploitation of

resources under integrated resource governance framework. He proposed to take effective measures for urgent protection of marine environment and ecosystems from marine pollution under coastal and marine pollution management framework. He emphasised on adopting confidence building measures through bilateral and multi-lateral engagements for stability and good maritime governance in IOR. In his speech, Rear Admiral Awal also opined for deploying Navy, Coast Guard and other law enforcing agencies in national waters and beyond for good order and stability. According to him, maritime awareness is important to monitor good order and stability in vital maritime spaces. He also gave importance to the enhancement of capacity building through shared and balanced approach to regional security of IOR.

At the end of the seminar, crests and souvenirs were handed over to speakers and moderators. A group photography followed by light refreshment pulled the curtain of that elegant event.

Keynotes

The first keynote speaker Admiral Jayanath Colombage, PhD (retd) delivered his speech on 'Maritime Good Governance and Sustainable Development for Indian Ocean Region: The Conceptual Perspective'. The speaker argued that geo-strategically the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) had gained so importance in the 21st century that it was no longer a benign region rather a contested one. Therefore, as said by Mr Jayanath, Maritime Good Governance was inevitable for the sustainable development of IOR. He further argued that there was a power transition taking

place in IOR due to the changing balance of power scenario and fast developing economies of China and India and intentional unlawful damage to the marine environment, marine pollution, Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing were also key challenges in IOR. To combat all these, the speaker stressed upon the maritime domain awareness and confidence-building measures among the littorals. He concluded with the view that the best way to ensure peace and stability of IOR was to maintain a rule-based maritime order for which adequate regional maritime strategy and Maritime Security architectures should be devised.

Rear Admiral M Khurshed Alam, Mphil, ndc, psc (retd), presented his speech on topic 'Good Governance in Exploration and Exploitation of Marine Resources' as the second keynote speaker. He began by stressing upon the fact that the ocean was valued at more than USD 24 trillion, however, its actual value was likely to be much higher as many ecosystem services were difficult to quantify. He said that the aquaculture accounts for roughly 18 per cent of the global seafood production where Small Scale Fisheries (SSFs) enormously contributed to food security and employment for millions of coastal poor. The speaker informed that decade long study of marine biodiversity illustrated scientific efforts to know oceans better. Mr Khurshed also said that technological challenges and regulatory uncertainty, particularly in Areas Beyond the National Jurisdictions (ABNJ), had made industrial mining not yet feasible. The speaker concluded that it was imperative to improve and strengthen the governance framework for the management of Blue Economy/fish

stocks associated with deep-sea ecosystems. He emphasised that monitoring and control of fishing activities for the conservation of biodiversity and different types of habitats in IOR must be ensured for sustainable development.

Capt Richard Francis Sears (retd) presented the third keynote speech on 'Maritime Security and Good Governance in the Indian Ocean Region'. The speaker began by stressing upon the fact that the IOR had steadily gained importance in the post-World War II era and the region would see an acceleration of this importance going forward. Capt Richard said that economically the Indian Ocean littorals contained more than two-thirds of the world's oil reserves and 35 per cent of the gas reserves along with large deposits of uranium, gold, diamonds and other minerals and strategically the Indian Ocean possessed vital sea lines of communication and some of the most critical choke points on the globe. The speaker also explained that the Maritime Security environment of IOR where a great power competition had been spurred by its economic and strategic value. He said that China and India were both rising as military and economic maritime powers which would spur inevitable competition, particularly in the Indian Ocean. The speaker concluded by emphasising upon the need for a stronger regional architecture to improve governance in the region.

The fourth keynote speaker Cheryl Rita Kaur delivered her speech on 'Marine Pollution Control: Governance Challenges'. The speaker highlighted various governance challenges of marine pollution control. She pointed towards the concern that almost 80 per

cent of pollution in the seas emanated from land and if the current rate of pollution continued, the plastic could outweigh fish by 2050. Rita Kaur said that large coastal population, waste generation/ mismanagement and leakage from the land/rivers were three main causes of marine pollution. She said that there were many regional declarations that emphasised the importance of the protection of the marine environment and sustainable use of marine resources; however, there was no binding regional oceans agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of maritime activities. The speaker concluded that adequate importance should be given to having a coordination mechanism at the national level and development of clear integrated ocean policy and marine ocean planning.

The fifth and last keynote speaker Admiral RK Dhowan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM (retd), presented his speech on 'Role of Law Enforcing Agencies in Maintaining Good Governance at Sea' which is considered as one of the imperative topics of the maritime arena. In continuation of all previous speeches, the speaker primarily highlighted three aspects related to the rule based international order which were stated by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his key role address at the Shangri La Dialogue in June 2018. Firstly, he said that there was a need to evolve common rule-based orders for the region, that should apply equally to individual nations as well as the global commons. Such an order must believe in sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as the equality of all nations. These rules and norms should be based on the consent of all and not the power of a few. Secondly, nations should all have equal rules and rights,

under international law and freedom of navigation, to the use of common spaces at sea and in the air. Thirdly, promoting a democratic rule-based international order in which all nations, big and small, thrive as equals. The speaker also informed the forum that, India intended to establish an open and inclusive Regional Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean. The speaker concluded that the IOR countries needed to plan strategies and develop capabilities to harness oceanic resources for the economic benefit of its people.

The Bar is Raised Higher

It was beyond doubt that the overall arrangements and conduct of the first international seminar organized by BIMRAD were of high standards. By arranging the seminar wonderfully, BIMRAD has raised the bar very high. BIMRAD also had shown excellent in professionalism coordinating and logistic arrangements where

Bangladeshi hospitality was at its best. Bangladesh Navy's high standard of professionalism was also showcased. During the deliberation, aspiration of Bangladesh as a nation to uplift the people of Bangladesh was also evident. BIMRAD maintained a congenial atmosphere for the guests and audiences. According to many, it was a wonderfully conducted event with dedication, commitment and professionalism.

MoU Signing

On this very day, three MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding) were signed between BIMRAD and three international maritime research institutes and think tanks for extending cooperation, resource sharing, training and many more.

A MoU was signed between BIMRAD and National Maritime Foundation, India. The National Maritime Foundation (NMF), New Delhi, was established in 2005 as the nation's first maritime think tank for conducting independent and policy-relevant research on 'matters maritime'.

Pathfinder Foundation of Sri Lanka signed a MOU with BIMRAD Bangladesh. The Pathfinder Foundation (PF) is a non-profit, non-partisan research & advocacy think tank which has played a direct and catalytic role in promoting economic policy reforms in Sri Lanka.

Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) signed the third MoU with BIMRAD. DKI APCSS is a U.S. Department of Defence Institute that officially opened September 4, 1995, in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Centre addresses regional and global security issues, inviting military and civilian representatives of the United States and Asia-Pacific nations to its comprehensive programme of executive education and workshops, both in Hawaii and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Focusing the Future

This very first seminar of BIMRAD has opened several windows through which international research and development of Bangladesh's maritime sector can be conducted. There can be joint research projects between BIMRAD and other international think tanks in this area of interest. Representatives/scholars representing maritime institutions could be invited for events related to the maritime domain. There could even be temporary, short-term affiliations and exchange programmers at the respective think tanks for specific periods to carry out

joint research. Funding for such projects can be identified. BIMRAD can act as a catalyst for cooperation and confidence-building measures in the region. BIMRAD has already shown that it is capable of doing that during its first international seminar conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh is positioned in a strategically important location in the Bay of Bengal and should leverage that position for the common good of the region. Apart from that, Maritime Security, Maritime Governance, Blue Economy and SDG 14, Global Warming, Climate Change, Responsible Fisheries are some areas in which national and international bodies can collaborate. As a new institute, BIMRAD should priorities the institutional maritime research agenda and thematic areas that would bring direct short-term benefits to Bangladesh. The organization should prepare for a strategic research plan that would address the medium to long-term needs, gaps and challenges.

Conclusion

The importance of sustainable use of maritime resources for socio-economic development should not be ignored. The people must remember that 71 per cent of the planet's surface is saltwater, and oceans have become the center of civilization, trade, commerce and leisure. This ecosystem contributes to the planet's climate control and the world's oxygen, food, water, raw materials resources and even our entertainment services. With this continuation of maritime awareness initiative, sustainable implementation plans on maritime resource exploration, accumulation and their proper use, prevention of marine pollution, conservation of marine life and introducing laws to establish good maritime governance can be addressed, and sustainable development can be achieved, beneficially.