

Wishing BIMRAD Fair Winds and Happy Sailing:

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Q.1. BIMRAD is a very new origination in Maritime research arena. As a keynote speaker of the international seminar arranged under the umbrella of BIMRAD, would you please share your feelings including the overall arrangement of the seminar?

As the first international conference organised by the BIMRAD, you did a splendid job and raised the bar very high. Overall arrangements and conduct of the seminar were of high standards. All coordinating and logistic arrangements were excellent and the Bangladeshi hospitality was at its best. The conference also showcased the high standard of professionalism of the Bangladesh Navy. Aspirations of Bangladesh as a nation to uplift the people of your country was also evident during the deliberations. There was also a congenial atmosphere which prevailed during the entire duration of our stay. Overall, it was a wonderfully conducted event with dedication, commitment and professionalism. Well done BIMRAD and Congratulations!

Q.2. As a newly incorporated organization in the maritime arena, there are lots of potential sectors where BIMRAD can conduct research work to develop the maritime sector of Bangladesh. What is your opinion/suggestions in this regard?



Agreed. BIMRAD has filled a long felt need for an aspiring maritime nation such as Bangladesh to embark on research in the maritime domain and to formulate policy recommendations and advocacy for the government and thereafter for the entire region, BIMRAD can be a repository for maritime-related research in Bangladesh and could facilitate research by local, regional as well as international researchers in related maritime fields. Some of the areas recommended are; formulating a regional Maritime Security and governance structure; developing confidence-building measures for enhancing maritime connectivity and prosperity; Blue Economy as a regional integrator and security provider; marine environment and preventing human-induced pollution; and the impact of Climate Change and Global Warming on regional countries and mitigating measures.

Q.3. In your view, what are the potential challenges may be encountered by BIMRAD to way forward as a newly established research institute; and how BIMRAD can overcome those challenges?

Harnessing the vast knowledge and experience of Bangladesh Navy personnel, either retired or serving, in a meaningful and productive manner would be a huge advantage and a challenge. A carefully prepared plan should be designed and implemented in this regard. Funding to sustain the future mobility of BIMRAD is also important. A seed fund may be required with financial control being exercised by a designated authority. Expenses for conducting regional and/or international conferences, workshops, seminars to be considered. How BIMRAD can relate and coordinate with other maritime and marine-based research centres and think tanks need to be carefully considered and necessary guidelines may be drawn up. Furthermore, there will be a requirement of funds to embark on research.

Q.4. How best BIMRAD can work collaboratively with Pathfinder in order to achieve maritime vision & augment SDG 14 in this region?

There can be joint research projects between BIMRAD and PF in this area of interest. Representatives/scholars representing both institutions could be invited for events related to the maritime domain. There could even be temporary, short-term affiliations and exchange programmes with the respective think tanks for specific periods to carry out joint research.

Funding for such projects can be identified. There is a difference in PF as it is a non-profit organisation and dedicated funding is not available. Protecting the 'Life Below Water' is a regional and global necessity and we need to do whatever is possible to achieve positive results.

Q.5. You have given a very thought-provoking concept on Maritime Good Governance in your lecture which has generated a lot of discussion amongst participants. You have courageously mentioned some important issues in IOR. Do you think these issues could become a big problem in maintaining good order in IOR, if so, why?

I firmly believe that our region should not be a battleground for major-power rivalry and strategic competition. Our main aim is to develop infrastructures for enhancing connectivity and prosperity to uplift our people. I believe that as long as we do not have our own narrative and initiatives, we will be subjected to other's narratives and initiatives. We need to develop a regional identity and take ownership of our affairs and not be dominated by extra-regional powers. At present, we have peace and a rule-based maritime order and a somewhat benign maritime environment. We should try our best to maintain this. This peaceful period is the most opportune time to discuss maintaining this status quo. We should be ready for a regional maritime order that we are prepared for and not the other way around.

Q.6. In your speech, you have mentioned that both Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are now at strategic dilemma stage in OR arena. Please explain a bit more, why? How can we overcome from strategic dilemma to strategic convergence and subsequently towards strategic competition?

I have given some answers in above Question 5 in this regard. Yes, we are in a strategic dilemma as we cannot make decisions based on economics and what is good for our countries. First, we have to pay attention to the strategic aspiration of other countries and extra-regional powers. We need to enhance maritime connectivity and ocean trade. We were very well connected prior to the arrival of colonial powers to this region. We need to reconnect ourselves as soon as possible and become a power and an economic bloc as a region. We need to avoid being caught up in the strategic competition of major powers and be forced to choose sides or hedge one side against the other. We should always have a people-centric approach to prosperity. If we are united as a region, we can withstand pressure from external forces better.

Q7. According to your opinion, what are the reasons that make the Indian Ocean a contested region? Are there any probable solutions in hand that will make this region a peaceful one?

The Indian Ocean Region (OR) is of high economic relevance. It is the major gateway for global trade in energy and containerized cargo. It will remain so in the immediate future as Asian countries are developing fast

and are becoming economic powers. There is a power transition that is taking place in the IOR. The USA's economic and military power is on a relative decline and China and India are emerging as major economic and naval powers. There are signs of multi-polarity emerging in the Indian Ocean and this could lead to contest and conflict upon its waters. We need our own narrative, maritime strategy and confidence-building measures to stay away from this competition.

Q.8. Can you please explain what do you mean by 'multi-lateral security arrangement' in IOR?

No single navy or coast guard can be the 'net security provider' in the IOR. We need a collaborative mechanism to face the current and possible threats in the future. We need burden sharing and cooperation and interoperability. The best way for us is to work as a region and develop multilateral security arrangements rather than working our own way forward, individually. The best and most economical way forward would be to work as a region. We need to develop trust and overcome trust deficiency. If we believe that a multi-polar world is emerging, we need to look at the multilateral security as well.

Q.9. You mentioned the "rule-based maritime order", would you please explain a bit more?

A rule-based maritime order in the IOR will especially benefit the JOR littorals to maintain freedom of navigation, overfly and maritime trade upon its waters. As a global common, it would benefit international sea-

borne trade. What I meant by a rule-based maritime order is that we agree to abide by the internationally accepted rules such as UNCLOS and other conventions and regimes for the maritime domain and not be a threat to other nations by unilateral actions for individual gains. How do we achieve this is the question. That is why I emphasise on an inclusive 'Code of Conduct' to be abided by all littorals as well as other users of the Indian Ocean or even limited to the Bay of Bengal.

Q.10. How BIMRAD can work in collaboration with the regional and extra-regional maritime research institutes (like NMF, Pathfinder, MIMA, APCSS etc.) to mitigate the mistrust in the IOR for maintaining Maritime Good Governance?

The answer lies in some of the answers I provided before. We need to create and continue a free and frank discussion about the issues we are facing with regional and extra-regional entities. It could be track 2 or 1.5. We should endeavor to propel our recommendations to the policymakers in our countries. If we persist and create valuable advice, one day they will listen.

Q.11. How BIMRAD can contribute to the confidence building between different regional maritime stakeholders in the IOR?

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.

Q.12. BIMRAD has signed MoU with Pathfinder; what are the possible areas that both can work together?

Maritime Security, Maritime Governance, Blue Economy and SDG 14, Global Warming, Climate Change, Responsible Fisheries are some areas the two institutions can collaborate.

Q.13. What are the main reasons behind your proposal, "let us work through SAGAR concept"?

The IOR has many different initiatives and dialogues. I have witnessed that these produce good outcomes during their initiated deliberations. But the implementation of these recommendations does not follow. I feel SAGAR is a good concept for the region. We all should rise like the rising tide. If we leave one or a few countries behind, it could lead to conflict and we may not have the desired peace to focus on our economic development. SAGAR is a local concept. We could use it to collect, analyses and evaluate the outcome of all the initiatives and summaries the findings in a meaningful manner. These collective outcomes could be presented to our governments or regional bodies such as BIMSTEC or SAARC for implementation.

Q.14. What are the important issues that have been discussed on maritime-related research during the call on with Bangladesh Navy Chief?

I am so proud of the way Bangladesh CNS is discharging his duties. I have seen how he performed as the Chairman of Chattogram port. He is always having a vision and he is a taskmaster. He has a 'country first' attitude and believes in it. I congratulated him on his success and also for creating BIMRAD. We discussed the need to continue the progress we achieved during the BIMRAD dialogue. As a first step, we agreed to have a trilateral conference between BIMRAD, NMF and PF. We also discussed learning best practices in the fishing industry from each other. Even the Security Advisor to the Honourable Prime Minister was very keen on long-line fishing and possible joint ventures between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Q.15. Do you foresee any joint research that both the institutions can start immediately?

I believe that I have given the answer earlier. We can start with enhancing

Maritime Security cooperation in the BOB, Maritime Governance issues, Blue Economic prospects and best practices and joint fisheries activities.

Q.16. Are you happy with the conduct of BIMRAD members; was your visit to Dhaka useful?

I am indeed very happy about the conduct of BIMRAD members. I enjoyed your kind hospitality, exposure to your rich culture, scholarship, networking opportunities and delicious Bangladeshi cuisine. Thank you very much.

Q.17, Any other suggestions/opinions from your side?

It was a wonderfully conducted conference. Even this questionnaire itself speaks volumes of your commitment. This is the first time in my academic career, proper feedback was obtained based on a paper presented by me. This shows your interest to carry on. Well done. I wish you fair winds and happy sailing.