

Effective Cooperation and Partnership Needed for Sustainable Development

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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?

The overall planning and execution of the first BIMRAD international seminar have indeed impressed me, especially the fact that key areas included in the presentations, deliberations and discussions were topical and relevant to the current needs, issues and challenges faced in the region. The inclusion of think tanks, as well as regional and international organizations in the maritime field, also assisted in the sharing of thoughts for not only achieving the sustainable development goals but also to synchronize the way forward through effective cooperation and partnerships with like-minded institutions.

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?

In my opinion, BIMRAD is well positioned to conduct research,



formulate management and policy options, and create better awareness on related maritime issues - not just in Bangladesh but also to strive towards more coordinated efforts and action programme linked with other like-minded institutions to exchange experiences and best practices, and to embark on timely research for local, regional and international benefits and outcomes in the maritime field.

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 what is the way-out of those challenges?

As a new institute, among the foreseeable challenges would include the need for BIMRAD to priorities the institutional maritime research

agenda and thematic areas that would bring direct short-term benefits to Bangladesh; whilst also preparing for a strategic research plan that would address the medium to long-term needs, gaps and challenges. Human resource and workforce with the right background, knowledge, and experience would also be essential. Close links and networking with related agencies in Bangladesh would also be needed in ensuring proposals and recommendations from BIMRAD so that those are well accepted and implemented.

Q.4. Nowadays, marine pollution is one of the major concern in the IOR region. What are the devastating effects it can cause for a densely populated littoral country like Bangladesh?

In many other parts of this region, most of the populations live within the coasts and hence it is not surprising that human activities are taking their toll in the form of pollution and other adverse environmental impacts. All marine pollution has the potential to not only damage the marine habitats, biodiversity and life in the sea, but also impose direct or indirect threats to human health and wellbeing, food security, and economic prosperity. Most of the associated issues are also, more often than not, trans boundary in nature and hence the impact would be felt whether the pollution originates from Bangladesh or elsewhere, in this case. Responsibilities are owned by States to ensure that damage to the marine environment caused by such activities is prevented, reduced and controlled. For the matter of fact, the 1982 United Nations Convention on

the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as a universally accepted global convention governing the oceans, rules on States the right to seek remedies to prevent trans boundary pollution of the marine environment. Recent environmental concerns have also been focusing on the fact that marine pollution is placing extra stress on organisms and marine lives that are already threatened or endangered.

Q.5. In your speech, you have mentioned that many regional institutes are working to control marine pollution. Yet, marine pollution is increasing at an alarming rate. Why? How BIMRAD can work in collaboration with the regional and extra-regional maritime research institutes to develop general awareness against marine pollution?

It is important to acknowledge the fact that policy and management actions to address marine pollution involves translating the aspired goals, targets and objectives into implementable actions. In my opinion, although this is seen as an integral and logical part of a policy cycle or management plan, not much emphasis is being placed on assessing the effectiveness of existing maritime policies (given if there is such a policy in the first place), gaps and challenges, and barriers linked to implementation performance or proper execution (or in simple words i.e., on paper vs effective implementation/enforcement). Other possible challenges include the lack of coordination, funding, commitment, capabilities among the implementers, and sometimes even weak political

support. I am of the opinion that loopholes related to the factors mentioned above need to be addressed to improve implementation and achieve the desired outcomes.

Q.6. Can you please mention any significant improvement against marine pollution by any regional institute? If not so, then what standard model/ concept can be followed by those institutes against marine pollution?

There are generally several examples that come to mind on this. I will, however, emphasize on the example established by the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA). Taking the issue of marine debris pollution as a major threat to the oceans, which comprise a wide range of materials such as persistent plastics, lost and abandoned fishing gear, and other pollutants. Marine debris contributes to ecological, environmental and socio-economic damage, including ingestion by and entanglement of marine life, fouling of coastlines and interference with navigation. Reducing marine pollution is also part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is spelt out in Goal 14, which focuses on the need to conserve and use oceans, seas and marine resources on a sustainable basis.

A national survey in Malaysia earlier revealed that we lack systematic surveys and monitoring of marine litter, data on marine litter at a source, information on ocean circulation patterns and accumulation zones along the coastlines, and the ecological and environmental impacts of marine litter. For many years, there was also no suitable quantitative

means to evaluate whether a beach was clean or dirty, with the only measure being the amount of waste removed from these areas, namely the tonnage of debris cleared or the number of trash bags collected. MIMA had therefore established a Clean-Coast Index (CCI) to serve as a tool to evaluate the actual cleanliness of our coastal areas. This went on to be adopted for monitoring and management purposes by State and local governments.

Q.7. In your speech, you have highlighted that 70-80 per cent of sea pollution has occurred from land. How best we can address this issue and what are the policies BIMRAD can adopt? Can you please cite any Malaysian model as an example to follow?

Yes, indeed, 70-80 per cent of the pollution that reaches the sea comes from land-based sources. In general, this calls for actions directed toward minimizing the flow of such pollutants into the sea and improving the quality of the materials that does reach the sea. Malaysia, for instance, has good practices and models on addressing both land- and sea-based sources of pollutants through proper monitoring, enforcement and reporting mechanisms well in line with national, regional and international environmental requirements. In a nutshell, examples include the national marine water quality monitoring efforts by the Department of Environment Malaysia, as well as enforcement of MARPOL annexes by the Marine Department of Malaysia. The issue however largely involves addressing the non-point source of pollution more effectively. Unlike

pollution from industrial and sewage treatment plants etc. which comes from diffuse sources, non-point source pollution is usually caused by rainfall and runoff carrying away natural and human-made pollutants into the rivers, wetlands and coastal waters. The effects of non-point source of pollutants on specific waters may vary and usually are not fully assessed. They, however, impose serious effects on recreation values, fisheries sustainability, and coastal communities' livelihoods.

Q.8. BIMRAD has proposed for MoU with MIMA (Maritime Institute of Malaysia). What are the possible advantages we may derive if MoU is signed?

In general sense, the direct benefits would include the sharing of experience and knowledge on areas of mutual interests, establishing joint collaborative research or non-research programmes for mutual benefits, creating more direct networking opportunities between the two institutions and research staffs, as well as the opportunity for producing joint publications in the maritime field.

Q.9. According to your opinion, what are the probable fields that MIMA would be interested to work with BIMRAD?

MIMA would be interested to explore further the opportunity to work on addressing marine environmental issues and sustainable resource management. This could include efforts on addressing marine pollution, protected areas establishment and management, food security, and Climate Change related

issues with regards to the coastal and marine environment.

Q.10. How best BIMRAD can work collaboratively with MMA in order to achieve the maritime vision and augment SDG 14 in this region?

In addition to the MOU, I would also suggest for a dialogue session between BIMRAD and MIMA to explore further strengths and opportunities that could be capitalized from the experiences available within MIMA, as well as to be in focus with priority areas identified by BIMRAD towards realizing SDG 14 aspirations.

Q.11. How or is there any scope that BIMRAD may derive benefit from or augment the maritime related issues with existing regional forums like PEMSEA, BOBLME, IORA, SAGAR, BIMSTEC, etc.?

Although not directly relevant to all the regional forums mentioned above, MIMA does play an active role in not just participating but also providing inputs and recommendations on related areas in several of the above. There are hence opportunities for MIMA and BIMRAD to explore the feasibility to produce joint input documents, presentations as well as organize joint forums to address some of the priority areas that have been identified by the above forums.

Q.12. What are the important issues that have been discussed on maritime-related research during the call on with Bangladesh Navy Chief?

The overall discussion was very encouraging and forward-looking. One such area that I found

particularly enlightening was the present maritime situation understanding, issues and needs in Bangladesh. With proper planning and execution, much can be done by BIMRAD to address concerns and achieve mutual benefits collectively through engagements at the local, national and regional levels.

Q.13. Are you happy with the conduct of BIMRAD members; was your visit to Dhaka useful?

Yes, of course. This was my first visit to Dhaka; much was achieved in such a short time I had in the city. The learning and sharing experience, networking, as well as the chance to plan further cooperative engagements with not only BIMRAD but also other like-minded institutions and key personnel present - are cherished.

Q.14. Any other suggestions/ opinions from your side?

The international seminar has been a crucial first step and seen as a remarkable effort and opportunity to further cooperation and engagement in the maritime field. We look forward to continuing communications towards achieving closer maritime cooperation!

Who Gives the Ocean that Blue Tint?

One of the most indelible features of the oceans is the deep blue waters that are continually churning, rolling, and coming in waves. The colour is the result of the sun's red and orange wavelengths being absorbed by the surface and its blue wavelengths penetrating deeper, giving way to a blue tint. And because those wavelengths can travel further down, the ocean will tend to appear bluer the lower you go. Why isn't water in a glass blue when you're sitting outdoors? There aren't enough molecules to absorb the light.