

Navigating Maritime Literacy in Bangladesh: Challenges and Ways Ahead

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Maritime literacy is not just a skill, it is the skill and knowledge of maritime geography, including navigational principles and operation of vessels used for various purposes, concepts, and awareness that concern the sea and coastal areas. This also means understanding the maritime ecosystem, and how humans impact its composition are part of this holistic idea called maritime literacy. This also includes understanding the importance of protecting marine habitats through basic knowledge of safety measures, emergency management and survival techniques required by marine activities, and knowledge of practical conservation methods.

Bangladesh has a rich maritime past including historic trade routes and a long history of shipbuilding and avid fishermen. An understanding of international maritime laws, policies and organizations governing maritime activities and issues related to the latest developments in the maritime sector is important for Bangladesh. The economic importance of ocean knowledge for maritime industries, including shipping, fishing and tourism and how it affects international trade and finance faces many

challenges. This article highlights solutions or pursue "Cut the Gordian Knot" to these complex challenges that have been explored, considering the knowledge necessary to navigate, perceive and interact with marine environments and activities often referred to and related to maritime literacy.

Importance of Maritime Literacy

Maritime literacy is important for a variety of reasons, including safety, environmental protection, economic rationality, cultural appreciation, science and emergency management skills, navigation principles, and weather information, which can help prevent accidents and save lives. Learning marine safety procedures, emergency signals, and first aid ensures that people are prepared in the event of a disaster. Proper maritime literacy can demonstrate the importance of marine life and resources, environmental protection and conservation by developing a strong understanding of marine ecology. Awareness is required of how humans save marine environments by promoting sustainable fishing, pollution control, and preservation. Learning the role of international trade through the Sea Lines

of Communication (SLOC) can help significantly boost the economy (Muna, 2023). Understanding the way of working in the marine-related industry, fishing, science, and tourism can create new job opportunities.

Learning maritime history reveals how maritime transportation has affected human civilization, including cultural exchange and exploration. Understanding maritime customs and traditions helps to preserve cultural heritage and develop progress and identity. The idea of knowledge of marine biological resources fosters interest in marine research and contributes to scientific literacy. An understanding of marine engineering enables creativity and advances technology, including ship design and marine engineering.

Benefits of Maritime Literacy

Maritime literacy helps people be better prepared for work and leisure at sea, reducing risk and increasing safety. Environmental policy and management of marine resources involve more knowledgeable people and planning. Thus, maritime literacy can promote a sense of shared responsibility. It encourages community participation in coastal marine conservation initiatives. It can integrate biology, geography, history, economics and engineering to ensure prosperity for a maritime nation like Bangladesh.

Advance learning of maritime literacy ensures the safety of people who work at sea or participate in waterborne activities. Due to the importance of marine ecosystems, people are increasingly aware of the need for conservation and eco-friendly behavior. Understanding the importance of the maritime industry promotes sound business practices and clarifies its place in the global economy. Knowledge of the history and culture of the marine world improves our understanding of human civilization and intercultural relations. Increasing people's understanding of marine ecological concepts in marine science can promote scientific literacy and encourage careers in the maritime sector.

State of Maritime Literacy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's current maritime literacy shows that the country is increasingly recognizing the value of maritime infrastructure due to its location, economy dependent on maritime trade and growing interest in marine conservation. The location of the country is advantageous for shipping lanes and regional maritime trade. Major ports like Chittagong and Mongla handle most of the country's imports (Munim, 2022). Exports are important for trade. A large portion of the population derives its livelihood from fishing and related activities.

Seafarers can get training at Bangladesh Marine Academy, Marine Fisheries Academy, and other marine academies across the country. Programs in marine science and related disciplines are available at several public and private universities. There is limited integration of maritime literacy in primary and secondary school curricula. However, the country needs more focus on specialized training in marine fisheries, marine engineering, and other marine-related higher studies.

Although there are occasional items and segments, maritime news is rarely covered by the mainstream media. Government and non-profit organizations often run awareness campaigns on marine conservation and protection. The Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard are trying to build awareness in promoting maritime literacy in Bangladesh by organizing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) seminars. This is the major initiative dedicated to promoting maritime literacy. However, the awareness remains low amongst the vast population of the country.

The Sundarbans mangrove forest protects a unique ecosystem. It is recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There are many policies to protect marine life and its conservation. However, problems such as pollution and overfishing remain. NGOs and local associations are involved in awareness-raising activities. They promote sustainable fishing methods, beach clean-up, etc.

Efforts are being made to develop a comprehensive maritime strategy. This strategy focuses on maritime security and sustainable development. The government is pushing the idea of "Blue Economy." The goal is to make better use of marine resources. Bangladesh participates in regional maritime conventions and organizations. These bodies work to improve environmental protection and maritime security, and enable partnering with global organizations for research. They assist in technology transfer and capacity building.

Challenges and Ways Ahead

The general education system of Bangladesh does not include a strong integration of maritime literacy. In addition, there are not many facilities or resources available for offshore training and education. One of the main barriers to achieving maritime literacy in the country is the lack of public outreach and awareness. The media often does not cover maritime issues regularly and widely. Furthermore, the lack of implementation and enforcement of marine policies and regulations undermines the regulations and public awareness required to address major environmental concerns.

Encouraging public-private partnerships to build ocean education programs and resources to ensure effective coverage and information sharing through the media, social networks, and community activities can be very beneficial. Appropriate syllabi for schools and universities will bring a more educated future generation. Planning for multi-sectoral programs to encourage collaboration between government, educational institutions, and maritime industries will be an appropriate futuristic goal. A centralized maritime authority should be created for communication to showcase Bangladesh's maritime history through museums, cultural programs and tours. This will create an interest in nautical issues and a sense of pride. Improving marine literacy can lead to a more educated and engaged population while fostering a stronger sense of connection between people and communities in the world's ocean and coastal regions.

Bangladesh's maritime literacy rate is changing as more and more people realize the importance of the Bay of Bengele in its economic development. It is also vital for environmental protection.

Cultural heritage is benefitting as well. Despite efforts to improve policy frameworks, public awareness, and education, obstacles remain. These need to be overcome by the Government, and educational institutions must collaborate. NGOs and businesses should work together regarding these. By addressing these issues, they can mobilize the public to encourage great learning on maritime aspects. If oceanography is not emphasized in the educational system, it leaves a large portion of the population unaware of ocean issues.

Improving Bangladesh's maritime literacy is a challenging but important task. Bangladesh can realize the potential of all "Blue Economy" and marine resources by implementing a comprehensive strategy, including coordinated planning, public awareness campaigns, more investments, and reforms in education in order to pursue cutting the Gordian Knot of maritime illiteracy and secure the bright future of the nation.

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