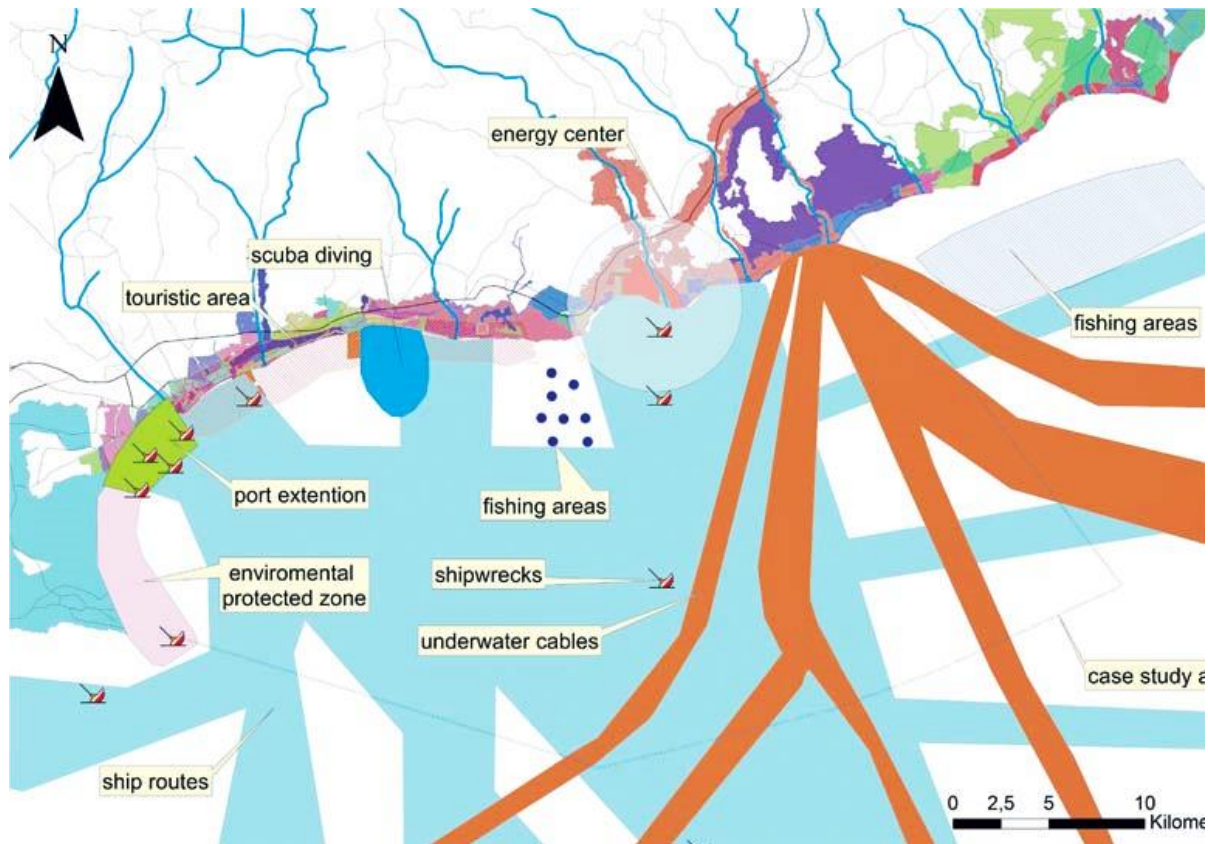


# MSP: A Commitment for Sustainable Ocean Use



As a maritime nation, Bangladesh covers a sea area of 1, 18813 sq. km, almost equal to its land territory. The Ocean economy plays a vital role in the country's self-sufficiency. Around 18.2 per cent of the country's population depends on the recent ocean economy (World Bank Group, 2018). Nowadays, the 'Blue Economy' is the most emerging term for Bangladesh.

The term gained popularity after the successful demarcation of the maritime boundary in 2012 and 2014. Already 26 sectors of the Blue Economy have been identified by the Ministry of Planning, including marine fisheries, oil, gas and minerals, marine tourism, marine port, shipping etc. If development, investment and management occur to boost this ocean economy without set standards and policies, they may lead to short-term gains without adding long-term sustainability.

As such, it is the need of the hour to implement Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) for sustainable ocean governance in a country like us.

Maritime Spatial Planning is a process that brings together many ocean users to make informed and coordinated decisions about managing marine resources sustainably. These users include energy, industry, government, conservation, and recreation. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO defined marine spatial planning as the most frequently used public process of analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic, and social goals that are typically set forth through a political process.

Generally, ecosystem-based, area-based, integrated, adaptable, strategic, and participatory are traits of marine spatial planning. Marine spatial planning aims to combine the needs for development with the need to conserve the environment, produce social and economic outcomes in an open and planned manner, and establish a more logical use of maritime space and the interactions among its uses. MSP is generally presented through a map where the area-based resource distribution, availability, and human exploration area are included. MSP and the land-based spatial planning system are almost the same.

For Bangladesh to avoid conflict of various uses of the sea, the optimum use of resources, and protect the ecosystem through a better management system, MSP is the primary need. At the primary level, planners of our country can take into account the cumulative impact of maritime businesses on our seas through the planning and mapping process of a marine ecosystem.

Thus the work may make sectors more sustainable and proactively reduce disputes between enterprises that want to use the same sea area. It will gather and disseminate information on the ocean ecosystems and economy spatially, providing a more integrated basis for management decision-making.

MSP is important to identify marine and coastal resources and their sustainable use for reducing the risk of irreversible damage to our marine ecosystems. MSP helps identify risk, area and resources for better management of the Marine sensitive area and commercially important species. It helps to recover the Ocean from any extraction loss of the environment. MSP is an obligatory part of boosting the country's economy's development through marine resource extraction.

Several European nations have assumed global leadership in the implementation of MSP, either on their initiative or as a result of European legislation and policy. Marine spatial planning is a powerful tool to foster decision-making among sectors, stakeholders, and administrative authorities. If we look at the other maritime nations, they all have proper MSP for proper marine resource extraction and better management of the marine ecosystem/environment. Bangladesh Government has developed a plan to turn Bangladesh into a developed country by 2040. Marine resources and the blue economy can play a vital role in this achievement. Following the other developed countries, we could develop a plan for MSP according to their procedure, and a better management strategy could grab as soon as possible. Sharing knowledge, technology and expertise with neighbouring countries could be the primary stage for developing MSP in Bangladesh.

However, there are multitudes of challenges to starting the MSP process in Bangladesh, including identifying stakeholders and their conflicts, their engagement, and identifying an authority for their early engagement in the process. Bangladesh government, different ministries, NGOs, Research organizations and even other stakeholders are now very much aware of MSP for the betterment of the sea.

As people are aware, coordination is now an easy process. Although the experts urge a separate ministry, I think it takes a long time to form the ministry just for MSP. Whereas, the government may assign responsibility to any related ministry to promulgate the MSP in

Bangladesh as soon as possible to obtain the benefit of the sea. There are many conflicts among stakeholders, including fishing with gas exploration, gas exploration with shipping, gas exploration with salt extraction and many more.

The government should arrange regular meetings to resolve these conflicts among stakeholders. At the present analysis, it is apparent that MSP is the most needed for Bangladesh to settle all conflicts and for better planning arrangements.

So, for the expansion of offshore activities and the increasing need to meet international and national commitments to biodiversity conservation, marine spatial planning (MSP) is a tool for sustainable sea use management for any maritime nation like us.

*Author: Afifat Khanam Ritika, Research Officer, Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Organization (BIMRAD).*

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