

Proceedings

Seminar

on

Marine Resource Management of Bangladesh in the Context of Newly Demarcated Boundary

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Organised by



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Introduction



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised a national seminar on marine resources management of Bangladesh entitled “Marine Resources Management of Bangladesh in the Context of Newly Demarcated Boundary”, on 26 February 2015. Two keynote presentations were made in the Seminar by **Rear**

Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam, (c), ndc, psc, (Retd), Secretary (Maritime Affairs Unit), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by **Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed**, Professor, Department of Oceanography, University of Dhaka respectively. Each presentation was followed by deliberation by the designated discussants. **Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP**, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh graced the Seminar as the Chief Guest. **Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc.**, Director General, BISS delivered the address of welcome. **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS chaired the session.

Address of Welcome



Major General A K M Abdur Rahman, ndc, psc Director General, BISS, welcomed all distinguished guests to the seminar. He expressed his heartfelt gratitude and thanks to **Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP** for being present at BISS despite his very busy schedule. Major General Rahman said Bangladesh did not have full authority over territorial water of the Bay of Bengal as Bangladesh had dispute with two neighbouring countries.

Finally, the long pending dispute has been resolved and now Bangladesh has specific designated claim over sea water. Bangladesh has settled maritime boundary dispute with Myanmar as well as India. After the settlement from the International Tribunal for Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Bangladesh now possesses a total of 118,813 sq.km of

territorial sea, 200 nautical mile of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and a substantial share of the extended continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal. It has created a scope for Bangladesh to explore the sea resources to bolster its economy. As seas and oceans provide natural resources like natural gas, shell gas, petroleum, fisheries etc, these natural resources have always played a vital role accelerating the economic development of any country. In the face of growing challenges like climate change, economic and financial opportunities, competition for natural resources and food insecurity, the marine resources hold greater significance for a great majority of global population. Against this backdrop, theory like “Blue economy” focused on sustainable economic development has come to fore. Similarly, Bangladesh can utilize sustainable economic opportunities under the aegis of “Blue Economy”. Noting how natural resources became a curse in some of the countries of Africa, Major General Rahman suggested a detail study and careful approach for the utilization of the sea resources of Bangladesh.

Echoing **Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina**, Major General Rahman labelled Bay of Bengal as the “Third Neighbour”. Bangladesh is an energy deficit country, but is moving ahead to become middle income country. In this regard, the Bay of Bengal is expected to be a reservoir of oil and gas and also can be used to harness renewable energy like wind energy, wave energy etc. Besides, Bangladesh has a long tradition of fishing. More than 80 percent of the protein comes from fish. In 2012-13, a quantity of 588,988 tonnes of sea fish was collected from the marine areas of Bangladesh. Moreover, the Bay has been used as trade route for centuries. It is an important route for trade between South Asia and Southeast Asian countries. The proposed Sonadia Deep sea port in the Bay will work as regional network hub. As Bangladesh is located at the northern limit of the Bay of Bengal with an unbroken coast of 710 km in length, Bangladesh can plan to establish “Sea Tourism Belt. He concluded his speech by expressing his sincere gratitude to all distinguished guests for responding to his invitation to attend the seminar.

Keynote Presentation 1



Rear Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam, (c), ndc, psc, (Retd), Secretary, Maritime Affairs Unit, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bangladesh said Bangladesh had a number of challenges concerning the maritime boundary delimitation. The baseline declared by Bangladesh in 1974, was criticised and not accepted by the UN. The equidistance line has been in use for demarcating maritime areas between two adjacent countries since 1958; if an equidistance line would be drawn either

with India or Myanmar, that would leave Bangladesh with only 100 nautical miles (nm) of sea

area. That is why Bangladesh called it a cutoff as it was also locking the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Bangladesh. Bangladesh government declared a production sharing contract in 1974 for gas and oil; but when works began in western blocks, India objected saying maritime boundary had not still been determined. On the eastern side with Myanmar, the line was curved and that country was following a parallel line. In 1991 however, Bangladesh declared new blocks, but then with Myanmar, the line proved as curved; following Myanmar's claim, Bangladesh left that area. In 2000, Bangladesh again declared 28 blocks but Myanmar claimed 17 and India claimed 10 leaving only one for Bangladesh for which the country signed a contract with Conoco-Phillips in 2009. By declaring the 28 blocks in front of Myanmar, Bangladesh took about 250 nm of sea area leaving Myanmar with only 30 nm, 67 nm and 122 nm.

Admiral Alam said, albeit all sovereign could withdraw from all courts established for the law of the sea, at the Arbitration Tribunal, countries can take another country without the latter's consent. Bangladesh opted for Arbitration Tribunal. The first problem with Myanmar at ITLOS was concerning the St. Martin's Island. On 23 November 1974, territorial maritime boundary was settled through an agreed minute for 12 nm, from the Naaf River. When Bangladesh and Myanmar went to the court, Myanmar said it was not willing to give the St. Martin's Island the full effect as that of its mainland. It proposed to the court that the island should be actually be given just 06 nm. It also said the 1974 document was not a treaty as per the 1969 Vienna Convention, and it was not obliged to comply with that. Finally, the court allowed Bangladesh, from the Naaf River boundary, the 12 nm up to St. Martin's Island. For the 200 nm with Myanmar, there were two equidistance lines and Bangladesh got 100 nm plus, a sea area of around 40,000 kms. The ITLOS verdict allowed 12 nm of territorial sea for St. Martin's, then up to 200 nm permitting Bangladesh with access to deeper/high seas.

On Bangladesh-India dispute over the South Talpatti Island/New Moore Island, Admiral Alam said, in 1976, India declared and claimed that island. Bangladesh learnt of its existence in early 1977. Bangladesh Navy went to that area, surveyed the island and claimed it in 1977-78. In 1981, India landed troops on that island. In 1981, Bangladesh released a white paper which said the island had come up with the tidal bore of 1970 and was only a low-tide elevation. Bangladesh did not take the Radcliffe Map/Award into consideration which was drawn containing the rivers Ichhamati, Raimangal, Hariabhanga and Kalindi. In 1983, India informed the British Hydrographic Office that size and shape of the island had changed. Regrettably, from 1976-1983, there had been no response or protest by Bangladesh to the British Hydrographic Office about Indian or Bangladeshi claim on that isle. The island was never seen again above water after the Urir Char Cyclone of 1985. If Bangladesh followed the Radcliffe Map, the isle would not come to Bangladesh's control. The country referred the 1925 notification of boundary delimitation between Khulna and 24 Pargana districts to the court saying this notification should be the basis of the boundary. But India said the Radcliffe Map/Award (of 12 August 1947) and the mainstream of Raimangal River should be followed to delineate boundary. Earlier in 1951, Pakistan knowingly or not, informed the Indian government that the boundary on the four rivers

should be fluctuating. The Indian side too accepted the boundary as a fluid one. There is substantial difference between fluid and fluctuating boundary. But the then Pakistan government should have understood this because when it went to international arbitration in 1950 regarding the Ganges flow, there were several arguments about fluid and fluctuating boundaries. Even the Indian judge there argued that the Radcliffe Award never intended to have a fluctuating boundary which is subject to constant changes. Bangladesh saw if it followed the fluctuating or fluid boundary or the Radcliffe Map, it would not get the South Talpatti Island. When Bangladesh opted for the centre of the Hariabhanga River to be set as a starting point for delimiting maritime boundary, India opted for using the centre of the Raimangal River. Bangladesh then submitted the map of the aforementioned 1925 district boundary delimitation map which showed three rivers—Jamuna, Raimangal and some parts of Hariabhanga River. India maintained that South Talpatti is still an island. Bangladesh requested the court to visit the coastal area saying delegates should see for themselves the extent of change. But India objected to this visit saying there was no visit by the court during Bangladesh-Myanmar maritime boundary arbitration, so why in Bangladesh-India case? Bangladesh insisted that in the South Talpatti case, court officials should see if the island was really visible. When judges visited the area in October 2013, there was water all over. India said they could show the island. But even with high-tech assistance, nothing could be seen but water. An experiment conducted by stopping and allowing four ships, showed all of them travelled to Raimangal River. It proved India's stance as right that the mainstream of the Hariabhanga never flew west of the South Talpatti Island. Ultimately, the Radcliffe Map was followed. The arbitration gave Bangladesh and India full access to the Raimangal and Hariabhanga respectively.



Discussing EEZ of 200 miles, Admiral Alam said Bangladesh got a 180 degree straight line with India. The country said it

had a concavity, incompatible with the equidistance line. India said it also had concavity. Since 1969, except the German case of settling maritime borders based on equidistance line, concavity has not been allowed as a factor. The court's verdict was similar in Cameroon-Nigeria coastline dispute. India objected referring to these cases. Bangladesh urged that the equidistance method would not yield equitable results and rather curtail its rights. India said an equitable line would give it only 117 miles coastline while Bangladesh would get 169 miles, adding that Bangladesh was using the same claim (concave coastline) to get equitable solution, earlier with Myanmar and now with India. Bangladesh needed to prove that from its coastline, the continental shelf proceeded downwards and hence, a seismic survey was essential and then submit its claim. The country had 10 years of time (2001-2011), conducted a survey in 2010 and submitted the claim to the UN Commission on the Limit of Continental Shelf (UNCLCS) only in 2011. Myanmar

and India submitted their claims in 2008 and 2009 respectively. This created a lot of problems as Bangladesh requested a little bit more area on the continental shelf. When Bangladesh was going to the court, India and Myanmar objected saying Bangladesh does not need continental shelf. India did not get continental shelf at a specific point. If Bangladesh would be given a diversion after 200 miles, India would get only 252 miles while Bangladesh would get 442 nm of sea area. It then said Bangladesh should not decide about continental shelf boundary until the entitlement would be determined by the UNCLCS as nobody said Bangladesh would get the continental shelf. Bangladesh urged for quick decision by the UNCLCS. With the court's decision, Bangladesh got about 19,467 sqkms out of the total disputed area measuring about 25,602 sqkms. The court also decided that beyond Bangladesh's 200 nm gray area, India and Myanmar could catch fish but Bangladesh should have exclusive right to explore and exploit all resources from seabed.

Now, it cannot be said Bangladesh has not got an equitable solution rather secured a sea area of over 118,000 sqkms. Bangladeshi needs to have higher quality fishing vessels and other technologies for deep sea fishing. Here, Admiral Alam asked the representative of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), Dhaka to cooperate. He also stressed the need to explore minerals and energy resources. Ship breaking is also contributing to the country's economy. Security issues should be taken care of. To promote blue economy, Admiral Alam suggested development of shipping. Bangladesh must have more ships of its own to save from the US\$ 08-09 billion it pays in ship fare yearly to foreign ships. Bangladesh could also go for seaweed and pearl culture which too are absent. Lastly, he said the Bay of Bengal is the third neighbour for visiting which, Bangladesh's business communities and those dependent on the Bay can journey here and to other connected areas like the Indian and Pacific Oceans without passports and visas. It has indeed opened up a very large area, about 334 million sqkms which means 334 sqkms of sea area is open to Bangladesh's entrepreneurs, businesspeople to explore exploit, manage resources therein and bring those to the teeming millions of the country.

Discussion by designated discussants

Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Professor, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar



University in his discussion, commented that Admiral Alam's paper has certainly set the background for Bangladesh's overall management of the country's marine domain as it speaks about peaceful resolution of two critical maritime boundary demarcation disputes with India and Myanmar. Following the resolution of the problem, the present government of Bangladesh has stepped up various efforts to develop blue economy out of the resources lying in the

Bay of Bengal. The paper is a good blend of the author's vast theoretical and practical experiences on ocean affairs yet it has no chapterisation and author describes the theme under several headings while discussion on Bangladesh's dispute with India and Myanmar contains the bulk of research on the paper. Maritime boundary delimitation is a very complex and multifaceted issue having political, legal and technical aspects but Admiral Alam has discussed all these in a very succinct and lucid manner so as to enable readers to easily grasp the entire process of negotiations centred around resolving Bangladesh's maritime disputes with India and Myanmar from beginning to end. Speaking on blue economy, the paper stresses it is not marine fishing only but there are lot more activities Bangladesh can engage into and make more earnings utilising the sea. Dr. Azad praised the idea of development of abilities for nations to promote sustainable use of marine; yet, more allocations for research and political will of leaders in these sectors are necessary. There are more areas where Bangladesh can place more attention to promote blue economy particularly shipbuilding, fisheries/aquaculture, energy resources development, tourism, mineral and other resources from the seabed etc. He also lauded Admiral Alam's focus on the security dimensions of Bangladesh's maritime areas, both traditional and nontraditional. An estimate says Bangladesh may earn US\$ 23 billion a year from various services relating to oceans. He emphasised that a country can utilise many parts of its maritime boundary for harvesting resources but the coastal zone should not be neglected as it is a rich yet very delicate biogeographical region which must be an integral part of its maritime management. About ocean governance, there must be sustainable policies and for maintaining security in freedom of navigation, security of trade and commerce, protection of maritime resources and environment; there is no substitute to enhanced regional and global cooperation because most of the globe's maritime domains are not under the jurisdiction or sovereignty of any specific nation and many nations do not have the capability either to protect their respective commercial shipping on high seas or even within their own territorial waters. Dr. Azad concluded by quoting Elisabeth Mann Borgese—"In the majority of countries, ocean affairs do not represent a central concern but as matters subsidiary to other activities having higher priority. Their political stature is normally low which translates into their location at low levels within the government hierarchy as well as certain patterns of resource allocation like limited personnel and low-level funding" and said as maritime boundary disputes with India and Myanmar have been settled, maritime affairs must receive higher attention in Bangladesh's policies.

Mr. Syed Nasim Manzur, President, Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries

(MCCI), Dhaka, in his discussion focused on the business implications of Admiral Alam's presentation; by 2030, there will be 40 per cent shortage of supply against demand. When supply and demand are mismatched, that is obviously revenue and profit related. Revenues from water related businesses are expected to reach US\$ 01



trillion by 2020. Thus water remains a big business. Indian Premier Narendra Modi, during his inauguration in May 2014, signed an agreement with Mauritius on the sidelines, agreeing to increase cooperation in maritime security, renewable energy and blue economy including the development of relevant infrastructure. In February 2015, India and the US signed a joint vision statement on the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean regions. That document contains a specific focus on blue economy. The marine sector of South Africa produced US\$ 4.9 billion worth of revenues and 3,16,00 jobs in 2010. Their target is to assure 5 per cent growth every year up to 2019. China is currently working on implementing its 12th five-year plan with a focus on development of marine economy. Their annual growth rate was 17 per cent in the 1970s, clearly in maritime economy, 20 per cent in the 1990s and up to 2015; they have set a growth target to create about 2.6 million new jobs which are expected to reach approximately 10 per cent of Chinese GDP by 2015. The EU's "blue growth strategy" is now being debated at the European parliament. This strategy is believed to be capable of generating US\$ 500 billion growth added value and 5.4 million new jobs annually. If we look at employment generation, the marine sector presents a great opportunity for Bangladesh. About sustainable development and use of marine resources, Mr. Manzur suggested those should be matching with Bangladesh's level of development because often standards are imposed on developing nations that may not suit their levels of development. Developed nations should decide themselves which ones they should adopt. It does not mean harming the environment. Aquaculture contributes about 40 per cent protein to nations around the Horn of Africa. For a land starved country like Bangladesh, the newly gained sea area can also be a source of potentials. The Bay of Bengal is the largest bay in the world but we still know very little about it. Therefore, we must know about it, or we will be unable to use the resources profitably and sustainably. The availability of phytoplankton is a vital factor to develop fisheries but it depends on the availability of fresh water coming from rivers (like Meghna) and siltation. These are some areas in need of more research if we really want to use resources well and promote blue economy. Bioactive molecules are another vital element used as raw materials in pharmaceutical industries where Bangladesh remains a notable success story. The country needs to know how to isolate these molecules as then there will be enough of these ready for export. Skilled human resources are crucial. The Bangladesh government is trying very sincerely in this regard. Bangladesh needs to target FDI from countries like South Korea, Japan, Canada etc who have tremendous resources, knowledge, capability and experience in deep sea fishing and maritime economy. Seychelles has signed Blue Ocean Exploitation Strategic Collaboration document with France. Mr. Manzur said the "Maritime Silk Route" as proposed by China can be a useful option for Bangladesh to enhance its economic progress to which the country has agreed in principle. He also mentioned that in the 1970s, Japan floated a scheme called the "Flying Geese Strategy" which said that countries with higher production costs should shift their facilities to destinations with lower costs. Bangladesh can be a good contender for that if the Maritime Silk Route is implemented. At the first conference on blue economy held in Bangladesh in 2014, Bangladesh's need for developing skilled manpower was stressed. India is willing to collaborate and that proposal should be looked into. The Bangladesh

private sector are interested to work on four areas of blue economy, i.e. job creation, food security for local people, product diversification, and mitigate the land scarcity. Bangladesh's EEZ offers a huge opportunity; the government must continue to invest and support knowledge building and delays should always be avoided. He concluded by quoting French scholar Marq de Villiers—"The trouble with water and there is trouble with water is that they are not making any more of it."

Keynote Presentation 2



Dr Md Kawser Ahmed, Professor, Department of Oceanography, University of Dhaka, made a keynote presentation entitled "Marine Resources and Management for Economic Development of Bangladesh". He briefed on marine ecosystem, its services provided to the ecology and economy and posed a question related to the contribution of ocean in a country's economy. He informed that one of every six jobs in the U.S. is marine-related

and over one-third of the annual U.S. GDP originates in coastal areas. From ocean tourism and recreation, the U.S. gets one per cent of its GDP. He also noted that the revenue earned by the U.S. from coastal tourism is higher than those earned from sectors like trade and shipping, offshore oil and gas, fisheries etc. Therefore, coastal tourism is an avenue where Bangladesh should concentrate to enjoy the benefit of marine resources to the fullest.

He discussed about the living and non-living resources of the Bay of Bengal including wide range of floras and faunas. He noted that it is very important to know about the biological resources in the Bay. While discussing the resources, he informed, in Bangladesh more than 82.15 per cent of fish comes from inland source while 17.85 per cent comes from marine sources. He noted about the debate relating to under-fishing and overfishing of the marine resources and insisted on sustainable management of fisheries. It is necessary to find out the maximum sustainable yield and maximum economic yield for proper fisheries management which requires a framework to balance resources conservation, optimise economic returns and meet social requirements.

Dr Ahmed opined that Bangladesh should undertake surveys and species-wise stock assessment for proper management of marine resources. Unfortunately, so far, on physical, chemical, geological, satellite and biological oceanography of Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh does not have any data. He also informed that Bangladesh government has procured a survey vessel named 'Meen Anushondhani' to be commission in March 2015. He also discussed about non-living resources from the Bay of Bengal like wind power, energy from waves and currents, tidal energy etc. Dr Ahmed stated that there is not enough scope for renewable energy development in Bangladesh for many natural reasons. As potential resources in waters of Bangladesh, he

mentioned, there could be Placer deposits, Phosphorite deposits, Evaporite deposits, Polymetallic sulphides, Manganese nodules and crusts, Hydrocarbons, Gas hydrate, Aggregate, Coral and Living resources etc. Therefore, it is necessary to develop capacity building in marine biotechnology, transportation sector, tourism and recreation sector etc. The onshore gas reserve of Bangladesh can be used for 10 years only. According to USGS study, there are 95 percentage certainties that Bangladesh has 8.5 tcf gases, 50 per cent certainty of 32 tcf and only 5 per cent certainty of 62 tcf gas presence.

Dr Ahmed mentioned that Bangladesh needs to go for massive exploration as soon as possible. The plan of government is to import coal, import LNG or massive exploration of gas. If Bangladesh needs to produce 40,000 MW of electricity by the year 2030, it is necessary to use all coal, gas, oil and other resources appropriately. On BIG-B initiative, he mentioned, Bangladesh can make an economic and trading bridge between BIG-B and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Cheap labour of Bangladesh and production cost would make the BIG-B a lucrative place for foreign investment.



Designated Discussants

Eng. Quamruzzaman, Director (PSC), Petrobangla, stated that Bangladesh does not have any data on what resources are there in the Bay of Bengal that the country can explore and exploit. After delimitation of maritime area between Bangladesh and Myanmar in 2012, Petrobangla reshaped the blocks and announced bidding grounds. Contracts were signed with various companies. Data processing is underway. It is

expected that drilling campaign would make use of Sangu platform under Petrobangla. The government of Bangladesh has already approved three contracts of B-12, B-16 and B-21 with Conoco Philips.

The delimitation of boundary in 2014 has further opened up the avenue for hydrocarbon exploration. However, the available data records date back to 1974 that has grown too old. There is extreme necessity of updated data in this region. Petrobangla has already floated international tender among 24 countries. Thus the next PSC bidding can take place without any delay. In February 2015, a contract has been signed with the US for import of LNG. A LNG terminal would be installed in Moheshkhali and it would be operational in two years of time.

The target is to produce electricity using 25 per cent coal, 25 per cent gas, 25 per cent other liquid fuels and the rest 25 per cent from other sources. If the government decides to explore existing coal, Bangladesh would be able to fulfill its target by 2015.

Captain Mir Imdadul Haque, ndc, psc, BN, Director (Hydrography), Naval Headquarters



mentioned that Bangladesh as a nation is suffering from sea blindness. He noted that there has been a lot of discussion on how to manage the resources in the Bay of Bengal and lots of hopes have been generated. On the management of resources of Bay of Bengal, he opined that Bangladesh should have an ocean policy. The country cannot use the resources without developing a proper policy mechanism.

The discussion insisted on focusing on management of the sea since there are numerous maritime agencies as well as overlapping laws. Bangladesh has signed a number of conventions on different issues. But with regard to the law of the sea Bangladesh has not been forthcoming. He mentioned a number of conventions related to the protection of sea and sea-borne issues like piracy, degradation of quality of sea, utilization of sea power etc.

Mr Haque mentioned that since Bangladesh has established its protected areas, it is high time to start using the resources for the economic development of Bangladesh. The country should combine all the potentialities in a single box and make proper use of it. He also mentioned that gap between various administrative bodies and other agencies should be reduced. The gap between existing laws should be dealt and increasing research and data sharing should be introduced. Bangladesh should itself manage to make best use of its resources to fulfill the competing objectives of the country.

Open Discussion



Mridu Pawan Das, First Secretary, High Commission of India conveyed the message that both Bangladesh and India have accepted the verdict over maritime delimitation in true spirit of friendship. In such a context both countries should look ahead at increasing cooperation. The settlement was a win-win situation and India and Bangladesh should work together for proper utilisation of the Bay of Bengal.



Major General Imam-uz-Zaman, BB, PSC (Retd.) mentioned that Bangladesh has a newly demarcated border. In this context, he posed the question, that whether the government of Bangladesh is considering setting up of high power coordinating body to monitor agencies for the management of sea resources.

Humayun A Kamal, Former Ambassador and Secretary congratulated the Bangladeshi team for a coordinating effort demonstrated during the tribunal. A new area of 118 thousand square km was added to Bangladesh. He also noted that a detailed scientific survey is necessary to get to know about the Bay even more. On the issue of pollution and overfishing, he mentioned that such activities are causing depletion of already marginal resources. It is task of relevant authorities to find out illegal trawlers and regulate their movement. Bangladesh can also think about using the tidal waves of Bay of Bengal to satisfy its electricity requirements.



Lt Gen M Harun-Ar-Rashid, BP (Retd.) noted that although there have been discussions that Bangladesh, till now, does not have sufficient knowledge of the resources at the sea, the national planning and budgetary factors are not much discussed. He noted that both should private sector initiative along with actions of the part of government to deal with the issue in a holistic manner.



Md Ramjul Huq, Professor, Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka posed a number of questions. He queried that whether Bangladesh is considering the coastal people who are working for sea for thousands of years as part of its policies. He also noted that according to article 82 of law of the sea, a country has to pay for the exploration of the outer continental shelf to the international authority. What is Bangladesh's stand over this? He also asked that Bay of Bengal is one the most piracy prone area and how is the government planning to control this?



Dr Mahfuz Kabir, Senior Research Fellow, BISS stated about green GDP and environmental economic accounting which have direct implication for the sea management. He queried that is there anything in the mind of policymakers about the global climate change and subsequent taming of the ocean.



Ambassador Shahed Akhtar mentioned that when the law of the sea was first discussed, countries were not very willing to share technologies. Therefore, since the cost of exploration of resources is enormous, Bangladesh can think of working jointly or in bodies like BIMSTEC. He noted that it is very unfortunate that sometimes there is too much planning on one issue but not proper implementation. This should not happen in the case of Bay of Bengal.



Mr Shah Alam, Former Secretary, talked about the South Talpatti Island. He noted that although it is said that the island no more exists, the resources must still be there. There is also claim that 100 tcf worth of gas resides in the island which has been given to Reliance industry for exploration. Bangladesh does not mention what it has lost to Myanmar or India only focuses on the victory or gain. He also noted that government should take authoritative action if fisheries resources are not harvested in a sustainable manner. Since fishes of Bay of Bengal live in three layers, with some living in the deepest layer, Bangladesh does not have capacity to catch fish beyond certain depth. He also noted that government procured service ships but the country is not being able to take full advantage due to lack of technical expertise to deal with this.



H E Mr Myo Myint Than, Ambassador of Myanmar in Bangladesh noted that, Myanmar has intention to enhance its friendly relation with Bangladesh. During the delimitation verdict, every country presented their claim. But the verdict is public and it is win-win since both the countries which will facilitate friendship of both countries. Although both the countries used different methods to uphold their claim but it should not come in the way of the good relations.



Rear Admiral Md Khurshed Alam (Retd.), Secretary (Maritime Affairs Unit), MOFA, in response to the queries of the floor, mentioned that the government of Bangladesh is forming a 21 member committee for exploitation of sea resources in which secretaries along with navy and MODA are included. He expressed hope that although the progress so far has taken forty years, Bangladesh would be able to make positive changes. He also noted that since the opportunities of government is limited; private sector should be involved in the process.



About the payment of Continental Shelf, Mr Alam mentioned that the case of Bangladesh is at the court and if it gets resolved, Bangladesh would not have to pay. He mentioned that the piracy situation in Bangladesh is not a big concern and Bangladesh navy can look after the problem. He noted that policies are being framed by the government. He also acknowledged that although technologies are difficult to get from some countries, there are also others who are willing to give technologies. He mentioned that EU, Japan, China can come forward and invest in this sector. He denied the claim that there is a possibility of finding 100 tcf gases in an area of 1 square km at South Talpatti Island. He also noted that Bangladesh too, like India and Myanmar, believes in friendship with neighbouring countries and is willing to work to promote such understanding with regard to the Bay of Bengal.

Address by the Chief Guest

Mr Md Shahriar Alam, MP, Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in his address



as the Chief Guest, thanked BISS for organizing an expert level seminar on such a national important issue. He noted that The Hague Arbitration, announced last year 7th of July on the delimitation of the maritime boundary of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar established the rights of Bangladesh to explore, exploit and managing living and non-living resources of Bay of Bengal increased from 40,000 sq km to staggering 118,000 sq km which is 81% of our land

mass. He said that Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after assuming office in 2009 attached highest priority to ensure the rights of 160 million people of Bangladesh over the resources of Bay of Bengal and to get bold and pragmatic decision for speedy and time bound resolution by referring the issue to the international judicial system under UNCLOS besides continuous bilateral negotiations. The judgment of the Hague tribunal finally, delimited the maritime boundary among Bangladesh, India and Myanmar that remained unresolved for over 40 years. Through the process, Bangladesh once again established as a peaceful and self-respecting country in front of the world. He mentioned that the honourable Prime Minister has given her consent to make the Maritime Affairs Unit a permanent wing under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He said that the role of marine resources in poverty alleviation and in acquiring self-sufficiency in food production, protecting environmental balance, addressing adverse effects of climate change and other economic activities is unlimited. Soon after the verdict, in order to realise the full potential of all the resources at the Bay of Bengal and considering the existing capability of Bangladesh, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized an International workshop on Blue Economy in September 2014. The workshop was attended by as many as thirty-seven foreign scholars from nineteen countries. The workshop was inaugurated by Prime Minister

Sheikh Hasina and she emphasized that the Blue Economy could play an important role in the economic upliftment of the country in the context of poverty alleviation, ensuring food and nutrition security, combating climate change impact etc. He however, noted that the lack of qualified human resources, institutions and technology are the key challenges for Bangladesh to effectively use the marine resources. To build key manpower in sectors like marine resources management, the government has taken steps for higher education at the University of Dhaka and University of Chittagong. The first national Oceanographic Research Institute (NORI) is being established at Ramu in Cox's Bazar to create a marine scientific community for research, he added. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University has already started its journey. Bangladesh and its 18 other private Marine Academy is now capable of supplying skilled manpower to the merchant ships all over the world. Our officers are of demand by the



international operator, he noted. Since marine resources management in a sustainable manner is one of the priority sectors of the government, Ministry of Foreign Affairs is searching for foreign partners for cooperation, collaboration, technology transfer and capacity building. We have taken initiatives to accommodate international law in domestic level to develop national strategy, he mentioned. He also added that Bangladesh appreciates and

support regional and sub regional initiatives for marine resources management. Finally, he remarked that though states hold the primary responsibility for the sustainable management of the marine resources but the private sectors cannot be neglected. The government will facilitate greater role and engagement of the private sectors. He highly appreciated this kind of expert level seminar initiative as a platform for open discussion in strengthening existing system and policies.

Concluding Remarks



Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmed, Chairman, Board of Governors, BISS in his remarks stated that Bangladesh have remained contented on living off the land and rivers and only moved to the sea for trade and some low level engagements in international shipping as well as low coastal fishing. However, the population growth and recent economic growth and development have motivated us to look

more closely to the potentials of the sea. The verdicts of International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) have made the Bay more attractive and real for Bangladesh. He noted that over the last six years the government has taken many important measures in making the prospects of a thriving blue economy a reality. He stated that the marine waters of Bangladesh is a valuable source of fish, marine shrimps, mollusks, crabs, turtles, whales and so on. Catching, processing and marketing of marine fisheries are increasingly emerging as a prominent economic activity in Bangladesh. Bay of Bengal also abounds in valuable hydrocarbon and other minerals including manganese nodes. He opined that, Bangladesh needs to explore and exploit these resources in a planned and coordinated way. He thought that, comprehensive survey with regular follow-ups should be the immediate priority. The security of territorial and EEZ waters, resources and the people engaged in different aspects of blue economy should be of highest importance. Capacity building and human resources development should also be given the equal priority. Finally he called for an extensive as well as intensive cooperation with neighbours, other littorals as well as other friends far and near. He also acknowledged the challenges connected with the delimitation of maritime boundary and prospects of blue economy in the Bay of Bengal. He suggested for continuous efforts in revisiting these issues in order to make proper and informed decisions in planning, formulating and implementing the policies that would provide better solution for optimum utilisation of the marine resources of Bangladesh.

Finally he thanked everyone for contributing to the seminar. He especially expressed gratitude and thanked the chief guest **HE. Mr. Md. Shahriar Alam, MP** and extended his sincere thanks to the keynote presenters **Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam** and **Dr. Md. Kawser Ahmed**.