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## The Significance of Blue Economy Strategy and Capacity Building Programme: An Indian Perspective on Relations with Bangladesh

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### Abstract

*The blue economy is a recent arena of study that encompasses economic activities dependent on the ocean, often linked to other economic sectors including tourism, maritime transport, energy and fishing. Blue Growth supports the sustainable growth of the marine and maritime sector as oceans and seas are the engines of the global economy and hold enormous potential for growth and innovation. This article is a comprehensive analysis to the social science output in terms of Blue Economy (BE), Maritime Economy (MAE), Ocean Economy (OE), Marine Economy (ME), Capacity Building (CB) for Blue Economy and Blue Growth (BG); by doing explorative methodology of the author's definitions of BE, BG, ME and OE provides interesting links between sustainability and governance; economy and ecosystem protection; industrialization and localization; and the growth of maritime economies, with development as the central axis that surrounds them. The main contribution is to find out whether there is any link between BE and CB through keyword study. The paper provides an in-depth analysis of the various exploratory models that have been used to advance the blue economy model in the region. Additionally, the concluding remarks drawn in the last section of the paper shed light on the ethical sense of capacity building of this model, which is a crucial aspect to consider. Overall, this paper offers a confident and thorough analysis of the blue economy model in the India-Bangladesh coastal region.*

**KEYWORDS:** Blue Economy, Capacity Building, Maritime Security.

### THE CONCEPT OF BLUE ECONOMY

The Blue Economy is an innovative concept that focuses on the sustainable use of marine resources for economic growth while improving human livelihoods and the health of our ocean ecosystems. Its origin dates back to 1994 when it was first coined by Professor Gunter Pauli, a renowned economist and philosopher at the United Nations universities.

Since the 2012 Rio+20 summit, the Blue Economy has gained significant attention in both academic and business areas, and it has been widely adopted by countries for various reasons, such as connectivity over the ocean, renewable energy sources, and opportunities for job creation. Small Island Developing States have also appealed to adopt the Blue Economy model to address their survival challenges. It's worth noting that the UNCLOS has played a crucial role in the oceanic strategic context since 1980, and the Blue Economy model has received global attention for its potential to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals. This innovative

model can bring economic growth and social inclusion while preserving our oceans and coastal areas.

From the Indian perspective of this model, she has extensively embraced the blue economy model for numerous reasons. Such reasons include the International North-South Transport Corridor project, which boasts oceanic connectivity; the development of Andaman and Nicobar Islands; pole-to-pole port connectivity among nations reliant on sea transport; establishment of energy connectivity routes; access to renewable energy sources; as well as job opportunities aimed at bridging gender inequality gaps, among others. As Bangladesh is India's closest neighboring country that connects the east by sea route while Bangladesh looks west, we need to work together as a global community to ensure the sustainable usage of our marine resources for the benefit of both present and future generations. By embracing the Blue Economy concept, we can foster a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

### **INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS: A NEW DIMENSION**

The blue economy, which is a concept introduced by the European Union, includes all the economic activities related to oceans, seas, and coasts. This model connects various organizations and emerging non-state actors. It is essential to note that the world's oceans, coastlines, and seas form the most extensive ecosystems where two-thirds of the earth is water, and one-third is land. These ecosystems play a vital role in maintaining the health of our planet and human beings. [Spamer, J]

Undoubtedly oceans are essential components of International Relations as they act as critical buffers while serving as valuable resources for ecosystems. Oceans provide food supplies and habitats for humans while playing an integral part in upholding environmental balance by ensuring marine species' survival. Additionally, they contribute significantly to global trade connectivity with countries worldwide hence promoting economic prosperity. However, despite their importance in trade relations, only 7% of the world's oceans have been explored which raises grave concerns.

The relationship between ethics and oceans has become increasingly intricate given the context of global megatrends, such as population growth, energy demand, climate change, humanity, and the relocation of coastal cities. In light of the rapid pace of urbanization, climate change, population growth, and other land-based issues, global political policy decisions and focus are progressively transitioning toward the Blue Economy model. This shift is driven by the recognition of the urgent need to address the complex challenges confronting the planet, and the Blue Economy model is seen as a viable solution that can promote sustainable economic

growth while preserving the environment. Shaping the Blue Economy model appropriately will not only have a positive impact on the environment but also promote sustainable economic growth. By fostering a better understanding of the value of marine ecosystems, this model can create new economic opportunities, generate employment, and drive innovation. Additionally, it can help to address critical environmental challenges, such as climate change, while promoting the long-term health and well-being of our planet and its inhabitants.

The blue economy model is a nascent concept that has been embraced by several European and African countries as part of their agenda, owing to its benefits for environmental conservation and economic progress. The absence of restrictions on ocean-related natural negotiations has encouraged developed nations to invite coastal developing countries into the fold. Furthermore, non-state actors are expected to participate alongside governance in this process. Given India and Bangladesh's commercial hub status within the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean regions, they must engage in discussions surrounding the significance of the blue economy. This discourse is not limited solely to administrative levels; rather, it would be highly advantageous for developing organizations throughout South Asia to adopt this model holistically.

The promotion and strengthening of the blue economy present great potential for South Asia, a pivotal hub of global trade. Nevertheless, the region faces an array of socio-economic challenges. In light of this context, adopting a blue economy approach offers a viable solution to address some of these issues. The South Asian region holds significant social, economic, and political importance as one of the world's most populous areas. The combined population of the eight countries that make up the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) -Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives -stands at around 1.9 billion people. Despite its vast human and natural resources, however, South Asia remains one of the largest yet poorest regions in the world with poor quality living standards and high infant mortality rates. [Arbo P, Knol M, Linke S, Martin KS]

This study aims to highlight how pursuing a blue economic trajectory can lead to economic growth, sustainable development, and an ethical sense of humanity for these countries in South Asia, particularly India and Bangladesh. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is widely regarded as a primary indicator reflecting any economy's growth rate. It represents the total value produced by all resident producers within an economy along with product taxes. GDP per capita is calculated by dividing a country's GDP by its population size, providing insights into how much is spent on each and overall performance levels. According to World Bank data from 2019, South Asian nations had recorded GDP per capita figures averaging \$1907 during 2018

which marginally surpasses African counterparts only slightly higher than those found across Africa. Thus, the blue economy model has undoubtedly emerged as a vital paradigm of cooperation between India and Bangladesh in recent years, owing to the enormous potential of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean for offering abundant marine resources. Both countries have recognized the vast opportunities that this sector presents to boost their economic growth and create employment opportunities. With a shared vision to explore sustainable ways of harnessing the blue economy, including fisheries, aquaculture, and offshore oil and gas exploration; India and Bangladesh have been actively working together. Additionally, the two nations have been collaborating on maritime security and safety and have agreed to jointly develop ports and other infrastructure along their coasts. The blue economy has the potential to significantly enhance India-Bangladesh relations and bring tangible benefits to both nations, and there is no doubt about it.

India and Bangladesh are undoubtedly two of the most densely populated nations in the world, characterized by highly uneven income distribution. Unfortunately, the middle-class segment in both countries is rapidly shrinking while poverty rates continue to soar, thereby exacerbating wealth inequality. The pace at which progress occurs across different sectors within this region tends to be slow but steady; furthermore, South Asian countries experienced an estimated decline in GDP growth rates by about 1.1% between 2018 to 2019 (the World Bank). Policymakers have projected maximum retrieval figures reaching up to approximately 6.3% during 2020 followed by another increase of up to 6.7% in 2021. However, currently, only three out of eight SAARC nations, namely Maldives, India, and Bangladesh, reveal healthy indicators when it comes to their respective GDPs per capita. Several states, namely Nepal and Bhutan, are currently making significant investments in the tourism industry, while also implementing innovative business strategies aimed at managing income distribution more effectively.

### **ROLE OF BAY OF BENGAL IN MAINTAINING CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH RELATIONS AND REVIEW**

It is important for India and Bangladesh to explore and promote their blue economy model through various multilateral platforms. The Bay of Bengal, located at the southern end of the continent, is considered to be strategically and economically important regions. The blue economy model explains the strategic and economic significance of all the world's oceans, and it is crucial for both countries to explore the strategic and economic context of these oceans.

In this regard, the geopolitical ground of the oceans is a crucial aspect that needs to be highlighted. The SAARC and IORA are important international organizations that both countries can leverage to enhance their cooperation in this area. By promoting their blue economy model, India and Bangladesh can tap into the vast potential of

the oceans, including fisheries, aquaculture, tourism, and shipping. These sectors can contribute significantly to economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction. Moreover, the blue economy can also help address environmental challenges such as climate change and ocean pollution. Sustainable use of ocean resources can lead to a healthier marine ecosystem, which is critical for the survival of both countries' coastal communities. A figure has been shown below that how and where blue economic model can develop to the coastal area of India and Bangladesh.



Available at: Sajal K. Kar and Dr C Shaji (ed.s.), "Storm surge studies in the North Indian Ocean: A review", *Indian Journal of Geo-Marine Sciences*, 43(2), February 2014.

The blue economy model can be developed in the coastal areas of India and Bangladesh by focusing on various sectors such as by developing sustainable fisheries and aquaculture practices. This can be achieved by promoting community-based fisheries management, improving fish processing and marketing infrastructure, and investing in research and development to enhance the productivity and profitability of the sector.

Another avenue for promoting the blue economy is through the development of coastal tourism. The coastal areas of India and Bangladesh have a rich cultural and natural heritage that can attract tourists. Developing eco-tourism, adventure tourism, and cultural tourism can provide new livelihood opportunities for local communities while promoting conservation of the marine ecosystem.

Shipping is another sector that can contribute to the blue economy with its blue connectivity. The ports in India and Bangladesh can be developed as transshipment hubs to cater to the growing demand for trade and commerce in the region. This can also create employment opportunities and boost the infrastructure of the coastal areas.

Finally, renewable energy can be a game-changer for the blue economy in the region. The abundant wind and solar energy potential can be harnessed to provide

clean energy solutions for the coastal areas. This can reduce the dependence on fossil fuels, provide energy security, and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

In conclusion, India and Bangladesh can benefit greatly from promoting their blue economy model through multilateral cooperation. It can be developed in the coastal areas of India and Bangladesh by focusing on sustainable practices and investing in infrastructure and research and development. It is essential to explore the strategic and economic context of the oceans while keeping in mind the geopolitical ground of the region. By working together, both countries can unlock the full potential of the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, contributing to their economic growth and sustainable development. The Bay of Bengal region, which is shared by India and Bangladesh, offers vast opportunities for the development of the blue economy.

### **THE STRATEGIC MODEL OF BLUE ECONOMY AND CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME**

It is fascinating to learn about the significant role that seas and oceans have played in human civilization throughout history. The naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan is often regarded as the most important American strategist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for his advocacy of British hegemony and the importance of naval supremacy in maintaining global dominance. Mahan believed that pacification, which refers to commercial use of the ocean and control during war, was crucial for national greatness.

Moreover, seas and oceans have always been a crucial source of commercial, scientific, strategic, and military engagement for human civilization. The Blue Economy, which refers to the sustainable utilization of marine resources for economic growth, environmental sustainability, and national security, highlights the links between these different aspects. It's amazing to see how the master source of our oceans has been utilized to create goods and services throughout history.

*Now, it should be mentioned here why all the coastal countries should adopt the blue economic strategy?*

There are several reasons why coastal countries should consider adopting the Blue Economy strategy. Firstly, the ocean economy presents a vast potential for economic growth and development. The ocean economy is estimated to be worth \$1.5 trillion annually and is expected to grow in the coming years. By adopting the Blue Economy strategy, coastal countries can tap into this potential and create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth. Secondly, the Blue Economy strategy emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability. Coastal countries heavily rely on the ocean for their livelihoods, and as such, it's essential to ensure that the marine environment is kept healthy and productive. Adopting the Blue Economy strategy

can help to promote the responsible use of marine resources, leading to a more sustainable and resilient ocean economy. Thirdly, the Blue Economy strategy can help to enhance national security. Coastal countries face numerous security challenges ranging from piracy to illegal fishing. By implementing the Blue Economy strategy, coastal countries can strengthen their maritime security and protect their territorial waters. [Junquera, B and Mitre, M]

In summary, adopting the Blue Economy strategy can bring numerous benefits to coastal countries, including economic growth, environmental sustainability, and national security.

It's fascinating to see how India's approach to development partnership has been shaped by its own history of struggle for independence and solidarity with other colonized and developing countries. The inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi has played a significant role in shaping this approach. It's interesting to observe how historical events and personalities can shape a country's policies and values. Gandhi said, "I like to think in terms of the whole world. My patriotism consists of the good of mankind in general. Therefore, my service to India includes service to humanity". India's model of developmental cooperation towards Bangladesh is comprehensive and involves multiple instruments such as grant-in-aid, line of credit, and capacity building and technical assistance. India's vision of development cooperation covers a wide range of areas based on the priorities of partner and neighbouring countries. These areas include commerce, culture, energy, engineering, health, housing, IT, infrastructure, sports, science, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance, as well as restoration and preservation of cultural and heritage assets. It is impressive to see how India's development cooperation spans across sectors and sectors, demonstrating a holistic and inclusive approach to development such as the blue economy and its capacity building etc. Delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Modi were held in 2022, followed by the signing of seven MoUs on bilateral cooperation, including river water sharing, blue economy on the capacity building, space cooperation and so on. As a result, the ethical significance of the blue economy is currently emerging as a topic of discussion for both countries among international experts. [Harzing AW, Alakangas S]

*Now, the next research question can be mentioned here that why we need to merge the blue economy strategy and capacity building programme?*

Merging the Blue Economy strategy and capacity building program can bring significant benefits to coastal countries. The Blue Economy strategy emphasizes the importance of sustainable utilization of marine resources for economic growth, environmental sustainability, and national security. On the other hand, capacity

building programs aim to enhance the knowledge and skills of individuals and institutions to facilitate development.

By merging these two programs, coastal countries can create a skilled workforce that can implement the Blue Economy strategy effectively. Capacity building can help individuals and institutions gain knowledge and skills in areas such as marine science, ocean governance, and sustainable fisheries management. This can help to promote the responsible use of marine resources and create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

Moreover, merging the Blue Economy strategy and capacity building program can help coastal countries address the challenges they face in implementing the strategy. The Blue Economy strategy requires a multidisciplinary approach that involves various stakeholders such as government agencies, private sector, and civil society. Capacity building programs can help to build the capacity of these stakeholders to work together effectively towards achieving the objectives of the Blue Economy strategy.

In summary, merging the Blue Economy strategy and capacity building program can help coastal countries to build the necessary skills and knowledge to implement the strategy effectively. This can create new opportunities for sustainable economic growth, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance national security.

India's development partnership programme encompasses capacity building assistance as a crucial component. The Government of India extends its support to other friendly countries by providing various forms of capacity building aid, including but not limited to civilian and military training programmes in India, on-site training abroad, deputation of Indian experts, and the establishment of centres of excellence in IT and vocational training centres. These efforts demonstrate India's commitment to fostering growth and development in partner countries. Blue Economic will be well presented to all the people and the administration, while it will be a known subject to the people of the offshore area. However, it will be possible to present this concept to the rural people of India and Bangladesh only when it is presented to all the regional people in the administrative and various university activities. Because, Blue Economy is a concept that strengthens the relationship between people and the environment which is very much sound for the global economy. Not only that, regardless of men and women, everyone can join the country's economy and eliminates unemployment. At the same time, people's environmental awareness is also maintained. Again, through the blue economy, the country's commercial connectivity system also became more efficient. To implement these ideas, the Government of India launched the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program in 2018.



The ITEC Programme is a highly successful initiative offering a wide variety of short-term training courses to government officials and working professionals across India. Over the years, the programme has grown exponentially from mere 4000 training slots in 2006-07 to an impressive 14000 slots (including defence training) in 2019-20. In the previous year alone, ITEC offered civilian training slots in over 383 courses across 98 institutions, covering a diverse range of disciplines such as Engineering and Technology, Government Functions, Environment and Climate Change, Agriculture, Banking, Finance, Accounts and Audit, English Language, Health and Yoga, Petroleum, ICT, Journalism, Management and Leadership, Power, renewable & Alternate Energy (including solar), Rural Development, and Women Empowerment, to name a few. With such a vast and diverse range of offerings, the ITEC Programme has established itself as a leader in providing quality and practical training to professionals across India.

India's ITEC program has been expanded to include new modalities such as e-ITEC, ITEC-Onsite, and ITEC Executive from 2018 onwards. The ITEC program is designed to promote cooperation and partnership for mutual benefit between India and developing countries like Bangladesh. The program is response-oriented and aims to address the specific needs of developing countries. India's expertise in manpower and technology can be highly beneficial to developing countries, particularly those with similar geographical and ecological conditions. The ITEC program offers training facilities in a wide range of areas, including agriculture, information technology, renewable energy, and public administration. The inclusion of new modalities such as e-ITEC, ITEC-Onsite, and ITEC Executive has made the program more accessible and flexible for participants. E-ITEC allows participants to attend virtual training programs from their home country, while ITEC-Onsite provides training at the participant's location. ITEC Executive, on the other hand, offers specialized training for senior executives. The ITEC program is available to nationals from various developing countries, including the Philippines, Palau, and Micronesia. By providing training opportunities to individuals from developing countries, India is helping to promote capacity building and economic growth in these countries.

In summary, India's ITEC program is a valuable initiative that promotes cooperation and partnership for mutual benefit between India and developing countries. The program offers a range of training facilities and has been expanded to include new modalities that make it more accessible and flexible for participants.

## **CONCLUSION**

As a neighboring country of India, Bangladesh can greatly benefit from the support and development offered through India's ITEC program. By participating in the

program, Bangladesh can gain access to India's expertise in various areas, including agriculture, technology, renewable energy, and public administration. The ITEC program can help Bangladesh to promote capacity building and economic growth, which can have a positive impact on political and economic standards in the country. By enhancing the skills and knowledge of its citizens, Bangladesh can create new opportunities for sustainable development and strengthen its economy.

Moreover, by collaborating with India on maritime security, Bangladesh can contribute to regional security and stability. Maritime security is crucial for both countries, particularly given their shared maritime border. Through cooperation and partnership, both countries can work towards ensuring the safety and security of their territorial waters. In summary, Bangladesh can greatly benefit from India's ITEC program, which offers access to expertise in various areas and can promote capacity building and blue economic growth. By collaborating with India on maritime security, Bangladesh can contribute to regional security and stability, which can have positive political and economic impacts on the country.

Given current global megatrends such as population growth energy demand climate change relocation among others affecting urbanization at an unprecedented pace; political policy decisions are progressively transitioning towards adopting a Blue Economy model. The shift recognizes urgent needs requiring complex challenges confronting our planet addressed sustainably through viable solutions that promote sustainable economic growth without compromising environmental protection.

India will also strengthen cooperation with SAARC countries because of three points can be elaborated, such as: Transparency, Rule of law, and Peaceful resolution of disputes. Strengthening cooperation with SAARC countries based on these principles can lead to a more stable and prosperous region. It is important to prioritize mutual respect and understanding among nations to promote peace and stability in the region. India's efforts in this regard are a positive step towards achieving this goal.

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