

# DRAFT NATIONAL MARITIME POLICY AND IMO CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY OF BANGLADESH 2025

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Maritime and Shipping Strategy of Bangladesh.

Member States of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, are required to designate their strategies on the provision of international maritime safety and protection of the marine environment in compliance with the objectives and policies of IMO. Bangladesh is also party to number of ILO and other UN body's maritime and shipping related conventions

The overall maritime and Shipping strategy of Bangladesh in relation to ensuring safety of life and property at sea and prevention of ship generated air and marine pollution; and Seafarers rights, employment/living conditions and welfare are as follows:

- Taking necessary measures for implementation of binding rules and regulations developed by the IMO/ILO or other UN bodies,
- Implementation of IMO/ILO or other UN body's recommendations in line with the requirements of Bangladesh,
- Constant review and fulfilment of obligations and responsibilities of Bangladesh in relation with provision of safety at sea and prevention of ship generated marine pollution; and Seafarers rights, employment/living conditions and welfare activities,
- Improvement of administrative performance and implementation capacity and provision of effective cooperation and coordination among related governmental bodies.

The foregoing issues related to strategy shall be developed by the Ministry of Shipping.

In this context, the compliance by the governmental bodies responsible for execution of IMO/ILO or other UN body's activities with the above mentioned issues and the strategy to be developed shall be monitored by the National Maritime Council (NMC). All the related public institutions and organizations shall provide necessary assistance to the Council and support to conduct the works of monitoring in cooperation and harmony.

With a view to confirming compliance with the relevant IMO instruments and improving the performance of related public institutions by promoting maritime implementations, it is deemed appropriate to participation in the International Maritime Organization's Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS). In this respect, responsible Ministries, divisions, departments and offices involved in maritime and shipping related international

obligations and national responsibilities are directed to act duly in taking necessary actions in order to be prepared for the international audit under the coordination of the Ministry of Shipping and the Department of Shipping.

Bangladesh is a littoral State with a coastline of about 389 nautical miles (approximately 713km) and Territorial Waters of 12nm, Contiguous Zone of 24nm, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 200nm and 24,000 km of inland waterways. This area contains resources including oil and gas deposits and installations which constitute the mainstay of the nation's economy. Thus, as a coastal state, Bangladesh has jurisdiction over an extensive maritime area with significant living and non-living maritime resources that make a substantial contribution to the country's economy. It is pertinent to note that 90% of Bangladesh import and export trade by volume is carried by sea.

Bangladesh requires a safe, secure and enabling Maritime domain to drive a strong, diversified, sustainable and competitive economy and the National Shipping Policy (NSP) will drive this process.

However, while opportunities exist to enhance the contribution made by the maritime environment to sustainable development in the country, the economic potential of the resources in this area is largely underutilized. In order to fully benefit from the range of resources in the sea around us, there is a need to better coordinate management across different maritime sectors and resources and to integrate environmental management directly with economic development, fiscal policy and social goals.

In Spite of the preparation of a number of strategies and policies relevant to the governance of the Nation's maritime environment, no all-encompassing national policy or legislation exists to harmonise and coordinate these at the national level. The existing associated policies are inadequate for supporting the integrated approach needed for effective maritime administration. Fundamental changes are therefore required in the way the Nation's maritime environment is administered and regulated. Central to such a change is the need to transit to a more integrated approach that considers all stakeholders' interests.

National Shipping Policy is the Government's policy statement for the management of the maritime sub-sector. The development of the policy is informed by discussions and consultations with stakeholders and the international maritime community.

The Policy sets out the direction for modern maritime management. It includes a

Strategic Action Plan which sets out the Government's initial priority areas of focus. This Action Plan will further be refined and implemented by the Government in collaboration with local communities, maritime industry players and other related governmental and non- governmental organisations.

## **1.2 Aim and objective**

The aim of this document is to produce a National Maritime Policy that will serve the socio-economic needs of all stakeholders in the maritime industry and for good maritime spatial governance.

This document seeks to:

- i. Establish the context within which the National Maritime Policy is being developed and implemented.
- ii. Set out the framework of a modern approach to maritime management in Bangladesh.
- iii. Describe the strategic approach that would be used to achieve the policy objectives.

## **1.3 Purpose**

The purpose of the National Maritime Policy is to establish a framework that will guide the planning and development of maritime activities in a rational and sustainable manner for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

This policy is the basis for effective coordination among Government regulatory agencies with responsibility for maritime affairs and the harmonisation of national actions in relation to the maritime resources of Bangladesh.

For the purpose of this Policy, the geographical scope of the National Maritime Policy consists of the 713 km coastline, 24,000 km of inland waterways and within the 200 nautical miles limit of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

While the policy applies to all uses and activities in the maritime environment, additional sector specific policies would be included with regard to maritime transport, defence, tourism, fisheries, education, training, research, and the

establishment of maritime protected areas, in recognition of their significance to the overall socio-economic development of the Country and maintaining the quality of the marine environment on which these sectors depend.

## **2. POLICY PERSPECTIVE**

### **2.1 Maritime Boundary**

On 7 July 2014, an Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 issued its [award](#) in the Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Republic of India. The Award provides much needed clarity on the maritime entitlements of both Bangladesh and India.

Bangladesh has rights and responsibilities over approximately 106,613 square kilometers of maritime space. Coastal and ocean areas, world's largest mangrove forest and associated marine biological diversity are core national assets that also provide a range of essential environmental resources that would be costly or impossible to restore or replace if damaged or lost. In addition, there are vast seabed/sub-seabed mineral resources such as petroleum, manganese, copper amongst others, if properly used and well managed, can provide a broad range of economic, social and cultural benefits for generations of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh marine and coastal zones support a rich and unique range of habitats. The biodiversity of these zones includes a rich diversity of pelagic fish, lobsters, conch, turtles, algae, resident and migratory birds. Offshore waters are home to numerous species of marine mammal and sea turtles as well as deep water pelagic fish species. The coastal zone also supports numerous sites of historic and cultural significance. These coastal resources provide the basis for a wide range of economic and social activities.

### **2.2 Blue Economy**

The maritime environment already makes a significant contribution to the overall economy of Bangladesh, supporting a diverse network of commercial activities, including oil exploration and exploitation, commercial fishing, tourism, shipping, recreation and as a source of building materials. Indeed, the maritime

environment is the lifeblood that supports many coastal communities and is also the backbone of the global transportation system. Safe and secure navigable waters are critical to the effective functioning of the national economy.

There is need for the sea and ocean around our country to continue to generate significant economic, social and cultural benefits to the people of Bangladesh in a sustainable way. Every square metre of space within our maritime boundaries, above and below the surface of the sea, is important to the future development of our nation.

Marine industries have excellent potential to contribute to future economic and employment growth and offer an important opportunity where alternative investment and employment opportunities are unlimited. Opportunities may also exist for further development of other sectors, particularly fisheries and tourism, and also the development of new activities or sectors such as aquaculture, offshore oil and gas production and offshore renewable energy.

### **2.3 Impacts on the Marine Environment**

Although the oceans offer great potential in terms of sustainable economic development, they are also under increasing pressure from many uses. Changes in the marine environment resulting from human activities are occurring faster than previously anticipated, affecting especially the most vulnerable marine ecosystems. Major threats to the marine ecology of Bangladesh include climate change, greenhouse emission and human interference; sea level rise, coastal development and the destruction of marine ecosystems, unsustainable fisheries practices, pollution from land-based and offshore sources, and rising ocean temperatures.

Many stretches of coastline, near Cox's Bazar and Kuakata along the important tourism areas in Bangladesh, have experienced dramatic rates of coastal erosion with considerable economic costs to owners and the national economy.

The marine environment's ability to maintain its diversity and productivity, and provide a wide array of valuable services to people, is therefore increasingly being compromised. Designing and implementing effective governance and management strategies are critical to address the challenges posed by the increasing impacts of human activities on the marine environment and to ensure the effective management and sustainable use of living and non-living marine resources.

## **2.4 Combined Management**

Administration of our maritime space purely on industry-by-industry basis is not sustainable. Allocated spatial parcels such as public access rights, fishing rights, navigation rights, seabed use rights, mineral rights, development rights and riparian rights must be collectively managed to be compatible with each other and the ecological health of the marine environment.

There is need for a combined approach that intergates environmental management directly with economic, fiscal and social policy objectives. Such a concept should encompass the need for a healthy, productive and naturally diverse marine environment, while at the same time harnessing economic prospects which can contribute to more sustainable livelihoods, and secure human settlements in Bangladesh. Integrated management should therefore be an essential approach for Bangladesh maritime space.

## **2.5 Marine Casualty Investigation**

Encourage timely marine accident and incident investigation implementation and timely publication of report to prevent future recurrence and ensure safety of lives, vessels and cargo in the Bangladesh waters in line with National legislation and International Conventions.

## **3. POLICY STRUCTURE**

### **3.1 Focus**

The policy structure is focused to guide the coordination and management of maritime activities.

### **3.2 Policy Principles**

The policy is based on the following principles which should guide all maritime management decision making. They should be considered together and be applied to all policies, plans, regulations, decisions, and actions affecting access to and use of the maritime environment.

**3.2.1 Development** - Human development in harmony with the environment is fundamental to achieving sustainable development so that individuals and societies are empowered to achieve positive, social, and environmental outcomes.

**3.2.2 Environment Based Management** - The variety, health and productivity of marine environment is fundamental to the management of both the ocean and the land. The maritime environment must be treated as a distinctive and indivisible system, recognizing the interrelationships between land, sea and air. Large scale marine spatial planning and other area-based management measures should be integral parts of an ecosystem approach to marine management.

**3.2.3 Protective Approach** - In exploring the maritime resources, due regard should be given to environmental sustainability by strictly implementing all laws and regulations relating to the protection of the maritime environment including effective funding, contingency plan and preparedness for an emergency.

**3.2.4 Information Based Decision Making** - Planning and management decisions should be based as far as possible on the best available data and information concerning the natural, social, and economic processes that affect the maritime environment. Decision makers should be able to obtain and understand quality science and information in a way that facilitates sustainable use of maritime resources.

**3.2.5 Integrated Management Strategy** - Integrated Management is a commitment to planning and managing human activities in a comprehensive manner, while considering all factors necessary for the sustainable use of maritime resources. There is need to move away from the stand-alone approach that characterizes existing governance systems to Inter-Agency collaboration and cooperation.

**3.2.6 Duty of Care & Accountability** – It behooves on all people to act with due care to avoid negative impacts on the maritime environment and resources. Decision makers and members of the public should be accountable for the actions they take that affect the maritime environment and its resources.

**3.2.7 Public Participation** - Full stakeholders' awareness and participation contribute to credible, accepted rules that identify and assign the corresponding responsibilities appropriately. All stakeholders should therefore be engaged in the formulation and implementation of decisions concerning governance of maritime uses.

### **3.3 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

The Strategic objectives for the Maritime Policy are to:

- i. Strengthen effective governance and regulatory mechanisms;
- ii. Improve awareness on maritime issues;
- iii. Enhance regional and international trade performance;
- iv. Ensure the competitiveness of Bangladesh domestic and foreign trade;
- v. Ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of national and international safety instruments;
- vi. Ensure security within the maritime domain to prevent hostile and criminal acts;
- vii. Minimize environmental damage and expedite recovery from catastrophic events;
- viii. Promote the ratification, and implementation of international legal instruments; and
- ix. Provide a clear framework that enables investors to participate in maritime projects to improve growth and competitiveness of the maritime sector through Public Private Partnerships.

#### **3.3.1 Strengthen effective governance and regulatory mechanisms.**

##### **3.3.1.1 Policy Statement**

In 2012 and 2014 Bangladesh resolved its maritime boundary disputes with neighbouring States. This paved the way to enabling Bangladesh to safeguard its territorial integrity, and realise the full economic and developmental potentials of the nation's maritime domain. The overall aim of reforming the current governance arrangements should be to establish, strengthen, and implement effective governance mechanisms that contribute to the implementation of the Maritime Policy with following measures:

- i. Establish proactive measures to secure, exercise and protect rights and jurisdiction over maritime areas and resources.
- ii. Establish and implement clear coordinated institutional mechanisms for integrated maritime management across relevant sectors such as fisheries, tourism, transport and environment including, where appropriate, partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.



- iii. Update national legal frameworks that give effect to international and regional obligations to reflect an integrated approach to planning and management of the Nation's maritime domain.
- iv. Strengthen monitoring, compliance and enforcement initiatives at the national and regional levels.
- v. Implement multiple-use maritime spatial planning and zoning mechanisms for improved planning and control of maritime activities.

### **3.3.2 Improve awareness on maritime issues.**

#### **3.3.2.1 Policy Statement**

The care of the maritime environment is the responsibility of everyone. However, lack of awareness and environmental education results in low levels of personal responsibility. Public participation is key to promoting and instituting a duty of care for the maritime environment.

There is also need to make available accurate, timely and documented official information on ocean and inland water governance activities through media coverage, public fora, meetings, discussions and educational campaigns with following measures:

- i. Raise public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the importance of the maritime domain, while accommodating the needs and aspirations of communities through active public participation in the development of new policies.
- ii. Ensure that all citizens have access to information concerning the maritime environment in line with provisions of extant laws.

### **3.3.3 Enhance regional and international trade performance.**

#### **3.3.3.1 Policy Statement**

Adequate and knowledgeable manpower is very essential for the attainment of the potentials of the maritime industry. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Promote the provision of maritime education and training at all levels, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of seafarers in accordance with provisions of Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW), Convention 1978 as amended.
- ii. Provisions of all necessary maritime training equipment and

facilities in accordance with the STCW requirements.

- iii. Promote the employment of seafarers and decent working conditions in line with the provisions of Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006.
- iv. Promote the funding and undertaking of research studies by maritime universities and other national institutions and encourage technical cooperation in maritime and inland water transportation.

### **3.3.4 Ensure the competitiveness of Bangladesh's domestic and foreign trade.**

#### **3.3.4.1 Policy Statement**

All seaborne cargo for seven-sister sub-region of India is destined for Bangladesh. The port cost and procedures for the clearance of goods must be reasonable and user friendly for the nation of attaining the much desired hub status within the sub-region.

The nation's shipping trade is dominated by foreign-flagged vessels/carriers from the developed market economies of Europe. It has become difficult for Bangladesh nationals to be integrated into different areas of the shipping sector as a result of complexity, lack of capacity and huge capital outlay required in shipping.

Bangladesh Shippers are therefore at the mercy of foreign shipping cartels operating in the Bay of Bengal sub-region that increase their tariffs arbitrarily in a way that is detrimental to the competitiveness of the country's imports and exports in the world market. This also results in capital flight and inflation for Bangladesh economy. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Implement harmonized shipping charges/tariffs/rates through effective economic regulation.
- ii. Simplify cargo clearance procedures and documentation through automation (single window system) of the cargo clearance processes to make the ports competitive.
- iii. Ensure an effective multi-modal transport system in Bangladesh.
- iv. Provide the enabling environment for effective private sector participation in foreign, coastal and inland water transportation.
- v. Ensure that the Country's Terms of Trade change to Free On Board (FOB) for imports and Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) for exports.

### **3.3.5 Ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of national and international safety instruments.**

### **3.3.5.1 Policy Statement**

Despite the efforts by government to ensure that vessels coming to our ports comply with international conventions, substandard vessels still visit the Bangladesh ports. There is need to further strengthen the regulatory institutions as well as build capacity across the board to enable them deliver on their mandates. The aim is to eliminate substandard shipping, increase the protection of crew, passengers, cargo and reduce the risk of environmental pollution. Bangladesh action in the field of maritime transport, and in particular maritime safety and protection of the environment, generates significant added value to the international framework (IMO Conventions). The ratification and implementation of IMO instruments into the Bangladesh legal system ensures their enforcement across the nation's maritime domain. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Ensure proper manning of vessels by qualified Bangladesh manpower.
- ii. Ensure that all vessels within Bangladesh waters meet the basic safety standards in line with international conventions and domestic legislations.
- iii. Ensure safe navigation of ships within Bangladesh territorial waters without encumbrances.
- iv. Establish full maritime domain coverage through enhanced Search and Rescue (SAR) of the maritime environment.
- v. Develop and promote mutual assistance and cooperation between neighbouring State Parties in the area of maritime safety, security and protection of the marine environment.
- vi. Promote the sharing of best practices among State Parties in the overall management and operation of Maritime Administrations and other maritime entities.

### **3.3.6 Ensure security within the maritime domain to prevent hostile and criminal acts.**

#### **3.3.6.1 Policy Statement**

The terrorist attacks of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, and subsequent attacks in Madrid, Paris, London, Brussels and other places, show how vulnerable transport infrastructure is to sabotage. All transport modes now have to find the right balance between providing commercial openness and effective security procedures. In the field of maritime transport, the Government has been active

in recent years, legislating to improve security at ports and at sea to complement international efforts in this important area. The raised threat levels need a global response, and after the terror attacks in the United States, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) adopted a new Chapter XI-2 in its Convention on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. In support, Bangladesh adopted the regulation on enhancing Ship and Port Facility Security. The aim is to protect ships and ports from terrorism; it has incorporated the ISPS Code into Bangladesh law. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Establish full maritime domain coverage through enhanced surveillance of the maritime environment.
- ii. Curb piracy and armed robbery within Bangladesh ports and territorial waters.
- iii. Ensure that the Bangladesh Navy intervenes in the protection of the sovereignty of the State and all infrastructure, installations and equipment within the Maritime industry. The intervention shall be in accordance with the extant laws of Bangladesh.

### **3.3.7 Minimize environmental damage and expedite recovery from catastrophic events.**

#### **3.3.7.1 Policy Statement**

Maritime oil disasters have proved to have tremendous negative consequences. The environment is affected the most when ships carrying dangerous cargo run into trouble. In recognition of this, the Government is keen to improve the safety of vessels carrying potentially polluting cargo, hence her decision to ban single hull tankers within her maritime area due to the risk of grounding. However, unscrupulous or negligent operators and crew still illegally discharge polluting substances into the sea. To counter this practice, measures have been introduced in Bangladesh to improve port reception facilities for ship waste and cargo residues including marine environmental monitoring. All ports in Bangladesh have been directed to reduce marine pollution by ensuring that they provide adequate waste reception facilities, and by collecting a fee from all ships whether they use the facilities or not, under the polluter pays principle, which gives them an incentive to deliver waste ashore rather than dispose of it illegally at sea. Bangladesh involvement in ballast water and air pollution regulations and climate change issues should reflect on our policy so as to ensure environmental sustainability. The Government has adopted legislation which

imposes stiffer sanctions for ship-sourced pollution. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Ensure prevention of oil pollution and management through effective legislation and regulation.
- ii. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping.
- iii. Improve the environmental quality of marine waters.
- iv. Manage ship-generated waste and ship dismantling.

### **3.3.8 Promote the ratification and implementation of international legal instruments.**

#### **3.3.8.1 Policy Statement**

Bangladesh domestic maritime and shipping legislations are greatly influenced by international conventions and practices. Globalization and the dynamics that have taken place in world shipping and the effect of international conventions have led to Bangladesh development of world class maritime legislation. However, while keeping tab on the ratification and implementation of most conventions, the challenge of implementation has been the bane of the Nation. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Put in place mechanisms that will ensure the fast promulgation of legislations that will enhance the maritime industry.
- ii. Strengthen the relevant institutions to ensure effective implementation of applicable conventions.

### **3.3.9 Provide a clear framework that enables investors to participate in maritime projects to improve growth and competitiveness of the maritime sector through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs).**

#### **3.3.9.1 Policy Statement**

Put in place monetary and fiscal policies that adequately favour indigenous maritime investments as well as encourage foreign participation. The Government should therefore consider issuance of institutional guarantee on behalf of indigenous investors to financial institutions for the funding of maritime projects while encouraging and promoting a culture of financial discipline for the maritime investors to enable them build up the industry. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Facilitate full indigenous participation in the maritime industry.
- ii. Promote objective and sustainable human capacity development for the manning of maritime vessels by Bangladesh.
- iii. Put in place monetary and fiscal policies that adequately favour investments in the maritime industry. In this regard, government will:
  - a. Create an enabling environment for indigenous private shipping companies to acquire vessels;
  - b. Make a special provision for the maritime industry to have access to domestic credits and foreign exchange in an affordable manner;
  - c. Encourage tax relief where and when necessary for indigenous maritime operators;
  - d. Explore the possibility of international funding assistance and cooperation for the indigenous maritime investments;
  - e. Encourage and promote a culture of financial discipline for the shipping companies to enable them build up fleet capacity;
  - f. Encourage invention and innovations, focus on local markets, networking and image building, modal shift from road to rail and water transportation;
  - g. Ensure that the Country's Terms of Trade change to Free On Board (FOB) for imports to Cost Insurance and Freight (CIF) for exports; and
  - h. Encourage Infrastructural and technological development.

## **4. ADMINISTRATION OF THE POLICY**

### **4.1 DEPARTMENT OF SHIPPING (DOS)**

#### **4.1.1 Background**

DOS came into existence in 1976 through the merger of Directorate of Shipping and the Controller of Shipping. It is responsible for the regulation of maritime activity in Bangladesh. The department is responsible for safety of inland navigation and issuing registration and annual fitness certificates of the vessels. The statutory obligation of regulating the Maritime Industry in Bangladesh by DOS is based on three (3) relevant national instruments:

- i. Bangladesh Merchant Shipping Ordinance, 1983
- ii. The Inland Shipping Ordinance, 1976
- iii. The Flag Vessel (protection) Act, 2019

The Agency was established primarily for the promotion of Maritime Safety and Security, Protection of the Maritime Environment, Commercial Shipping and Cabotage activities, Shipping Regulations and the administration of Maritime Labour and Seafarers Standards. The Agency also implements applicable domesticated International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions.

#### **4.1.2 Promotion of Maritime Safety and Security, and Protection of the Marine Environment.**

##### **4.1.2.1 Policy Statement**

The sustainable development of the maritime sector is hinged on the existence of safe, secure and environmentally sound transportation of goods which adhere(s) to acceptable local and international standards. Following measures shall be adopted:

- i. Ensure that all ships operating in Bangladesh waters operate in accordance with local and international maritime safety, security and environmental protection standards.
- ii. Promulgate appropriate legislation to govern safe operation of Bangladesh flagged ships worldwide and foreign ships operating in Bangladesh waters by

enforcing Port State and Flag State control measures.

- iii. Preserve and protect the maritime environment by eliminating pollution from ships and other sources and minimizing the accidental discharge of such substances through the implementation of MARPOL 73/78, other relevant Conventions, Domestic Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines.
- iv. Continue to fulfill international obligations under treaties, multilateral and bilateral agreements regarding maritime security.
  - v. Review and update maritime related legislative frameworks in conformity with international obligations and the dynamics of the industry.
- vi. Collaborate with the Indian Ocean Memorandum of Understanding to eliminate sub-standard ships through continued implementation of the Port State Control (PSC) regime for foreign ships calling at Bangladesh ports in line with extant MoUs.
- vii. Ensure the Port State Control (PSC) inspection targets, currently set at 15% of all ships making a port call are met and, ensure that resources required are adequate.
- viii. Ensure effective Search and Rescue mechanism through inter-agency collaboration and synergy.
  - ix. Encourage inter-agency synergy in the identification and prompt removal of hazardous wrecks in Bangladesh waters.
  - x. Create enabling environment for environment-friendly ship recycling technology.

#### **4.1.3.1 Policy**

- i. Promote capacity building of inland ship crew in Bangladesh sea ports in line with the provisions of the MLC and other legislations.
- ii. Ensure adequate welfare and safety of the seafarers and inland crew in line with the appropriate International Conventions, and other domestic regulations.
- iii. Effective collaboration of the port administration with dock workers Union and the labour employers to sustain industrial harmony in the maritime industry.
- iv. Ensure that dock workers and seafarer's employers comply with existing regulations and standards in relation to crewing, wages, safety, welfare and training of dock workers & seafarers at ports and onboard vessels.
- v. Ensure compliance with appropriate regulations and effective sanctioning of violators in accordance with existing legislations.



- vi. Ensure effective registration and regulation of Seafarers, Dock workers, Stevedoring companies, Seafarers employers, Jetties, Terminal operators and offshore platforms and terminals.

#### **4.1.4 Coastal and Inland Shipping**

The Coastal and Inland Shipping Ordinance stands on four pillars namely: building, ownership, manning and registration of vessels. The purpose of the Ordinance is to encourage indigenous participation in coastal and inland shipping that will enable her develop and empower indigenous shipping.

##### **4.1.4.1 Policy Statement**

The government recognizes the great potentials and benefits of Coastal and Inland Shipping and is resolved to address the constraints to enable the country to fully exploit the benefits of the ordinance. It is therefore the objective of the government to develop and enhance the inland and coastal shipping with private sector participation. The government shall:

- i. Review of the Inland Shipping Ordinance 1976.
- ii. Strengthen the institutions for effective enforcement of the provisions of the Ordinance.
- iii. Encourage inter-agency synergy for effective implementation of the Ordinance.
- iv. Encourage the commitment of government to the strict implementation of the Ordinance.

#### **4.1.5 Maritime Transport**

Bangladesh economy is largely dependent on shipping. Approximately 95% of all goods imported to the country arrive by sea and most agricultural and industrial products are exported by sea. Thus, shipping and the supporting infrastructure such as ports and harbours are vital to the economic growth of the country.

If Bangladesh can operate a functional register of international ships, she would derive significant revenue from ships listed on the National Register of Ships. Domestic and regional shipping is also an important maritime activity sustaining socio-economic development in the Country.

The Department of Shipping (DOS) is the maritime administration in Bangladesh.

It directs, coordinates and monitors maritime activities, exercising its competence as a Port State, Flag State, and Coastal State Administration. It is the jurisdictional authority for the investigation of matters relating to maritime disasters and the administrative authority for investigating and sanctioning violations of merchant shipping standards under its jurisdiction.

The Government is committed to promoting regulatory reforms to ensure that access to efficient and competitive shipping services is maintained. The Nation's international economic competitiveness requires that we act in line with international approaches to shipping regulations.

The goal for maritime transport is to have "A Safe, Secure, Clean and Internationally Competitive Maritime Transport Sector".

#### **4.1.5.1 Promote efficient, effective and internationally competitive maritime industry that boosts international trade.**

##### **4.1.5.1.1 Policy Statement**

The maritime transport sector is critical to the economic development of Bangladesh. It contributes significantly to the country's foreign exchange earnings from both cargo and other shipping activities. Bangladesh also maintains, and wishes to grow, its sea-going shipping fleet. The government shall:

- i. Implement measures to attract ship owners to register their vessels in Bangladesh through a vibrant ship registry that is internationally respected and profitable.
- ii. Promote Bangladesh as a crewing nation by encouraging the hiring of Bangladesh Seafarers.
- iii. Promote the expansion of ship building, repair and maintenance activities to support the maritime sector.
- iv. Facilitate the development of marina facilities to tap into the growing nautical tourism market.

#### **4.1.5.2 Facilitate the expansion of transport demand in areas of exports in the maritime domain.**

##### **4.1.5.2.1 Policy Statement**

In line with the economic diversification policy of government, the Nation aspires

to develop the potentials of ship building sub- sectors to an enduring height and to add to the Nation's international trade earnings.

#### **4.1.5.2.2 Policy**

- i. Ensure effective supply chain management for ship building.
- ii. Promote Bangladesh as a premier cruise ship destination and ensure the provision of effective support services and related infrastructure in addition to a well-defined regulatory framework.
- iii. Institute a long term strategy for the development of a sustainable coastal and marine tourism.
- iv. Promote and support enlightenment programmes to stimulate the development of tourist activities associated with the marine environment and coastal zone.
- v. Adopt measures to ensure that negative impacts of tourism activities are avoided, minimized or mitigated.

### **4.2 Chattogram, Mongla and Pyra Ports Authority (CPA, MPA & PPA)**

#### **4.2.1 Background**

The Chattogram, Mongla and Pyra Ports Authority were established by the Act of parliament of in 1976 and 2013 respectively to own, regulate and operate the respective ports in Bangladesh in a safe, secure, efficient and environmentally friendly manner. The need to improve port efficiency through enhanced cargo handling operations in a competitive manner gave birth to the port reforms. This reform has left the port authorities with the status of landlord, technical regulator and provider of infrastructure and marine services while cargo handling operations now resides with the concessionaires.

The essence of the Port Reform was to increase efficiency, productivity and infrastructure at competitive port price. The aforementioned indices have shown improvement but without commensurate reduction in port cost. Security challenges in some port facilities also exist. Institutional framework for the provision of equipment and facilities is also a challenge.

#### **4.2.2 Policy Statement**

To make Bangladesh ports the hub in regional and international shipping, demands that the ports should render services that are competitively efficient, reliable, and

flexible yet at minimum port costs. The Bangladesh government is making efforts to improve the security situation within the port areas to make the port seamless and efficient for the flow of cargoes as key policy position of the port policy, so as to create efficient movement of cargo in the supply chain and to achieve reduction of cost of doing business on the shore side of the chain.

#### **4.2.3 Policy**

- i. Accelerate the completion of the Port development master-plan that will cover all the Ports and provide the foundation for evolving future policy for the development and operation of the ports.
- ii. Ensure that all ports fulfill requirements regarding depth, width, harbour channel markings and other navigational safety and hydrographic survey requirements.
- iii. Identify changes in transport demand in short, medium and long terms.
- iv. Analyze the extent, nature and location of existing and additional ports to meet expansion requirements.
- v. Facilitate and enhance the expansion of international trade particularly tourism and exports through the ports.
- vi. Streamline the processes of Government Agencies operating within the ports and encourage synergy.
- vii. Build port infrastructure and modern automation systems in response to transport demand with a view to minimizing human contacts in line with international best practices.
- viii. Restructure Bangladesh Ports Authority and properly designate its functions as a landlord through the repeal of the existing legislation , to cover its statutory functions within the entire maritime domain.
- ix. Render customer service delivery that is efficient and a maritime logistics nodal point that is quick, reliable and flexible while maintaining minimum port costs.
- x. Provide and rehabilitate road and rail links to and within the ports, Inland Container Depots and Inland Waterways.
- xi. Promote the expansion of ship repair and maintenance activities to support the maritime sector.
- xii. Promote Public Private Partnership in Port development and operations.

### **4.3 BANGLADESH NAVY (BN)**

#### **4.3.1 Background**

The Constitution of Bangladesh charged the Bangladesh Naval Forces with the defence of the nation by sea. These include defence from external aggression, maintaining territorial integrity, suppression of insurrection and acting in aid to civil authorities. The BN is responsible for the maritime aspect of these functions.

Over 95 percent of Bangladesh foreign trade is sea-borne. Threats to Bangladesh maritime environment are broadly categorised as economic, political and environmental. Political threats emanate from maritime boundary disputes, terrorism, militancy, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, while environmental threats include marine pollution and natural/man-made disasters. On the other hand, economic threats are illegal activities that negatively impact on the economic fortunes of the nation and its people. These include poaching, economic sabotage such as illegal fishing, sabotage of strategic oil and gas installations, kidnapping, piracy and armed robbery amongst others. It is estimated that Bangladesh loses billions of dollars annually to maritime related crimes including illegal fishing. This development has negative economic consequences, if unchecked. The problem of checking these illegal activities in the Nation's waters using available resources is identified as the main challenge to the BN, in conjunction with other agencies.

#### **4.3.2 Policy Statement**

The Bangladesh Navy is charged with the responsibility of enforcing and assisting in co-ordinating the enforcement of all customs laws, including anti-bunkering, fishery and immigration laws of Bangladesh at sea, in addition to making of charts and co-ordinating all national hydrographic surveys. To enable her perform these statutory functions, Government needs to provide her with adequate infrastructure, platforms, equipment and manpower to enhance safety and security for improved economy, which is largely dependent on the maritime environment.

#### **4.3.3 Policy**

- i. Provide adequate infrastructure, platforms and equipment. These include jetties, patrol vessels and equipment.
- ii. Enhance maritime domain awareness for detection of maritime crimes.
- iii. Prevent infringement and violation, as well as ensure the enforcement of Customs, Immigration, Fishery and Pollution Laws and Regulations.
- iv. Protect the merchant shipping and sea lanes.
- v. Preserve the exclusive right of exploration and exploitation of resources within

- the Nation's EEZ.
- vi. Coordinate hydrographic surveys and making of charts for Bangladesh waters and the sub-region in general.
  - vii. Prevent marine pollution including but not limited to dumping of toxic wastes in Bangladesh waters.
  - viii. Provide adequate funds for the acquisition of jetties, patrol vessels and other equipment for maritime security.
  - ix. Encourage and attract patronage for effective utilization of BN shipbuilding and other private repair facilities such as the Naval Dockyard and other private Shipyard in order to promote the local shipbuilding industry.

#### **4.4 BANGLADESH COAST GUARD (BCG)**

##### **4.4.1 Background**

The Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) was established to ensure maritime security, law enforcement, and resource protection in Bangladesh's waters. As a paramilitary force under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the BCG plays a crucial role in safeguarding the country's maritime interests, complementing the efforts of the Bangladesh Navy.

The responsibilities of the BCG include preventing illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking, and piracy. It also enforces environmental protection laws, assists in search and rescue (SAR) operations, and supports disaster response efforts in coastal areas. Given Bangladesh's extensive maritime domain, including the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), territorial waters, and inland waterways, the BCG is an essential agency in maintaining law and order at sea.

Illegal activities such as drug trafficking, unauthorized vessel movements, and resource exploitation continue to pose security and economic challenges. The BCG's capacity must be continuously enhanced to counter these threats effectively and to align with international maritime security standards.

##### **4.4.2 Policy Statement**

The Bangladesh Coast Guard is entrusted with ensuring maritime security, enforcing national and international maritime laws, and protecting Bangladesh's coastal and marine resources. To fulfill its mandate, the BCG must be adequately equipped, staffed, and technologically advanced to carry out surveillance, interdiction, and enforcement operations efficiently. Strengthening the BCG's capabilities will contribute to national security, economic stability, and sustainable use of marine resources.

##### **4.4.3 Policy**

- i. Strengthen operational capacity through the acquisition of modern patrol vessels, surveillance aircraft, and advanced communication systems.
- ii. Enhance maritime domain awareness through integrated monitoring systems, including

satellite surveillance, coastal radar stations, and AIS tracking.

iii. Enforce laws against illegal fishing, smuggling, human trafficking, and other illicit maritime activities within Bangladesh's waters.

iv. Conduct coordinated maritime security operations with the Bangladesh Navy and other agencies to protect national interests.

v. Improve search and rescue (SAR) capabilities to ensure prompt response to maritime accidents, natural disasters, and emergency situations.

vi. Establish and maintain forward operating bases along the coastline to extend BCG's operational reach.

vii. Promote environmental protection by preventing marine pollution, monitoring waste disposal from ships, and ensuring compliance with MARPOL regulations.

viii. Increase public awareness and cooperation with local fishing communities to improve maritime security and sustainable resource management.

ix. Ensure adequate funding and investment in training, technology, and infrastructure development to enhance BCG's operational effectiveness.

x. Strengthen international cooperation and partnerships in maritime law enforcement, security, and search and rescue operations.

## **4.5 BANGLADESH SHIPPERS' COUNCIL**

### **4.5.1 Background**

Bangladesh Shippers' Council was established to provide a platform for the protection of the interests of shippers on matters affecting the shipment of imports and exports to and from Bangladesh and to advise the Government on all matters relating to:

- ✓ freight rates;
- ✓ terms of shipments;
- ✓ class and quality of vessels;
- ✓ port charges and facilities;
- ✓ accessibility and affordability of transport services; and
- ✓ generally on problems of the shipping industry in Bangladesh.

Several reforms have been carried out by Government to transform the Maritime Sector over the years, especially, the Port Reform. The huge expectation that the Port

Reform would lead to cost reduction and efficiency in service delivery has not been met due to the absence of economic regulation.

#### **4.5.2 Policy Statement**

The Bangladesh Shippers' Council is charged with the responsibility of protecting the interest of Bangladesh Importers and Exporters, and also serves as an agent for economic development by minimizing and stabilizing transport costs. In addition, it serves as the nation's Ports Economic Regulator to make the ports competitive.

#### **4.5.3 Policy**

- i. Institute an effective economic regulatory regime at Bangladesh Ports for enhanced efficiency.
- ii. Address any negative impact of Port Concession activities on the economy arising from the port reforms in order to realize the objectives and dividends of the concession.
- iii. Provide guidelines on tariff setting by regulating all parties in order to guard against arbitrariness.
- iv. Monitor and enforce standards to ensure efficient service delivery in port operations.
- v. Encourage competition and guard against the abuse of monopoly and dominant market position.
- vi. Encourage Private Sector Investment in the Port Sector.
- vii. Ensure cooperation and consultation at regional, continental and international levels to harmonize policies in the areas of maritime, multi-modal and inland waterways transportation.
- viii. Ensure the development of the Land Ports which will serve as consolidation centres of cargo for export/import with neighbouring states, especially India.
- ix. Encourage cargo support policy for active participation of indigenous carriers.

### **4.6 Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA)**

#### **4.6.1 Background**

The authority was first established in 1958 by the former [East Pakistan](#) government as East Pakistan Inland Water Transport Authority (EPIWTA). It was established for overall



control, management, and development of inland water transports in the entire region. This agency was introduced on October 31, 1958 with the ordinance called the East Pakistan Inland water Transport Authority Ordinance 1958 (E.P. Ordinance, NO LXXV of 1958). Later the government appointed three constituted authority of this institution on November 4, 1958. After [independence of Bangladesh](#) this authority was named as Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority.

Due to inadequate physical investment and operational constraints which results in increase in inland ship mishaps. Therefore, there should be a policy framework that will evolve a comprehensive regulation and enforcement to make inland water transport safe and secure.

#### **4.6.2 Policy Statement**

An efficient Coastal and Inland Waterways system will relieve pressure on the country's rail and road transport infrastructure as containerized and bulk goods can be transported over long distances at very low rates through water. The energy demand of the waterways is low and the negative effect on the environment is minimal. The use of the waterways for transportation should therefore be encouraged as a matter of policy. Government is therefore committed to increasing the use of the inland waterways as major means of transportation. Inland water transport including ferry services can provide freight and passenger links between coastal and inland waterways communities.

#### **4.6.3 Policy**

- i. Improve and develop Inland Waterways for navigation.
- ii. Provide alternative mode of transportation for the transportation of commercial goods and people.
- iii. Provide technical and operational regulations on the Inland Waterways to encourage 24-hour navigation for timely delivery of cargo.
- iv. Ensure the provision of intermodal connectivity with rail and road.
- v. Restructure and strengthen the institutional framework of BIWTA.
- vi. Provide infrastructure, ports warehousing and jetties where necessary in a Public Private Partnership arrangement.
- vii. Strengthen the legal framework to ensure that BIWTA effectively carries out its conservancy functions within its jurisdictions.
- viii. Promote an inland waterways strategy that will provide a framework for inter-agency collaboration.
- ix. Update regularly the hydrographic Surveys of Bangladesh inland waterways for safe navigation and protection of the marine environment.