

World Maritime Day 2021
Celebration in Bangladesh on 30 September 2021

SEA is the FUTURE

Spotlight on the 2021 World Maritime Day theme "Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future"

By

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Introduction

"Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future" is the 2021 World Maritime Day theme. The theme mirrors a clear necessity to raise responsiveness of seafarers' vital role in world trade and highlight their prominence. Seafarers have always been at the heart of everything IMO does. The Day focuses on the importance of shipping safety, maritime security, and the marine environment. It aims to raise awareness about the importance of shipping safety, maritime security, and the marine environment and also links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance and dependence of the global supply chains and the safe and efficient operation of maritime transport on the professionalism and dedication of seafarers.

IMO Secretary General

IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim said in his message for the day, "Through these difficult (*pandemic*) times, the international community has seen how the ability for shipping services and seafarers to deliver vital goods, including medical supplies and food, has been central to responding to, and eventually overcoming, this pandemic. A first step would be for all countries to designate seafarers as **key-workers**, as outlined in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution adopted in December. To date, just over 50 IMO Member States (*including our Bangladesh*) have done so. I strongly urge Governments to designate seafarers as **key-workers**."

UN Secretary-General

UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said, "I renew my appeal to Governments to address their plight by formally designating seafarers and other marine personnel as "**key-workers**", ensuring safe crew changes, implementing established protocols, and allowing stranded seafarers to be repatriated and others to join ships."

Seafaring

The earth, in fact, is being rotated by nearly 1.89 million Seafarers (Marine Officers – Marine Engineers – Marine Ratings) through their day-n-night effort in moving yearly nearly 11 billion tons of cargo (commodities, fuel, foodstuffs, goods and products) every year by over 74,000 merchant ships from country to country ensuring 7.8 billion humans' well-being. This huge global-movement does not always create a strong echo on their personal radar. Just imagine there is no shipping! Echoing the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her speech at the Graduation Parade of Bangladesh Marine Academy on 25 February 2021, "If there is no shipping, world will come to a halt (জাহাজ চলাচল না থাকলে, অচল হয়ে যাবে বিশ্ব)."

Bangladesh Merchant Marine

Living lonely and working on floating and moving entity for months away from one's family and friends is not an easy task. It needs high level of skills and competence in terms of academic, professional and mental strength. Hence, Bangladesh Merchant Marine follows a strategy for

developing world-class Cadets and Mariners for national and international ocean-going merchant ships; enriched with Bachelor/Master of Maritime Science degree and professional Marine Certificate of Competence. The Bangladeshi Mariners are keeping remarkable roles in seafaring and in shore-based marine management and shipping trade as well.

Seafaring for Blue Economy

- Highly skilled, trained and educated Seafarers are the driving force for developing an economy.
- Seafarers and their counterparts ashore (marine scientists, offshore engineers, fishery technologists, biotechnologists etc.) are able to ensure a thrust in blue economic growth.
- The global fleet would be increased from current 74,000 to over 95,000 by 2030. Additional 600,000 officers will be required.
- In this 21st century, with the rise of various newer sci-tech based professional pathway options, recruitment and retention of seafarers is a challenge ahead – *an opportunity for Bangladesh indeed.*

Shipping is an amazing industry and seafaring is a choice of smart generation!

Educated and skilled seafarers drive the ocean-going ships in international waters. Education and work-place both are exceptional in this profession; study, service and earning – all run in parallel. As the work-place is a moving entity and is at far distant sea, living there for 24 hours is spontaneous. An ocean-going ship having navigational equipment, propulsion machinery, services (electricity, drinking water generation, fire-fighting, emergency, health, food, living, sanitation etc.) is an independent floating city!

Evaluation of Seafarers of Bangladesh (Marine Officers & Marine Engineers)

Seafarers are 'individually' highest foreign currency earners in Bangladesh.

Professional Path	: Cadet to Captain/Chief Engineer of Ocean-going ships
Current yearly recruit	: 700 Cadets from 6 public & 5 private Academies
Time required	: 10 years (average)
Qualification	: Certificate of Competencies (Class III, Class II and finally Class I) Bachelor/Master of Maritime Science
Expected Service	: 25 years
Cost of Education (input)	: 20 Lakhs Taka
Expected Earnings (output)	: 15 Crore Taka in Foreign Currency
Total yearly earning	: 3,500 Crore Taka (US\$ 400m) by all Bangladeshi Seafarers

Maritime Excellence of Bangladesh

- Bangladesh Marine Academy – established in 1972 by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman – is now a Partner Institution of World Maritime University, Sweden and is recognised by UK Merchant Navy Training Board and European Commission.
- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University - established in 2013 by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.
- Marine Fisheries Academy - established in 1973 by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- Bangladesh – an IMO Member & ex-Council Member for 3 terms (Category-B twice & Category-C once).
- Bangladesh – ratified 25 of the IMO Conventions/Protocols (6 conventions are under process for ratification).
- Bangladesh – elected President of the council of the International Seabed Authority (ISA).

- A country included in IMO White List since 2000 for successful compliance of IMO STCW Convention.
- Around 200 inland ship-building yards.
- Around 10 ocean-going ship-building yards.
- Century-old sea-fishing heritage.
- Around 11,000 Marine Officers & Marine Engineers and 5,000 Ratings (Crews).
- Secretary General of IMSO (International Maritime Satellite Organization) is a Bangladeshi Master Mariner (Captain).
- One of the 30 Governors of the World Maritime University, Sweden is a Bangladeshi Chartered Marine Engineer.
- One of the 42 IMO Maritime Ambassadors is a Bangladeshi Chartered Marine Engineer.
- One of the 22 Trustees of the IMarEST London (Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology) is a Bangladeshi Chartered Marine Engineer.
- Bangladesh is one of the top 3 riverine countries of the world.
- 24,000 miles navigable inland water-ways in 1,300 rivers.
- Bay of Bengal - one of the largest & furious bays of the world.
- Largest (*Ganges*) delta of the world.
- Longest unbroken sea-beach in Cox's Bazar (app. 100 miles).
- Chattogram Sea-Port – one of the oldest Ports of the world.
- Wooden shipbuilding heritage in Chattogram (exported to Turkey, China, Portugal & Germany in 13-18 centuries).
- Unsinkable SAMPAN (*alike Gondola of Venice*) heritage of Chattogram.
- Bangladesh is keeping world shipping GREEN by recycling scrapped ocean-going ships.

Challenging Seafaring

Seafaring is always a dangerous and hard yet attractive and desired profession. It contains professional pressure and risk. At the end of a lengthy and stressful day, there is no home or family; no pleasant evening gossiping with friends at home or at restaurants; no social ups & downs; no variations of surroundings; no relaxation or way-out to de-stress – just the persistent murmur of the diesels & waves and the immeasurable movement of the ship that is a floating lonely home-cum-workplace of the seafarers – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 30 days a month and 365 days a year! Not the end... Seafarers always remain burdened with the possibility of natural calamities.

Joyful Seafaring

On the other, seafaring is always a charming and smart life-style at the blue-world! Modern shipping is highly regulated for ensuring 'safe, secure and environment-friendly' service by the IMO. Everyday the Seafarers are in newer time-zone! Every port they are meeting with newer nationals! Earning while learning! Salty salary which is really huge and compensating! Communicating with friends & families through phone/fax/emails/video! Family-expedition through family-carrying facilities on-board! Leadership positions while being young! Reaching the top (Master Mariners [Captain] or Marine Engineers [Chief Engineer]) of their careers within 10 years! Mobility ashore with changeable hands-on skill & experience (at around 40-50 years of age)!

Seafarer producing countries

Asia: Majority of seafarers come from **Philippines**; however, this workforce is mainly the Ratings i.e. Marine Crews. India has been well-set in the maritime manpower map with generating marine officers/engineers for many years. However, nowadays students are finding many comparable choices. **China** has all the traits to be a major international supplying point; but that has not been happened because of very internal focus; although their economy is doing very well and requires workforce for its own use and having an unemployment rate of only 4.5%. **Vietnam** seemed to be a forthcoming supply point, but has failed to meet the expectations in numbers, mainly due to

to lack of educational background and training facilities. **Indonesia** on the other hand has a future prospect to enter the supply arena; however, we have to wait for that future. **Myanmar**, due to its political instability, has not been able to capitalize its hard-working workforce. Moreover due to sanctions imposed by many countries Myanmar has not figured on maritime manpower map yet.

Western world: East Europe still continues with their supply; but may not be able to do so for long. As countries develop – and as there comes better opportunities ashore – seafaring's attractiveness fades away. This is a cycle of development seen with all so called developed nations. West Europe today does not supply enough seafarers compared to East Europe due to its wage parity.

South America: A country needs to have a good merchant fleet of its own for becoming a strong workforce supplying point. Except Brazil, most South American countries have small fleets. In fact, these countries have just the sufficient workforce to meet their own demands only. Although Brazil trains officers for its own merchant fleets; however, as their oil and offshore sector is growing, the future supply will also be dedicated to meet its own needs.

Africa and Middle East: Excepting Egypt and Nigeria, all the countries have small fleets. Nigerian maritime workforce is mainly working in their oil & gas sector, and few Egyptian officers are seen to be working in the international fleet. This is also the case for some Angolan and South African officers. There lies a political and financial risk for international ship management companies to enter into these countries. The same goes for the Middle Eastern maritime countries. Military conflicts and political risks have lessened the importance of these countries in the maritime field.

Conclusion

The above scenario of the shipping world clearly shows that seafaring is an international engagement that contains continuous challenge of conserving own position among the various maritime nations of the world. Even then it is also clear that prospect and opportunities are there for our **Bangladesh** too. We only need to have the appropriate attitude, professionalism and patience to conquer a fair share in the world of oceans. Although we have centuries-old heritage of seafaring, we have merely a tiny presence today in the World Maritime Manpower Map – 16 thousand among 1.89 millions world-wide. We may be very small in number but we are not small in our excellence. In every corner of the globe, a Bangladeshi seafarer is seen to be working at some apex position – *in Singapore, Australia, UK, Canada, USA, Middle East etc.* We do not lack in merit, skill and capacities. In this 21st century, we need to have spontaneous combination of professional skill and academic excellence. Besides, with blessings of the efficient leadership and teamwork, the desired day is not far away when maritime light of Bangladesh will also brighten up the policy level of the shipping world.

May Allah bless our Maritime Bangladesh
Joy Bangla – Joy Bangabandhu

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About the Author

Sajid Hussain is serving Bangladesh Marine Academy since 1993 and as its **Commandant** since 2009. He was a minor freedom fighter in Sector – 7 at his age of 12. He is an IMO Maritime Ambassador, a Governor at World Maritime University, Sweden; a Trustee, Fellow, Council Member & a Recognised Speaker of IMarEST London, a Chartered Marine Engineer of UK Engineering Council and a Maritime Expert of IMO and GlobalMET (Australia); a member of the senate, syndicate & council of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University.

He was Chief Cadet Captain during his Cadetship in Bangladesh Marine Academy in 1980; sailed in BSC ships as Cadet to Chief Engineer during 1980 to 1993; possesses a CoC Class ONE Marine Engineer from UK, MSc in Maritime Safety (Marine Engineering) from World Maritime University, Sweden and a DSc in Maritime Education (Honoris Causa); achieved IMarEST London's "Outstanding Contribution to Marine Education Award 2019." Author of 23 books, 30 Research papers and over 250 features; he initiated establishing "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University" based on his thesis 'A proposal for establishment of a Maritime University in Bangladesh'.

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