

AVOIDING AN URBAN NIGHTMARE: TIME TO GET PLANNING RIGHT

DHAKA TUESDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2019, FALGUN 7, 1425 BS **16**

Harnessing the potential of Blue Economy

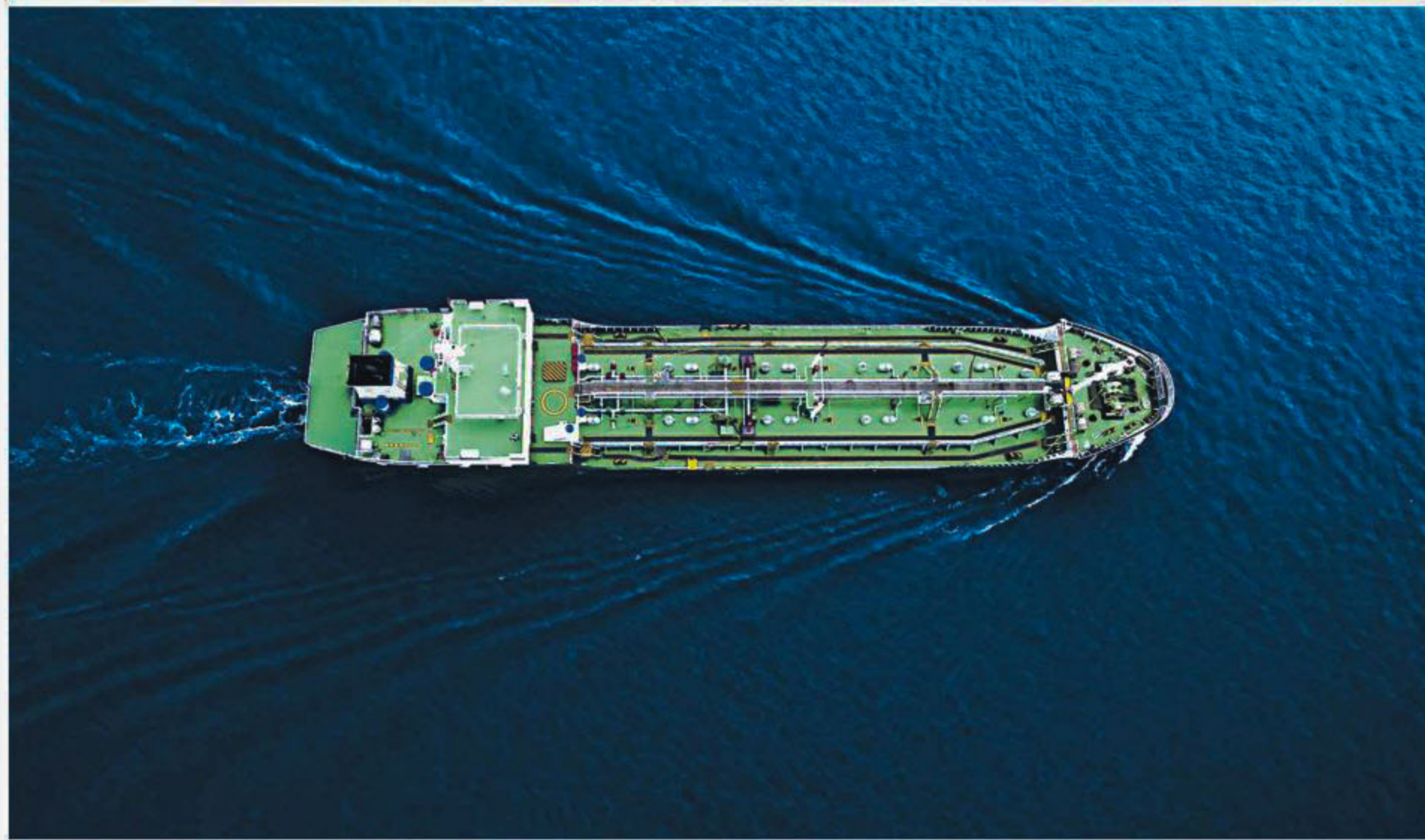


COMMODORE MN ABSAR

Seas have always been instrumental in defining the destiny of the world, be it as a means of transportation or as trade routes or as a hub of resources. They have also played a significant role in bringing people closer, melting down of cultures and religions; and it definitely helped in spreading new ideas and thoughts. Today, as we stand in the 21st century, seas are important not only for military needs but also for the economy.

Earlier technology was not that advanced. Hence the sea was a forbidden world. At that time people only focused on fishing and extraction of oil. But today, advent of advanced new technologies has opened up new vistas of opportunity. Nations are now trying to exploit and explore the marine resources. In this backdrop, there is new thinking on the ways and means of use of seas and oceans. Prof Gunter Pauli in his seminal book *The Blue Economy: 10 years, 100 innovations, 100 million jobs* for the first time brought the concept of "Blue Economy" into prominence. Today, Blue Economy is ushering in a new paradigm of ocean- and sea-based sustainable development without jeopardising the ocean health.

Following the declaration of Honourable PM Sheikh Hasina's vision on Blue Economy in 2014 people in Bangladesh are also now hoping to see



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a new tomorrow by exploiting the fleeting opportunities of the Blue Economy. Bangladesh has very successfully resolved the delimitation issue and gained a total of 118,813 sq. km of territorial sea, 200 nautical miles of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and a substantial share of extended continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal. On the other hand, we now have the economic

wherewithal to go for state-of-the-art technologies. Hence gradually Bangladesh will go towards a lot of economic activities which will be related to seas, oceans and coastal areas. As a result of this new era of Industrialisation of Seas, public sector, private sector, entrepreneurs, foreign investors, multinational companies, local communities, etc., will come into

the areas adjacent to our seas. They will build their companies, raise the infrastructures, and a lot of activities will go on there. Logically, all these will have climatic impacts. Concomitantly, increased frequencies and intensities of natural disasters in our areas cannot be ruled out. Bangladesh is a ground zero in terms of climatic affects. So if we are not concerned about the resilient infra-

structures for blue economy, we will face dire consequences and will fail to harness the fleeting opportunities of the Blue Economy.

When we talk about Blue Economy, we have on one hand the economic activities related to the seas and oceans, and environmental factors on the other.

For harnessing the full potential of ocean-based resources within the present maritime boundary of Bangladesh, a range of productive economic sectors will be needed: 1) marine fisheries and aquaculture; 2) marine non-traditional species culture; 3) marine biotechnology; 4) carbon sequestration; 5) oil, gas and minerals mining; 6) ocean renewable energy; 7) sea salt production; 8) marine trade, shipping and transport; 9) marine tourism; 10) marine education and research; 11) maritime surveillance; 12) marine spatial planning, etc.

One has to note that when we talk about Blue Economy related industrial, economic, and social projects, we should realise that it is a colossal job encompassing a wide geographical area and wide array of different types of infrastructures, including road network, rail network, power supply and water supply network, ports and airports, power generation station, water treatment facilities, warehouses, industrial complexes, hotels, motels, tourist resorts, just to name a few.

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