

How Bangladesh can secure global jobs for maritime graduates



Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury
is adjunct faculty at Bangladesh Maritime University, and former head of inland container depot at Kamalapur and Pangaon Inland Container Terminal under Chittagong Port Authority.

AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh is producing far more deck and engine cadets than the global shipping market can absorb, resulting in a national crisis. Cadets face long waits for training berths, skills atrophy, and a slide from officer-track careers into underemployment. Our training pipeline can produce several hundred officer-track graduates annually, but the number of shipboard training berths has lagged well behind. When a cadet cannot promptly secure the 12 plus months of sea time for a first Certificate of Competency (CoC), every passing quarter erodes competence, confidence, and employability. This mismatch between output and openings has been flagged by industry voices and analysts repeatedly, including calls to rethink maritime education and align intake with real demand as mentioned in an article, titled "Why Bangladesh must rethink its maritime education," by *The Financial Express*.

Worse, our graduates face frictions that peers from leading seafarer hubs do not. According to a report by this daily, cadets from many countries can travel on seafarer IDs to seek berths, but Bangladeshi cadets often cannot without prior work visas, shutting them out of interviews and last-minute joinder opportunities in crew-change ports. That single administrative choke-point compounds the placement gap created by an oversupplied cohort.

However, there is a proven way out. Vietnam, once in a similar bind, partnered with the Dutch Shipping and Transport College (STC) Group and the University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City to create UT-STC—a finishing school plus placement hub that aligned training to European expectations (including International Maritime

Organization compliant and DNV certified simulators and employer-designed modules). Then it actively brokered cadet berths with EU ship owners. UT STC is also a Marlins approved English test centre, underscoring language and soft-skill standards that recruiters trust.

In late 2009, I, along with two of my colleagues, had the privilege of attending a two week refresher training programme arranged by the STC Group in Vietnam. The programme was held at their joint venture institute adjacent to the University of Transport Ho Chi Minh City (UT-HCMC), the very partnership that produced the remarkable UT-STC model. Observing the institution's infrastructure, curriculum integration, and the precision with which Dutch maritime training principles have been localised was a revelation. The blend of theory, simulator work, and industry exposure reflected a deep alignment between academic preparation and real world vessel operations.

The experience provided more than academic insight; it offered a living demonstration of how structured collaboration with an international training house can transform the employability of maritime graduates. The Vietnamese cadets we met were confident, linguistically competent, and visibly aligned with international safety and operational culture. It was evident that the Dutch collaboration had not merely transferred technology, rather it had transferred a mindset. The proximity to UT-HCMC allowed continuous academic linkage, while STC's involvement ensured that the training retained credibility with European shipowners. For us, it was both inspiring and instructive working model that Bangladesh can adapt almost directly.

To do that, first, Bangladesh must create a Bangladesh Maritime University (BMU)-anchored international finishing track: a 12 week, employer-co-designed module layered on top of cadet programmes delivered with a reputable foreign partner—so the credential signals instant trust to global crewing managers. That partner could be an EU training house (in the style of STC) or a Nordic academy favoured by Norwegian owners. The goal is simple: when a CV lands on

officer demand projections by international shipping associations, such as Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) and International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and employer commitments from any finishing-track partner. This can protect cohorts from avoidable underemployment while rebuilding credibility.

Fourth, make placement a public good, not a private gamble. A national cadet placement portal under the Department of Shipping

associations: the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, German and Dutch groups, and Japanese networks. Vietnam's UT-STC did not wait for the market to come to it. It went to the market with an offer owners could trust. The lessons from my own exposure to UT-STC reaffirm that successful initiatives stem, not from waiting for opportunity, but from deliberately engineering trust through competence, transparency, and collaboration.

Sixth, protect the brand by protecting the licence. Certifying integrity is everything. Any policy that dilutes the pathways to the continuous discharge certificate (CDC)—an official document for seafarers with records of their sea service history—or, CoC or tolerates weak sea-time verification undermines every graduate's prospects. The quickest way to lose EU and white-list confidence is to appear casual about standards; the quickest way to win is to be stricter than required and invite inspection, a stance repeatedly advocated in policy commentary.

Finally, treat post cadet drift as a solvable training gap, not an individual failure. When berths are scarce, BMU and the academies should keep graduates warm with simulator refreshers, English labs, dynamic positioning familiarisation, LNG cargo basics and digital seamanship modules, so a six month wait does not become a skills cliff. In Vietnam, UT-STC's short courses were designed to convert waiting time into competitiveness—a small investment with outsized hiring returns once recruiters arrive. Having seen this first-hand, I am convinced that Bangladesh can replicate this "warm-hold" model (before skills learned at the academy get cold) at modest cost but immense strategic benefit.

This is not about lowering ambition; it is about raising certainty. A Bangladesh-EU finishing track signals quality. Mobility agreements remove pointless frictions. Demand-shaped intake protects cohorts. A national placement platform levels access. Tough love on licensing safeguards recognition. And "warm hold" training flips idle time into value. Do these together and you change the first employer's calculus from risk-averse to opportunity-seeking. Give our cadets the last mile they've earned; the ships, and the world, will do the rest.



VISUAL: MONOROM POLOK

a superintendent's desk in Hamburg or Oslo, the badge says "job ready." This is precisely the direction urged by reformers arguing for quality over unchecked expansion.

Second, fix the visa choke-point. Pursue targeted seafarer mobility arrangements with crew change hubs, such as the United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Hong Kong, so that Bangladeshi cadets holding seafarers identity documents (SDIDs) can enter, interview and join vessels without pre-secured employment visas, as competitors do.

Third, tie intake to real demand. Leading suppliers like the Philippines shape maritime school admissions against forecast vacancies. Bangladesh should do the same for the next five intakes. We can use

and BMU can standardise profiles, publish transparent queues, and let vetted employers pull candidates directly; pairing it with strict ethical-recruitment oversight of manning agents so families are not extorted for berths. India's ability to move large graduate cohorts into foreign fleets each year is not accidental; it is coordination as mentioned in an article "Why Bangladesh needs a national maritime roadmap," published by *The Daily Star*.

Fifth, sell Bangladesh's edge. Our flagship academy and new public campuses have infrastructure that, if curated properly, can impress owners. Package simulator time, English-for-mariners benchmarks and safety culture into a co-branded assurance with the foreign partner and take it to owners'

silence 192 others. Each vetoing state should be forced to engage in a public, Socratic-style Q&A, so that its contradictions face the threat of exposé and reasoning becomes part of the record, whereby transparency transforms impunity into exposure.

Permanent members should also adopt the regulation proposed by France and Mexico, pledging not to use the veto in cases involving genocide or mass atrocities. These reforms require no charter amendment, only political will. The UN can add real consequences. For example, states that block humanitarian action losing leadership of peacekeeping committees or major UN posts for a period. Power values prestige more than legality, and when prestige is at risk, restraint follows.

For small and middle states, these reforms are not abstract ideals but survival mechanisms. The UN is the only forum where a small country in Asia or Africa can speak with the same legal dignity as a superpower. Expanding the council to include more regional giants would only amplify inequality. True multilateralism means accountability, not aristocracy.

Like every decades-old organisation, the UN, too, needs reform; but not the kind that inflates privilege in the name of progress. It needs conventions that discipline the veto, not expansions that distribute it. Shaming the council into acting responsibly, and strengthening the UN General Assembly's voice, would achieve more than adding new permanent seats ever could.

The task today is not to add more seats but to make those already seated answer for their choices. Power cannot be shared fairly until it learns to limit itself. Reforming the UN means teaching power, at last, the habit of restraint.

Expanding the UN Security Council won't make it fairer



Sanjaya Kalika
is a Nepalese international lawyer and a Herring Scholar at the University of Oxford.

SANJAYA KALIKA

As the United Nations turned 80 last month, the familiar refrain of "reform or perish" echoed once again through diplomatic circles. From Tokyo to Brasilia, governments are renewing calls to expand the UN Security Council by adding new members to make it "representative of today's realities" and to break the monopoly of the five powers that have ruled since 1945. While the demand sounds fair, expanding the council would not democratise the UN—it would simply multiply vetoes, deepen paralysis, and transform an exclusive club into a larger but equally unaccountable one.

The argument for expansion rests on moral intuition: why should China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—five victors of an eight-decade old war—still define global security? New Delhi, now leading the BRICS bloc and lobbying harder than ever for a permanent seat, says global governance must reflect contemporary power shifts. Tokyo, Berlin, and Brasilia echo that call. Yet, their campaigns sound less like reform and more like recognition drives—narratives of deservingness wrapped in moral vocabulary. That is a bit like Donald Trump's insistence on getting the Nobel Peace Prize.

The veto remains the UN's original sin and a defining compromise. Without it, the great powers would never have joined the organisation; but with it, they can paralyse the UN whenever interests collide. The council already struggles to respond to Gaza, Myanmar, and Ukraine, where vetoes by the United States, China, and Russia have immobilised action. Imagine doubling that number.

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Advocates call expansion "democratisation," but an oligarchic enlargement would hardly fit any definition of democracy. Expanding the permanent membership would merely formalise each region's unofficial—and self-declared—hegemons, allowing them to claim

to speak for their neighbours. In South Asia, India's bid alarms its neighbours. In Africa, Nigeria, South Africa, and Egypt compete for primacy. In Latin America, Brazil's ambitions unsettle Argentina and Mexico. And when Germany argues that it deserves a permanent seat, Italy retorts that it, too, lost the war. Regardless of these rivalries, an expanded elite, with or without vetoes, would move slower, decide less, and legitimise the hierarchies it was meant to resist.

The world is not unrepresented at the UN Security Council. Ten non-permanent seats, distributed among five regional groups and rotated biennially, already give every region a say. Even small (or supposedly far-flung) states such as Nepal, Benin, and Jamaica have served multiple terms on the council with exactly as many votes as France or China. What silences

equality and cooperation, offers a warning. India's ongoing boycott since 2016 has paralysed SAARC by treating it as an extension of bilateral diplomacy, or, worse, domestic politics. The UN could meet a similar fate if dominated by regional giants—reformed on paper but stagnant in practice.

The UN's crisis, however, is not numerical but ethical. Too many states defy its principles with impunity. For example, Russia not only cited self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter while invading Ukraine, it also filed the "notification" within 24 hours of the start of hostilities, as required by Article 51. India, a would-be permanent member, on the other hand, did not even fulfil such a requirement when carrying out strikes against Pakistan in May. The problem, therefore, is not that too few sit on the council but that too many disregard what it stands for. Adding seats will not change that behaviour; it will reward it.

Still, abolishing the veto is as unrealistic as expanding it is unwise. The answer lies in taming it—making it politically unusable except, perhaps, in extraordinary cases. Britain's monarchy offers a useful analogy, where the Crown's powers have been rendered inert by centuries-long conventions. The British Crown today acts only on ministerial or parliamentary advice; authority persists in law but not in exercise. The veto can evolve the same way. The UN Charter need not be rewritten, and Pandora's box need not be opened, as long as political practice can turn power into restraint.

Every veto should be visible, explainable, and costly. A single veto ought to trigger an emergency session of the General Assembly under the Uniting for Peace resolution, ensuring that one member's decision cannot

them is not absence but hierarchy, where, although the elected ten can vote, one veto from the unelected five can erase everyone else. Expansion would only enlarge that hierarchy, not dismantle it.

South Asia's own regional body, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), established on the UN's ideals of

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 24 Class cutter
- 26 Track trip
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- 31 Fitting
- 32 Tom Cruise movie
- 33 Ready for war
- 40 Pull along
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- DOWN**
- 1 Fancy party
- 5 Years gone by
- 9 Speed trap device
- 10 Farm towers
- 12 Brighten
- 13 Skilled
- 14 Formal headwear
- 16 Greek vowel
- 17 Mechanical learning
- 18 Twist of fiction
- 21 NFL tiebreakers
- 22 Aloud
- 23 35-Down variety

2 Makes suitable

3 Turning tool

4 Region

5 Free TV spot: Abbr.

6 Lend a hand

7 Shirt part

8 Critic's annual list

9 Stylishly quaint

11 Asterisk

15 Bun worn on the head

19 Pillage

20 Mamie's husband

22 Pants part

23 Groan inducer

24 High quality

25 John of "Three's Company"

26 Pea or peanut

27 Tickled

28 Longed

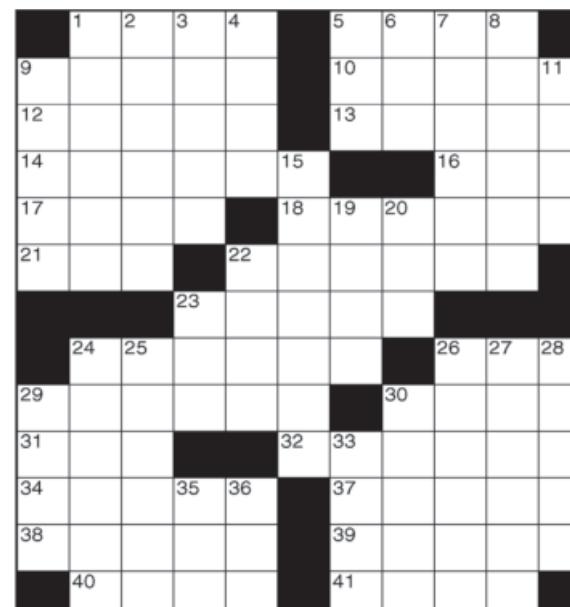
29 Yaks it up

30 Future fungus

33 Poet Khayyám

35 Brewed beverage

36 Work unit



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

