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A \$150 Billion Maritime Blueprint: The Policy Imperative for Bangladesh's Economic Sovereignty



Captain A K M Golam Kibria
Chairman, MH Global Group
Director, Ocean Shiptrade Pte Ltd – Singapore
Maritime Strategist

For decades, Bangladesh has treated its maritime territory merely as a geographical boundary—not as a strategic engine of economic power. Yet beneath the seabed and across the vast maritime zones of the Bay of Bengal lies an estimated \$150 billion blue economy potential, capable of generating more than 3 million jobs.

The fundamental question is clear: Will Bangladesh remain confined to a coastal mindset, or will it rise as a true maritime power?

Transitioning from a passive coastal state to an effective maritime power is not simply a matter of building infrastructure. It requires a coordinated national strategy encompassing policy alignment, human capital development, institutional reform, and global connectivity.

Capital Outflow: A Silent Economic Drain

Bangladesh is producing skilled seafarers and maritime officers who have secured respectable positions across the global shipping industry. Yet the high-value segments of maritime commerce—logistics management, ship management, marine insurance, financial services, and maritime legal sectors—remain largely under foreign control.

Every year, a significant portion of freight earnings flows out of the country. Bangladesh dismantles ships but does not lead in ship operations. It produces officers but has yet to build world-class maritime service institutions.

This is not merely a policy gap—it represents a major leakage of national economic capacity.

A Three-Pronged Maritime Strategy: A Practical National Roadmap

1. Establishing Dominance in Ship Chartering

If Bangladesh establishes 1,000 domestic ship chartering companies by 2040, its participation in global freight markets could expand dramatically.

Ship chartering is relatively low-capital yet highly knowledge-intensive, generating high-value employment in brokerage, freight analytics, and logistics management. Developing this sector would position Bangladesh within the decision-making core of global shipping commerce.

2. Expanding a Bangladesh-Flagged Fleet

A target of 1,000 Bangladesh-flagged vessels is ambitious but achievable through strategic investment, policy incentives, and international partnerships.

Ship ownership is fundamental to maritime sovereignty. Retaining freight earnings within the national economy strengthens financial stability, deepens maritime expertise, and enhances Bangladesh's strategic presence in global trade routes.

3. Shipbuilding: Transforming Bangladesh's Coastline into a Maritime Industrial Hub

Bangladesh's coastline can become a golden maritime industrial corridor.

With a focused national strategy, the country could capture \$6 billion in shipbuilding exports by 2040, particularly in the global market for small and medium-sized vessels.

The engine of this transformation is synergy—developing riverine shipyards, integrating shipbuilding with the existing ship-recycling sector to create a true circular maritime economy, and establishing joint ventures for technological transfer.

Equally crucial is human capital. Training 50,000 maritime specialists will be essential to drive this transformation.

By uniting shipbuilding and ship recycling within a closed industrial loop, Bangladesh can transform its coastline into a globally competitive center of maritime manufacturing.

Additional Strategic Pillars

A comprehensive maritime strategy must also include several complementary pillars:

Blue Economy Expansion – Unlocking offshore energy resources, fisheries, seabed minerals, and marine tourism.

Maritime Education and Skills Development – Training thousands of young professionals in shipping, logistics, maritime law, and marine engineering.

Port and Logistics Modernization – Transforming national ports into regional transshipment and logistics hubs.

Global Trade Connectivity – Strategic partnerships with international shipping lines and commodity trading companies.

Coastal Industrial Growth – Establishing shipbuilding clusters, repair yards, and maritime economic zones.

Maritime Finance and Insurance Hub – Developing domestic capabilities in maritime finance, insurance, and legal arbitration.

Policy and Governance Reform – Implementing a long-term national maritime strategy inspired by successful global models.

Employment and Export Growth – Creating millions of jobs while strengthening export competitiveness.

Sustainable Ocean Governance – Protecting marine ecosystems while ensuring long-term economic prosperity.

Policy Coordination: The Need for Central Maritime Leadership

Such a transformation cannot be achieved through fragmented institutional efforts. It requires the establishment of a "powerful independent National Maritime Council" to coordinate strategy across government, industry, and academia.

This body would oversee the development of integrated maritime economic zones in Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, and Payra, elevate maritime education and research to international standards, and establish a comprehensive maritime finance, insurance, and legal services ecosystem.

Across the world, several successful maritime development models are widely studied—the Korean model, the Greek model, the Japanese model, the United Kingdom model, the broader European model, and most notably the Singapore model.

Through deep analysis of these international successes, Captain A. K. M. Golam Kibria has proposed a distinctive "Bangladesh Model."



Singapore's rise as a global shipping hub was built upon integrated maritime policy, institutional efficiency, and strategic foresight. Bangladesh—leveraging its strategic geographic location, vast workforce, expanding domestic market, and abundant marine resources—possesses similar potential.

The proposed Bangladesh Model integrates maritime policy, modern port infrastructure, skilled human capital, transparent trade systems, and a sustainable blue economy—positioning the country as a major global hub for shipping and maritime trade.

Integrating Economic Power with Human Responsibility

Maritime strategy is not solely an economic agenda—it is also a platform for humanitarian leadership.

The "Global Five-Zero" initiative, founded by Captain Kibria, represents a moral commitment to a world free from poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, corruption, and homelessness.

This initiative was presented at the University of Oxford and received international recognition through the work of the Dr. Mostafa Hazera Foundation.

The foundation also participated in the 80th anniversary event of the United Nations, attended by Secretary-General António Guterres.

Economic strength and social responsibility are not opposing forces—they are mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable national development.

The Call of the Time

The sea is not a luxury for Bangladesh—it is its strategic future.

The \$150 billion maritime opportunity is not merely a statistic; it is a test of national vision, policy courage, and leadership.

Captain A. K. M. Golam Kibria has outlined a roadmap to achieve a \$150 billion maritime economy and create 3 million jobs by 2040, aiming to transform Bangladesh's struggling economy into one defined by strength, dignity, and global relevance.

Now there is only one question—Is Bangladesh ready to embrace its blue horizon?