

Politics and Possibilities of Deep Sea Port in Bangladesh: A Special Focus on Matarbari Port Project

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Abstract: The economy of Bangladesh is booming gradually year after year and the government is also planning for huge infrastructural development to boost up its economic sectors. Infrastructure like Deep Sea Port or Deep water port can bring both economic and military significance for a country. China, India and, the USA were in the race of aiding Bangladesh to construct deep sea port in the Bay of Bengal to gain exclusive access and control over the Bay as well as the Indian Ocean. China was about to start Sonadia Deep Sea Port which was cancelled due to India's & the USA's concern. Bangladesh then strategically sided all those three powers and by changing the location of the port construction, brought comparatively pacifist Japan to build her first-ever deep Sea Port at Matarbari, in Cox's Bazar district. This paper critically measures the deep politics after doing a content analysis of the events related to the research area. Besides, the importance of the Bay of Bengal and how it could shift the regional politics has also been discussed in the perspective of Bangladesh, India, and China.

Keywords: Deep sea port politics, Matarbari deep sea port, Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh-China-India, Sonadia port cancellation, Blue economy

I. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is regarded as one of the fastest-growing economies in the world which is continuously having more than 6% economic growth for a decade. According to the World Bank Report, 2019, the pace of Bangladesh's economic development is faster than India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, and Afghanistan ("Bangladesh 2nd fastest growing," 2019). Focusing on economic growth 8.13 percent, head of a highly dignified business delegation of Germany, Peter Clasen regarded Bangladesh as a new 'Asian Tiger' ("Bangladesh: the tiger of Asia", 2019). For resilient economic growth uninterrupted foreign trade, sufficient port facilities, diversification of export products, infrastructural development, developed road, and railway connectivity throughout the country- are essential. Energy, infrastructure, and Transportation is the key to success in the field of Economy, Human Index, Education, and Social Development in this age of Globalization. That is why Bangladeshi policymakers, politicians, and bureaucrats are trying to build a

sustainable transport system and energy supplying route. The Government has taken some mega projects to boost up the economy of the country, for example, the Padma Bridge, the Rampal Power Station Project, Metro Railway, Payra Seaport, and most noteworthy, the Matarbari Critical-Coal based power plant and Matarbari Deep Sea Port, etc. The government planned to construct a deep seaport near the Matarbari power plant and there are several strong economic, geopolitical, and diplomatic reasons behind this decision.

Transportation of export-import goods needs a developed and well-equipped seaport facility as 82 percent of total cargoes of Bangladesh are handled by seaports and others by land and airports (Karim, 2018). Currently, Bangladesh has three seaports namely Chittagong, Mongla, and Payra (it is partially completed and started to use since 2016) seaports. Chittagong Port has to handle more than 92 percent of goods transported through the three seaports of Bangladesh (Chittagong Port Authority Website). Therefore, congestion of containers and vessels in the port has become a common problem which makes the turnout time much larger. Moreover, as the Chittagong port cannot accommodate ships more than a 9.5-meter draft, it has to send feeder vessels to Singapore, Sri Lanka (Colombo port) or Malaysia (port Klang), and carry goods which costs more money and needs more time. Bangladesh is thriving towards economic development and deep seaport has become an essential component for accelerating foreign trade and encourage foreign investment to the country. In addition, the country will also get financial benefits by providing access to the port to its landlocked neighbors Nepal and Bhutan. The port will play a vital role in transporting products to China and the north-eastern part of India as well. Thus, after establishing effective connectivity and direct link with the neighboring countries, it may be reasonably expected that Bangladesh will have a significant growth in its GDP through the establishment of a deep water port (Shafiqullah, A.K.M., 2013).

Bangladesh is situated in a crucial geographic location and the Bay of Bengal holds very importance in regional politics, hence, the country has to balance its relation in the question of providing access to the Bay with international and regional

powers from the birth of this country. Just after the war of liberation, Bangladesh took the then USSR's (United Soviet Socialist Republic) assistance for demining the Chittagong port (Mahmud, 2017). After the incident, the country didn't allow any other state in its port areas before it took Japan's support and assistance in constructing Matarbari deep water port. For getting access to the Bay both the western and eastern powers like the USA, Russia, China, Japan tried to negotiate with Bangladesh time and again. China is involving in the port development at Payra, which is being constructed as a part of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, but according to experts which lacks the ability to be a deep seaport because of excessive and continuous sedimentation on the port area. Sonadia and Matarbari are two perfect places for deep-water port construction and finally, Bangladesh allowed its one of the most important investor countries, which has a minimum political interest and a large economic interest in the region, Japan. Rather than monitoring the region by creating naval fleet to the Bay, the country will be more interested in developing Industrial City in Moheshkhali. Besides, the country came up with a very minimal interest rate. As deep seaport has both economic and security aspects, politics over the issue of constructing deep seaport has shown us clearly about the international major power struggle in Bangladesh. Being a small and developing country- accepting one state's proposal rejecting others and at the same time maintaining balanced relations with all the states is a great challenge indeed. We are looking forward to exploring how Bangladesh has managed the deeper politics of deep seaport so far. The problem statement for the research is the following question:

- How effectively and strategically Bangladesh is (was) dealing with the politics of deep sea port and what new possibilities will the port offer for Bangladesh?

This is a qualitative research based on existing sources of knowledge. Apart from secondary sources, expert interview has taken as primary data. The paper is divided into five parts where we focus four important theme regarding the politics and benefits of deep sea port construction. First part constitutes the introductory remarks and the rationale of the research paper, the second part focuses on the clarification of important and essential concepts of the paper; third part, where the main argument of the paper lies, discusses about the politics of cancelling Sonadia deep water port project and building a deep sea port near Matarbari coal based power plant ; the fourth part states the advantageous Bangladesh will enjoy after having its own deep sea port at Moheshkhali; Finally the conclusion has the summary of the whole paper with some recommendation.

II. NECESSITY AND COMPLICATIONS OF DEEP SEA PORT CONSTRUCTION IN THE BAY OF BENGAL

2.1 Defining Sea Port and Deep Sea Port

Having an opening to a sea is a blessing for any state in this age of commerce and the free-market economy as the lion's

share of foreign trade happens through the sea. A sea port means a particular area or a harbor where ships, vessels, or boats can anchor and goods, consumer products from many countries arrive, and ships set off with products to foreign countries. From the ports, products are circulated all over the country. According to marine insight, besides providing loading and unloading capabilities- a sea port also has a warehouse for storing goods, fishing facility, hostel, staff quarter, restroom, warm water facility, medical facility, and so on. A sea port enhances the commercial development of a country in many ways by gaining economic pace and also to anchor warships, naval fleet, etc. - so from a military point of view, the importance of sea port is vast (Dasgupta, 2019).

As the term goes "Deep" sea port (DSP) – means a sea port deeper than normal ports and ships of deep draft (deep draft ship naturally containing more than 8000 containers) can float from a deep sea port. Regular ports are not more than 20 feet deep, while in a deep water port large loaded ships having 30 feet depth can anchor (marine insight, 2017). A deep sea port can accommodate fully laden Panamax ships (Panamax ships are those which symbolizes the specific shape, size limits of a ship that can travel through the Panama Canal). Deep water port is a massive infrastructural development situated beyond the territorial sea. The average draft of a deep water port is more than 14.5 meters and container handling capacity is much larger ("Deep Sea Port in", 2013). According to Roa et al (2013) "It is considered deep water port, one whose draft (draft mean by the vertical distance from the water surface to the seafloor) in both the entrance channel and in the terminal area, exceeds 13.72 m". A deep water port also includes diversified modern facilities with a skilled labor force, 24-hour access to the port, uninterrupted supply of electricity, good maintenance system of loading-unloading containers, developed road connectivity to the important places of the state etc. For a state, a deep sea port and other related infrastructural development can make a favorable environment for the foreign investors and consequently increase foreign trade. Additionally, the development projects will create huge employment facilities for its citizens too.

2.2 Limitation of the Existing Sea Ports of Bangladesh

Chittagong port was established in 1887 and in 1976 Chittagong port authority was set up for overall maintenance of the port. Chittagong port is the center of the export-import business of Bangladesh and many foreign traders prefer to load and unload their goods from this port. But the irony is, the port that keeps the foreign trade of Bangladesh alive- has to face several limitations. Mather vessels cannot arrive here thus feeder vessels need to send in Singapore, Sri Lanka which costs extra time and money. Although Turnaround time for the port has lessened significantly from 8-9 days (in 2017) to 35 hours ("Ctg port grows in" 2019). But container handling capacity is 18-20 container/hour compared to other active ports like Singapore or Sri Lanka it is very low (Islam,2017). Another major crisis is the congestion of ships in the jetty which is trying to solve by the authority. Although

the Pangaon inland terminal was built by Chittagong Port Authority and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority Bangladesh to lessen container jam, but the development of connectivity from the port to other parts of the country both by land and waterways is highly recommended and yet to accomplish.

Mongla port was established in 1954, which is situated in Bagerhat, a southwestern district of Bangladesh. The port is facing a shortage of proper logistical support, adequate port facility, and declining draft of the port. A total 92% of export-import is happening through the Chittagong port and Mongla remains unused and undermined (“Mongla not take the”, 2017). The port is handling cargo and ships and containers less than 50% of its capability. The major crisis here is the average draft of the port is decreasing to 7, 7.5 meters whereas an 8 to 9-meter draft is needed for a large ship to arrive. Besides, this port has given continuous loss at a time but now for some years govt. has got some revenue from it. Considering all these the importers also prefer Chittagong port to unload their goods than this port.

Payra deep sea port is still under construction that is planned to complete within three phases and The first phase is completed already in 2016 which was started in 2013. It is situated in the Southern part of Bangladesh, in Patuakhali District’s Kalapara Upazilla. The port was planned to make a deep sea port with the assistance of China that costs USD 15 billion, is considered as a part of the BCIM Economic Corridor (Payra Deep Sea Port, n.d.). Experts say, Payra port is not suitable for making a deep sea port because the port draft is naturally very shallow which is a big constraint. Already a large amount (\$963 million) of money was allocated for initial dredging. Besides, such areas need dredging continuously as tidal current or cyclone (which is very common in Bangladesh) will continuously bring sediments to the area and make the port unable to use as a deep sea port.

2.3 Geopolitical Importance of the Bay of Bengal: Why Deep Sea Port in the Bay is So crucial?

The Bay of Bengal is one of the theatres in world politics located in the northeastern Indian Ocean with an area of about 839,000 square miles (2,173,000 square km) (Balakrishna, 2020). It is named after the nation Bengali and its habitat Ancient Bengal. It lies roughly between latitudes 5° and 22° N and longitudes 80° and 90° E and surrounded by the Andaman Sea, Malaccan Straits, Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean. It has Sri Lanka and India to the west, Bangladesh to the north, and Myanmar and the northern part of the Malay Peninsula to the east (Balakrishna, 2020). Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar are the three countries sharing almost the majority of the Bay which is situated in the endpoint of South Asia and the Far East part of the world, which are geopolitically enriched for various reasons. South Asia and Southeast Asia got divided by the bay, according to some geographers, academics, and diplomats (Brewster, 2014). The Bay of Bengal is a

significant maritime space for cross-cultural and cross-civilization interaction for trade and transport (Basu et al., 2018). Being one of the busiest sea routes of the world it holds great importance for geopolitical and economic reasons from the ancient period. The resourceful bay abounds with lots of fishes, seafood, and natural resources. Deep parts of the sea may contain a huge reserve of oil, natural gas, coal, etc. Bangladesh has the world’s largest sea beach which makes it one of the hotspots of tourism in Asia; most of the mighty rivers in South Asia fall into it and it has a great impact upon the weather and natural calamities in the regions (“Geopolitical Significance of the Bay of Bengal”, 2013).

Besides, one who controls the Bay of Bengal would control the water route from the Far East to the Middle East via Europe. India, as a rising superpower wants to control it despite the long-planned process of China as a key actor in the Bay of Bengal by creating a sustainable diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. From the ancient time to now China is using the water reign of the Bay of Bengal as their key route to reach the Middle East and Europe and that is why China is trying to control the Bay by creating a strong and stable relationship with the countries stands on the bay for sustaining the Belt and Road Initiative. China already took lease of a port of Sri Lanka named Hambantota for 90 years (Abi-Habib, 2018) and Akyab port, also known as Sittwe from Myanmar which is located in Arakan’s conflict zone (Islam, 2019). The Bay of Bengal is the most effective gate for the Chinese to spread all over the world. Middle Eastern oil transported from this Bay to the Southeast and Fareast and sometimes to even far. China even wanted to build a deep sea port in the Bangladeshi part of the Bay which was named Sonadia Deep Sea Port canceled by the critical diplomacy of India (Bagchi, 2016; “Bangladesh scraps China-proposed” 2016).

India has water areas in the Arabian Sea but its vast wealth and geopolitical benefits are in the Bay of Bengal which is the lifeguard for both of their economy and security. India wants its control over the region for checking maritime terrorism, piracy, and natural disasters, monopolistic trading, maintaining sea transports, etc. (Das, 2018). That is why, the country does not want China, or any other major power to create access in the sea, not even the United States of America (The USA). The USA has a naval base in Andabar Nicobar and it wants to take its control over the Chattogram Port of Bangladesh (“Geo Political Importance of Bangladesh for”, 2020). For Bangladesh, the Bay of Bengal is the most important God-gifted natural wealth and the Bay has many times increased the importance of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is surrounded by neighboring India from three sides and the Bay of Bengal is the gate for its open access to the world for which India could not put sanctions upon Bangladesh as Saudi Arab did to Qatar. The Bay of Bengal can be a breaking point for getting rid of the Indian Hegemony. Landlocked countries, i.e. Nepal, Bhutan can use Bangladesh’s sea ports for their export-import purposes. The Bay of Bengal has given some power to

the small countries in the region to bargain with the dominant powers like India, China etc.

III. POLITICS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEEP SEA PORT AT THE BAY OF BENGAL

Deep sea port is a deep concern for the national interest of Bangladesh. Bangladesh situates in an advantageous geographic location and that is why China, India, and Japan are trying to assist Bangladesh to build deep seaport in the water of Bangladesh (Shepard, 2016); the United States of America's wants to get access on the Bay of Bengal through Bangladesh is well known and even Russian Federation has their own agenda in the region (The Strategist, 2014). Initially, China showed interest to aid in port construction on Sonadia, but before engaging in any concrete development with China, Bangladesh due to its giant neighbor India's political pressure freezes the development of Sonadia port and accepts Japan's assistance to build a port in Matarbari, very near to Sonadia.

3.1 Why Sonadia was Cancelled?

After an intensive feasibility test with the assistance of Japan in 2009, Bangladesh decided to make its first deep sea port in Moheshkhali's Sonadia- which was selected as the best place for the construction. China was eager to finance the Mega project in such a crucial location and even planned to execute the project by three phases, 2020, 2030, and 2055-time frame and supposed to give Bangladesh 8 billion US dollars. ('Deep sea port in Matarbari gains', 2020). Not only China but other major powers like India, the USA, Japan also showed their keen interest in engaging in this port development process of Bangladesh. The possibility to sign agreements, treaties, MOUs regarding the construction of Sonadia port with China had arisen many times since 2014. It was highly assumed that, in 2014, by the official visit of Bangladesh Premier Sheikh Hasina to the People's Republic of China, a concrete development on Sonadia port would come to light. Not only the 2014 official visit, but the 2016 official visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bangladesh failed too to make a deal or any kind of progress regarding the issue although Bangladesh officially became a part of the Belt and Road Initiative since then. Exploring the causes why Bangladesh took a back step, and choose Japan as a partner in port construction instead of China, the following reasons are found.

3.1.1 Great power Competition in the Bay of Bengal

In the dynamics of regional politics in Asia and the Pacific Region (APAC) especially in South Asia, East Asia, and South East Asia- rivalry between two major power over their dominance on land and sea is noticed for quite a long time. China has its ambitious mega plan of 'Belt and Road Initiative' aiming at connecting the Eurasian region for boosting up its economy with a greater scale of connectivity. Both India and China have the intention to gain influence over the countries neighboring to the other one. Besides, having

accessibility or control or influence over the sea areas help a state to explore the innumerable resources. Already we are aware of China's ambitious plan to maintain its growing influence on the Indian Ocean. China is the partner of constructing Pakistan's Gwadar port, Sri Lanka's Hambantota port, Myanmar's Sittwe port, Maldives' 2 km Friendship Bridge by providing a large amount of loan to those countries. As all the mentioned countries are developing, hence bearing the heavy cost for the mega projects are economically not viable for them. Already Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and some other African countries are becoming the part of debt-trap diplomacy knowingly or unknowingly. Consequently, this economic burden has made the loanee being exploited by the loaner (China), which in a sense undermines the sovereignty of those countries. Hence it is said, BRI is the misnomer of Chinese colonialism ("China's debt trap diplomacy", 2020). Similarly, India financed the first foreign port development project, the Chabahar port in Iran which will make an easier entrance to the Hormuz strait that has an opening to the Indian ocean. But recently, Iran canceled its agreement with India for making the Cabahar rail project in the allegation of funding delay. Except these, we all are aware of the immense investment of the two countries in development projects of Myanmar which eventually forbade the countries pressurizing Myanmar for taking back to their own people, the Rohingyas from Bangladesh. Neither of the states wants to lose its influence over the southeast Asian country situated in a very important geographic location.

This competition is going on between the countries in the case of Bangladesh too. From Independence, India has strong influence and clear political interests in the political sphere of Bangladesh and has a special relationship with the ruling party, Awami League. It is said, India has backed the existing Awami league government by justifying the debated 2014 election (Ramchandran, 2016). The government of Bangladesh not ignoring the warning of the giant neighbor has taken a gradual retreat from the commitment with China. So India's political pressure has made Bangladesh rethinking its position and finally take a strategic move towards Japan, a true friend for the country which was a clever stance of economic diplomacy. On a meeting of the Fast Track Project Monitoring Committee, Sheikh Hasina clearly uttered the cancellation of Sonadia port construction focusing on the possibility of damaging the ecological balance of the area (Shawon, 2020). Although off the record policymakers, government officials confess about the geopolitical consideration in canceling the Sonadia project but from the spokesperson of the government, it is said that the plan was dropped as because Sonadia is an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) according to the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) ("Deep Sea Port Project", 2020). Moreover, PM Sheikh Hasina suggested to make Sonadia as a tourist place by preparing it for ecotourism (Jahingir, 2020).

3.1.2 Japan Came up with Comparatively Flexible terms and conditions

Japan is one of the trusted and constant investor countries of Bangladesh since the birth of the country. When Bangladesh was in a dilemma in between ‘what to do’ and ‘what not to do’ – in the context of constructing Sonadia port, Japan tested the feasibility of Matarbari whether it can be turned into a DSP or not. Fortunately, it was found as a favorable place and Japan came up with a scheme of the loan package to help Bangladesh in the mega project and create a breathing space of Bangladesh as previously it was in the midst of political pressure of India and China. Moreover, JICA will provide a part of the loan at .01 percent and the rest parts with 0.9 percent interest rates which is more flexible than China proposed to lend (Shawon, 2020).

3.2 The Rays of Hope at Matarbari: Matarbari Deep Sea Port Near Matarbari Power Plant

Bangladesh ranked 41st largest economy in 2019 according to a United Kingdom based think tank (“Bangladesh 2nd Largest Economy in”, 2019), will be the 24th largest economy in 2033 (“Bangladesh Is Poised to Be”, 2019), and will be one of the next 10th biggest markets in future (Pfeiffer, 2016), according to reports. The Awami League ruling Bangladesh always priorities on economic development and initiates many mega projects to ensure infrastructural development. The Matarbari coal-fired power plant project and deep sea port are two of the mega projects that are situated at the village Matarbari under the union of Maheshkhali in the District of Coxbazar. The 1200 MW power plant project is funded by Japan International Cooperation Authority (JICA) and Japanese company Sumitomo Corporation is the client contractor of the project and Penta Ocean Construction Co. Ltd. is the special contractor of the deep sea port project (Penta Ocean website, 2017). It is the first-ever project of Ultra critical type in South East Asia (CPGCBL YouTube Channel, 2018) and Bangladesh is the sole proud owner of that mega project. This power plant will have expected to be the ‘Electricity-Hub’ Or Power Hub (“Matarbari will become a power hub: Muhith”, 2017) of the country after its engagement with the national grid.

Besides this, the government will build a deep sea port in Matarbari and this port will be the most significant initiative of the Bangladeshi government in the Bay of Bengal. Deep sea port is a very ‘deep matter’ in a geopolitical sense. That is why the government of Bangladesh did not move ahead to build the Sonadia Port in collaboration with China. While constructing a jetty for carrying fuel for the power plant JICA found the possibility of building deep sea port in the location. The preparatory survey was conducted by the JICA Survey Team (JICA, The Overseas Coastal Area Development Institute of Japan, Oriental Consultants Global Co. Ltd, Nippon Koei Limited, PADECO Co. Ltd.). Deep sea port will make Bangladesh an elite country in terms of sea-controlling, importing and exporting various products. The construction of

the port in Matarbari is more than reality, rather it is shifting the geopolitical importance of Bangladesh from one dimension to another.

ECNEC (Executive Committee on National Economic Council) on a meeting held on 10th of March, 2020 finally approved the plan of Matarbari deep sea port which will be constructed with the assistance of Japan International Cooperation Assistance (JICA), Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and the Bangladesh Government which is expected to be completed in 2026. The first deep water port is under construction at Matarbari in Cox’s Bazar district’s Moheshkhali Upazila. After the meeting of ECNEC presided over the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, planning minister MA Mannan confirmed, the project was funded 17 thousand 777 crores and a large share of the money will be given by the JICA (“ECNEC approves TK 177.77 billion”, 2020). Bangladesh government will contribute 12 thousand 892 crores 76 lac BDT and the rest amount 2 thousand 213 crores 24 lac BDT will be provided by the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA). Japanese Nippon Koei company was appointed by Bangladesh government for providing consultancy services like provide port design in detail, monitoring and supervision of the construction activities, tender assistance, providing guidelines and suggestions where needed (“Matarbari Port design deal,” 2020). According to news reports, it is also known that there will be two terminals of 300 and 600 meters long that will help in unloading goods from ships in an easier way. Now, construction of a channel 16-meter-deep and 300-meter-long and preparing breakwater for the entrance of seawater is going on. Md. Zafar Alam, Project Director of Matarbari port says, after receiving detailed design and confirming tender for the port construction, they are expecting to initiate main port construction in mid-2021 (Channel 24, YouTube channel). There will be two terminals- one will be a multipurpose terminal with a length of 300-metre and another will be a 460-meter long container terminal (Barua & Byron, 2020). The areas adjoining to the port will have four-lane road length of 28 Km along with 17 bridges (“Deep sea port in Matarbari”, 2020).

Besides, other modern facilities for tourists and people who work there like, accommodation, medical facilities, and other modern infrastructures will also have planned to be constructed. The primary aim of the port is to import coal for the power plant and after some other development, the port will be given for multipurpose use. which surely increases the pace of seaborne trade of the country (DBC News, 2018). Japan might have a plan for building an industrial city based on the port. To get the best result out of it, multi-model connectivity by roads, railways, and waterways must be built connecting the capital and other important places of the country. Furthermore, Bangladesh should be pro-active in making deals with landlocked neighboring countries and other countries for using the port as transshipment purposes.

IV. POSSIBILITIES AND RAYS OF HOPE CENTERING MATARBARI PORT

Matarbari sea port is expected to bring a sphere of good hope to the economy of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is now importing and exporting its 90% from two sea ports- Chattogram and Mangla. Payra sea port has started its service in a very limited version as the main part of construction is not done yet. Slow and inadequate port facilities are interrupting the growing pace of economic development of the country. So a deep sea port like Matarbari is a timely needed initiative of the present government. It will decentralize the export-import system and create an environment of world class trade. Importing oil from Middle eastern countries, food from Brasil and exporting clothes to European Union and United States America would be very easy if a deep sea port in Matarbari will be built. Furthermore, Bangladesh will have the most significant control over the major part of the Bay of Bengal. From the past few decades we have seen some confrontations between Myanmar ('74 Bangladeshi fishermen detained by Myanmar for 6 months', 2017) and India (Daily Prothom Alo, 2017) for the blue economy in one of the largest bays of the world. Matarbari port will enable the country to initiate several mechanisms to take control of its precious resources of the bay. Some possibilities & benefits of having a DSP in such a crucial region are described as follows:

Increase the Pace of Economic Development by Ensuring Modern Port Facilities: The proposed Matarbari port will have 18-meter-deep draft, can accommodate mother vessels containing 8000 TEUs (Twenty Foot Equivalent Unit) containers, which will reduce the dependence on feeder vessels and will save extra time and money. Matarbari port will considerably increase the container and cargo handling capacity which can handle 8 lacks of container annually after the completion of the first phase work ("Matarbari to play host to", 2020), eventually increase the intensity of foreign trade of the country. The project is a dream come true project for the Bangladeshi traders. Initially, the port will facilitate the supply of fuel (coal) for the power plant and later on, the port will be prepared and opened for multipurpose use which surely increase the intensity of seaborne trade of the country. Japan might have a plan for building an industrial city based on the port. To get the best result out of it, multi-model connectivity by roads, railways and waterways with allover the country will be ensured which ultimately attract more foreign investments.

Centre of the Trade for other Nations: Bangladesh should be pro-active in making deals with landlocked neighbors and other countries for using the port as transshipment purposes. We all know that, Bangladesh has two land-locked neighbors Nepal and Bhutan who mainly use the ports of India, sometimes China and Myanmar and sometimes Bangladesh's Chittagong Sea Port. Because the people of Nepal treat India as an Aggressing force who are trying to control the economy and political sphere of Nepal; people of Bhutan are trying to get off from the narrow existence between China and India. In

this sense, Bangladesh should come up with the best option, because, for hundreds of year Bengal people are friendly to them. Now Bangladesh will have the opportunity to receive their imported products and it will flourish Bangladesh's economy at the same time. Bangladeshi diplomats have to be dynamic to persuade the Nepalese and Bhutanese Governments to trade through Bangladesh's Matarbari Port by offering them comfortable scheme.

Safeguard of the Maritime Boundary: Bangladesh is a peaceful country that build up its foreign relations with other countries based on the motto "Friendship towards all, malice towards none". But in reality, some neighbors like Myanmar did some misbehavior repeatedly in the land and water borders. That is why Bangladesh, as a sovereign country has to defend its people and territories. Myanmar police shot at Bangladeshi citizens, captured Bangladeshi fishermen entering into Bangladeshi water zones and by torturing Rohingya people known as the most persecuted people of the world, force them to flee to Bangladesh. Now, after the Matarbari Sea Port project will have finished Bangladesh could take military advancements from there. The Myanmar Government shamelessly claimed Narkel Jinjira also known as Saint Martin Island as their land (Dhaka Tribune, 2018), even though they along with their counterpart India lost to Bangladesh in the international courts. So Matarbari could be a point for Bangladesh Navy to operate with heavy arms, submarines if necessary. A secret part of the port can also hand over to Bangladesh Army or Navy so that they could gather intelligence and heavy weapons to counter any aggression of the enemies who are posing threat to the maritime sovereignty of Bangladesh. The port could also be used to stop smugglers of Myanmar and Bangladesh who are dealing Yaba and other drugs. Moreover, after building the port in collaboration with Japan Bangladesh surely will be in the control of the vast majority of the Bay of Bengal. With Matarbari Bangladesh will be able to contact all the international ships those pass the water of Bangladesh. Surely it will increase the strategic significance of Bangladesh and will be an important geopolitical tool as well.

A Source of Employment: Matarbari power plant and Matarbari sea port will create a greater job zone in Cox's bazar. Many local inhabitants and their family members would get the opportunity to work in the project. Many of them are working there already. To secure its job market from foreigner, Bangladesh should concern about recruiting its skilled and resourceful manpower to several important posts of the mega project and at the same time train them to be more efficient and skillful. The blue economy of Bangladesh will open new doors to be benefitted from fishing, tourism, exports, imports, extracting natural resources and so on. 26 Gas blocks of Bangladesh are in the Bay of Bengal and those would be under full control of the state and it will create many job opportunities.

The Port can be used as a Part of Belt and Road Initiative: Bangladesh government has the agenda to make the country

an industrialized one to meet up the growing demand of its huge population and diversify export products. China is one of the biggest trade partner of Bangladesh which recently gave 97% Bangladeshi products duty free access of to the market of China (Ahmed, 2020). So, there is no reason of denying this economic partner but Bangladesh clearly doesn't want to be another Pakistan or Sri Lanka to China so earlier it didn't go further in conducting Sonadia port. Keeping 'national interest' at forefront Bangladesh should strategically maintain relations with the country and permit it to use Matarbari port only for economic purpose. Even in an interview with CNN-News18 Bangladeshi Prime Minister shows the importance to be a part of BRI and how that could make a positive change in the region (CNN-News 18, 2019). Focusing on the suspicion of India she said, India is already a member of BCIM EC (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor) hence it should not be suspicious of the engagement of Bangladesh in BRI (India have not join any of the Belt Road Forum-BRF so far).

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Many states in the world have their opening to a sea but some are landlocked. Bangladesh is fortunate enough to possess a significant portion of a resourceful bay with a potential and unexplored blue economy that will open the door of Bangladesh's maritime economic activities in future. Already, Bangladesh acquired its proper share of the bay from Myanmar on March 14, 2012 by a judgment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) and from India by a verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) on June 7, 2014. Now, Bangladesh has the right to explore its vast resources, secure its maritime area from any aggression and a deep sea port will be a boon for these activities. Like before, in the present era the importance of naval power in securitizing a state's territory is significant-therefore Bangladesh navy can increase its power and essential logistics based on the port. The development of deep sea ports as an economic infrastructure with link roads, advanced communications and other economic infrastructures will add another geostrategic tool for the country in dealing with neighbors like India, China and others. Almost 60-billion-dollar trade operate through only small feeder vessels which bound Bangladesh to spend more money on imported goods as secondary vessels cost both more money and time (Hasan, 2016). Deep water port will accommodate mother vessels therefore people will get products imported from other countries in a cheaper rate than before. Besides, by increasing and accelerating international trade, it will benefit the country by creating employment opportunities, good communication network, advancing living standard of people and so on. Finally, successful construction of the dream project, proper management of the port after it will be build, strategic decision of the authority in providing access to other states, etc. can bring the best output of having a deep water port.

We have some words for the government. Keeping the challenges in mind the followings are the recommendations.

- Already Bangladesh has managed a crucial politics on the construction of Deep Sea Port. In future several similar issues may arise where big power confrontation may occur centering the Bay of Bengal. In all cases the country should be driven by its national interest. In providing access to other countries like India and china on economic purpose, Bangladesh should be cautious and should prohibit the countries to make any security concern (threats) for the country.
- Environment and health concern should keep into consideration. Being situated by a coal fired power plant, the fly ash from the plant might pollute the overall environment of the area including the port. There should be proper and adequate mechanisms to face the environmental hurdles to keep the two important infrastructures out of danger. A prominent INGO Greenpeace already shows its concern on the project as the environmental impacts of the power plant in a such region, very near to human habitation will be very toxic and pollutants will cause severe harm to humans causing premature death to humans and other animals. The project is described as "a deadly double standard 'saying a "clean coal' is a myth ("Moheshkhali Coal Power Plant Deadliest", 2019).
- The Native inhabitants near the project should be treated with humanity and should be provided with proper shelter and livelihood security. The port authority should be considerate enough in enrolling skilled labors from Bangladesh not only unskilled or construction workers.
- Bangladesh is a country with many natural disasters. The project should keep adequate management to prevent any natural calamities or catastrophe hit the areas of the power plant and deep sea port. Bangladesh is one of the environmentally vulnerable countries. The project coordinators and policy makers should keep in their minds so that any climate catastrophe or sea disaster cannot harm the project and the people who are having and will have their livelihood on it.

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