



"A sailing ship is no democracy; you don't caucus a crew as to where you'll go anymore than you inquire when they'd like to shorten sail. - Sterling Hayden

# Blue Economy - Wave 62

(Series on "Blue Economy" By Capt. Gajanan Karanjikar)



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There have been various efforts from Indian government to give a required push for Indian Port building and highlight the need for progress in various forums.

## Blue Economy and Sagarmala (Cont. ...)

Sagarmala spells essential development of Indian ports and the coastal region by empowering people into the development of communities as well as modernisations of ports, very promising to create lot of jobs. The connections of the ports around the coast to serve coastal cargoes in India. The state ports connection with state cargo movement will enhance Sagarmala. As Sagarmala progress the boost will come for the Blue economy as well. The challenges for Sagarmala and blue economy remain same.

The centrepiece of India's push for the blue economy is the Sagarmala project that includes constructing ports, augmenting coastal infrastructure, developing inland waterways, intensifying fishing, and creating special economic zones and tourism promotion.

## To highlight some of the achievements in Indian ports:

- Turnaround time at major ports stood at 64.69 hours in FY20 (till September 2019).
- Five times more growth in major ports' traffic between 2014-18, compared to 2010-14.
- Increased efficiency has led three times increase in net profits of major ports between FY14-18.
- Project UNNATI has been started by Government of India to identify the opportunity areas for improvement in the operations of major ports.
- In August 2019, India became the first country in the world to issue Biometric Seafarer Identity Document (BSID), capturing the facial bio-metric data of seafarers.
- As per Union Budget 2019-20, the Jal Marg Vikas Project for enhancing the navigational capacity of Ganga, a

multi modal terminal at Varanasi has been functional since November 2018.

## Tough road ahead:

\* According to an ICRA study, the program is being impeded due to **lack of timely investment mobilization and budgetary support.**

\* Another challenge is the creation of an environment **favourable for businesses and tangible incentives to attract the private sector.**

\* There has been **resistance from the fishing communities** and environmental activists in certain areas. The Karnataka High Court recently stayed the work on Karwar Port following protests by the local fishermen.

\* At the end of 2018, the centre diluted the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification- a move that is favourable to the Sagarmala Program but highly **dangerous for the fragile coastal ecosystem.**

\* This is because Sagarmala, along with Bharatmala, were declared as **'strategic projects'**- i.e. exempt from the provisions of CRZ. This implies that land can be reclaimed from ecologically sensitive CRZ-I zones and roads can be built here.

\* Apart from this, there have been instances of Sagarmala projects triggering **accelerated coastal erosion and increased pollution from the industrial clusters.**

\* **Port expansions** involve **massive dredging** into the sea that destroys vast stretches of **fertile fishing grounds** and destabilises jetties.

\* Over the years, there is **reduced parking space for small artisanal boats, curtailed access to fishing harbours and unpredictable fishing catch.** This is significantly affecting the fishing communities, who are already suffering due to the impacts of living next to mineral handling facilities and groundwater exhaustion.

\* There has been **less than the ideal allocation for the coastal community development** pillar of the project.

\* There is also suspicion among the fishing community that this ambitious programme would **lead to displacement** and would adversely affect their fishing trade.

\* Fishermen are of the view that the programme has been designed to privatise sea and to uproot fishermen from their hamlets.

\* The **COVID-19 crisis** has greatly affected the trade projects that form the basis for the Sagarmala program. This has led to the need for fresh blueprints (Maritime Vision 2030).

## What is the way forward?

\* The government needs to set up a dedicated **'Maritime Development Fund'**- as the sector requires long-term and stable financing.

\* There is a need for the **management of wastes** entering the coastal areas from large river systems.

\* These not only affect the coastal community and maritime ecosystems but also pose a huge threat to the human food chain.

\* According to recent studies, the **reduction of plastic inputs** from the **catchment areas of top polluting rivers** can drastically **reduce the waste outflow into the ocean.** It is imperative for Sagarmala project, which includes riverine infrastructure development, to **integrate** existing environmental programmes like **Swachh Bharat** and the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).**

\* India needs to **identify partners** (both foreign and domestic), who can help in making Sagarmala more **sustainable** and inclusive.

\* There is a need for **increased funding for the welfare of the local fishing communities.** Their traditional livelihoods must be safeguarded while promoting communities' growth and development.

\* There must be **increased modernisation** with **emphasis on sustainability.**

## Food for thought:

Though coastal development is vital for economic development, it should not be at the cost of thousands of livelihoods of the marginalised communities and degradation of the environment. Therefore, necessary reforms and funding must be provided to make the project more inclusive and environment-friendly.




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