

The Need for Recruitment of Own Manpower by Bangladesh Coast Guard

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Abstract

The creation of Bangladesh Coast Guard happened with the assurance of Bangladesh Navy to provide necessary manpower. As easy as it sounded initially, the task became increasingly difficult and impracticable for both the forces. While Bangladesh Navy itself suffers from the shortage of manpower, Bangladesh Coast Guard's mandates rose multiple times, especially with the delimitation of maritime boundary necessitating increase of personnel. Besides, Bangladesh Coast Guard's specialized tasks entail specialized manpower which does not come under the present ambit of Bangladesh Navy's training scheme. Bangladesh Coast Guard therefore receives much lesser than necessary people, who are also required to return to Bangladesh Navy after a certain period of duty. The short and uncertain tenure of people is creating further problems like lack of continuity, lack of belongingness and consequently inability to retain specialized knowledge. The study aims to assess the requirement of own manpower of Bangladesh Coast Guard through recruitment. This is primary research backed by a secondary research where content analysis has been the mainstay of the study. Bangladesh Coast Guard is now compelled to look for solutions through induction of its own manpower, where the experience of coast guards with rich background like the US, Indian or Japanese can be of some reference. This way, Bangladesh Coast Guard is expected not only to release Bangladesh Navy from the obligation of providing its manpower, but also to develop this very strategic asset in an optimum way, so as to meet the evolving challenges in maritime environment in the future days to come.

Keywords: Coast guard, Para-military force, Search and rescue, Seafarers, Maritime

1. Introduction

Coast Guard is a name closely related to maritime security. Across the globe, coast guards act as first responder to maritime incidents. Benign maritime tasks are generally entrusted to Coast Guards, while navies perform the war-fighting tasks. Like other navies of the world, Bangladesh Navy (BN) felt the need of a separate force to carry out anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, search and rescue, anti-proliferation of drugs and narcotics, security of sea ports, saving lives and properties at sea, salvage at sea, protecting bio-diversity and endangered species and so on which are not primarily navy's tasks. Engaging high-value naval platforms for these kinds of tasks do not essentially justify navy's investment considering the cost-benefit analysis. Hence, with the initiative of Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) appeared as a separate force to carry out the constabulary duties at sea. But as benign as the Coast Guard duties might look like, they are in fact serious jobs necessitating involvement of specialized and skilled manpower and mission-configured assets.

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People meant to perform those jobs should be sufficiently trained and motivated to undertake them and be willing to take risks as the situation demands. BCG is yet to be able to develop a suitable human resource capital to be able to undertake its Coast Guard-specific tasks to the fullest satisfaction of maritime stakeholders.

Bangladesh Coast Guard came into being as a para-military force in 1995. Its inception is linked to a historic event in the nation's parliament. In 1994, the-then opposition party Bangladesh Awami League raised a bill proposing the establishment of a separate maritime force. Consequently, Coast Guard Act 1994 was passed by the parliament and the force came into being officially on 14th February 1995 (its official raising day). Bangladesh Navy provided all the assistances in establishing the force. Most significantly, BN provided all the initial platforms (two ship and two boats). As mandated in the Coast Guard Act 1994, the force started its journey with a handful of officers and men from BN, doctors from Bangladesh Army and civilian from its own recruitment. However, the provision to recruit own uniformed personnel by the Coast Guard somehow missed the attention of the founding policy-makers. The arrangement looked sufficient for a humble start but as time went by, difficulties started arising, necessitating rethinking and review.

With the passage of time, especially with the delimitation of maritime boundary with the neighbours and consequent impetus on 'Blue Economy', BCG's activities started increasing manifold. BN could no longer cope with BCG's manpower demand. Moreover, BCG's specialized tasks such as Search and Rescue, salvage, pollution control, protection of bio-diversity etc need specialized manpower which BN does not have. Hence, BCG is always running with serious manpower deficit in strength as well as in skill. It is now time to carry out a comprehensive research on the issue and find a viable solution to it. One would tend to ask, 'what is the type and extent of the manpower problem BCG is facing and how can it be resolved?' In order to find out the answers of these vital questions, this research has examined the type and extent of the human resource problem of BCG and developed a viable solution. To this end, this paper starts with a discussion on the shortcomings of BCG's manning system and examine the problems faced by the force due to the current system one by one. Thereafter, it will look into the manpower systems of other coast guards across the globe. These two-pronged discussions will then lead to a viable solution of BCG's manning issues. This is a secondary research where content analysis is the mainstay of the study.

2. Literature Review

The available literature does not specifically deal with Bangladesh Coast Guard, let alone its manpower issues. Bangladesh Armed Forces' headquarters have published a few policy documents which mention the role of Bangladesh Coast Guard during war and peace. Armed Forces Division (2006), with a view to bringing jointmanship among the forces, has published a draft *Joint Warfare Doctrine* which has described in great details the joint operational aspects of Bangladesh Armed Forces. It dealt with pure military subjects like the operational art in joint environment and Command, Control and Communication (C3) and so on. However, a very broad direction about how the future joint operations will look like, and how Coast Guard could fit into it, could be obtained from the document. A more specific mention on Bangladesh Coast Guard was found in AFD (2018), in the recently published Defence Policy of Bangladesh, where its wartime roles have been broadly

defined. However, Bangladesh Navy (2010), in its publications *Maritime Doctrine of Bangladesh* and *BN Forces Goal- 2030* have identified BCG's role during wartime along with its preparations to that end. The documents are classified as 'SECRET' and the researcher was privileged to get access to it due to his position.

In carrying out a research on BCG, the questions on the genesis, development and current practices of the contemporary coast guards across the globe automatically come up. In this regard, Indian Coast Guard Headquarters (2016) published 'History of Indian Coast Guard,' which gives an account of the background of formation of Indian Coast Guard and its chronology has been a good reference. The background of creation of ICG matches almost with Bangladesh situation and hence, the book has helped draw analogies in respect of formation and development of BCG, especially regarding the manpower issue. On the other hand, Tom (2010) in his definitive, officially illustrated book *The Coast Guard* accounts the story from US Coast Guard's origin to its activities in the current periods. Needless to mention, for the current research, a good number of analogies and examples including those related to manpower issues, could be drawn from the book.

After 23 years of journey, Bangladesh Coast Guard published and adopted *Coast Guard Vision Document*, in January 2019, in which it has laid down the force's future plans up to 2041. This elaborate document has described in details the current problems, lacunas being faced by the force and pressures from different corners on the force to build its capacities and perform the duties entrusted on it. Through the analysis of the areas of responsibility of the force, the document has shown that the force's name is really a misnomer and it is not only the sentinel of the nation's coastlines, rather its area of jurisdiction spreads across the nation's entire maritime boundary and beyond. In course of analysing the ways to perform the desired duties, the document has identified the requirement of recruiting Coast Guard's own manpower as the first and foremost requirement of the force. The propositions of the document need to be validated through detailed research and analysis.

The literature above do not discuss the manpower issues of Bangladesh Coast Guard, it is evident that there is a significant gap in research which can be covered by a new research. The new research can shed lights on the issue, discuss pros and cons, examine different aspects of the issue and propose solutions to the benefit of BCG and all.

3. Coast Guard's Human Resource System and Its Lacunae

Bangladesh Coast Guard was named as a Department ('Odhidoptor' in Bangla) under the Ministry of Home Affairs at its inception (Bangladesh National Parliament, 1994). It started its journey with an interim complement of 435 officers and sailors deputed from Bangladesh Navy (BN). Later, a comprehensive Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) of 2025 officers, men and civilians was approved for the force. The approval of TO&E came with the condition that all uniformed personnel of the force will be deputed from BN except the doctors those who were seconded from Bangladesh Army (BA). At the same time, the parent services (principally BN and BA) were authorized to recruit equivalent numbers of officers and men to be sent on deputation to BCG. However, the recruitment of civilian personnel was supposed to be undertaken through an approved regulation. Basing on this, the force requested the ministry to formulate 'Bangladesh Coast Guard Odhidoptor Officers and Personnel Services Regulations 2010.' These regulations princi-

pally dealt with the recruitment of civilian employees but kept, for unknown reasons, the recruitment of own uniformed manpower unaddressed. Thus, the window of opportunity to recruit its own uniformed manpower was lost. It may be mentioned that enacting a law, some rules or regulations is a tremendously cumbersome task and a long-drawn process, containing multiple steps and involving quite a number of ministries. Such a venture can only be undertaken by a knowledgeable and tenacious pool of officers and once such opportunity comes, one needs to see that all future requirements are met with the amended or newly enacted law, so that repetition of such tedious ventures becomes necessary as rarely as possible. However, in the event of BCG, the minute details were missing, keeping scope for ambiguity and double entendre.

4. Problems Being Faced

Bangladesh Coast Guard has cruised a long way of 23 years since her inception. Its areas of responsibility (AOR), operational activities and capabilities have increased manifolds. With the patronage of the current government, the force gained the current momentum of development. Government supported BCG's initiative and enacted the new 'Bangladesh Coast Guard Act 2016' and eradicated all complexities that existed in the previous law (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2016). In the new law, the provision of recruitment has been catered for while the existing practice of deputations of officers, junior officers and other ranks has also been preserved (Bangladesh National Parliament, 2016). Theoretically speaking, the new law has widened the scope of induction of own uniformed personnel for BCG further. Mentionable here that, the act has been passed after the resolution of disputes regarding delimitation of maritime boundary with the neighbours. Following the delimitation, the country's general mass and government were adequately sensitized on the importance of maritime area. Consequently, government attached enhanced emphasis on the sea-based 'Blue Economy' and moved to strengthen Bangladesh Coast Guard. As a result, BCG undertook a good number of projects to procure vessels, platforms and develop infrastructures. But ships, boats and aircrafts do not move themselves; it is the men behind who make them move. The focus on the most significant component - the man behind the machine - was seemingly left unaddressed or did not get enough attention as it ought to have.

In order to understand as to how grave the situation for the force is, the following table will speak for itself. The table depicts the BCG's shortage of manpower as of 05 December 2019. One can easily grasp the deplorable state that BCG undergoes every day.

Table 1: BCG's Manpower State

Category	Approved Manpower as per Approved TO&E	Manpower Currently Posted	Shortage of Manpower (%)
Officers	422	155 (37%)	267 (63%)
Sailors	3969	2783 (70%)	1186 (30%)
Civilians	384	163 (42%)	221 (58%)
Grand Total	4775	3101 (64%)	1674 (36%)

Source: BCG Headquarters, Personnel Directorate.

Out of the above-mentioned strength of 3101 uniformed personnel (officers, sailors and civilians), about 300 remain out of duty due to training courses, sickness, essential leave etc. With the left over meager strength, BCG has to man 5 bases, 39 stations and 15 outposts (59 locations), not to mention the 25 locations which it has to man during 'Operation Jatka' (for the reservation of Hilsa fry). Under this extremely tight condition, the force is operating at present.

But BCG's plight does not end here - shortage of manpower is only a part of its problem. The force's activities can hardly be performed by rifle and baton only; it is a highly technical service with specialized activities. Its specialized tasks include Search and Rescue at sea, salvage, marine pollution control, protection of marine bio-diversity and endangered species etc. These tasks necessitate manpower with specialized training and skill. Building capacity in those fields need a permanent pool of specialized people. BCG has not been able to build any reckonable capacity in these specialized fields yet. With the current system of acquiring manpower on temporary cycles through deputation, building those capacities is not possible (BCGHQ, 2019). The problem has been elaborated in subsequent paragraphs in detail.

4.1 Uncertainty

BN officers and sailors do not come to BCG on deputation for a clearly determined or specific period. Actually, it is also difficult for BN to do so, due to the fact that the complex career pattern of the personnel necessitates them to undergo various mandatory training courses at different intervals. Hence, if seaman A is deputed to BCG and suddenly BN finds a space to conduct a career training for his branch and trade, seaman A will be called back to BN immediately for undergoing that training. Hence, seaman A's tenure in BCG seems more like a 'gap-filler' between two consecutive assignments rather than an actual assignment itself. Sometimes, people come to BCG with an assumption that their tenure may well stretch up to three years, only to find that an unexpected change in the schedule of mandatory career course has shortened their tour of duty. Hence, uncertainty prevails and people's ability to concentrate in their actual work is hampered. Once in BCG and while undergoing Coast Guard-specific training courses, people always remain apprehensive of the fact that they may not be able to utilize this training in their life at all. Empirically speaking, many have gone back from BCG to parent services after receiving the induction training only. This uncertainty affects people's propensity as well as ability to concentrate efficiently in Coast Guard duties.

4.2 Lack of Continuity

During the tour of duty in BCG, an officer or sailor of BN needs to gain practical experience through serving in different zones of BCG, so that he can efficiently discharge his duties in the force's overall Area of Jurisdiction. For obvious reasons, it is humanly impossible to serve in all 4 zones of the force within the short period of deputation. Therefore, in the limited period of deputation, no one can achieve the required operational experience and efficiency. Since BN officers and sailors leave the Coast Guard in the middle of their learning process, the continuity of their work is lost. As fresh people come, they have to start from scratch. Thus, continuity of a serious operational or professional job gets lost which affects the performance.

On being trained in relevant fields of applications, BN officers and sailors (now BCG personnel) are employed in ships, bases, stations and outposts of BCG. After their deployment, they need a logical span of time to make themselves conversant with the activities of any unit before taking over a responsible duty and relieving the previously deployed people. Then again, their duties are not standalone functions, they need to coordinate with other organizations, which presupposes knowing the right persons, visiting them and building rapport leading to a relationship of trust with them. All these involve hard work, physical presence and a logical amount of time. Such a short tenure of personnel deployment hampers the whole process, having an impact on BCG's activities.

Furthermore, Armed Forces personnel's work areas, terms of reference and degree of involvement in public affairs differ from those in BCG. Officers and sailors coming from BN have been well-trained to face a conventional enemy aggressively. This aggressive posture is irrelevant in case of Coast Guard. Being a law enforcing agency under Ministry of Home Affairs, BCG has to mix up with general mass and provide them with necessary protection and safety and help grow awareness among the general people on various issues. Coast Guard has no enemy, the people whom they face, are citizens of Bangladesh. Hence, a complete shift in attitude and focus is needed for BN officers and sailors before beginning to perform any duty in the Coast Guard. This needs time and the short tour of duty hardly leaves adequate time for the personnel to get sufficiently motivated and shift their focus from the basic teaching. When, however, the necessary motivation happens, it becomes time for them to return to the Navy.

4.3 Lack of Belongingness

Bangladesh Navy, like other military services, tremendously value esprit-de-corps. It is a popular saying that Navy is not just a job, it is a way of life. Hence, as a matter of practice, Navy tries to grow belongingness among its members, and it is the belongingness and resultant teamwork that make officers and men fight wars hand in hand. When the officers and sailors come to serve in BCG for only a brief period, and with full knowledge that their career is controlled by BN, they logically do not get the required impetus to grow adequate belongingness with BCG. This phenomenon inhibits one to grow necessary interest and seriousness in their performance. Not to mention, this lack of belongingness at times acts as an impediment to committing quality time to the force, having an impact on the overall performance.

4.4 Lack of Retention of Specialized Knowledge

If BN officers and sailors are given any specialized training during their tour of duty in BCG, the value of the training is lost with their departure. As previously mentioned, the specialized fields of BCG like search and rescue, salvage, pollution control, protection of bio-diversity and endangered species and similar tasks require specialized knowledge and training. In order to undertake such tasks at any time, BCG needs to create a pool of competent manpower. For this, the officers and sailors of BCG need to undergo different levels of training, enabling them to gain different levels of competencies. Each level of training needs to be followed by a certain amount of work in the field, in order to graduate to the next level of competence. BN officers and sailors, after undergoing training in one level,

find their tour of duty coming to an end. They never find a chance to apply the training in the field sufficiently or move to the next level of training. As new people arrive, they have to start all over again from the scratch. As a result, BCG's capacity to undertake a specialized task like pollution control, search and rescue, salvage and so on are always remaining at the basics.

4.5 Minding Own Business First – The Hidden Factor

In order to fulfill its mandate, Bangladesh Navy continuously trains and develops its officers and men through a huge investment of skill and finance. But humans are not machines - different individuals can grasp things up to different levels and perform to different degrees. BN, like any other organization strives to promote the best performers, reward them with incentives, gives them more responsible and challenging jobs and tend to just 'carry along' the low performers. In case of deputing someone outside the service, no organization will definitely send out the ones for whom it has spent the highest number of rewards, incentives and trainings -they are that organization's closely guarded assets and the organization would rather have the propensity to shed a few of the low performers, to be able to get rid of them for a few years. This is a tendency which may happen with any organization. Hence, what Bangladesh Coast Guard is receiving on deputation is not necessarily always the best human resource from BN's inventory.

4.6 Summary

The manpower problem of Bangladesh Coast Guard seems to be unique. It cannot be imagined easily that an organization such as BCG, which is mandated to fight a war and protect sovereignty of the nation in time of need, suffers from shortage of quality 'men behind the guns.' It is even more startling to visualize that the organization passed two and a half decades without even touching the problem area. Time has come for BCG to take the problem seriously enough and look for a sustainable solution. In doing so, it could be prudent to look around the globe and find out what the other Coast Guards have been doing.

5. Examples from Across the Globe

Having done adequate deliberation on the manpower problem of BCG, it is now appropriate to make an attempt to see whether similar problems exist throughout the contemporary world. In this regard, it can be helpful to study the cases of other coast guards across the globe. For the current study, the US Coast Guard, Indian Coast Guard and Japanese Coast Guard have been chosen. The manpower issues of these forces appear to offer viable solutions to BCG's manpower problem.

5.1 US Coast Guard

US Coast Guard was established at the initiative of the-then Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton in 1776 as Revenue-Marine (Beard, Tom, 2010). After a chequered journey, the service emerged as US Coast Guard under the Department of the Treasury in 1915. As one of the country's five armed services, the Coast Guard has been involved in every US war from 1790 to the Iraq War and the War in Afghanistan. It maintains an extensive fleet of 243 coastal and ocean-going patrol ships, tenders, tugs and ice-breakers called 'cutters',

1650 smaller boats, 201 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. The service has 40,992 men and women on active duty, 7,000 reservists, 31,000 auxiliaries, and 8,577 full-time civilian employees, making a total workforce of 87,569 (USCG, 2019). The main strength of US Coast Guard is formed by the active duty service personnel consisting of officers and enlisted personnel recruited by the US Coast Guard. The officers are trained in the US Coast Guard Academy located in New London, Connecticut and the enlisted personnel are trained in different schools. It is well evident that the US Coast Guard has learned to create and nurture its human resource basing on the force's needs. It is also remarkable that the ranks of officers and men are the same as in the US Navy. While it is the smallest of the US military services, it is by itself the world's 12th largest naval force. Moreover, its workforce diversity can be treated as an example to any other organization in the world.

5.2 The Indian Coast Guard (ICG)

During 1950s, the sea borne smuggling across India's coastline became rampant day by day, threatening its national economy (ICG, 2019). Indian customs and fisheries department did not have capability to contain this large-scale smuggling activity and intercept illegal vessels even within territorial waters. Therefore, since 1960, Indian Navy (IN) has been requesting the government to create a separate force for maritime law enforcement duties for protection and safety tasks in Indian waterways. The Government appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Shri KF Rustamji to suggest measures in this regard, which came up with the recommendation of forming the 'Indian Coast Guard.'

In 1977, ICG made a humble start with a handful of ships and personnel from Indian Navy. But Indian leadership performed two significant things at the beginning of the force. First, they put ICG under the Ministry of Defence, providing it a faster channel of authority than its counterparts like BSF. Secondly, and more significantly, they started ICG's recruitment of own manpower from the beginning. ICG's recruitment plan allowed recruiting own uniformed personnel and also expert personnel from BSF, Customs, Department of Environment, Civil Aviation etc. With the passage of time, the recruits of ICG started replacing the officers and men of IN, from lower positions gradually moving to higher positions. The process came to an end after ICG got its first Coast Guard entry Director General in 2016. Having its own manpower gave ICG tremendous dividends including establishment of its own air wing, increasing its surface fleet, training its manpower in Coast Guard-specific tasks like pollution control, search and rescue, salvage, protection of bio-diversity and so on. However, the name of ICG ranks of officers and sailors differ from those of Indian Navy, although they look the same. ICG officers and sailors receive their initial training from Indian Naval training schools. They also receive subsequent higher trainings from those schools, while Coast Guard-specific trainings are imparted by ICG training institutions. It is interesting to note that although the two forces are under the same ministry and both the forces' personnel are required to undergo training together although their ranks' names are different. However, having own manpower provided Indian Coast Guard with immense flexibility to plan its operations, growth and future and meet the seemingly endless and ever-changing challenges in the maritime area.

5.3 Japan Coast Guard

Japan is an island nation with an Exclusive Economic Zone of 4,050,000 square kilometer and a Search and Rescue Responsibility Area far greater than the EEZ. Japan established its Coast Guard in 1948 (JCG, 2019). The Coast Guard has 12,000 personnel and operates under Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. It undertakes criminal investigations, maritime security operations, search and rescue work, marine environment preservation, disaster mitigation, oceanographic research, maritime safety operations and so on. It also values international cooperation a lot and strives to strengthen collaboration and cooperation with other countries, so that the people of Japan can use and enjoy the blessings of the ocean environment. The force operates a fleet of 138 Patrol ships, 238 patrol craft, 89 other craft, 31 different types of aircraft and 49 helicopters. Japan Coast Guard recruits its own manpower, of which officers undergo a basic training of 4 years and 9 months in JCG Academy, after which they undergo a 3-month cruise round the world as a part of training. The enlisted personnel are also recruited by JCG. They undergo basic and advanced trainings in Coast Guard School. JCG officers and sailors have the same ranks as Japanese Navy and the rank badges look the same. The importance of the force is increasing day by day in Japan and having its own manpower has given the force the capability to undertake diverse maritime tasks as required.

6. In Search of a Solution

A close look at all the coast guards mentioned above clearly indicates that they all had their own manpower from the beginning, which enabled them to shape themselves as reckonable maritime forces. In contrast, Bangladesh Coast Guard, not having its own manpower, has not been able to perform up to the expectation of maritime stakeholders. The problems faced due to having manpower on deputation and the experience of Coast Guards across the globe suggest that Bangladesh Coast Guard has no alternative other than having its own manpower. In fact, people are utterly surprised, when they come to know that the organization still runs with people taken on loan. Officials from ministries and people from different corners keep asking why the Coast Guard has not yet made any significant effort to induct its own people. The question of own manpower is closely connected to the existence of the force itself and it is already getting late for the force to do something about it – better late than never.

But as obvious as it looks, it is easier to be said than done. After running more than two decades in a certain way, it looks like quite a lot of work is involved including meeting legal and procedural paraphernalia to make it happen. It has been found that the existing law, especially the freshly promulgated Coast Guard Act 2016 needs amendments for allowing BCG's own recruitment. An effort has been taken to highlight the changes to be made in the said law underneath.

The Coast Guard Act 2016 section 4 states:

‘4. Force and Its Composition.

- (1) According to the provisions of this law, there will be a para-military force named Bangladesh Coast Guard.
- (2) Bangladesh Coast Guard will be a disciplined force with the same meaning as it is meant in section 152 of the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

- (3) Subject to the provisions of this law, the classification of different posts of the force will be, from time to time, determined by the government.
- (4) Recruitment is to be done in the posts mentioned in sub-section (3) in the manner prescribed by regulations.'

This section has allowed the force to recruit its own people. But in the section 2 of the law, where the definitions are stated, the definition of the 'force' has been stated as:

'Force' means a para-military force constituted under section 4 of this law comprising commissioned officers deputed from Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army medical corps, and other coast guard members recruited by Bangladesh Coast Guard and civilian officers and employees.'

Here, the types of personnel which would constitute the force have been enumerated and inadvertently the personnel category 'own recruited officers' and 'own recruited junior officers' have been omitted. So, they cannot be recruited if this definition persists. This mistake becomes even clearer by reading this definition further. It reveals that this definition has also excluded BN deputed junior officers and sailors from being Coast Guard members (this category of personnel has been serving in the Coast Guard since its inception), which is completely illogical. This means, an inadvertent clerical error had been committed. All other sections and sub-sections allow BCG to recruit its own officers and sailors, save this mistaken paragraph. For example, the section 1 (12) says:

'Officer' means officers deputed from the commissioned officers of Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Army medical corps, and any officer appointed according to the service rules promulgated under this law, against the posts mentioned in serial 'ka' of sub-section (1) of section 5.'

This says that the term 'Officers' will mean the officers deputed from BN and Bangladesh Army medical corps and officers appointed by Bangladesh Coast Guard as per the service rules promulgated under this law. That means it has recognized officers recruited as per service rules promulgated under this law as BCG officers.

Viewed from the point of a 'glass only half empty', BCG can be allowed to go ahead with its recruitment. On the other hand, viewed from the point of 'glass only half filled', one can always argue that the clerical mistake must be eliminated first, whatever is the cost of delay in BCG's recruitment of own manpower. But amending a law is a very cumbersome process - requiring concerned file to rotate through multiple desks in several ministries. Thereafter, BCG's employment rules have to be formulated, requiring yet another tedious process. When these are in place, Bangladesh Navy can be approached to provide necessary assistance in the recruitment and training process. Without the help of BN, going further in this area will be difficult. In this regard, BCG needs to follow the footsteps of Indian Coast Guard, which took extensive assistance of Indian Navy during its toddling period.

6.1 Is it Overstepping in Navy's Domain?

When BCG would recruit its own manpower, BN would be able to cut down its current allowance for BCG gradually. It is a common tendency to view this phenomenon as a loss of power or upper hand over BCG, which is not founded in solid logic and practicality. In

today's context, it becomes easily clear that it is neither practicable nor prudent for BN to attempt to supply manpower for BCG anymore. Over the years, BN has grown in leaps and bounds. It is now a three dimensional force - with aviation and submarines. Being technical services, Navy and Coast Guard cannot just recruit any layperson from the crowd - they need people with sufficient talents, which is short in supply. As per US statistics, the number of people meeting US Coast Guard recruitment qualifications with a propensity to serve is one in 30 (USCG, 2018). The picture is not different in Bangladesh. So, BN itself has a hard time in fulfilling its own vacant posts. BCG, faced with this reality, is left with no option other than looking for its own way of recruiting its people. By doing so, BCG is not overstepping in BN's domain, rather relieving BN from a responsibility which was relevant back in 1994 but no more relevant now. Indeed, if BCG is allowed to recruit its own manpower, it would serve the purpose of both the forces and benefit all.

6.2 What Changes are Expected?

Having own manpower would be a 'game changer' for BCG. It would unleash BCG's capabilities which it could not bring to light so far. Indeed, BCG will get a new lease of life and will practically be re-born the day it will recruit its own manpower. The changes that will take place, will be visible, tremendous and all-pervasive. Missions which BCG could not undertake will become a natural order of the day. BCG's problem of shortage of manpower will not only disappear, it will disappear for good. BCG's specialized tasks like carrying out search and rescue in its vested 170,627 square kilometer area, pollution control, protection of bio-diversity and endangered species, providing security to offshore installations, coastal surveillance - all would be performed to the satisfaction of the stakeholders. Security of government's 'Blue Economy' related projects will be better ensured and sea-farers' lives will be more guaranteed. Consequently, it will pave the way of realizing the benefits of sea-based 'Blue Economy', contributing significantly towards building a 'hunger-free' and 'poverty-free' developed Bangladesh by 2041.

7. Conclusion

Bangladesh Coast Guard has traveled almost a quarter of a century. For the force, the sophomore days are over. Its experience curve has gone up for a sufficient period and time is ripe for taking it to the next level. There are urgent calls from the nation and from the seafarers for the force to live up to its motto 'Guardian at Sea.' In order to undertake any meaningful activity, it needs dedicated, committed, accountable, professional, knowledgeable and well-trained personnel. Indeed, the question of recruiting own personnel is closely related to the existence of the force itself. Hence, the force needs to work tremendously in different ways to make it happen. To that end, a number of challenges are there, not to mention the ones which are waiting to pop up in course of time. But about the question of existence, there is no way back.

In its struggle to induct its own manpower, the next problem faced by BCG is how to materialize the process. The process is far from simple - it needs correction of two laws. For BCG, it is imperative to study the examples from other coast guards, extrapolate their results in the context of Bangladesh, foresee all future problems and finalize the corrected laws, so that they allow for future adjustments. There are internal inertia also - people tend to think this to be overstepping in navy's domain or going totally out of the box (when

well-established service like BGB has refrained itself from recruiting own officers). BCG needs to overcome all these and build consensus within and without. The task is not easy but the benefits far outweigh the pain. Moreover, there is practically no way out for BCG. It is calculated that BCG saves at least one life a day and returns ten taka for every one taka invested by the public exchequer. Once BCG's own human resource would be in place, the benefits would be much higher and durable, in congruence with the vision of a future nation free from hunger and poverty.

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