

*Aurangzeb Chowdhury***BANGLADESH COAST GUARD – NEEDS OF STREAMLINING OVERLAPPING FUNCTIONS AND BRINGING REFORM IN DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE****Abstract**

Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) came into being in 1995. As the youngest law enforcing agency, it finds some difficulties in making required elbow room among other forces. In course of time, overlaps with other forces cropped up. BCG believes that the overlaps can be eliminated through clear demarcation of responsibilities and areas of jurisdiction. Besides, providing limited magistracy power at sea and making BCG the maritime service provider for other law enforcing agencies would strengthen the law enforcing efforts and save resources. On the other hand, BCG's decision-making structure has a huge scope of deeper engagement towards obtaining better decisions for BCG. Placement of BCG officers in the ministry and establishing seamless communications with the decision-making structure are some of the measures to overcome this hindrance. Experiences of other coast guards across the globe also suggest similar steps. Towards building a more effective and efficient decision-making structure, ministry-BCG overlapping placements and engaging the decision-makers more deeply can be suggested along with a few other measures. With these teething problems resolved, one believes that BCG would be in a far better position to become the true 'Guardian at sea'.

**Keywords:** Guardian at sea, BCG's AOR, Overlapping Responsibility, Specialized Maritime Skills, Decision-making Structure Reform

**1. Introduction**

Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) can be said to be the youngest force in the country. It was established through the enactment of the Coast Guard Act 1994 and officially started its journey on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1995.<sup>1</sup> Being the last to emerge as a law enforcing agency, BCG had to accommodate itself in the overall operational environment. In doing so, BCG has been undergoing a continuous fine-tuning to create adequate elbow room for itself. In the process, incidents of overlaps crop up with other forces, making readjustments essential in the overall operating

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<sup>1</sup> Bangladesh Coast Guard Headquarters, *Coast Guard Vision Document 2041*, Dhaka: Coast Guard Headquarters, 2019, p. 3.

environment of law enforcement. These teething issues are relatively new, causing problems of different nature to deal and need to be addressed appropriately.

Being a law enforcing agency, Bangladesh Coast Guard is well-placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) from the inception. BCG looks for strategic guidance from MoHA and expects the ministry to make appropriate decisions for smooth functioning of the force. However, BCG is a specialized force and it has specialized functions which are highly technical and specialized in nature. BCG is principally a maritime service and it has functions like Search and Rescue (SAR), salvage, pollution control, protection of bio-diversity and endangered species, air operations, operations with maritime surveillance drones, hovercraft operations and so on, which need high degree of technical and operational know-how. Hence, decision-making about the force's matters necessitates a great deal of Coast Guard-specific knowledge and understanding. However, the current decision-making system shows significant scope of improvement and reform. Besides, apart from being a law enforcing agency, Coast Guard is also the only maritime organization under MoHA. But the ministry is not equipped with necessary manpower or specialists to receive professional appraisals in making decisions on maritime matters. Hence, many a times decisions reached are devoid of adequate Coast Guard-specific inputs.

BCG has behind it almost a quarter of a century, gathering a good deal of experience and maturity. With the delimitation of maritime boundary and consequent emphasis on 'Blue Economy', BCG is expected to undertake its mainstream activities such as patrolling in the whole of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Continental Shelf (CS) as well as specialized jobs, i.e., pollution control, SAR, salvage, protection of bio-diversity and so on.<sup>2</sup> All these activities need to be supported by sound, timely and effective decision-making at the strategic and operational level. Besides, anomalies such as overlapping of responsibilities with other forces should not hinder the force's operations.

Against this backdrop, the paper seeks to delve into the research question namely what are the needs of streamlining BCG's overlapping functions (with other forces) and what reforms are necessary in BCG's decision-making structure so as to enable the force function to its fullest level? The question being closely related to the fundamental activities of the force, it is necessary to carry out a research to find out the extent to which these factors are affecting the force's activities and how these can be eliminated. To this end, this paper will start with a discussion on the overlapping responsibilities with other forces and lacunas in decision-making structure and examine how these are affecting BCG's activities. Thereafter, it will look into the context of other coast guards across the globe. These two-pronged discussions will then lead to a viable solution of the said problems. The methodology followed in this paper is qualitative in nature based on primary and secondary data.

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<sup>2</sup> Bangladesh National Parliament, *Coast Guard Act 2016*, Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press, 2016, p. 2072-2080.

## 2. Literature Review

The available literature does not specifically deal with Bangladesh Coast Guard, let alone its intricate issues with the ministry and other forces. Armed Forces Division, 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.<sup>3</sup> It dealt with pure military subjects like the operational art in joint environment and Command, Control and Communication (C3) aspects. 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. However, no mention about the operational environment of BCG or its relationship with the ministry and other law enforcing agencies was found. A more specific mention on BCG was found in the recently published “Defence Policy of Bangladesh”, wherein its wartime roles have been broadly defined.<sup>4</sup> However, Bangladesh Navy, in its publications “Maritime Doctrine of Bangladesh”<sup>5</sup> and “BN Forces Goal- 2030”<sup>6</sup> has identified BCG’s role during wartime along with its preparations to that end. The essence of these documents helped the researcher shed some light on the military nature of the force and its need of obtaining quick and appropriate decisions.

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 came to light. In this regard, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Headquarters published book named “History of Indian Coast Guard”, which gives an account of the genesis of formation of ICG and its chronology, has been a good reference.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the book has not highlighted ICG’s working relationship with Indian Ministry of Defence and other forces of India, which could have been useful for the current research. Khurana has identified the relationship between Indian Coast Guard and Indian Navy as ‘uneasy companionship’.<sup>8</sup> Besides, there is a parliamentary committee report on Indian Coast Guard which suggested increase of its budget and make a few other reforms.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Tom Beard, 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.<sup>10</sup> Needless to mention, for the current research, a good number

<sup>3</sup> Armed Forces Division, *Joint Warfare Doctrine*, Dhaka: Armed Forces Division, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Armed Forces Division, *Defence Policy of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Armed Forces Division, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Bangladesh Navy, *Maritime Doctrine of Bangladesh*, Dhaka: Naval Headquarters, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Bangladesh Navy, *Forces Goal 2030*, Dhaka: Naval Headquarters, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Indian Coast Guard Headquarters, *History of Indian Coast Guard*, New Delhi: Indian Coast Guard, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Gurpreet Singh Khurana, “India’s Evolving Coastal Security Architecture: A Case for a New Central Force”, *National Maritime Foundation*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Standing Committee on Defence, *Performance of Coast Guard Organisation*, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Beard, *The Coast Guard*, Washington D.C.: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 2010.

of analogies and examples including those related to manpower issues, could be drawn from these documents.

After 23 years of journey, Bangladesh Coast Guard has 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 the force.<sup>11</sup> The document also touched upon the force's issues with the ministry and the sister forces. However, for obvious reasons, an elaborate discussion on these sensitive matters was avoided, because it was not the aim of the document. The propositions of the document need to be validated through detailed research and analysis. Besides, the literature do not discuss the BCG's issues with the ministries and other law enforcing agencies which come into play in BCG's day to day activities. Hence, it is evident that there is a significant gap in the research which need to be covered by a fresh research on the issue. Therefore, the current research will shed new lights on the matter, discuss pros and cons, examine different aspects of the issue and create solutions to the benefit of BCG and other stakeholders.

### **3. BCG's Area of Responsibility and Convergence with Other Forces**

#### **3.1 BCG's Area of Responsibility**

Seven years after the emergence of Bangladesh Coast Guard, government delineated its areas of responsibility through a gazette notification.<sup>12</sup> Other than the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Continental Shelf (CS) as mentioned in the Coast Guard Act 2016, the areas are Territorial water and adjacent estuary in according to Territorial waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974 (Act no. XXVI of 1974); all rivers and canals of Sundarbans; Passur river (from estuary to Chalna) to Shibsha river; Mongla Nala, Polihara river and Panguchi river; Haringhata and Dhareshwari rivers (from estuary to Kumarkhali); Bishkhali river; Payra/ Burishawar river (from estuary to Aamtali); Andharmanik, Nilganj and Khapra Bhanga rivers; Mohipur river; Rabnabad channel and Galachipa river (from estuary to Galachipa); Darchirra and Bura Gourango rivers; Shahbajpur and Meghna rivers (from Meghna to Chowkighata); Karnaphuli river (estuary to Kalurghat river); Sangu river (estuary to Jaldhar channel); Kutubdia, Maheskhali and Sandwip channel; Bangladesh portion in Naaf river (from estuary to Teknaf Bazar); All the rivers and channels falling into

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<sup>11</sup> Bangladesh Coast Guard Headquarters, *Coast Guard Vision Document 2041*, Dhaka: Coast Guard Headquarters, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gazette Notification No. 23-Law/2002, 30 January 2002.

the Bay of Bengal (from estuary to 5 nautical miles upstream); The waterways from Chattogram and Mongla sea ports to Dhaka; and other rivers, channels, island and port areas declared by the government.

Later on, through another gazette notification, government extended the force's AOR up to one kilometer towards inside the land from the river bank or sea shore, principally to allow the force to continue 'hot pursuit' of the criminals.<sup>13</sup> The list makes it clear that the river ways in the southern part of the country have been entrusted to the force. During the force's emergence, there was no other force operating in these areas. So, BCG operated in those areas alone and without any friction or overlap. However, in 2018, Nou Police was established, and it was revealed that its AOR and charter of duties are partially in duplication with those of BCG.

The duties vested on BCG are patrolling, anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, anti-robbery, Search and Rescue, salvage of vessels, protection of bio-diversity, pollution control, prevention of illegal migration and human-trafficking, security of sea ports, enforcing court's order on any vessel and assisting Bangladesh Navy during war and so on. These duties are generally unique in nature, however, some are in overlap with the Nou Police which will be discussed in ensuing paragraphs.

### 3.2 *History of Nou Police*

'Nou Police' is the riverine unit of Bangladesh Police. The word 'Nou' according to Bangla Academy dictionary and Banglapedia means 'riverine.' Although 'Nou Police' is actually Riverine Police, an official English name of the force is yet to come.<sup>14</sup> However, 'Nou Police' is not a separate force *per se* – it is a part of Bangladesh Police. The areas of jurisdiction of Riverine Police are as under:<sup>15</sup>

- Any river, canal, lake or navigable riverine route and tidal riverine route or part thereof which have been published in Government Gazette as per Bangladesh Inland Shipping Ordinance 1976 Section 2, subsection (f).
- Fifty-meter area extending into the land from the high water mark of the rivers; except religious installations, educational institutions, market places or any other installations;

<sup>13</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gazette Notification SRO No. 23-Law/2002, 30 January 2002.

<sup>14</sup> Discussion with SK. Md. Maruf Hasan, bpm, ppm, DIG Nou Police, DIG (currently AIG and Rector, Police Staff College).

<sup>15</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Gazette Notification SRO No. 249-Law/2015, 05 August 2015.

- Installations regarding riverine traffic such as, riverine terminals, ferry ghats, river ports or other installations.

In its areas of jurisdiction, the Nou Police is supposed to carry out certain principal functions<sup>16</sup> which are, assisting in river traffic management; increasing awareness against riverine accidents; maintaining law and order in places like riverine ports; ferry terminals; passenger waiting areas; checking registration, fitness and other documents of riverine craft; assisting in taking legal actions against carrying of passengers beyond allowed capacity; against charging of excessive fares in all ferries and vessels; against transportation of smuggling goods or narcotics. Its other duties are: assisting concerned authorities in taking legal actions against pollution of environment; against violating laws and regulations regarding protection and conservation of fishery and against violating laws and rules for prohibition of impeding; poaching; illegal earth filling; diverting of river routes and the like. Furthermore, its responsibilities include arranging; conducting and participating in national and international research; convention; seminar; symposium regarding the management of river routes and riverine environment; and last but not the least performing any other duties as per other concerned laws, rules, regulations, legal documents or as ordered by the Inspector General of Bangladesh Police or the government; also falls under the duties of Nou Police.

### 3.3 *Overlaps with BCG*

The functions and areas of responsibility of the Riverine Police are overlapping with those of Bangladesh Coast Guard to some extent. More specifically, the riverine part of area of responsibility of BCG is in overlap with that of the Riverine Police. The two overlapping functions are: conservation of fishery; and prevention of smuggling and transportation of drugs. Another duty, i.e. assisting the concerned authorities in taking legal actions against pollution of environment can eventually overlap with BCG's duties if not properly interpreted and materialized by the Riverine Police.

The current overlap could have been avoided if the Riverine Police's AOR were kept outside the AOR of BCG. As per the government gazette, BCG's AOR extends from Dhaka to the southern part of the country; it needs not (and it does not), for instance, operate in Surma river, Brahmaputra river, Padma river (in Rajshahi) or in Kaptai lake (which was given to BCG once). Currently, in some areas, the maritime stakeholders are not clear as to whose jurisdiction is where. There remains the risk of duplication of effort as well as one force countering the other creating unnecessary rivalry and clashes of interests. On the contrary, at times it can become

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

from everybody's job to nobody's business. One feels that such overlaps in AOR and functions could have been well avoided at the beginning.

**4. Clear Demarcation, Incidental Magistracy and Maritime Assistance Services**

It may be mentioned that the operation and activities of the law enforcing agencies cost significant amount of national resources. Duplication of activities would mean wastage of these resources, which should be avoided at all costs. Hence, the overlapping functions and responsibilities of the forces must be resolved by making clear demarcation of responsibilities and areas of jurisdiction. Demarcation of AOR and responsibilities would entail viewing the things from overall perspective, judging clearly who's duty is what, determining the needs of the nation and stakeholders and after considering all pros and cons, making such decisions which may be unpopular to many. In order to do all these, there is a need of a person or body who would look at the things from the overall perspective of the nation, and not submit to any myopic view or petty interest of anyone. This organization or person must put the country's interest first, carry out detail analysis, and moderate the things towards the best interest of the country. The person or body needs to be higher in position and authority and moderate things with binding conclusions. The person or body should also make clear delineation of the forces' areas of responsibility, functions and resources, as well as avoid duplication of resources. MoHA can undertake the task to some extent, however, one feels that an organization such as National Security Council (NSC) would be the most appropriate to undertake the task. Government has formed a National Committee on Security Affairs (NCSA) in March (and later re-formed it in May) this year and appointed ex-DMP Commissioner as its Chief Executive Officer (CEO).<sup>17</sup> One feels that, such an organization, directly under the head of the government, can perform the said task effectively.

From the experience of other coast guards across the globe, it is felt that the NSC or similar body should also consider giving incidental and limited magistracy power to Bangladesh Coast Guard. While securing the nation's interest out at sea, BCG encounters a number of offenders on a daily basis. If one BCG vessel encounters a group of offender vessels, arresting them and escorting them to shore for handing over to police cannot become economical. The area of operation would remain unattended and more offenders would engage in illegal ventures. Hence, if BCG vessel could instantly levy a fine on the perpetrators, the overall effect would be much more positive and economical. Such examples are known to exist in Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (or Malaysia Coast Guard) and Korean Coast Guard.<sup>18</sup> They are

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<sup>17</sup> Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Cabinet Division, Bangladesh Gazette Notification dated 22 May 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Discussion with Inspector Lee Eun Swob of Korea Coast Guard and Lieutenant Commander Fadli Esa

authorized to impose instant fines on the perpetrators at sea up to a certain limit. The fines should be such that they leave the illegal ventures no more profitable for the offenders. One strongly feels that such a step has become necessary for BCG.

As many of the forces need to operate in maritime environment, a competent service should be tasked to provide maritime assistance to all. Experience says that maritime service is highly technical and needs specially trained manpower. There are essential and indispensable skills that the force has to acquire and keep developing continuously in order to operate truly in maritime environment, some of which, but not limited to, are <sup>19</sup>: i) Terrestrial navigation, through the waters (which entails the use of navigational equipment); ii) Blind pilotage, which means piloting a vessel to the desired destination even when one cannot see anything around, especially during impaired visibility due to fog, mist, heavy rainfall and other reasons, and also during inclement weather conditions; iii) Seamanship, which includes the upkeeping, maintenance, effectively living and performing duties on board a watercraft even when the weather conditions are adverse; iv) Rules of the Road (ROR), which means the national and international rules for the vessels to navigate through waterways; v) Chart work, which means the study of using maps of water ways; vi) Basic hydrography, which means study of the depth of water and characteristics of river and waterways; vii) Meteorology, which is the study of weather and climate; viii) Ship's Husbandry, which means the methods of maintaining and upkeeping a vessel; ix) Marine engineering, which means the professional skills to run and maintain engines, generators and associated equipment; x) Electrical and Electronics; xi) Marine communication; xii) Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defence (NBCD) including Fire-Fighting (FF) and Damage Control (DC); xiii) Operational Logistics; xiv) PME, which means repair and maintenance including periodical docking and xv) Diving operations and similar other operations.

All these things are specialized skills and people create their life-long careers on them.<sup>20</sup> Hence, it may not be a non-maritime organization's priority to develop such skills or set up institutions for them. In Bangladesh, only Navy and Coast Guard have true maritime capability.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, if BCG would be tasked to provide maritime services to other forces and organizations, be it in the form of providing logistics support or carrying out patrolling by a team in certain places or doing maintenance of certain vessels, that would benefit everyone. At present, BCG faces shortages of skilled personnel, however, the force is vying to recruit its own manpower soon and would be able to provide seamless assistance in the service of other forces.<sup>22</sup>

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of Malaysia Coast Guard during working level meeting of Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM) held during 11-12 July 2018 in Dhaka.

<sup>19</sup> Basing on the Author's 41-year-long service experience in Bangladesh Navy.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Bangladesh Coast Guard, *Coast Guard Vision Document 2041*, Dhaka: Coast Guard Headquarters, 2019.



## 5. Needs of Bringing Reform in Decision-Making Structure

Bangladesh Coast Guard at its inception has been placed under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), like BGB. It is the only maritime force under MoHA, not to mention, its activities are specialized in nature. Being under MoHA, BCG has to fall back to the ministry for decisions regarding important matters arising frequently as well as those arising seldom. It is critical for the force to get decisions which are prudent and made without avoidable delay. In order to make such decisions, the organizational structure of the force as well as the ministry needs to be such that necessary information are at hand when needed and flow upwards as soon as necessary. An examination of the current decision-making structure reveals significant scopes of adjustment in this regard, which is elaborated in the subsequent paragraphs.

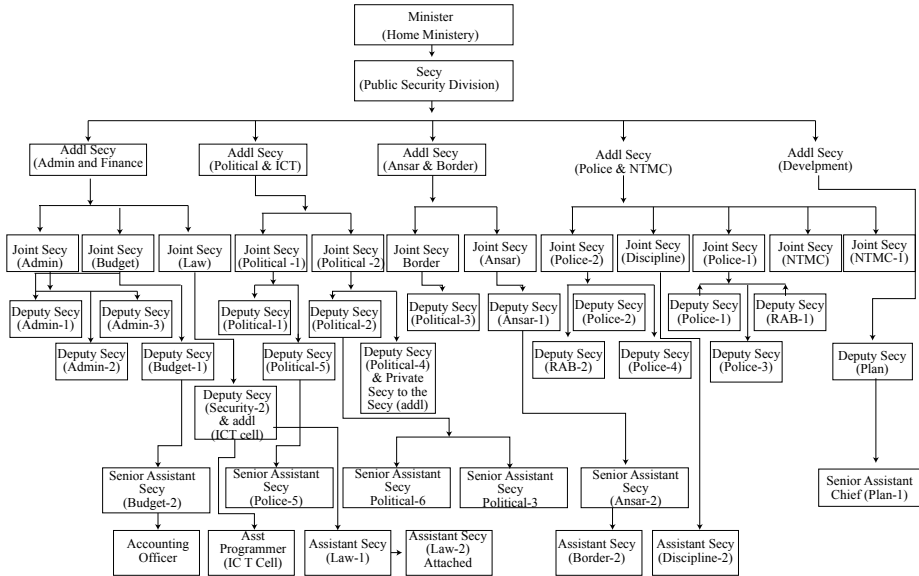
### 5.1 *BCG's Relation with MoHA and Other Relevant Ministries*

Towards examining the subject in details, at first it is necessary to take a look at the organogram of MoHA, which is given below in Figure 1.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Constructed based on Public Security Division, MoHA's original and existing organogram, available at <https://mhapsd.gov.bd/site/organogram>, accessed on 03 August 2019.

**Figure 1: Organization Structure of MoHA**



The principal matters of BCG are dealt by Deputy Secretary (Border-3), who reports to Joint Secretary (Border), who in turn reports to Additional Secretary (Ansar and Border). The Additional Secretary reports to the Secretary who falls back to the Minister for decisions. Matters regarding the development projects of BCG are taken up by Senior Assistant Chief (Planning-1), who reports to Deputy Chief (Planning) and the hierarchy goes up to the Minister through Additional Secretary (Development). These officers are from Bangladesh Civil Service (Administration) or BCS (Economic) cadre (now merged with BCS Administration cadre).<sup>24</sup> They have good idea about how police force works, because they were magistrates in the fields. They have gained a wide exposure of field administration and law and order through their service in different capacities. However, they are not generally exposed to maritime matters. Although an exposure to the Armed Forces is given to them through an orientation course in Bangladesh Army, no exposure to the maritime field is given to them. One can well assume that an orientation programme in Bangladesh Coast Guard would make them well acquainted with the force and enable them to make effective decisions for it.

<sup>24</sup> “BCS admin and economic cadres merged”, *Dhaka Tribune*, 14 November 2018, available at <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/government-affairs/2018/11/14/bcs-admin-and-economic-cadres-merged>, accessed on 03 September 2019.

Here the onus lies on BCG to look for opportunities to orient its decision-makers in a suitable way. It is evident that there are a number of peculiarities of the force which are not easy to see. For example, as a maritime service, BCG adheres to a specific set of traditions, which has descended from the Royal Navy. Besides, BCG becomes a war-fighting force under Bangladesh Navy during war, for which it needs constant training and preparation. At that time, BCG ships must be capable to perform the three classical roles of a warship – float, move and fight in a hostile operational environment. BCG ships should, therefore, be so built as to be able to be fitted with modern weaponry at the quickest possible time and merge into naval war fleet. At the same time, BCG officers and men must be able to take part into naval combat without any new teaching or training. It is peculiar for the force that it has to wear the mask of a policeman, while maintain the vigour of a combatant. BCG needs to find out ways to project these kinds of uniqueness to its hierarchy constantly.

Outside MoHA, two other ministries are especially important for BCG – Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) and Ministry of Finance (MoF). These ministries approve or reject BCG’s proposals for inclusion of manpower and hardware in the Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E). BCG’s communication with these two ministries are especially important and there is a lot of scope to improve it, as will be seen subsequently. A few other ministries have very little involvements with BCG, which are the Cabinet Division, Ministry of Land and Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

## **5.2 *Scopes Where Decision-Making can be Revamped***

For the smooth functioning of a force in line with the country’s policies and development needs, the decision-making must be timely, harmonious, seamless and smooth-flowing. As stated earlier, for making a decision on BCG, a good deal of understanding on the force becomes necessary. It is in BCG’s sake to bring the ministries on board, keep them informed about the specialized aspects of the force and continuously strive to see that the decision-making is more favourable to it. Currently, there are a number of scopes where the decision-making can be revamped, which are enumerated in the subsequent paragraphs.

### **5.2.1 *Common and Recurring Decisions***

At Present whenever a matter arises warranting a decision, MoHA and other ministries, being devoid of Coast Guard-specific information, send letters to BCG and waits for inputs. Moving of official memos back and forth consumes a lot of work, attention and man-hour, which could be utilized otherwise. Since, it is a recurrent matter, placing a Coast Guard officer in the ministry would have made BCG-related information and explanations available at hand.

### 5.2.2 *Decisions with Lasting Effects*

There are a few decisions which have lasting effects on BCG and other forces. One example is the decision regarding sanction of manpower and equipment to be included in the force's Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E). Being a new force, BCG needs to get new manpower, new ships, boats, bases, stations and outposts sanctioned in its TO&E. Inclusion of manpower or equipment in TO&E creates permanent financial liability on the government and therefore, the ministries become extra cautious while scrutinizing them. The current system requires the proposal of the force to be scrutinized by the parent ministry, i.e. MoHA in the form of a formal internal meeting. Then the proposal goes to the Ministry of Public Administration's branch named Organization and Management (O&M). This branch holds an internal meeting where it may or may not call the concerned organization for opinion or explanation. After scrutiny, the proposal is forwarded to the Ministry of Finance, Finance Division, Expenditure Management branch. This branch approves or disapproves proposals basing on government's priorities. In this process, experiences have found that Coast Guard's input are not communicated to these bodies effectively and proposal's are severely cut down or even rejected. One believes that if BCG's actual needs, priorities, contributions and other bright sides could be communicated adequately through presentations, informal discussions, formal meetings, visits of decision-makers to BCG ships and installations, the result could have been just and more appropriate. It seems that BCG needs to engage the officers in decision-making channel more effectively and keep them engaged, in order to solidify its impression in their minds.

Besides, another relevant thing here is a proposal for TO&E takes long time – months, sometimes even years. This time lag happens due to the above-mentioned problem - communication gap. One feels that BCG needs to persuade the concerned authorities to create a 'one-stop service' by which all concerned ministries come to sit together to consider a TO&E proposal and make an instant decision. By this, the travelling of official files from desk to desk could be minimized avoiding procrastinations and saving valuable time.

### 5.2.3 *Decisions Regarding Resource-Sharing and Optimization*

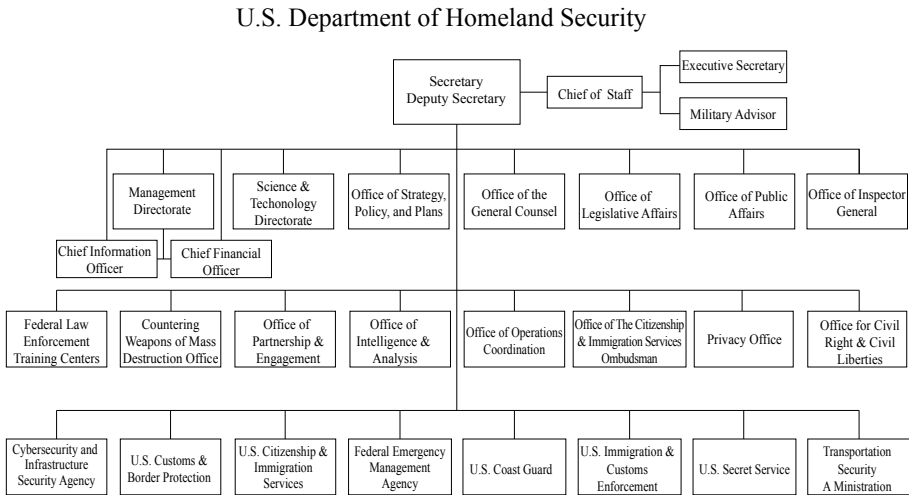
The law enforcing agencies have many capabilities and resources which are common in nature. It is in the interest of the nation that those costly resources are shared towards saving valuable resources of the country. The onus of such steps naturally lies on MoHA, being the controlling body of the forces. For example, since Bangladesh Navy (BN) has almost all types of maritime training institutions, BCG does not need to develop them, rather send its personnel for training in those institutions. BCG only needs to develop Coast Guard-specific institutions, which

are not in the navy. Similarly, as BN is maintaining diving schools of high standard, Bangladesh Army and Fire Service and Civil Defence divers are getting trained there, saving tremendous resources and investments. The same is true for the maritime related resources and services and in this regard BCG should be asked and be able to provide. Such decisions should come from the ministries as and when needed.

## **6. Experience of Other Coast Guards**

Towards finding a solution to bridge the gap between the force and the ministry, the experiences of other coast guards of the world can be helpful. Since more matured nations have struggled with the matter for much longer periods, they have invented various ways to close the gap. The decision-makers in the ministry in many other countries also understand the impracticability of knowing everything of their coast guards and have made a system of obtaining information as and when necessary. The most common practice is putting one or more members of the force as advisor to the decision-maker. An examination of the organogram of the US Coast Guard, which is the largest force of its kind in the world, would make the point clear. As is known, the US Department for Homeland Security (DHS) is analogous to Ministry of Home Affairs in Bangladesh. The US Coast Guard is the only military service under US Department for Homeland Security. In order to make decisions on military matters, the topmost decision maker of DHS, i.e. the Secretary (analogous to Home Minister in Bangladesh) consults his Military Advisor, who reports to him through the Chief of Staff. Thus, the Secretary, being a political person, always has by his/her side one military specialist to advise him/her on military matters including the US Coast Guard. This enables him to make decisions on the US Coast Guard without even asking the force. One can imagine that a similar system, tailored to the needs of all, has become a need of time for Bangladesh.

**Figure 2: US Department of Homeland Security<sup>25</sup>**



India has placed its Coast Guard under the Ministry of Defence since inception. Indian Ministry of Defence is run by Indian Civil Service officers like Bangladesh and many other countries. Government of India constituted the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) under the Ministry of Defence through a notification on 23 November 2001.<sup>26</sup> The IDS came out as a part of Ministry of Defence by the cumulative pressure from Kargil Review Committee (KRC), Group of Ministers (a group formed to review the defence matters) and Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence Matters.<sup>27</sup> Located in South Block of Indian secretariat and headquartered in Integrated Defence Staff building complex which is at Mehram Nagar, Delhi Cantonment, the HQ is headed by a Lieutenant General (or equivalent officer) and manned by mostly defence officers.<sup>28</sup> The IDS advises the MoD on defence matters of operational natures. As such, decisions regarding defence-specific matters such as defence’s acquisition, planning, budgeting, training, deployment in humanitarian assistance, medical services and international cooperation on defence matters are dealt by the IDS.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, matters relating to defence industries, welfare

<sup>25</sup> Available at [dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19\\_0628\\_dhs-organizations-chart.pdf](https://dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/19_0628_dhs-organizations-chart.pdf), accessed on 15 January 2019

<sup>26</sup> “Vision and History”, Integrated Defence Staff, available at <https://www.ids.nic.in/vision.php>, accessed on 10 September 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2018*, New Delhi: Government of India, 2018, pp. 10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Prabhaskar K Dutta, “Why Modi govt needs to go beyond CDS”, *India Today*, 16 August 2019, available at <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/chief-of-defence-staff-cds-narendra-modi-1581393-2019-08-16>, accessed on 25 August 2019.

<sup>29</sup> “What We Do?”, Integrated Defence Staff, available at <https://www.ids.nic.in/what-we-do.php>, accessed on 01 September 2019.

of retired servicemen and defence research and development are dealt by branches of the MoD consisting of both civilian and military personnel.<sup>30</sup> One can easily conclude that this example can be well adopted in Bangladesh and BCG personnel may well be incorporated in the MoHA's organogram to provide required input on the force as and when required.

Japan Coast Guard is placed under the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). Japan is a nation which is surrounded by the sea on all sides and its sea area is more than twelve times bigger than its land area.<sup>31</sup> Hence, maritime trade and fishing contribute significantly to its economy. But unfortunately, Japan's maritime areas are plagued by smuggling, illegal migration, illegal fishing, pollution of marine environment, violation of maritime boundary and so on. With a view to curbing these crimes, Japan Coast Guard was established in May 1948. The force runs 457 vessels and 83 aircraft with about 13,994 personnel. During 2016, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe decided to boost Coast Guard activities, increase its budget and set the trend of appointing a regular JCG officer (graduate from JCG Academy) as commandant of the force.<sup>32</sup> Since then, JCG has got the third commandant consecutively from its own members with increased responsibility and activity. In overseeing the force, currently the MLIT is assisted by 19 JCG officers who are working in MLIT's organs such as secretariat, policy bureau, maritime bureau and aviation bureau.<sup>33</sup> The system is known to provide a smooth link between this specialized force and the MLIT, which is the second-largest executive agency of the Japanese government. One can easily tend to believe that the same system could work well to establish better communication link in Bangladesh context.

## 7. Towards Building a More Effective Decision-Making Structure

Needless to say, the current decision-making structure, i.e. the organogram of MoHA needs an adjustment in order to make effective decisions for the forces which are technical in nature. Here, the fundamental problem is to communicate the BCG-related inputs, particularly about the specialized aspects of the force, to the decision-makers in a timely and convincing way. Several propositions can be worked out, some of which are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

<sup>30</sup> "About the Ministry", Ministry of Defence, Government of India, available at <https://mod.gov.in/about--ministry>, accessed on 10 September 2019.

<sup>31</sup> "Japan Coast Guard Annual Report 2016", Japan Coast Guard (JCG), available at [https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/e/annual\\_report\\_of\\_jcg.html](https://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/e/annual_report_of_jcg.html), accessed on 10 September 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Reiji Yoshida, "Next Coast Guard chief to come up from ranks", *The Japan Times*, 18 July 2013, available at <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/18/national/next-coast-guard-chief-to-come-up-from-ranks/#.XXdhCJ4zZPa>, accessed on 10 September 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Masako Nohara, Coast Guard Officer Senior Grade, Japan Coast Guard, on 10 September 2019.

### **7.1 *Ministry-BCG Overlapping Placements***

In order to obtain and keep ready BCG-related inputs at hand, MoHA can include staff officers from the forces in its organogram by creating appropriate posts. The officers then become a part of the ministry and with their knowledge and experience, can decode the Coast Guard jargons into ministerial language. They will become officers of the ministry, putting on Coast Guard uniform. They can make effective contributions to the ministry's decision-making about the Coast Guard. This system is far ahead of other alternatives like making phone calls to BCG Headquarters or calling concerned BCG officer to the ministry or holding frequent meetings. Similarly, BCG may include a number of ministerial officers in its organogram. It may be mentioned that Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has created a post of Additional Secretary in the Coast Guard Headquarters under the Director General. By doing this, ICG has been dealing with the ministry very well, especially in budgetary matters. BCG may also try this system, which is surely to bridge its communication gaps with the ministries.

### **7.2 *BCG Orientation for Ministry Officers***

Systems may be made for BCS (Administration) cadre officers to undergo orientation training before taking over a post which deals with specialized organizations. Orientation courses may be arranged under their parent ministry, i.e. Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) in BPATC, Savar (for theoretical part) and in the establishments of the forces for practical experience. For example, someone posted to Border-3 sub-branch of MoHA may undergo an orientation training (theory and practical orientation) of suitable duration in Bangladesh Coast Guard. The orientation training may be followed by a sea trip of one-week duration or so. At the end, he should be given an overview of the force in Coast Guard Headquarters with a comprehensive presentation. Someone posted as Joint Secretary (Border) may also undergo an orientation training of suitable duration in the Coast Guard, followed by a sea trip. The details of the training can be worked out after discussions. In order to make the training effective, at first a certain amount of interest has to be grown in the trainee. Therefore, these postings should be as far as possible voluntary, so that someone who has some interest is allowed to come. Then adequate incentives such as visit to forces of other countries may be kept as a part of the training so that an overall picture can be assimilated by the future incumbent.

### **7.3 *Sensitizing MoPA for Placement of BCS Officers***

BCG may approach MoPA to transfer officers with interests in maritime fields in posts dealing with BCG matters. Currently, the BCG Administration cadre



officers are frequently rotated from a post to another due to their career compulsion. Generally, there is no relation between one posting and the subsequent one, because the postings are on the basis of arising vacancies. However, if one officer could be rotated between the posts of, for example, Deputy Secretary (MoD, dealing with naval matters), Deputy Secretary (in MoHA, Border-3 section, dealing with BCG matters), Deputy Secretary (Ministry of Shipping) and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, he could have got a wide exposure in maritime field. One feels that, a system may be put in place so that the decision-makers can steadily grow expertise on the fields in which they are expected to make critical decisions in future.

#### **7.4 *Taking Decision-Maker On-board***

BCG should create a culture of bringing its decision-makers on board through visits to BCG bases, stations and outposts and taking them on board for sea trips. BCG should endeavour to give the officers in MoHA, MoPA and MoF a practical ‘feel’ of the force and let them grow a deeper understanding. BCG should also time to time explain to the ministry officials its highly technical nature and specialized activities like SAR, pollution control, salvage, protection of bio-diversity, etc. and so on to appraise them of the intricacies of sea service. Such steps are sure to create intimate feeling among the decision-makers and make them deliver far more knowledgeable decisions.

#### **7.5 *Forming All-ministry Committee for TO&E***

BCG should endeavour to create a system so that while determining the TO&E for any unit of the force, a committee consisting representatives from MoHA, MoPA and MoF sit together with BCG and put forward their opinions, debate together and finalize the TO&E. Later, when the TO&E should pass through MoPA and MoF, they should not be cut down or rejected in part or as a whole.

#### **7.6 *Building Rapport with Decision-Makers from the Beginning***

Since BCG officers need to deal with the BCS (Administration) cadre officers very frequently, they should be sent for joint training with those officers. At present, the alma mater for the BCS cadre officers, i.e. the BPATC is conducting Senior Staff Course for Joint Secretary level and Advanced Course on Administration and Development (ACAD) for Deputy Secretary level.<sup>34</sup> BCG needs to send its officers for those courses or get those navy officers posted who underwent those courses.

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<sup>34</sup> “Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center”, available at <http://www.bpatc.org.bd/index.php?pageid=223>, accessed on 30 August 2019.

Such courses can create highly effective camaraderie with the civil officers which can offer lasting benefits for the force through personal relations and understanding.

## 8. Conclusion

Having emerged as the youngest force, Bangladesh Coast Guard has been facing ‘teething problems’ in making its foothold in a firm way. Although nearly one quarter of a century has elapsed since its inception, the problems still persist. Inception of some wings or parts of a force has created an obvious overlap with BCG in respect of areas of operations and functions. Some of the functions of those wings turn out to be basically Coast Guard jobs and the stakeholders are now confused as to whose duty is what. Both BCG and other law enforcing agencies are under the Ministry of Home Affairs, the onus lies on the ministry to draw clear-cut boundaries in this regard and remove overlaps. Alternately, the long-awaited and recently formed National Committee on Security Affairs (NCSA), as the apex body, can look at the problem from the overall perspective and resolve the matter. In order for the overlaps not to occur in future, BCG may act as single maritime service provider for all law enforcing agencies.

In order to run as a force, BCG looks towards the ministry for various decisions. There it seems that there is ample scope for the decision-making structure to be more inclusive and vibrant. For now, the current system tends to create and sustain a communication gap between the ministry and BCG for which neither party is to be blamed. But the gap must be bridged, and BCG must find out ways and means to close it as quickly and effectively as possible. To this end, BCG may make deliberate efforts to orient and equip the officers of the ministry with a practical ‘feel’ about the force through an orientation program and effective communications. At the same time, the ministry may find out some way to include some of the BCG members in its organizational structure towards making BCG-related information and explanations at hand. Coast Guard officers, permanently posted or on attachment in the ministry and assisting the ministry in decision-making, are surely able to close the gap, as the experience of the progressive countries reveals.

After one quarter of a century, it has become imperative for all to see that Bangladesh Coast Guard delivers its best to the maritime Bangladesh to the best of its ability. It is the duty of all others concerned to see that the force is able to do so by functioning smoothly. Coast Guard has undergone quite a bumpy ride along the way; and it struggles till today for many basic things like manpower, land, buildings, ships, boats and so on. The force has tremendous potentiality - it makes a return of 10 taka for every one taka of recurrent expenditure by the government.<sup>35</sup> Potentially, the

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<sup>35</sup> Bangladesh Coast Guard Headquarters, *Coast Guard Vision Document 2041*, Dhaka: Coast Guard Headquarters, 2019, p. 14.

force is able to make our sea area safe for the seafarers to explore and extract. 'Blue Economy' related activities, deep into the country sea area can become an easy and fearless venture under the vigilant watch of the force. With the 'teething problems' resolved, and with the active support and co-operation from all the corners, the force is surely to become the true 'Guardian at Sea' in future days to come.