India's blue economy priorities: maritime sector

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Blue economy is an all-inclusive concept based on seas and shorelines. India has prioritized its blue economy policies, and maritime development (logistics, infrastructure and shipping) is one of them. For charting the nation's growth, a regular review of global trends and India's plans is imperative. The major drivers or focal areas will be decarbonization and digitalization. Increased costs due to transformations, including technology acceptances and investments in port development to improve productivity will be on predictable paths. Shipping route alternatives (Northern Sea route, Belt and Road Initiative, etc.) will be in the discourses. Digitalization measures such as Maritime Single Window, Port Community Systems, etc. will get traction. India needs to shift gears with its Sagarmala projects and keep pace with the global transformative changes, especially on the digital front. Based on its new National Logistics Policy, logistics costs as a large head need to be considered along with performance metrics. This article juxtaposes global trends and indices, and lists a few issues that India must address.

Keywords: Blue economy, decarbonization, emission abatement, maritime policy, port modernization.

Introduction

Nations Sustainable Development Goals 14 policy directions. To take the BE concept forward and wide, clusters have also been mooted and formed for networking, etc.[2]. India envisages value addition from BE to services, maritime trade, shipping, etc.[3]. Table 1 shows the priority areas identified under the broad scope of BE for maritime transport and shipping. These have been selected from the proposal in the policy document. It needs a mention that concretizing the ideas and monitoring the status of many initiatives are yet to be firmly in place.

Regarding the priority of maritime logistics, infrastructure and shipping, India's flagship project is the Sagarmala programme. This programme has plans for 802 projects (INR 5.4 lakh crores; target completion 2035), but the progress stands at 220 projects (INR 1.12 lakh crores)[4]. A Rajya Sabha Report has observations on the lesser quantum of budgetary allotments to the Scheme[5]. In the 2023–24 Budget, allocation of INR 22.19 billion (with a 23.8% increase over the revised estimates of 2022–23) has Sagarmala's share at INR 4.5 billion[4]. Though there have been mentions of the slow progress of the Sagarmala projects, appreciable progress is on record. Table 2 projects a few growth parameters of India pertinent to the maritime sector[6].

This article brings in the perspective of maritime transport juxtaposing some of the developments worldwide. The