



From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence in Pakistan

Pakistan is fundamentally a maritime nation. Its coastline, ports, shipping routes, fisheries, coastal communities and strategic location on the Arabian Sea provide the country with an important gateway to regional and international markets. Yet maritime potential is not converted into national prosperity simply by possessing ports or having access to the sea. Maritime excellence emerges when national policies are translated into institutions, infrastructure, technology, human capital and measurable operational performance.

This is the essence of the theme 'From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence'. The challenge for Pakistan, is not just limited to recognizing the importance of the maritime sector but to translate its maritime ambitions into practical outcomes.



A Maritime Vision for Pakistan

Pakistan's Ministry of Maritime Affairs has articulated a vision to position the country as a leading maritime nation and regional trans-shipment hub through modern ports, efficient logistics, environmental sustainability, innovation and global connectivity. Its mission also emphasizes policy reform, ease-of-doing-business, improved hinterland connectivity, transit trade and the well-being of coastal communities. This vision is profoundly connected with the broader concept of the Blue Economy. The government has identified fragmented governance, outdated port and shipping technologies, marine pollution, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient research and innovation as critical bottlenecks requiring policy intervention.

Modern Ports as Engines of Economic Growth

Karachi Port and Port Qasim remain vital to Pakistan's international trade and industrial supply chain, while Dawadgar holds significant long-term potential as a hub for regional connectivity. Pakistan's official maritime vision explicitly seeks stronger hinterland connectivity and greater participation in transit and trans-shipment trade. Recent initiatives have further reinforced this direction, with a focus on strengthening Pakistan-China port-rail connectivity under CPEC. The transition from policy to practice requires ports to compete increasingly in efficiency rather than geography alone.

Digital gate systems, Port Community Systems, automated cargo handling, artificial intelligence, smart scheduling, electronic documentation and integrated customs procedures can reduce delays and improve predictability. Therefore, it is pertinent for Pakistan to establish measurable targets for port performance, including vessel turnaround time, container dwell time, logistics cost, digital clearance time, berth productivity and customer satisfaction. Tracking these indicators will aid in identifying gaps and driving improvements.

The Way Forward

Pakistan has considerable maritime potential, but maritime excellence will ultimately be determined by execution. In a positive shift, the Ministry's recent policy direction places modern ports, digitalization, blue-economy development, sustainability and regional connectivity at the centre of the maritime agenda. Its 2024-25 Year Book also highlights policy reforms, port efficiency, digitalization, intermodal cooperation and a longer-term ambition to develop a \$20 billion blue economy by 2025.

The next phase should therefore concentrate on five interconnected priorities: modern and digitally integrated ports; competitive shipping and maritime services; green and climate-resilient maritime development; highly skilled maritime human capital; and stronger government-industry academic collaboration.

Bahria University: Translating Maritime Policy into Knowledge and Human Capital

An important element in Pakistan's journey towards maritime excellence is the contribution of its universities and research institutions. Among these, Bahria University occupies a distinctive position because of its sustained engagement with maritime education, research, policy analysis and professional development.

Pakistan cannot build modern ports, introduce maritime digitalization, develop sustainable shipping or expand its blue economy without an educated workforce. Bahria University contributes to this requirement by connecting academic education with the operational, managerial, technological and policy dimensions of the maritime sector. At the Karachi Campus, maritime education has developed beyond the traditional study of ships and navigation towards the broader business and management dimensions of the maritime economy. BU's current academic offerings include four-year and two-year BS Maritime Business and Management pathways, a two-year MS Maritime Ports and Shipping Management, an MS Maritime Trade and Logistics and an LL.M. in International and Maritime Law. The university's academic roadmap also lists BS Coastal and Marine Sciences, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of contemporary maritime education.

BSMAS as a Platform for Maritime Excellence

Within this framework, the Bahria School of Maritime & Applied Sciences (BSMAS) serves as a timely, high-impact platform by weaving maritime education with applied disciplines. Through its academic programmes like the BS in Maritime Business and Management, MS in Port and Shipping Management and LL.M. in Maritime Trade and Logistics directly align classroom learning with the demands of the maritime industry.

BSMAS is also actively expanding its research and curriculum into smart ports, digitalization, maritime cybersecurity, green shipping and decarbonization. This interdisciplinary approach is essential because the modern maritime sector no longer operates in silos. Developing a smart port, for instance, isn't a task for port managers alone. It demands end-to-end collaboration among maritime experts, engineers, environmental scientists, economists, logistics specialists, software engineers and data analysts. Bahria University's BSMASS is at the forefront of this effort, actively building the skilled talent pool required for the nation's maritime future. The school prioritizes practical, hands-on learning through routine industry engagement, guest lectures from seasoned professionals, internships, applied research projects and field visits to major ports and operational facilities. By actively linking academia with industry, we can bridge the practical skill gap.



Pakistan Maritime Science and Technology Park (PMSTP)

Another major milestone in driving maritime innovation is Bahria University's association with the Pakistan Maritime Science and Technology Park (PMSTP). PMSTP acts as a nexus between education, applied research and commercial enterprises. Its potential areas include smart-port technologies, maritime digitalization, green shipping, cybersecurity, ocean and climate research, professional training and technology-based entrepreneurship. By supporting applied research, start-ups, prototypes and the commercialization of knowledge, Bahria University and PMSTP can contribute significantly to a knowledge-based blue economy and strengthen Pakistan's maritime capabilities. Bahria University's Triple Helix approach comes to life through joint ventures like the Bahria School of Maritime & Applied Sciences (BSMAS) and the Pakistan Maritime Science and Technology Park (PMSTP). This collaboration creates a direct bridge where government leadership, academia and private industry work shoulder-to-shoulder on applied research, digital infrastructure and commercial innovation.

Pakistan's Maritime Excellence Triangle

Realizing deep maritime reform isn't a task for a single entity. It requires a coordinated team effort across government, academia and industry. This synergy is captured in the Pakistan Maritime Excellence Triangle. Here, the government provides strategic policy and regulation, academic institutions like Bahria University supply cutting-edge research and market-ready talent and industry partners bring the necessary capital, technological adaptation and job opportunities. When these three forces operate in sync instead of silos, they successfully translate policy into practice, converting economic knowledge into economic growth, environmental stewardship and real-world impact across Pakistan's maritime landscape.

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