

## **Pakistan's Maritime Sector: A Catalyst for Economic Growth and Prosperity**

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### **Abstract**

*The maritime sector is playing a vital role in the economic development of many countries across the globe. The trade of world is completely dependent on sea and it has also increased the importance of maritime sector in the globalized world. Maritime power is also a vital component of states' National Power. Pakistan has been blessed with more than 1000 Km coastline. Pakistan has amazing strategic location in Arabian Sea which can play a significant role in the economic development and the protection of maritime assets of Pakistan. Maritime components can be utilized to improve the economy of Pakistan. This article is intended to highlight the potentials and prospects of Maritime Power of Pakistan for its economic development.*  
**Keywords:** Maritime, Trade, National Power, Pakistan, Strategic location, Arabian Sea.

### **Introduction:**

Geographical Position, size of population, extent of territory, national character of state, ports and harbors are some components of national power. Maritime power is also a major component of state's national power. Navy, Security agency for maritime, coast guards and many other connected military assets are elements of military power (Mahan, 2020). The maritime power of a nation can't be determined by the armed forces and weapons only. The maritime power is dependent on merchant fleets, oceanographic fleets, fishing fleets, maritime outlook and traditions. Civil maritime activities have become a vital component in a state's capability to exercise its military power at sea (Gorshkov, 2013). USA, UK, France and many other states have utilized and benefitted from the sea resources, and they have become great powers of world (Anwar, 1999).

Maritime Power of a state has gained a lot of importance in the globalized world. Maritime power is deciding the fate of nations across the globe. New trade routes are boosting the economy of many countries as economic development is dependent on these trade routes. International trade routes are providing a new base to states' maritime power in the current century of globalization (Tangredi, 2002).

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Water covers almost 71 percent of the earth's total surface. Oceans, seas and inland waterways are of great significance for the survival of states in the globalized world. Oceans, seas and inland waterways are full of resources. They are also vital for economic development and growth because industry and trade completely depend on them. They are also important for the protection of environment too. These water resources also provide a base for marine sciences and leisure activities of many kinds along the coast (Gorshkov, 2013). Oceans and seas are full of resources, and their potentials are not fully utilized yet. The exploitation of all resources of oceans and seas to full extent needs more research and attention. The great significance of water resources has increased the importance of marine study. The scope of marine study has also been modified as the world is thinking of exploiting new resources. This will create many opportunities of development, and it will have financial, political, social and technological implications.

Sea is the cheapest, safest and efficient way of transportation and almost 90% of total international trade is carried out through sea. Pakistan's economy is completely dependent on sea trade and almost 95% of international trade is dependent on sea routes. The total volume of seaborne trade of Pakistan was 94.321 million tons in the year of 2020 (Kalim, 2020). Pakistan merchant ships are transporting only 5% of the total marine trade and country is spending in billions on cargo charges (Hussain, 2014). The strategic interests of Pakistan are also associated with maritime trade. The geostrategic interests of a state can also be determined by the scale of maritime dependence of that state. 36,000 ships are travelling annually from the Pakistan's area of interest (Hassan, 2014).

The world is focusing on discovering minerals like sulphur, manganese nodules, oil, gas, plankton and krill under the water. Marine technology is also modernizing rapidly to harness the resources of seas and oceans. The developed technology is helpful to explore the seabed. The advancement in diving equipment has made marine operations possible. The fishing industry has also been revolutionized.

Shipping industry has been equipped with latest facilities which are making the trade of fresh fruits and vegetables possible. Ships of various categories like oil and gas tankers, containers and car carriers as big as 600,000 tones dead weight are travelling daily in the seas and oceans. Large ships have draught of almost 15 m and there is need to establish new deep seaports. Modern ports are required to handle these large ships. There is need to develop up to date repair facilities near the ports. Coastal countries are using their beaches for tourism and recreation purposes. This is adding a handsome amount of revenue to the economy of these coastal countries. Ship-breaking is also an industry which can play a vital role in economic development and growth.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1- To highlight the importance of the Maritime Power of Pakistan.
- 2- To analyze the Potentials and Prospects of Maritime sector for the economic

development of Pakistan.

**Significance:**

This research article highlights the importance of Maritime Power of Pakistan. The maritime sector of Pakistan has much potential that can contribute in many ways in the economic progress of Pakistan. This research underscores the benefits that Pakistan can gain from maritime sector. This study has discussed the prospects of maritime power which are vital for the economic growth and development of Pakistan.

**Research Methodology:**

“Mixed Method Research (MMR)” has been used in this research article. Qualitative and Quantitative both approaches are combined in the Mixed Method Research. The relevant data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. The collected data has been analyzed and interpreted in the light of objectives of the research. The analysis of data has highlighted the related studies as well as filling the research gap.

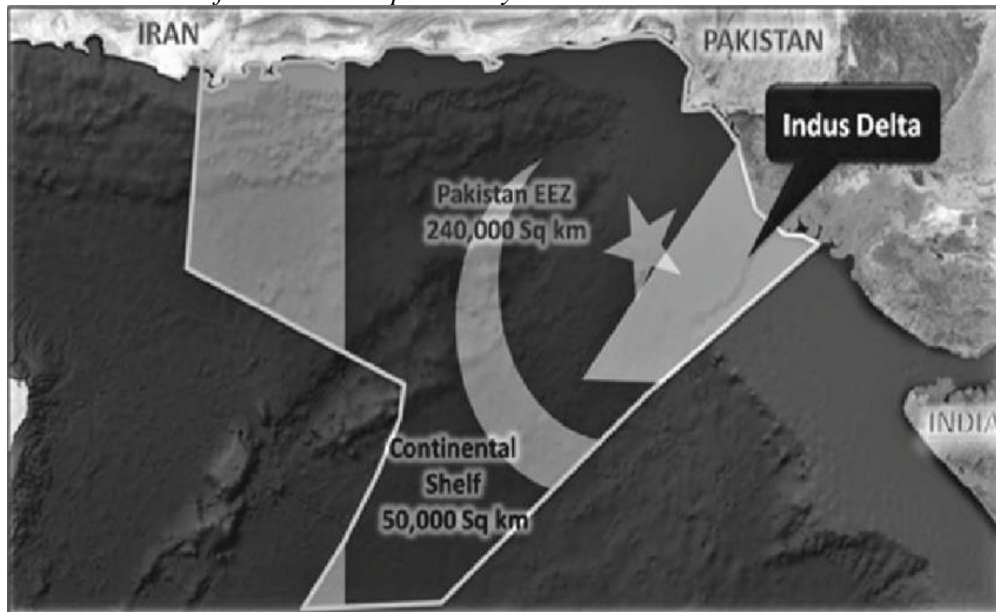
**Potentials and Prospects of Maritime Power of Pakistan**

**Pakistan’s Area of Maritime Responsibility:**

Pakistan has been blessed with more than 1000 KM long coast. This coast starts from Sir Creek in the Southeast and ends at Jiwani in the West with the Iranian border (Hafiz, 2017). Pakistan has Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 240,000 Square KM. EEZ extends up to 200 NM. Pakistan has extended continental shelf of 150 NM which is equivalent to 278 KM, and it is 50,000 Square KM. The total area is almost 290,000 Square KM (Syed, 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Pakistan’s Area of Maritime Responsibility*



**Note:** This image is adopted from “National Centre for Maritime Policy and Research (NCMPR) 2018”.

The development of maritime sector is very vital for the economic development and national security of a state. Pakistan is unable to exploit its marine resources effectively as a maritime state of South Asia. Pakistan didn't utilize the sea resources due to lack of attention which damaged the economic growth a lot. The development of maritime sector can boost the economic growth of Pakistan as it can diversify the economic base. The maritime sector has following prospects and potentials which are vital for the economic development of Pakistan.

### **Ports and Harbours:**

Ports and Harbours are the most important elements of Maritime power. It is the position on the coast where ships of all types can dock themselves. Ports are hub of trading activities, and it is considered the real pillar of economic progress of a country. Pakistan has following three main ports that are responsible for all commercial activities regarding exports and imports:

- 1- Karachi Port
- 2- Bin Qasim Port
- 3- Gwadar Port

### **1- Karachi Port:**

This port is functioning since 1887, and it is the oldest port of Pakistan. Karachi Port Trust (KPT) is managing this port. There is total 33 berths on Karachi port. 30 berths are used for dry cargo while the 3 berths are used for liquid cargo on this port. This port handled 55% of total cargo of Pakistan in the year of 2017-2018 (Sarfranz, 2020). KPT handled almost 55 million tons in 2017-2018.

### **2- Bin Qasim Port:**

This port is in Karachi and its construction was started in 1973. Port Qasim Authority (PQA) operates this port. There is total 18 berths on this port. The main aim behind the construction of this port was to provide iron ore for Karachi Steel Mills. It has the ability to handle all kinds of cargo. This port handled 45% of total cargo of Pakistan in 2017-18 which was almost 45 million tones (Sarfranz, 2020).

### **3- Gwadar Port:**

Gwadar is a deep sea port and its construction was started in 2002. It is 460 Km away from Karachi and it is in the south western province of Baluchistan. China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) has been given the control of this deep sea port for the 40 years. Gwadar port has geo-strategic significance which has given Pakistan geopolitical significance in the region. This port is located at the gate of Persian Gulf. This port is positioned at the mouth of famous Strait of Hormuz which is the main supply line of energy to the world. It is almost 180 NM away from Strait of Hormuz which is the most critical choke point of the world (Shahzad, 2019).

**Figure 2:** Location of Gwadar Port



**Note:** The image is adopted from Geo-Political Significance of Gwadar Port: Challenges and Prospects. *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses*, 4(1), 86-107.

Strait of Hormuz is a very important Energy Corridor because 15.5 million barrels of oil is passing daily from this Strait. Almost 20% of oil consumption of the world is flowing daily from the choke point of Strait of Hormuz and it means that Gwadar port is situated at the opening of energy corridor (Abraham, 2013). The location of Gwadar has strategic significance because it is sited among following three progressively significant areas of the world:

- 1- The Central Asian Republics (Blessed with abundant natural resources)
- 2- The Middle East (Very rich in oil reserves)
- 3- South Asia (The most thickly populated area of the world)

Both Central Asia and Middle East are famous in the world for having abundant natural resources and the port of Gwadar is positioned at the passage of these important areas. The position of Gwadar on the top point of North Arabian Sea is connecting it with China, Central Asia, Iran and South Asia. The geographical location of this deep sea port is also opening a new door which can connect it with Russia and Mongolia (Khetran, 2014).

The strategic significance of Gwadar port has increased the strategic depth of Pakistan. This port is farthest from eastern neighbour which has increased the strategic depth of Pakistan. This port is very close to important Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) which is helping Pakistan to observe and monitor the global SLOCs (Hussain, 2020). The amazing location of this deep sea port is offering Pakistan a natural protection and shield against the weather. This port is a new gateway to Central Asian Republics (CARs) as it is going to provide these republics the shortest access to warm water. This port has the potential to offer harbour services of various nature

to regional and extra regional players. This port is also going to provide the services of shipment, transshipment, showcasing of sea resources and storage to United Arab Emirates (UAE) and European Union (EU) (Malik, 2012).

“One Belt One Road” (OBOR) is a mega project that was announced by the government of China. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China (Lu, 2014). The project of Gwadar port has been included in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which has increased the importance of this port in the region. The competition of CPEC will make Gwadar port as an energy corridor for China. Gwadar port will become a mega port city of the world as many developments’ projects, special economic zones along with recreational programs are under the phase of completion after the introduction of mega project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

### **The prospects of Gwadar Port:**

Gwadar port is a mega project of ongoing development in Pakistan. The completion of this deep sea port will provide many financial benefits not only for Pakistan but for entire regional countries too. This port has the potential to act as a:

- Gwadar Port as a Transit Port
- Gwadar Port as a Trans-Shipment Port
- Gwadar Port as a Hub Port
- Gwadar Port as a Trade Corridor
- Gwadar Port as an Energy Corridor
- Gwadar Port as a new Gateway to Central Asia
- Gwadar Port as a domestic hub of trade activities

This deep sea port is also going to offer following services to regional countries in near future:

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| ▪ The facility of Storage            | ▪ Opportunities of Coastal employment          |
| ▪ Commercial Market                  | ▪ Trans-shipment                               |
| ▪ Openings for world’s manufacturing | ▪ Transportation                               |
| ▪ Center of Recreational activities  | ▪ Showcasing of Sea Resources of various kinds |

Gwadar Port can produce huge financial benefits for Pakistan due to its potentials. It is a new gateway which is going to provide shortest routes, regional connectivity and financials reward to the regional countries. A serious attention and practical steps from the officials of Pakistan’s governments are required to complete this mega project. This mega project is facing following challenges which should be addressed as soon as possible.

**Table 1: Challenges**

<b>Challenges</b>	
1. Competition of Gwadar Port with the developed ports of the region	2. Terrorism
3. Delay in the completion of Gwadar Port's infrastructure	4. Lack of management and technical capabilities
5. Sustain cooperative and supportive environment in the region	6. Convergent interests of regional and extra regional powers
7. Provision of basic facilities of life at Gwadar Port and city	8. Corruption
9. Security issue	10. Constitutional standing of Gilgit Baltistan
11. Need of political harmony among the provinces	12. Reservations of local Baluch community
13. Addressing the local stakeholders	14. Lack of resources
15. Operational capability of Gwadar Port	16. Harsh weather conditions during winter season
17. Existence of Extra Regional Forces (ERFs) in the region	18. Insufficient Academia Attention

### **Shipping Industry:**

Shipping has enormous potential that can contribute a lot in the economy of Pakistan. Pakistan has only one flag Carrier Company named Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC). This shipping company was established in 1963 and in 70s the shipping industry of Pakistan was at peak. In 1970s the Government of Pakistan took over the control of 10 companies that show the golden time of shipping industry in Pakistan. PNSC has the capacity of more than 50 ships which has been reduced to 12 vessels now which are of different type and size (Aalam, 2019).

**Table 2: PNSC Share in Pakistan Sea Trade, 2023-2024 (Million Tones)**

	<b>Year 2024</b>	<b>Year 2023</b>
<b>Pakistan Sea Trade</b>	96.37 MT	82.95 MT
<b>PNSC share</b>	9.94 MT	10.83 MT

**Source:** Annual Report, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC).

Pakistan National Shipping Corporation is lifting **10.31 %** of Pakistan's total sea born trade by volume. Pakistan National Shipping Corporation generated revenue of 29,994 million rupees in the year of 2022-23 (Syed, 2021).

Shipping industry has great financial potentials for public and private

companies in Pakistan. Pakistan is paying almost \$ 4-5 billion on annual basis as freight charges according to the reports of United Nations Convention on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The huge outflow is creating many issues of balance of payment for Pakistan. There is need to increase the number of vessels as well as the investment of public and private sector in the shipping industry. This will increase employment opportunities as well as add financial rewards to the economy of Pakistan. In such way the shipping industry can play a vital role in the growth of blue economy of Pakistan (Syed, 2021).

### **Fishing and Sea Food Industry:**

Sea food industry is playing a vital role in the economy of Pakistan. It is a large-scale industry which can contribute a lot to national GDP. It provides food to all the inhabitants of coastal areas as well as it is a major source of their livelihood. Sea food industry is employing almost one million people. There are many industries which are associated with sea food industries like ice factories, boat manufacturing and freezing sea food etc (Shah, 2018). Pakistan has a variety of marine fishes. This variety includes all types of Groupers, Pomfret, Barramundi, Mackerel, Red Snapper, Barracuda, Grunter, Cat fish, Rohu and Carp. Karachi fish harbor is holding 90% of total sea food catch and it is also managing 95% of total exports. Pakistan exported sea food of \$450 million in 2017-2018 (Askari, 2020).

Pakistan has 28<sup>th</sup> position in the products of fish industry in the world. Pakistan has the potentials to increase its sea food exports to \$2-2.5 billion annually. Low export quality, lack of basic facilities, bad transportation and unsuitable infrastructure at the harbor are the main reasons of low price of Pakistan's sea food in international market. The purchase price of Pakistan's fish is \$2.27-2.5/ Kg while the regional countries are selling their fish at \$7/ Kg in international market (Aalam, 2019).

Mostly the local fishermen in Pakistan are not educated and they are using old fishing techniques for catching fish. They are catching fish in the breeding season which is not legally allowed. They are harming the fishing industries, and it is a main reason for the depletion of aquaculture. The preservation of caught sea food and its arrangements for export is a complete process. Special care and attention are required to maintain the freshness of caught sea food. A uniform cold chain system is the requirement of tropical countries like Pakistan from harvesting to marketing. A special concentration from government authorities is required to satisfy the foreign importers of sea food from Pakistan. Plausible measures can increase the export of sea food and play a positive role in the economic growth and development of Pakistan (Sarfraz, 2020).

### **Ship Breaking:**

Ship breaking is a process of recycling which is also known as ship demolition. Ship breaking has gained a status of industry in the world. It provides cheap steel which is mainly used in infrastructure construction. Ship demolition is also a source of raw material as it provides steel which is also used in making ships. The sector of ship breaking is contributing to the maritime economy of Pakistan. This



industry is also paying a handsome amount of taxes to government authorities. The ship breaking industry is a labor intensive sector and there is involvement of direct and indirect labor in this sector (Syed, 2021).

Gadani ship breaking yard is in Baluchistan. It has 10 KM long beachfront which consists of 132 ship plots. Gadani is an ideal beach because of its topography for ship breaking. The deep sea approaches give amazing edge to this yard over the other ship breaking yards where the ships must wait for weeks and in many cases for months due to flooding, tidal conditions and ebbing. The firm sand at Gadani ship breaking yard is very helpful for the ship because they can be shore without any difficulty. Gadani was the largest ship breaking yard in the world in 1980s and 30,000 workers were directly employed in this sector. Almost half a million people earned their indirect living from this industry in 1969-1983. It is considered the golden era of ship breaking sector in Pakistan (Sarfraz, 2020). The better facilities in Chittagong (Bangladesh) and Alang (India) has increased the competition of ship breaking industry in the South Asia.

**Table 3: Reported Tonnage Sold for Demolition, 2018 (Thousand Gross Tons)**

	Bangladesh	India	Pakistan	Turkey	China	World total	Percentage
Oil tankers	5 989	1 946	2 824	66	14	10 884	59.5
Bulk carriers	1 115	465	829	18	53	2 495	13.6
General cargo ships	127	149	57	65	5	405	2.2
Container ships	620	402	38	54	152	1 284	7.0
Gas carriers	347	455	48	3	97	951	5.2
Chemical tankers	43	167	28	28	2	268	1.5
Offshore vessels	181	581	72	143	30	1 156	6.3
Ferries and passenger ships	..	171	..	14	..	185	1.0
Other	210	353	47	29	5	673	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 632</b>	<b>4 690</b>	<b>3 943</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>18 300.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>100</b>	

**Source:** Clarksons Research.

South Asia is currently the global center of ship breaking and recycling industry in the world. Bangladesh is currently leading the ship breaking industry of world. Bangladesh, India and Pakistan account for 70-80% of total recycling market of world for different ocean going vessels. China and Turkey have covered the remaining market share of ship breaking industry. The rest of world outside above five countries is scrapping almost 5% of global volume.

The ship breaking industry at Gadani is under recession and only 6000 workers are directly employed now. The government of Pakistan is not recognizing this sector as an industry. The recognition of this sector as an industry is the need of the hour (Sarfranz, 2020). The provision of basic facilities can make this sector active which can play a vital role in the growth of Pakistan's economy. The labor working at ship breaking yard is facing many hazards which demand the implementation of safety and environmental laws by the government of Pakistan. Ships with high Sulphur will not be able to obey the changing fuels requirements according to

International Maritime Organization (IMO) which is creating a new opportunity for the ship breaking industry of Pakistan because these ships will be available for scrap in near future. Special government attention and comprehensive policy is needed to increase the financial benefits of this industry in Pakistan (Syed, 2021).

### **Maritime Tourism:**

Tourism is rewarding a lot of financial benefits to many island and coastal states of the world. Maldives is a small country of South Asia which is earning a lot of revenue from tourism, fishing and shipping. This small state is a perfect example of generating revenue from Tourism. The industry of tourism is contributing almost 30% to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of Maldives. The contribution of tourism is almost 60% of foreign currency earning for Maldives. According to the reports of Tourism Ministry of Maldives almost 1.7 million tourists visited Maldives in 2019 (Sarfraz, 2020).

Maritime Tourism can produce many financial profits for Pakistan. The subject of Maritime Tourism needs serious consideration, and it will provide many opportunities for earnings for the local population of coastal areas. The operational status of coastal highways is offering a green signal to tourism in the coastal areas. Coastal Highway provides the basic transportation facilities. There are many spots for maritime tourism along the coast in Pakistan.

For example, Gwadar has great appeal for tourism in the region. The historical importance of Gwadar can project Pakistan's image to the international tourist community. The passengers' traffic will be enlarged in Gwadar after the connectivity of this city with the other cities of Pakistan through the network of roads and railway. It will attract tourists from neighboring countries like China, Iran, Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan (Afridi, 2016).

Only Gwadar has great attraction for tourism due to following sites:

- |                           |                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| ➤ Deserts                 | ➤ Gwadar Cricket Stadium     |
| ➤ Nesting beaches         | ➤ World War-II mud-air-strip |
| ➤ Historic Shahi Bazar    | ➤ Koh-e-Batil                |
| ➤ Hammerhead              | ➤ Marine drive               |
| ➤ Golden beaches          | ➤ Green turtle               |
| ➤ Archeological sites     | ➤ Princess of Hope           |
| ➤ Hill stations           | ➤ Astola Island              |
| ➤ Gwadar Sunset View Park | ➤ Mud volcanoes              |
| ➤ Hangol National Park    | ➤ Pishukan Town              |
| ➤ Rani Mandars            | ➤ Abode of Hindu goddess     |

The whole coast is full of sightseeing places and picnic spots. Sunny and sandy beaches positioned along the coast can attract tourists from all over the world. Scuba diving along with many other water sports can be a major attraction in the coastal areas. Exclusive beaches and Sea cruises for the international tourists can also be arranged to promote maritime tourism in Pakistan. Deep Sea fishing can be

organized as a sport in coastal areas during the fishing seasons.

Initially the government can develop Gwadar, Pasni and Ormara for tourism purposes because these cities are reasonable developed cities on the coast (Sarfraz, 2020). Special government attention is required to construct special resorts, parks, hotels, sports ground, shopping malls. The Ministry of Tourism can play a vital role in the promotion of tourism at local and international level which will result in many financial rewards to Pakistan. The provision of basic recreational facilities is a prerequisite for Maritime Tourism in the coastal region of Pakistan.

### **Offshore Resources:**

Makran and Indus basin are the two important offshore areas of Pakistan. Indus basin is the world's second largest basin. These offshore basins have the potential of many valuable resources. There is a need to exploit the hydrocarbon resources in above two basins. The surveys of Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) show that the offshore areas of Pakistan hold promising potentials for the discoveries of hydrocarbons. The survey of National Institute of Oceanography (NIO) reveals that Pakistan has amazing reserves of Methane gas. According to this survey Pakistan is included in top 7 countries of world that has abundant resources of methane gas (Humayun, 2014).

The coastal area of Pakistan is also wealthy in living and mineral resources. Arabian Sea has abundant marine vegetation which can play a vital role in the economic prosperity of Pakistan. The anticipated value of marine vegetation is almost 112 tons / hectare (Humayun, 2014). The seabed plants have amazing export value in the world. These plants can be used in medicine as well as they are used as a food universally. There is a need to explore and exploit the offshore resources of Pakistan. Government attention can attract private investment in the exploitation of these valuable resources.

### **Ship Building and Ship Maintenance:**

Ship building and ship maintenance is another sector which can produce many financial benefits to the economy of a state. Facilities of ship repair and maintenance are the main requirements of shippers near the ports. Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KSEW) is the only commercial shipyard in Karachi which was established in 1957. Almost 3000 employees are working at KSEW in different categories. This ship yard has been designing ship for many countries like UAE, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Belgium. KSEW has designed almost 448 ships for many countries by May, 2019 (Sarfraz, 2020).

This ship yard is not suitable for the handling of the large ships because the facilities are limited there. The limited facilities are acting as a hurdle in the way of this industry. There is a need to build another shipyard which should have all the facilities for all kinds of ships near the port. The Government is also thinking of building a ship yard at Gwadar which is a good step to promote this sector. This will produce job opportunities for the local inhabitants of Baluchistan. It will provide the facility of docking, maintenance and repair apart from ship building to the local as well as foreign ships (Askari, 2020).

## **Conclusion:**

Oceans and seas contain abundant natural resources and their potentials are not fully exploited yet. Maritime power is a very important constituent of states' National Power. The maritime sector is playing an essential part in the economic growth and development of many states across the globe. The economic development of Pakistan is dependent on the exploitation of its sea resources. Ports and harbours, shipping, fishing and sea food, ship breaking, maritime tourism, ship building and maintenance and offshore resources have lot of potentials that can contribute a lot in the economic development of Pakistan. The utilization of all sea resources of Pakistan to full extent needs more research and government attention. The government of Pakistan must bring public and private investment in maritime sector to exploit the sea resources which will provide financial rewards for the whole nation. In this regard, government can offer many incentives to the business community to invest in the sector.

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