

Minutes of Meeting – Mar 2023

MRC Research Advisory Board (RAB)/01-23

The Maritime Research Center (MRC), Pune conducted an interaction and public outreach for the Research Advisory Board (RAB) members in Mar 2023. The meeting was conducted in the sidelines of the three-week workshop conducted at Pune for evolving an institutionalized mechanism for enhancement of skilling to progress the Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) framework in the tropical waters of the Indo-Pacific and beyond. The following RAB members attended the event:

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|-----|---------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| (a) | Dr. Satheesh Shenoi | - | Attended Virtually |
| (b) | Prof. Radhika Seshan | - | Attended Physically |
| (c) | Dr. (Cmde) Somen Banerjee | - | Attended Physically |
| (d) | Prof Varsha Kelkar Mane | - | Unable to attend (Illness) |
| (e) | Dr. R Vijay Kumar | - | Attended Physically |
| (f) | Dr. (Cdr) Arnab Das | - | Attended |

In addition to the RAB members, multiple other advisors of MRC and domain experts attended the workshop from across the world and gave their guidance to progress the UDA framework. The [report on the workshop](#) and its proceedings are available at the MRC website.

The aim of the workshop was to make a broad evaluation of the gaps in policy, technology and acoustic capacity & capability at a global, regional, national and local levels. The three weeks of the workshop were divided into three phases.

Policy Intervention

This phase had speakers from the global, regional, national and local levels to understand the policy gaps across multiple levels. Even the awareness gaps were highlighted by each and every speaker. The platform also brought together experts, strategists, practitioners and communities from diverse disciplines, entities and geographic locations to interact and deliberate on this all-important topic.

Technology Intervention

Policy has to be driven by sound technology & knowhow. The second phase brought together technologists and practitioners from diverse domains to interact and identify the gaps. Digital transformation in the underwater domain was the key focus.

Community Interaction

Policy & technology has to be relevant to the real-world ground realities. The third phase was conducted in the Konkan Coast with the local coastal communities and practitioners in the field. The MRC team was extremely pleased to find the overwhelming participation by the communities and practitioners on the ground. However, there was a disturbing fact that these people are far removed from the global and national policy priorities.

The RAB members and other advisors were unanimous in their instructions that there is a massive awareness gap and disconnect among the policy makers, stakeholders and practitioners about the UDA framework and its relevance to the governance mechanism. They were convinced that the UDA framework has to be fast tracked to achieve the objectives of the geopolitical and geostrategic priorities like the SAGAR vision of the Honourable Prime Minister. India's economic growth and prosperity along with the strategic security concerns can only be realized with effective implementation of the UDA framework across all the stakeholders, namely national security, blue economy, environment, disaster & climate change risk management and science & technology. They applauded the comprehensive and inclusive approach by MRC driven by the UDA framework.

The RAB formalized a three-step approach:

Outreach

The awareness gap needs to be bridged with massive and structured sensitization initiatives like workshops, seminars, short courses and more. Policy makers, stakeholders, practitioners, academia, researchers and more need to be reached out and made aware.

Engage

The gains of the outreach initiative, has to be institutionalized with comprehensive and inclusive engagement. The students and young professionals need to be brought under a UDA fellowship program of varied duration to enhance their knowledge and skilling levels, so that they can be part of the growth journey. The policy makers and stakeholders need to be engaged with specific MoU on issues of their relevance. The policy makers and stakeholders could also participate in the UDA fellowship program and recruit their next generation of leaders and practitioners from these fellows.

Sustain

With the supply (skilled and knowledgeable human resource) and demand (policy & stakeholder requirement) sorted out, we need to build formalized and sustainable policy and technology intervention mechanisms. Frameworks need to be formalized along with the technology infrastructure. Funding and research priorities need to be restructured appropriately.

The RAB reviewed the existing activities at MRC and NDT and expressed their satisfaction at the progress made. They advised that the Public Relation (PR) mechanism needs to be stepped up to position MRC appropriately among the top institutions to drive the [Blue Economy and Strategic Security research activities](#), not just for India but also across the tropical region, covering Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond.

The RAB was also briefed on the MRC activities in the last two quarters. MRC informed them that the formalized and structured recording of the activities is done through the quarterly [UDA Newsletters](#).

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Dr. (Cdr) Arnab Das

Director, MRC