

A Legacy Flourishing from
Bangabandhu's

**Territorial Waters &
Maritime Zones Act 1974 to
Blue Economy**

**A New Era of
Integration**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Visit to
Thailand and Maritime Bangladesh

The Emergence of MIDI
is a Potential Game Changer in Regional Connectivity

CPA News

A Quarterly Publication of
Chittagong Port Authority



Editorial

A Golden Jubilee and a Look to the Horizon: Bangladesh's Maritime Future

This quarter's issue of CPA News marks a momentous occasion – the 50th anniversary of the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act of 1974. This cornerstone legislation, championed by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, laid the groundwork for Bangladesh's maritime ambitions. A grand celebration at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre reaffirmed the critical role the maritime sector plays in the nation's development strategy. We are reminded in this Lead Story, "A Legacy Flourishing from Bangabandhu's Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974 to Blue Economy," of Bangabandhu's visionary leadership and its lasting impact on the development of a robust blue economy in Bangladesh.

Looking ahead, the Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Development Initiative (MIDI) promises to be a meaningful change for regional connectivity. Strategically positioned in Cox's Bazar, this economic corridor is poised to become a hub for trade and intercommunication in the Bay of Bengal, fostering closer ties between Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, and Nepal. As detailed in our Horizon piece, "The Emergence of MIDI is a Potential Game Changer in Regional Connectivity," the MIDI corridor is more than just economic opportunity; it signifies a significant shift in the region's geopolitical landscape, promoting integration and infrastructural development.

On the diplomatic front, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visit to Thailand signifies a new era of partnership. This first visit by a Bangladeshi Prime Minister in over two decades strengthens longstanding ties and paves the way for broader regional integration with ASEAN countries. Bangladesh, with its strategic location, has the potential to serve as a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Increased investment, trade flows, cultural exchanges, and technical cooperation are all expected outcomes of this strengthened relationship, as discussed in our Perspective article, "A New Era of Integration: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Visit to Thailand and Maritime Bangladesh."

The visit also highlighted the development of Bangladesh's coastal tourism sector and the potential for free trade with Thailand. Sustainable development of this sector holds promise for the nation's blue economy, promoting poverty reduction, environmental protection, and responsible use of coastal resources. Furthermore, the signing of a letter of intent to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) signals a commitment to boosting trade between the two nations.

As we navigate the exciting future of Bangladesh's maritime space, do not forget to explore our "News Bytes" section for industry updates and insightful developments. We value your feedback – share your thoughts and suggestions on how we can improve CPA News and continue to be your trusted source for maritime knowledge. Thank you for joining us on this journey!

Chief Adviser

Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail
OSP, NUP, PPM, psc

Editor

Md. Habibur Rahman

Board of Editorial

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Executive Editor

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Contributors

Enamul Karim
Qazi Meraz Uddin Arif

Reporter

Omar Faroque Emon

Managing Editor

Monir H Khan

Public Relation

A.N.M Faruk Hossain Chowdhury
Mohammad Tareq

Photography

SM Shamsul Huda

Design & DTP

Toufique Ahmed
Abida Hafsa
Mahmud Hossain Prince
Mirza Nayeem Oliullah

Production Logistics

Habibur Rahman, Alia Ferdoushi
On behalf of CPA

Content Development, Writing, Editing, Design & Publication:

ENLIGHTEN | VIBES

House 06, Road 03, Sector 05
Uttara, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh.
Tel: +880 02-48956748
Email: enlightenvibes@gmail.com

Editorial Communique

CPA News

Chittagong Port Authority
Bandar bhaban, Chattogram
Tel: 02-333330869
Email: bandarbarta@gmail.com



Lead Story

A Legacy Flourishing from Bangabandhu's Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974 to Blue Economy

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The Emergence of MIDI is a Potential Game Changer in Regional Connectivity



Shift your focus to the Bay of Bengal and explore the transformative potential of the Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Development Initiative (MIDI). This economic corridor promises to revolutionize regional connectivity for Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, and Nepal.

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Perspective

A New Era of Integration Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Visit to Thailand and Maritime Bangladesh



Join us on a diplomatic journey as we analyse the recent visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Thailand. This strategic move signifies a new chapter in regional integration and paves the way for enhanced collaboration with ASEAN nations. Discover how this visit strengthens ties, fosters trade, and unlocks opportunities for maritime tourism and the Blue Economy.

A Legacy Flourishing from Bangabandhu's Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974 to Blue Economy

CPA News desk

**Celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the
Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act 1974**

In a momentous event held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC), Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attended the golden jubilee celebration of the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974, a cornerstone legislation enacted by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The event was organised successfully by Bangladesh Navy. State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury chaired the programme, highlighting the critical role of the maritime sector in Bangladesh's national development strategy.

The Event as a Catalyst for Growth

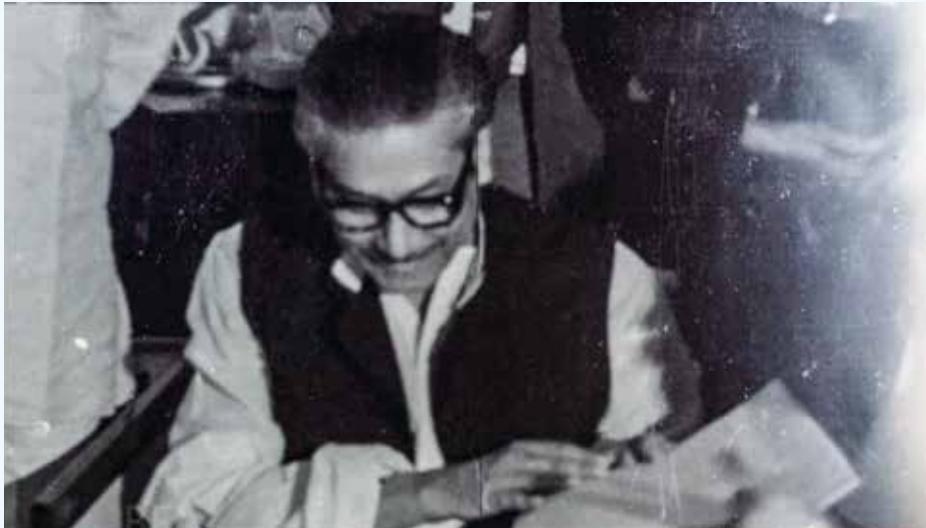
Prime Minister Hasina's address lauded the enduring significance of the Act. It transcended being a mere legal document; it served as a catalyst for Bangladesh's maritime ambitions. She emphasised how Bangabandhu, with remarkable foresight, recognised the Bay of Bengal's potential not just as a historical trade route but as a treasure trove of resources waiting to be tapped. The Act established a legal framework for the exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of these resources, paving the way for the sustainable development of the maritime sector.

Peaceful Cooperation for Shared Prosperity

The Prime Minister underscored the importance of peaceful cooperation in using the Bay of Bengal's resources. Her remarks went beyond simply acknowledging the region's long history of shared trade. They offered a glimmer of hope for continued peaceful co-existence in a world increasingly witnessing maritime disputes. By emphasising the need to maintain this peaceful environment for international trade to flourish, Prime Minister Hasina positioned Bangladesh as a champion for regional stability and a responsible stakeholder in the Bay of Bengal.

Securing Rights and Resources

Prime Minister Hasina addressed Bangladesh's successful legal battles with Myanmar and India in international courts



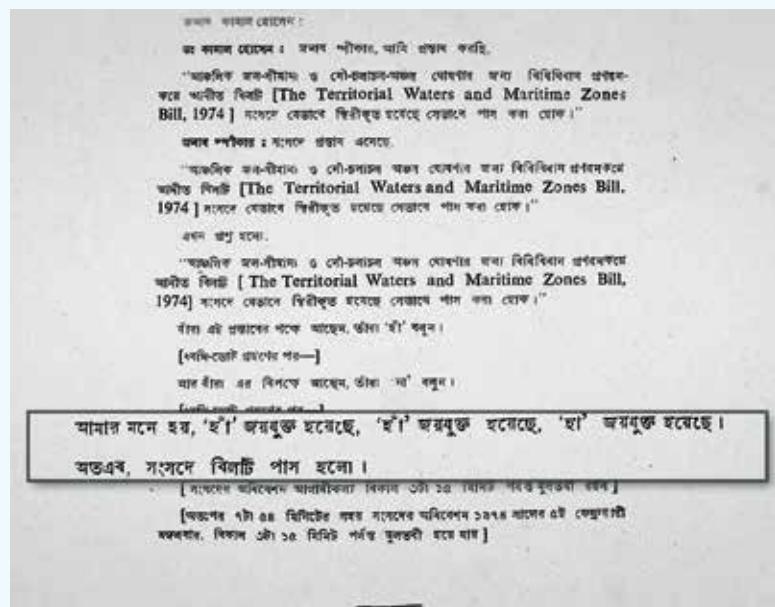
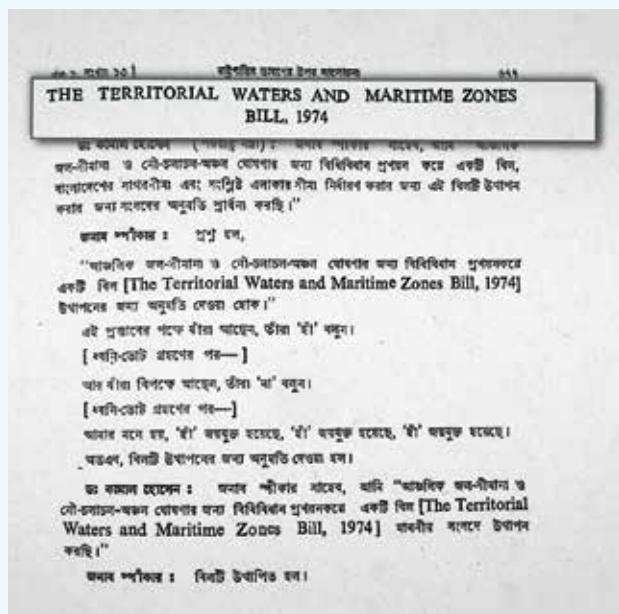
With courage and foresight, he embarked on and executed a variety of initiatives aimed at the development of marine resources. He is none other than the architect of the Maritime Vision, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

(2012 and 2014), securing the nation's rights to vast maritime areas and resources. These victories not only bolstered Bangladesh's maritime claims but also sent a powerful message to the international community. It demonstrated the effectiveness of international law in resolving maritime disputes and served as a precedent for other developing nations seeking to secure their maritime rights.

Building on Bangabandhu's Vision

The Prime Minister detailed her government's multifaceted approach to

realising Bangabandhu's vision, extending far beyond simply enforcing legal rights. Strengthening the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard ensures the nation's ability to safeguard these maritime areas from threats like piracy and illegal fishing. Establishment of research institutes dedicated to maximising the utilisation of marine resources signifies a commitment to scientific exploration and innovation in fields like marine biology, oceanography, and renewable energy. This focus on research and development ensures the long-term sustainability of Bangladesh's maritime endeavours.



The Parliament passed the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974, in compliance with Clause 2 of Article 143 of the Constitution



The Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the 'Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974'.

Blue Economy and Skilled Human Resources

Recognising the importance of skilled workforce in harnessing the potential of the Blue Economy, Prime Minister Hasina highlighted the establishment of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Marine University and a dedicated marine institute. These institutions go beyond simply producing graduates; they create a skilled workforce equipped to manage ports, operate complex vessels, conduct marine research, and develop innovative

technologies – all crucial elements for propelling Bangladesh towards becoming a maritime leader. This investment in human capital ensures Bangladesh can effectively participate in the burgeoning Blue Economy, encompassing sustainable practices across various marine sectors.

A Reiterated Commitment to Sonar Bangla

Prime Minister Hasina reiterated her unwavering commitment to transforming Bangladesh into a developed, prosperous,

and smart nation by 2041, free from poverty and hunger. She emphasised the importance of fulfilling the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a dream with the Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act serving as a cornerstone. The Act not only secured Bangladesh's maritime rights but also laid the foundation for a future where the nation leverages its maritime resources for economic prosperity and social development.

A Celebration of Achievements and a Call to Action

The event featured a keynote speech delivered by Rear Admiral (Retd) Md Khurshed Alam, Secretary (maritime affairs unit) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His speech delved into the intricate legal battles and diplomatic negotiations that secured Bangladesh's maritime claims. Additionally, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan delivered the welcome address, highlighting the commitment of the Bangladesh Navy to safeguarding the nation's maritime interests. A special audio-visual documentary screened at the event commemorated the golden jubilee of the Act, serving as a powerful reminder of Bangabandhu's vision and the noteworthy progress made in realising it. The programme itself was not just a celebration; it was a call to action for continued collaboration and innovation to ensure Bangladesh thrives as a maritime nation in the years to come.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited the stalls at the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 'Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974'.



Challenges and Opportunities: Charting a Course for the Future

While Bangladesh has made significant strides in its maritime journey, challenges remain. These include:

1. Pollution and Environmental Degradation:

Degradation: Marine pollution from land-based sources and increased shipping traffic pose a threat to the delicate ecosystem of the Bay of Bengal. Sustainable practices and stricter regulations are crucial to ensure the long-term health of the marine environment.

2. Climate Change: Rising sea levels and changing weather patterns could impact Bangladesh's coastlines and marine resources. Adaptation strategies and disaster preparedness plans are essential to mitigate these risks.

3. Technological Advancements:

The maritime sector is undergoing rapid technological transformation, with advancements in automation and digitalisation. Investing in research and development to keep pace with these advancements will be critical for Bangladesh to maintain its competitive edge.

Despite these challenges, exciting opportunities lie ahead:

1. Emerging Technologies: Advanced technologies like underwater drones and big data analytics can revolutionise marine resource exploration, management, and



In the grandeur of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 'Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974', the Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina graced the event with her esteemed presence. Not just one, but she embarked on an exploratory journey, visiting not one but multiple stalls, each echoing the maritime legacy of Bangladesh

conservation. Embracing these technologies will unlock new possibilities for Bangladesh's maritime sector.

2. Coastal and Marine Tourism: The Bay of Bengal boasts stunning natural beauty and rich biodiversity. Developing sustainable marine tourism practices can attract eco-tourists and generate revenue for coastal communities.

3. Renewable Energy: The Bay of Bengal has immense potential for harnessing renewable energy sources like wind and wave power. Investing in offshore wind farms and other renewable energy projects can diversify Bangladesh's energy mix and contribute to a greener future. A huge demand for electricity in coastal areas can be met with alternative renewable energy.

Sheikh Hasina, the Honourable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest and delivered an inspiring speech





Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the 'Territorial Waters and Maritime Zones Act, 1974'

A Collective Endeavour for a Sustainable Future

The maritime vision of Bangladesh is a testament to the enduring legacy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the continued leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Realising this vision requires a collective effort from various stakeholders, including:

1. Government: Continued investment in infrastructure, research and development, and capacity building is crucial. Enacting and enforcing strong regulations to protect the marine environment will also be essential.

2. Private Sector: Private companies can play a vital role in developing the maritime sector by investing in shipbuilding, port facilities, and marine-based industries. Adopting sustainable practices will be key to ensuring long-term success.

3. Civil Society: Raising awareness about the importance of the maritime sector and advocating for responsible resource management is crucial. Civil society organisations can also play a role in promoting sustainable fishing practices and coastal community development.

Looking Beyond the Horizon

Bangladesh's maritime vision extends beyond its own borders. Effective regional and global cooperation will be vital for ensuring the long-term sustainability and security of the Bay of Bengal. Here are some key areas for collaboration:

1. Joint Marine Resource Management: Collaborating with neighbouring countries on managing shared fish stocks and preventing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing is crucial for maintaining the ecological health of the Bay of Bengal.

2. Coastal and Maritime Security: Cooperation on maritime security issues like piracy, armed robbery, and human trafficking can ensure the safety of navigation and protect vital sea lanes. Combined naval patrols and information sharing are essential measures.

3. Scientific Research: Sharing research findings and collaborating on oceanographic studies can lead to a better understanding of the Bay of Bengal's ecosystem and the potential impacts of climate change. Joint research efforts can foster innovation and expedite solutions to shared challenges.

4. Blue Economy Partnerships:

Collaboration with developed nations and international organisations can provide access to innovative technologies, expertise, and financing to support sustainable development initiatives within the Blue Economy framework.

By actively engaging in regional and global forums, Bangladesh can position itself as a leader in advocating for responsible ocean governance and promoting the Blue Economy.

A Legacy for Future Generations

The story of Bangladesh's maritime vision is one of remarkable foresight, unwavering commitment, and continuous progress. From the visionary act enacted by Bangabandhu to the ambitious Blue Economy initiatives championed by Prime Minister Hasina, Bangladesh has charted a course towards a brighter maritime future. The journey is far from over, but the foundation has been laid. By embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and navigating challenges with foresight, Bangladesh can ensure that the Bay of Bengal becomes not just a source of economic prosperity but also a symbol of its maritime leadership and a legacy for future generations. ▲

The Emergence of MIDI

is a Potential Game Changer in Regional Connectivity

CPA News desk

The Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Development Initiative (MIDI), an economic corridor currently under implementation, is poised to transform the landscape of regional connectivity in the Bay of Bengal. Situated in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, this corridor is strategically positioned to serve as a hub of intercommunication among the countries of the Bay of Bengal region, including Bangladesh, India, Bhutan, and Nepal.

The MIDI corridor is more than just a conduit for trade and commerce; it represents a significant shift in the geopolitical dynamics of the region. The development of this corridor is part of a broader trend

of economic integration and infrastructural development that is reshaping the geopolitical landscape of the Bay of Bengal.

The Maheshkhali-Matarbari area, where the corridor is being developed, is already home to significant infrastructural projects, such as the Matarbari coal-fired power plant. This 1.2GW project, developed by the Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh, is a testament to the region's growing importance in energy production.

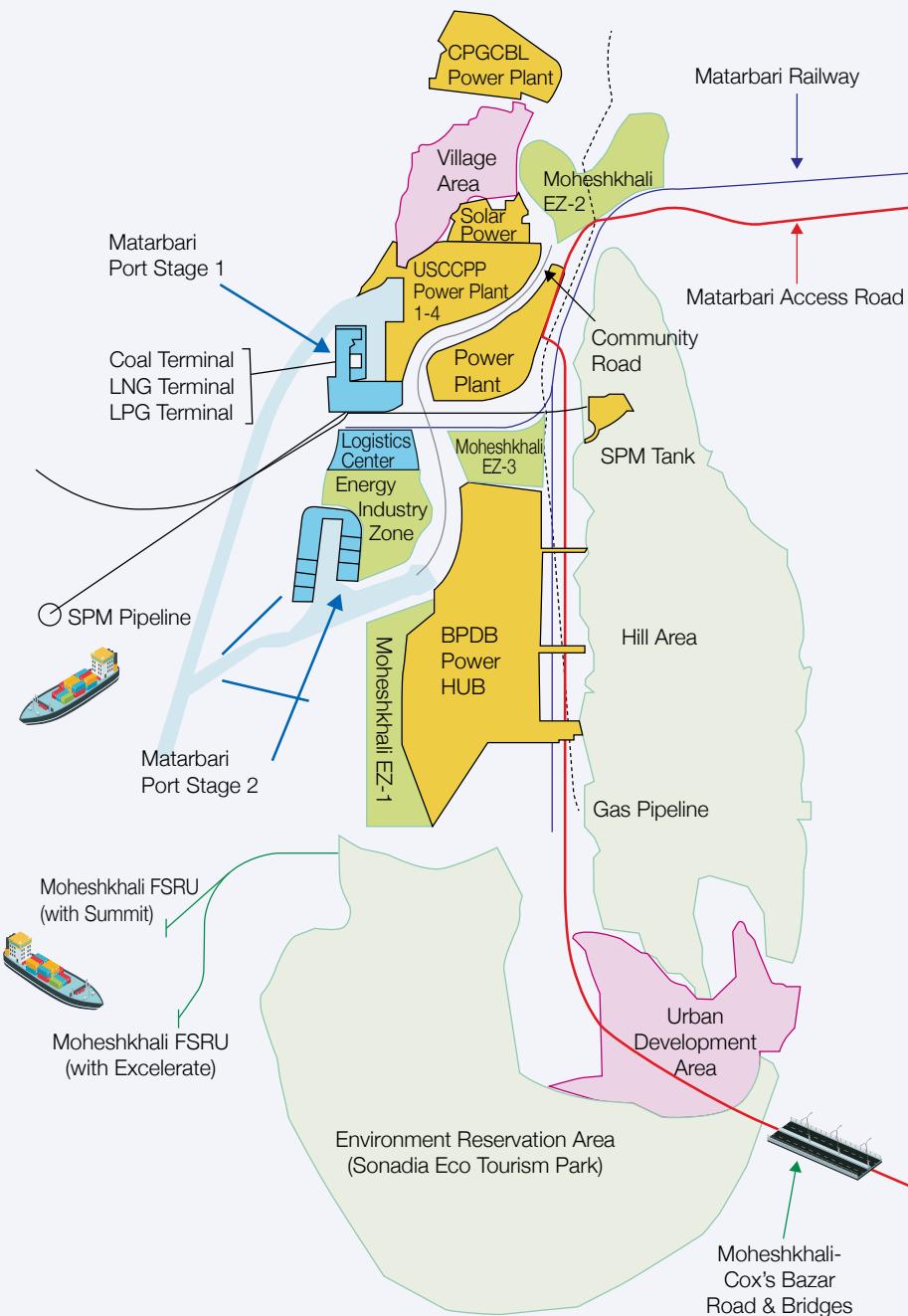
Moreover, the Matarbari Port, a deep-sea port under construction, is set to bolster the region's connectivity by facilitating the import of coal required for the power plant.

This port, along with the economic corridor, is expected to enhance the region's capacity to engage in international trade.

The MIDI corridor's potential to be a 'game changer' lies in its ability to enhance connectivity among neighbouring countries. By fostering economic integration and facilitating trade, the corridor could significantly boost the region's economic growth.

However, the corridor's impact extends beyond economics. The Bay of Bengal region is becoming increasingly significant in global geopolitics, particularly within the context of the emerging Indo-Pacific





A map of Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI)

framework³⁴. The development of the MIDI corridor in this strategic location underscores its potential role in shaping the geopolitical dynamics of the region.

The Seminar on Multidirectional Communication in the Bay of Bengal region

This importance of multidirectional communication in the Bay of Bengal region was a key topic at a seminar hosted by the

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) on March 10, 2024. Held at the Japanese Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital, the event brought together Ambassador IWAMA Kiminori of Japan and High Commissioner Prannoy Verma of India for a discussion on various aspects of regional communication. IWAMA Kiminori, the Ambassador to Japan, and Prannoy Verma, the Indian High Commissioner, delivered speeches, while CPD's Executive Director Fahmida Khatun presided over the event.

Setting the Stage for Cooperation

The CPD seminar commenced with opening remarks from various dignitaries. Among them, Japanese Ambassador IWAMA Kiminori highlighted the importance of regional cooperation. His statement underscores a key reality: when countries in a region work together, everyone benefits. Increased cooperation fosters economic growth, facilitates knowledge sharing, and strengthens regional security. In the context of the India-Bangladesh relationship, Japan's endorsement of regional cooperation serves as a timely reminder of the broader benefits that can accrue from closer ties between India and Bangladesh.

A Compelling Vision for the 'Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI)

On behalf of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Ichiguchi Tomohide, the chief representative, presented a compelling vision for the 'Maheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI)'. This ambitious project goes beyond just a deep-sea port at Matarbari. JICA sees it as a catalyst for creating a full-fledged economic zone.

The vision extends to establishing three key hubs in the region:

1. Logistics Hub: The deep-sea port at Matarbari will be central to this hub. With its superior draft, it will handle larger cargo ships, significantly boosting Bangladesh's trade capacity and potentially making it a regional logistics centre.

2. Power and Energy Hub: This hub could see the development of new power plants, potentially including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals. This would not only provide much-needed power for Bangladesh's growing economy but also position the country as a potential energy exporter in the region.

3. Industrial Hub: The improved connectivity and access to power created by MIDI could attract significant industrial investment. This has the potential to create new jobs, boost manufacturing, and further propel Bangladesh's economic growth.

A Framework for Enhancing Regional Cooperation Around the Bay of Bengal

Syed Yusuf Sadat, a researcher at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), presented a framework for enhancing regional

cooperation around the Bay of Bengal. He identified six key priorities:

1. Transport and Connectivity: Upgrading infrastructure, including roads, railways, waterways, and potentially a high-speed rail network, is crucial for smoother movement of goods and people across the region.

2. Cultural Connections: Promoting cultural exchange through art, film festivals, and educational programs can foster understanding and collaboration.

3. Information Technology (IT): Investing in digital infrastructure and IT skills development will facilitate communication, e-commerce, and knowledge sharing within the region.

4. Free Trade Area (FTA): Establishing a free trade agreement among Bay of Bengal nations could significantly boost regional trade by reducing tariffs and creating a more integrated market.

5. Foreign Investment: Attracting foreign investment through streamlined regulations and a business-friendly environment is essential for developing industries and infrastructure.

6. Infrastructure Development: Investments in power grids, communication networks, and logistics facilities will create a solid foundation for regional economic growth.

Sadat further emphasised that increased investment in trade and IT can transform the Bay of Bengal region into a “supply hub” for a wide range of products, from raw materials to finished goods. This could significantly



Japan's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Iwama Kiminori, and ERD Secretary Sharifa Khan signed the 7th tranche of the Matarbari power project loan agreement. JICA's Chief Representative, Ichiguchi Tomohide, was also present at the event in Dhaka.

boost regional economic activity and create new job opportunities.

Examples of Sub-Regional Development

Professor Kemmei Tsubota of Toyo University offered a successful example of sub-regional development by highlighting the Mekong River Delta. China, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos have achieved noteworthy progress in

agriculture, industry, and urbanisation by collaborating on projects focused on the Mekong River. This collaboration serves as a model for Bay of Bengal nations to consider when fostering regional cooperation.

Pivotal Role of Bangladesh in Regional Communication

Shahidul Haque, who previously served as Bangladesh's foreign secretary, underscored the nation's pivotal role in regional

An illustration depicts the Matarbari port complex in Bangladesh, supported by Japan, upon its completion. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has ambitions to establish a regional “industrial value chain”, with India's collaboration as well.





On 8 September 2023, Prime Ministers Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and Narendra Modi of India are pictured at a meeting in New Delhi, India, discussing potential opportunities via CEPA

communication. This claim is substantiated by two primary factors: Bangladesh's strategic geographical positioning and its remarkable economic advancement.

From a geographical perspective, Bangladesh occupies a unique position that establishes it as a natural conduit between South Asia and Southeast Asia. It shares terrestrial borders with India and Myanmar, and maritime boundaries with three significant ports in the Bay of Bengal: Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra. This geographical edge has positioned Bangladesh as an essential actor in regional geopolitics.

On the economic front, Bangladesh has achieved considerable progress in recent years. Once labelled as a "bottomless basket", Bangladesh is now celebrated as a "South Asian miracle". The nation has demonstrated a robust growth trajectory and development, bolstered by a strong demographic dividend, substantial ready-made garment (RMG) exports, resilient remittance inflows, and stable macroeconomic conditions. It has successfully alleviated poverty and enhanced human development outcomes across various dimensions. As a result of these accomplishments, Bangladesh is anticipated to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list in 2026.

Moreover, Bangladesh's geopolitical importance has been acknowledged by major global powers. The nation has emerged as a geostrategic priority due to US geopolitics and diplomacy concerning security alliances like Quad and AUKUS. Its escalating importance is recognised in the ongoing great power competition, particularly between China and the US.

The Strategic Importance of Developing Economic Corridors in the Region

Sunoko Sunayama, an expert in public sector management from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), has emphasised the strategic importance of developing economic corridors in the region, leveraging Bangladesh's unique geographical location. These corridors, anchored on transport routes, are expected to drive economic growth, create jobs, and promote regionally balanced development. The development of such corridors in Bangladesh, including the envisaged Southwest Bangladesh Economic Corridor (SWBEC), aligns with the government's Seventh Five-Year Plan and is expected to bring significant economic benefits. This strategic move, as highlighted by Sunayama, underscores the potential of Bangladesh to play a pivotal role in the region's economic landscape, leveraging its geographical advantage and recent economic progress.

Deepening Ties and Economic Potential

The recent CPD seminar concluded with a thought-provoking address by the Indian High Commissioner, Pranoy Verma. His announcement regarding the imminent discussions on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and Bangladesh marks a significant step towards a more robust economic relationship.

The CEPA is not merely a trade agreement; it is a comprehensive framework encompassing trade in services, investments, and fostering deeper economic partnerships. This agreement has the potential to narrow the trade gap between the two nations. Beyond just reducing the gap, CEPA

can unlock new avenues for economic opportunities. Imagine improved connectivity, access to new markets, and flourishing cooperation across various sectors.

High Commissioner Verma also highlighted the strategic importance of the under-construction Matarbari deep-sea port in Bangladesh. Upon completion, this seaport will be a meaningful change for maritime connectivity in South Asia. Significantly, it will offer India's north-eastern states easier access to international trade routes through the already established Ramgarh-Sabroom route via transshipment. The Integrated Checkpost (ICP) at Sabroom and Ramgarh facilitates the seamless movement of goods and people, fostering closer economic ties and cultural exchange.

High Commissioner Verma emphasised the importance of expanding people-to-people communication and collaboration in sectors like finance and information technology. This aligns perfectly with the vision of strengthening India-Bangladesh relations, which are built on a foundation of mutual respect, trust, and shared values.

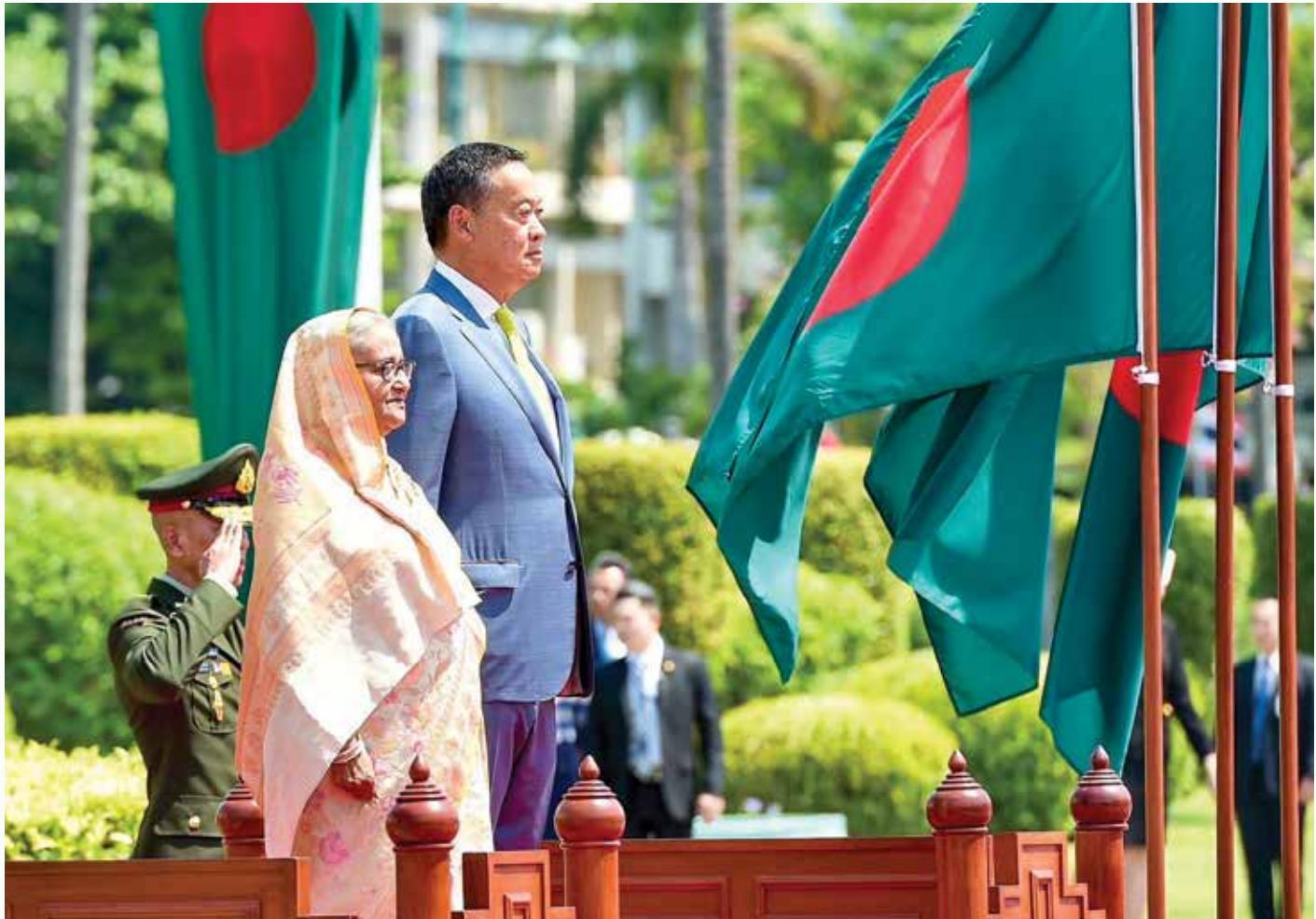
He said the future of India-Bangladesh relations is brimming with potential. Increased economic cooperation, facilitated by CEPA and the Matarbari seaport, coupled with enhanced maritime connectivity through the Ramgarh-Sabroom route, promises significant benefits for both nations. As these developments unfold, the people of India and Bangladesh stand to gain a great deal from this deepening partnership.

State Minister for Commerce Ahsanul Islam was the chief guest at the closing ceremony.

Conclusion

The Bay of Bengal holds immense potential to become a hub of economic prosperity for the bordering nations. However, achieving this vision necessitates a collective effort. Strong political will and unwavering commitment from each country are paramount to successfully implementing the identified priorities. Sustainable development in the region demands meticulous planning that prioritizes environmental protection and addresses potential ecological concerns.

Furthermore, fostering knowledge exchange and sharing best practices among member countries will prove instrumental in achieving successful regional integration. By collaborating and learning from each other's experiences, the Bay of Bengal nations can create a future marked by shared prosperity and environmental responsibility. Through this collective endeavour, a vibrant and sustainable Bay of Bengal can emerge, benefiting the member states and the region. ◀



A New Era of Integration **Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Visit to Thailand and Maritime Bangladesh**

CPA News desk

Introduction

The recent six-day visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, to Thailand from April 24 to 29, 2024, has indeed marked a significant milestone in the diplomatic relations between the two countries. This visit, the first by a Bangladeshi Prime Minister since 2002, is not just a reaffirmation of the long-standing ties between Bangladesh and Thailand, but also a strategic move towards a broader regional integration.

The visit is expected to usher in a new era of integration with ASEAN countries. Bangladesh, with its economic potential and geographic rapport, can offer ASEAN a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia. The country already has bilateral cooperation with several ASEAN members, and the momentum is most strongly felt in the private sectors of the two countries. The institutionalisation of this relationship between ASEAN and Bangladesh fosters investment and trade flows, social and cultural exchanges as well as technical cooperation.

Another key focus of the visit is the development of Bangladesh's coastal tourism sector. The geographic and strategic location of Bangladesh beside the Bay of Bengal has opened up multidimensional opportunities for the development of coastal and maritime tourism. Sustainable coastal and maritime tourism can potentially influence the blue economy, which can enhance poverty reduction through new job creation, biodiversity conservation, environmental pollution control, and the promotion of the sustainable use of coastal and marine natural resources.



In a grand display of diplomatic cordiality, the Prime Minister of Thailand extended a warm and pompous reception to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, marking a significant moment in the bilateral relations between the two nations

Furthermore, the visit is set to promote free trade between the two nations. A letter of intent was signed to start negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to boost trade. The commencement of Free Trade Agreement negotiations will help to expand trade and increase export opportunities. Bilateral trade is currently valued at US\$1.2 billion, and the FTA is expected to significantly boost this figure.

The Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid a courtesy call on the King and the Queen of the Kingdom of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklauchaooyuhua and Suthida Bajrasudhabimalakshana during her official visit to Thailand



Developing the Coastal Tourism Sector

Bangladesh's coastal and maritime tourism sector indeed holds immense potential. The country's strategic location beside the Bay of Bengal opens up multidimensional opportunities for the development of coastal and maritime tourism. However, despite its potential, most of the opportunities for

marine tourism remain unexplored, making collaborations like the one with Thailand and other ASEAN countries crucial for this sector's growth.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Tourism Cooperation, signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Thailand, is a significant step towards this direction. This agreement aims to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices in tourism. Such collaborations can help Bangladesh learn from the successful tourism models of these countries, particularly Thailand, which has a robust and thriving tourism industry.

Thailand, with its rich experience in tourism, can provide valuable insights and expertise to Bangladesh. For instance, Thailand's success in community-based tourism (CBT) can be a great learning point for Bangladesh. CBT, which involves local communities directly in tourism management, can empower host communities in Bangladesh, providing space for sharing experiences and fostering cultural exchanges.

Moreover, Thailand can assist Bangladesh in improving its infrastructure, services, and marketing strategies to attract more tourists. This collaboration can also open avenues for joint tourism packages, promoting tourism in both countries.

The trade data between Thailand and Bangladesh

Year	Thai Export to Bangladesh (in million USD)	Bangladesh Export to Thailand (in million USD)
2023	1,091.44	93.94
2022	1,170.95	83.14
2021	1,231.90	54.34
2020	859.23	50.82
2019	987.16	80.74

This table provides a clear view of the trade dynamics between the two countries over the past few years

On the other hand, Thailand stands to benefit from this collaboration as well. By helping Bangladesh develop its tourism sector, Thailand can tap into a new tourist market, attracting Bangladeshi tourists to its own tourist destinations. Furthermore, a thriving tourism industry in Bangladesh can lead to increased regional tourism, benefiting all countries in the region, including Thailand.

In terms of the blue economy, sustainable coastal and maritime tourism can significantly contribute to it. The blue economy, which refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth and development, can be enhanced by sustainable tourism practices. These practices can lead to new job creation, biodiversity conservation, environmental pollution control,

and the promotion of the sustainable use of coastal and marine natural resources.

Free Trade and Maritime Development

The Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations with Thailand and other ASEAN countries indeed marks a significant step towards diversifying Bangladesh's trade. This move aligns with the government's blue economy initiative, which emphasises the sustainable use of marine resources. The development of maritime resources is expected to contribute to the country's economic growth, create jobs, and support poverty alleviation.

FTAs are essentially international treaties that negotiate preferential trading conditions among countries. They ensure the reduction,

if not complete elimination, of trade barriers for specific products. Under the umbrella of free trade, goods and services can traverse international borders with reduced or zero tariffs. The transformative role of international trade in Bangladesh's economic growth narrative is hard to overlook, with FTAs playing a pivotal part in this metamorphosis.

Bangladesh is a signatory to several regional trade agreements that leave a lasting imprint on its economic trajectory and trade practices. These include the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) and the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), both of which are targeted towards catalysing economic growth in Bangladesh through fair and free trade practices.

FTAs act as catalysts for foreign direct investment (FDI), often resulting in a substantial boost to the economy through heightened capital inflow. FDI is more than just an injection of foreign capital; it brings along advancements in technology, improvements in human skills, job creation, and increased competition in the domestic market.

On the other hand, Thailand and other ASEAN countries also stand to benefit from this collaboration. By helping Bangladesh develop its various sectors, these countries can tap into a new market, attracting Bangladeshi consumers to their own products and services. Furthermore, a thriving economy in Bangladesh can lead to increased regional trade, benefiting all countries in the region.

In terms of poverty alleviation, trade liberalisation is expected to lead to positive overall employment effects in terms of

During an official meeting with her Thai counterpart, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh made a compelling case for Thailand to delve into the vast investment opportunities that Bangladesh offers. She highlighted the potential of special economic zones and hi-tech parks, and also underscored the prospects of investing in the healthcare sector, specifically hospitals and medical facilities, thereby paving the way for a stronger bilateral economic partnership.





A moment of diplomatic camaraderie captured as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh and the Thai Prime Minister exchange a handshake, symbolizing the strengthening of bilateral ties between the two nations

the quantity of jobs, wages earned, or a combination of both. The impact of international free-trade agreements on job growth and prosperity has been studied extensively, and research shows that twenty years of expanded trade has produced remarkable results for the larger goals that count.

Towards a Prosperous Bangladesh by 2041

The initiatives undertaken during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Thailand indeed align with Bangladesh's Vision 2041. This vision aims to transform Bangladesh into a developed country by 2041, with a per capita income of more than twelve and a half thousand US dollars. The focus on ASEAN integration, coastal tourism development, free trade, and maritime development is expected to diversify the country's earning baskets and contribute to achieving this vision.

ASEAN integration is expected to boost Bangladesh's economy by fostering investment and trade flows, social and cultural exchanges, and technical cooperation. It can also help Bangladesh tap into new markets and increase its share of exports in GDP, which is currently much lower than that of its similar trading counterparts.

Coastal tourism development, on the other hand, can significantly contribute to Bangladesh's blue economy. The geographic and strategic location of Bangladesh beside the Bay of Bengal has opened up multidimensional opportunities for the development of coastal and maritime tourism. Sustainable coastal and maritime tourism can potentially influence the blue economy, which can enhance poverty reduction through new job creation, biodiversity conservation, environmental pollution control, and the promotion of the sustainable use of coastal and marine natural resources.

Free trade can also play a pivotal role in Bangladesh's economic growth. FTAs are essentially international treaties that negotiate preferential trading conditions among countries. They ensure the reduction, if not complete elimination, of trade barriers for specific products. Under the umbrella of free trade, goods and services can traverse international borders with reduced or zero tariffs. The transformative role of international trade in Bangladesh's economic growth narrative is hard to overlook, with FTAs playing a pivotal part in this metamorphosis.

Maritime development, as part of the blue economy initiative, can significantly contribute to Bangladesh's economic growth. The development of maritime resources is expected to contribute to the country's economic growth, create jobs, and support poverty alleviation.

Conclusion

As Bangladesh continues to forge ahead on its path to development, the country stands as a testament to the power of diplomatic engagement and strategic economic planning. The recent initiatives undertaken by the government, particularly the diplomatic outreach to Thailand and other ASEAN countries, underscore the importance of international cooperation in achieving national development goals. The strategic focus on ASEAN integration, coastal tourism development, free trade, and maritime development is a clear indication of Bangladesh's commitment to diversifying its economy and enhancing its global competitiveness. These initiatives align perfectly with the country's Vision 2041, which aims to transform Bangladesh into a developed country with a high per capita income. Bangladesh now serves as a model for other developing countries striving to achieve their own development goals. ▲

Trade Direction	Major Items	Prospects
Export from Bangladesh to Thailand	Other made textile, vegetable textile fibers, apparel, products of animal origin, electrical & electronic equipment, fish and crustaceans, etc.	Pharmaceuticals and chemicals, chemical products, leather and leather products, frozen fish, raw jute and jute goods, ceramic tableware, knitwear and woven garments, tea etc.
Import from Thailand to Bangladesh	Cement, cereals, plastics, man-made staple fibers, sugar and sugar confectionary, machinery and mechanical appliances, cotton and cotton fabrics, etc.	Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training.

The major trade items and prospects between Bangladesh and Thailand.

▶ Prime Minister's Directive Accelerates Bay Terminal Project with Significant Cost Savings

The long-awaited transfer of 500.71 acres of government land for the Bay Terminal project has finally commenced. The Chattogram district administration initially priced the land at BDT 1,241 crore. However, under the Prime Minister's directive, the Chittagong Port Authority is acquiring the land for a nominal BDT 3 crore. This substantial cost reduction will result in savings of BDT 1,238 crore for the Chittagong Port, accelerating the infrastructure development of the Bay Terminal.

On January 31, the Ministry of Lands issued a letter to the port authority, authorising the transfer of 500.71 acres of government-owned land for the Bay Terminal at a cost of BDT 3 crore. The process of depositing the funds from the district administration to the port authority in the government treasury and transferring the land to the port by the district administration has now begun.

In July of the previous year, the district administration reassessed the price of 500 acres of private land. The new valuation set the land price at BDT 1,241 crore. This land, which spans the areas of Patenga, Agrabad, and Kattali circles, was proposed for transfer from the district administration to the Ministry of Lands. The Chittagong Port's application to acquire this land at a symbolic price was forwarded from the Ministry of Lands to the Prime Minister's Office.

Officials have stated that the land will be available shortly, thanks to the Prime Minister's directives. The land transfer work, guided by the instructions of the Ministry of Lands from the district administration, is expected to be completed soon.

The port authority has initiated the construction of a bay terminal on approximately 2,500 acres of land on the Patenga-Halisahar sea coast of the city to enhance cargo handling capacity. Of this, 791.78 acres of land will be reclaimed from the seacoast, with the remainder to be recovered from the sea. In 2021, the Chattogram district administration transferred 66.85 acres of privately owned land to the port at an acquisition price of about BDT 400 crore.

The proposed Bay Terminal is expected to be larger than the existing infrastructure of the Chittagong Port. The annual cargo handling capacity of the Chittagong Port is several times less than what the bay terminal alone will be able to handle. The Bay Terminal project will include the construction of three terminals. One of these will be constructed and operated by the Port Authority, while the remaining two will be built on a PPP basis with foreign investment. Discussions are currently underway with Dubai-based DP World and the Singapore-based Port of Singapore Authority for the construction and management of the two terminals.



▶ Matarbari Port Will Facilitate Communication with Neighbouring Countries: Speaker



Speaker of the National Parliament, Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, has stated that the Matarbari deep seaport will facilitate socio-economic development in Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries. She believes the port will enhance communication with different states through waterways and increase business competition.

Ms Chowdhury made these remarks at a workshop organised by the Ocean Policy Research Unit of Japan's Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The workshop, titled 'Bangladesh's First Deep Sea Port: Matarbari Launching a New Scene in the Bay of Bengal', was held at the Parliament LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan on March 19.

The Speaker highlighted that the Matarbari deep seaport will serve as a gateway, facilitating connectivity with landlocked countries like Nepal and Bhutan through Bangladesh. She emphasised the port's role in underscoring the importance of the Bay of Bengal to various South Asian countries.

She urged stakeholders to focus on the sustainable development of the ocean in addition to its use. Ms Chowdhury affirmed that the Matarbari deep seaport is a sound policy decision by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The workshop was attended by special guests including the Senior Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Masud Bin Momen; Secretary of the Maritime Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rear Admiral Md. Khurshed Alam (retd); President of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation Ocean Policy Research Institute, Dr Hide Sakaguchi; Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, IWAMA Kiminori; and JICA Bangladesh Chief Representative, ICHIGUCHI Tomohide.



► Chittagong Port Enhances Export Scanning Capabilities with Two New Scanners



Chittagong Port has bolstered its export scanning capabilities by handing over two scanners to customs. The State Minister for Shipping, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, inaugurated these fixed container scanners, which were procured with Chittagong Port's own funding. The inauguration took place on February 17, with one scanner installed at gate number 4 of Chittagong Port and the other at the CPAR gate.

The State Minister revealed that the Prime Minister had instructed the NBR chairman in 2019 to install scanners at all ports. The installation of these two scanners for export goods at Chittagong Port was met with satisfaction by the Prime Minister.

The event was chaired by the Port Authority Chairman, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, with the senior secretary of the Ministry of Shipping, Md. Mostafa Kamal, as the special guest. The secretary stated that the Prime Minister's order to install scanners at the port is part of their vision to build a smart Bangladesh through smart governance.

Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail highlighted that Chittagong Port is a first-class KPI and ranks 67th among the world's top 100 ports. He noted that the port is progressing under the direction of the Prime Minister and the leadership of the State Minister for Shipping. The installation of the modern scanner, a first for the port, will enhance the security and image of the port.

Project Director and Chittagong Port Security Director, Lt Col Mostafa Arifur Rahman Khan said that the scanner was equipped with a radioactive portal monitor of FS6000 model, collected with BDT 85.89 crore from the port's own funding, can scan 150 containers per hour. X-ray penetration power in steel is 330 mm. This dual energy scanner is capable of bothway scanning. The trailer driver can drive directly through the scanning tunnel and the container is automatically scanned. The container number is also automatically detected by the scanner.

The project received DPP approval on February 23, 2022. The work order was issued on December 12, contract execution took place on January 5, 2023, and the project was completed on December 27. The Chittagong Port Authority implemented the project to ensure container scanners at all export gates of the port in line with ISPS.

► Laldia Container Terminal to be Constructed Under Public-Private Partnership Model



The Chittagong Port Authority has announced that the proposed Laldia Container Terminal will be built under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. APM Terminal, a subsidiary of Denmark's Maersk Group, will collaborate with the port to implement the project. This initiative is part of a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement between Bangladesh and Denmark, under which the Danish company will construct the new terminal.

The Laldia Container Terminal project was formally presented at the inaugural G2G-PPP platform meeting at the Prime Minister's Office on January 3. The Danish government agreed to undertake the project under the G2G-PPP model. Following a detailed study and negotiation, an agreement will be signed later, as informed by the PPP authority through a circular.

Mohammad Tofazzel Hossain Miah, the senior secretary of Prime Minister's Office and Chairman of the PPP Authority, was the chief guest at the meeting. He expressed gratitude to the Danish government for their willingness to collaborate with Bangladesh in this joint venture for a dynamic and smart port infrastructure. He emphasised the significance of the G2G-PPP model and stated that this initiative will play a crucial role in implementing Bangladesh's Vision 2041 and in creating a Smart Bangladesh.

The proposed Laldia Container Terminal will be 450 metres long, with a berth depth of 10.5 metres and a ship's draft of 9.5 metres. The terminal will be equipped with advanced services to meet the growing demand for efficient and sustainable container handling services. The estimated cost of the project is 30 to 40 million dollars. The project will involve foreign direct investment, which will significantly contribute to the country's economic growth. Additionally, the revenue of the Chittagong Port Authority will increase based on an annual fee and revenue sharing from this agreement. The project is expected to create around 1,000 new employment opportunities, introduce smart port services, control net carbon emissions, reduce turnaround time for ships, and increase port competitiveness.

The Chief Executive Officer of the PPP Authority, Mushfiqur Rahman led the Bangladesh government delegation. The Danish delegation was led by Danish Ambassador to Bangladesh, Christian Brix Møller. Lina Gandlos Hansen, State Secretary for Trade and Investment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Denmark, joined the meeting on a virtual platform. Senior Secretary of the Shipping Ministry, Md. Mostafa Kamal, Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, and senior officials from both sides were present at the meeting.

► Celebrating Bangabandhu's Birth Anniversary and National Children's Day



The Chittagong Port Authority celebrated the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and National Children's Day on March 17. Chairman of the Port Authority, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, along with all members, paid tribute by placing wreaths at Bangabandhu's portrait at the port building.

A discussion meeting was held at the Shaheed Fazlur Rahman Munsi Auditorium, focusing on Bangabandhu's life and work. The theme of the meeting was 'Bangabandhu's dream, bringing smile to everyone's home'.

Speeches were given by Chittagong Port Board Member Md. Habibur Rahman, freedom fighter Hadi Hossain Babul, and students from various educational institutions.

In his speech, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, the chief guest of the meeting, remembered all the martyrs who died on August 15, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He emphasised Bangabandhu's love for children and his work for their rights, stating that the main objective of Children's Day should be to work for the welfare of underprivileged children. He urged everyone to follow Bangabandhu's ideals and contribute to building the 'Sonar Bangla' of Bangabandhu's dream under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

After the speech, prizes were distributed among the winners of an essay and painting competition themed 'Bangladesh before 17th March'. A biography of Bangabandhu and a documentary on the great liberation war and Bangabandhu's historical speech of March 7 were screened. Special prayers were organised in all places of worship under the jurisdiction of the port, and quality food was served to the inpatients of the port hospital.

► Independence Day Celebration



The Chittagong Port Authority celebrated the Great Independence and National Day on March 26 with various programmes. The day began with Chairman of the Port Authority, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, hoisting the national flag and laying wreaths at the Shaheed Memorial at the port premises. All board members, department heads, officers, employees, leaders of the Chittagong Port Employees Council, and retired freedom fighter officers and employees were present.

A discussion meeting was held at the Shaheed Fazlur Rahman Munsi Auditorium on March 25 in remembrance of the victims of genocide. The meeting focused on the historical leadership of Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the development of the country. Special programmes were held, and awards were distributed to participating students.

In his speech, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail paid deep respect to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and remembered the sacrifices of all the brave freedom fighters who were martyred in 1971. He stated that Bangladesh is a role model of development in the world, thanks to the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangabandhu's daughter. He expressed his belief that the Chittagong Port will always play a crucial role in the country's development and felt that it deserved to receive the Freedom Award.

Special prayers were organised in all places of worship under the Port Authority for the peace in the souls of Bangabandhu, his family members, martyred freedom fighters, and members of the SWAT operation. High-quality food was served to the inpatients of the port hospital. Fruit baskets and flower bouquets were given to ship captains stationed at the port jetty. On March 25, all ships stationed at the port sounded their horns for one minute at 12:00 PM, and a blackout was observed from 10:00 PM to 10:01 AM outside the port reserve area in memory of those killed in the massacre on the night of March 25.

► Chittagong Port Authority Mandates 100% Scanning of Export Products

The Chittagong Port Authority has issued an order for all types of export products to undergo scanning through container scanners before being shipped for export. This directive was given on March 2 to the association of private depot owners, from the terminal manager's office of the Chittagong Port, mandating 100% scanning of export products.

This follows the inauguration of two container scanners by the Chittagong Port Authority on February 17, specifically for scanning export products. The port now has a total of nine scanners at its 12 gates, including the newly inaugurated ones.

Among these, the Chittagong Port General Cargo Berth (GCB) Gate No. 1 and the New mooring Container Terminal (NCT) Gate No. 3 are equipped with FS6000 series fixed container scanners. The Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) has one FS3000 model fixed container scanner each at gates 2, 4, and 5. Additionally, there is one mobile scanner each at gate number CCT-2 and GCB-2. Gate number 4 and the CPAR gate have FS6000 series fixed container scanners.



► On Observing Historic March 7



The Chittagong Port Authority commemorated the historic March 7 with various programmes. The day began with Chairman of the Port Authority, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, along with board members and department heads, laying wreaths at the portrait of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, installed in front of the port building.

A discussion meeting was held at the Shaheed Fazlur Rahman Munsi Auditorium to mark the occasion. The Chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority presided over the meeting as the chief guest. The event was attended by board members, heads of departments, heads of sub-departments, heads of educational institutions, CBA leaders, officials, employees of the port, and students from various educational institutions.

In his speech, Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail paid deep respect to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bengali nation father of a thousand years. He highlighted that Bangabandhu's March 7 speech serves as a global example and an inspiration for all oppressed and freedom-seeking people. He credited this speech for inspiring the entire nation to participate in the freedom struggle in 1971.

He offered prayers for all the martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the war of independence, including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members who were martyred on August 15. He also remembered all the officers and employees of the Chittagong Port who were martyred in the war of liberation.

The meeting concluded with the port chairman distributing prizes among the winners of various competitions held among students from various educational institutions. The attendees also enjoyed a wonderful cultural programme featuring performances by the students.

► Indian Businessmen Show Interest in Investing Around Payra Port: State Minister for Shipping



State Minister for Shipping, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, has announced that Indian businessmen are showing interest in investing in the economic zone being developed around Payra port. He made this statement to reporters after a meeting with Indian High Commissioner Prannoy Verma at the Secretariat on January 23.

The State Minister mentioned that Matarbari is becoming a deep sea port and a pigeon port. He also noted that boat tourism has started between the two countries. However, he acknowledged that there are some issues with the on-arrival visa, but assured that efforts are underway to simplify the process.

Mr Chowdhury referred to India as a 'true friend' of Bangladesh, stating that their relations were forged during the liberation war. He expressed that India wants to be part of all developmental initiatives in Bangladesh. They will support the Ministry of Shipping and all the steps taken by the government for development, aiming to enhance the connectivity between the two countries.

The meeting was also attended by the Senior Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping, Md. Mostafa Kamal.

► BGMEA Advocates for Speedier Transportation of Export Products via Singapore

A delegation led by the President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Faruque Hassan, met with Alfred Sim, Vice President of PSA International Limited, and Lim Wei Chiang, Assistant Vice President of Group Business Development. The meeting, held in Singapore on January 30, was also attended by BGMEA Director Asif Ashraf, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Mission Cell Shams Mahmood, and others. Lutfun Nahar Shipu, Commercial Counsellor of the Bangladesh High Commission in Singapore, was present as well.

During the meeting, the delegation discussed issues of mutual interest, with a particular focus on the process of transhipping Bangladeshi export products through the Singapore port. BGMEA President Faruque Hassan emphasised the need for smooth and fast service for transporting Bangladeshi export goods through Singapore.

Hasan also requested PSA International to consider expanding their services to Bangladesh and providing port services at competitive rates in the shortest possible time. The BGMEA delegation visited the Port of Singapore to experience firsthand the numerous services and port operations offered by PSA International. Alfred Sim and Lim Wei Chiang expressed their gratitude to the BGMEA delegation for the visit.

► National Logistics Development Policy to Streamline Import-Export Process

The Prime Minister's Office of Bangladesh is preparing a National Logistics Development Policy to streamline the import-export process in the country. The lack of a logistics policy has led to increased time and cost for importing and exporting goods compared to other countries.

The proposed policy aims to manage all channels and activities involved in the flow of a product or service from the starting point to the final destination efficiently, cost-effectively, and timely. It will develop a world-class, technology-based, timesaving, efficient, and environment-friendly logistics system, thereby boosting domestic and international trade and investment capacity.

The draft policy proposes to provide all services of product logistics online, which will expedite the loading-unloading of port containers and cargo and reduce customs hassles related to HS code headings and product description.

The policy will focus on reducing delays and costs by improving logistics services, building a multi-modal logistics infrastructure, introducing automated or digitised logistics management, simplifying customs and other procedures, developing skilled human resources, attracting domestic and foreign investment, improving various logistics performance indicators, and adopting effective and efficient innovative technologies and international best practices.

The policy, which is being drafted based on the views of concerned stakeholders, will soon be published on the Prime Minister's Office website for public feedback. Upon approval by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the Cabinet, the policy will be finalised. The World Bank and Business Initiative Leading Development (BILD) are working as partners in this initiative.

To fully implement the National Logistics Development Policy, maritime and land ports and jetties will be modernised, with cooperation sought from development agencies.

► Traders Call for Simplified Port Services to Boost Exports



Businessmen and entrepreneurs have called for the simplification of port services to enhance exports and competitiveness. This demand was made during the first meeting of the FBCCI Standing Committee on Port and Shipping.

Chittagong and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh play vital roles in facilitating trade and commerce. However, they face challenges related to container handling capacity, jetties restrictions, and customs processes. Increasing container capacity, streamlining jetties regulations, and improving customs procedures are essential steps. Therefore, FBCCI Standing Committee Chairman Tarafdar Md. Ruhul Amin's emphasised on addressing these issues to achieve the goal of a trillion-dollar economy.

► Crude Oil Has Been Successfully Transported from the Sea to the Eastern Refinery Via a Pipeline

The Single Point Mooring (SPM) installed at Maheshkhali has accomplished this feat, marking a 'groundbreaking addition' to the power sector, according to the Ministry of Electricity, Water, and Mineral Resources.

On March 15, 2024, the crude oil reached the Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL), located on the banks of the Karnaphuli River in Chattogram. It was transported through a 74 km pipeline from the storage tank installed at Kalamarchhara in Maheshkhali, stated Mohammad Lokman, the Managing Director of the company.

Lokman explained that the crude oil was transported through testing commissioning. 40,000 tons arrived from March 9 to March 15. "With this, our testing commissioning has been successfully completed. Refined diesel came first. This means the commissioning of diesel and crude oil through two pipelines is over," he said.

If mother vessels can be moved to the SPM by tugboats, there will be no need to use the jetty to unload the oil. Until now, crude oil was unloaded by lighterage ships, which will no longer be needed.

Tugboats are required to bring the large ships to the Maheshkhali SPM. The Chittagong Port Authority possesses such tugboats. However, a decision has not yet been finalised on whether they will be used, or new ones will be acquired.

Bangladesh currently imports about 1.5 million tons of oil a year, spending BDT 800 to 1000 crores on oil load-unloading. The new system will save this money.

In early December of the previous year, refined oil was transported from the deep sea to storage tanks at Maheshkhali through a pipeline.

A single point mooring has been established in the Bay of Bengal, six kilometres west of the coast at Kalamarchhara union in Maheshkhali. From there, crude oil and diesel will be released through two separate pipelines of 36 inches in diameter. The oil will first be brought to the pump station tank at Kalamarchhara through a 16 km route. From there, the oil is transported to the ERL via the seacoast through a 74 km pipeline using various pumps.



► Initiatives to Make Pangaon Container Terminal Profitable



Efforts are underway to make the Pangaon Inland Container Terminal (ICT) profitable, according to Salman F Rahman, the Prime

Minister's Private Industry, and Investment Adviser. The terminal project was opened in 2013 by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with an investment of about BDT 300 crore from the Chittagong Port. However, it has not met its expected targets since its launch. The Port Authority has initiated fresh efforts to make it profitable and widely used. A high-level government delegation visited the terminal and held a meeting with traders. Rahman assured that the crisis between customs and labourers over the provision of services will be resolved within the next month. Environment Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury added that increased use of the terminal will reduce traffic and environmental pollution.

► Ministry of Shipping is Working with Immense Potential in the Economy: State Minister for Shipping



State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury has stated that the Ministry of Shipping is making significant contributions to the economy of Bangladesh. He made these remarks during a meeting held on March 19 to review the progress of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) of the departments and organisations under the ministry.

Chowdhury highlighted that the Ministry of Shipping's work differs from other ministries as it must operate in harmony with the environment. He emphasised that the completion of the deep seaport, bay terminal, and the first terminal of Payra Port will further boost the economy. He also stressed the importance of improving the waterways to elevate the Ministry of Shipping's standing.

The state minister underscored the need for timely project implementation and financing, and proper preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPP). He mentioned that it is not appropriate to alter the DPP later and that the disposal of dredged material from river mining poses a challenge.

The ADP includes 28 projects, with three by the Bangladesh Land Port Authority, 14 by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), one by the Chittagong Port Authority, two by the Payra Port Authority, four by the Mongla Port Authority, one by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), one by the Directorate of Shipping, Seafarers and Migrant Workers, one by the Department of Welfare, and one by the Bangladesh Marine Academy. The Chittagong Port Authority is funding three projects independently.

The meeting was attended by the senior secretary of the ministry, Md. Mostafa Kamal, and heads of departments and organisations.

► Chittagong Port Authority Urges Importers for Swift Delivery of Fruits



The Chittagong Port Authority has urged importers to expedite the delivery of about 1,000 containers filled with 40,000 metric tons of apples, oranges, tangerines, and grapes currently stored at the port. The appeal was made in a letter sent to the importers in March.

According to the Chittagong Custom House, over the last eight months of the current fiscal year, 104,000 metric tons

of apples, 58,258 metric tons of tangerines, 55,835 metric tons of oranges, and 29,470 metric tons of grapes have been imported. Despite the popularity of domestic oranges, the import of other fruits has significantly increased compared to the previous year.

Deputy Commissioner of the Chittagong Custom House, Kazi Iraj Ishtiaq, stated that according to the import data, there should not be a market crisis. However, measures are being taken to prevent any intentional creation of an artificial crisis by leaving the imported fruit in the containers.

Despite the additional import to meet demand amid the dollar crisis, the price of fruits in the market has not decreased. Instead, the price of these foreign fruits is increasing, providing an opportunity to create an artificial crisis. The non-delivery of containers has also led to a shortage of space for storing new containers at the port.

► Chittagong Port Authority Honours International Mother Language Day



The Chittagong Port Authority honours International Mother Language Day with due respect. On February 21, from sunrise to sunset, the national flag was flown at half-mast at the Port Authority's main office building, other buildings, workshops, residential buildings, schools, and all ships and vessels stationed at the port.

At 8 a.m., adjacent to the Shaheed Minar at the Port Authority High School, the Port Authority Chairman Rear Admiral Mohammad Sohail, along with board members, paid tribute to the memory of language martyrs by hoisting the national flag and placing wreaths. All officers, employees of the port, schools, colleges, clubs, institutes, Muktijoddha Sangsad, and all associations and societies in the port area also paid tribute by offering wreaths.

Following the wreath-laying ceremony, a discussion programme on the significance of International Mother Language Day and a memorial for Language Martyrs was held at the Shaheed Fazlur Rahman Munsi Auditorium. Prizes were distributed among the winners of the Essay and Beautiful Handwriting competition, which saw participation from students.

In his speech, the port chairman began by remembering the greatest Bengali in thousand years the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with deep respect. He emphasised the unique significance of the day, noting that the Bengali race is the only one in the world that has shed blood for their language. This sacrifice, he said, has set an example in the world and is a matter of our pride.

Addressing the students, he stressed the importance of practicing, cherishing, and loving one's mother tongue and motherland. He highlighted how February 21st protected our language and gradually led us to freedom, and emphasised the importance of teaching through the mother tongue.

The port chairman urged all present to contribute to the construction of Bangabandhu's dream of *Sonar Bangla* by being energised by the spirit of the 21st. He concluded his speech by paying respect to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the language martyrs, and the martyrs who died in the liberation war, and seeking forgiveness for their souls.

Later, students from schools, colleges, and madrasas participated in a cultural programme based on the significance of the day, and a documentary was screened.

After the Zohar prayer, the port chairman, members, and heads of departments participated in a doa mahfil at the port's central mosque. A special prayer was offered for the forgiveness of the souls of language martyrs and for the prosperity and progress of the nation.

► Nepal Expresses Interest in Using Bangladesh's Seaports



Nepal's Ambassador, Mr Ghanshyam Bhandari, met with State Minister for Shipping, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, expressing Nepal's interest in using Bangladesh's Chittagong, Mongla, and Payra ports. The focus is on using the Mongla port for traffic and goods transportation through Banglabandha. The meeting discussed the potential for Nepal to connect directly with Bangladesh using a 23 km land route through India. The expansion of commercial activities using the ports is being discussed at the Prime Ministerial level in both countries.

► New Pipeline Project to Save BDT 800 Crore Annually in Oil Transportation Costs



The government has launched a BDT 7,124 crore project to transport oil from mother vessels to lighterage vessels via a pipeline, leading to an annual saving of BDT 800 crore. A floating jetty, part of the 'Installation of Single Point Mooring with Double Pipeline' project, has been constructed near Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar. After initial trials, oil transportation has now commenced. Despite initial challenges, crude oil and diesel are now being transported to the Eastern Refinery. The new system reduces the oil discharge time from 15 days to 36-48 hours.



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