



## Ease of Doing Business Bangladesh on a great leap

Welcome to new CPA chairman  
Rear Admiral M Shahjahan

Construction for  
Matarbari Port Development Project begins

Fresh study on Karnaphuli River  
after six decades

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## CPA News

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### Chief Adviser

Rear Admiral S M Abul Kalam Azad  
(G), NGP, ndc, psc, BN

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Zafar Alam

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Enamul Karim  
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### Reporter

Omar Faroque Emon

### Managing Editor

Monir H Khan

### Public Relation

Mohammad Azizul Moula  
Md. Shafiu Azam Khan

### Photography

SM Shamsul Huda

### Design & DTP

Toufique Ahmed  
Abida Hafsa  
Mahmud Hossain Prince

### 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

Chattogram Port Authority  
Bandarhaban, Chattogram  
Tel: 031-2510869  
Email: bandarbart@gmail.com

## Editorial

### Bangladesh is developing its business environment

#### Happy New Year to all of our readers!

Last year was a year of death, social distancing and isolation due to global Novel Coronavirus outbreak. Every sector of a life was affected and all governments of the world took preventive measures to limit the pandemic. This New Year is not immune from that virus, but the good news is, several vaccines are available and people are getting vaccinated to fight the virus. We hope that we will get rid of this unwanted and invisible enemy and live a life in normalcy.

The concept of the 'Ease of Doing Business' comes from a research paper titled 'The Regulation of Entry' developed by the Bulgarian economist Simeon Djankov. Bangladesh implemented 15 reforms before the World Bank released its latest 'Ease of Doing Business' report. In the latest report, the reform work was done on three indicators. The process of starting a business has been simplified by reducing the company registration fees and time. Besides, electricity connection in Dhaka has been made easier through digitisation and investment in human resources. Similarly, the amount of security money has also been reduced in getting new electricity connections. At the same time, with the expansion of the Credit Information Bureau, loan-related information is becoming more readily available than before which have been reflected in the 'Ease of Doing Business Report 2020'. In our lead story, we shed lights on the initiatives and progress of Bangladesh to improve in 'Ease of Doing Business' ranking.

Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, NPP, ndc, psc, BN took office as the chairman of the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) on 31 January 2021. On that day, he took over the charge from outgoing chairman Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan previously served as the chairman of the Mongla Port Authority before joining as the CPA chairman. CPA News team greets him as the new lighthouse of Chattogram port and has included a short profile of him with eagerness in this issue of the magazine.

To raise the ranking of Bangladesh in the Ease of Doing Business, different ministries, departments and agencies of the government are carrying out several reforms. In there, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) is working as the coordinator. This issue of CPA News has published an interview of the Executive Chairman of BIDA, Md Sirajul Islam.

By sending the old year into the history books, the New Year arrives. Throughout the past year, thousands of small and big news have been made. Some were encouraging, some were fearful. And, in the abyss of time, some news dissolved. Some explain the course of the future. Some leave everlasting impressions in the mind; and in the memory, some become unfailing. In this respect, CPA News shed light on some of the news that made headlines in the Bangladesh maritime sector in the year 2020.

Besides, the 'Newsbytes' section will inform you of all the important maritime events and developments which took place during the final quarter of the last year.

We cordially welcome your invaluable feedback and suggestions of new ideas for further improvement of this maritime magazine. Thank you for being with us all the while, and keep staying with us.

Thanking you

**Zafar Alam**  
Editor

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*A good business environment depends on how easily, economically and quickly business facilitation services can be delivered, and that require relentless reforms and adjustments. World Bank ranks countries in the 'Ease of Doing Business' question based on the progress made of these reforms. This ranking acts as an influencer in the decision making moments of the local and foreign investors.*



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The New Year comes by pushing the old year into the pages of history. Thousands of small and big news are made throughout the gone year. CPA News has shed light on some of the news which made headlines in the maritime sector of Bangladesh in the year 2020.

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## Céad Mile Fáilte



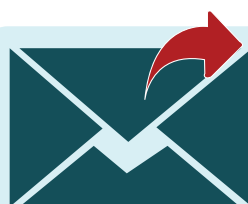
Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, (N), NPP, BCGMS, ndc, psc, BN has taken charge as the new chairman of Chattogram Port Authority (CPA). He officially took charge on 31 January 2021 and became the 41st chairman of Chattogram port.

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## Interview



The issue of Ease of Doing Business lies with the entire government involving with different ministries, departments and agencies of the government. BIDA acts as the focal point of Ease of Doing Business.



## We value your thoughts

CPA news is open to submissions exclusively from the maritime enthusiast writers. We are looking for strong, authentic and thought-provoking articles on maritime issues.

email your views to [cpanews@gmail.com](mailto:cpanews@gmail.com)





# Welcome to the new CPA chairman

## Rear Admiral M Shahjahan

*Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, (N), NPP, BCGMS, ndc, psc, BN has taken charge as the new chairman of Chattogram Port Authority (CPA). He replaced the former chairman Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad (G), NGP, ndc, psc, BN. He officially took charge on 31 January 2021 and became the 41st chairman of Chattogram port, the main gateway to the country's economy. Prior assuming office in CPA, he was the chairman of Mongla Port Authority.*

Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, an officer of the Bangladesh Navy, was born on 31 December 1965. He was commissioned in the Bangladesh Navy on 1 January 1987. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan is a holder of master's degree obtained from the Defence Services Command and Staff College. He later obtained an MPhil degree in Development Studies from the National Defence College and the Bangladesh University of Professional. The subject of his research was 'Impact of Port and Shipping on Economic Development of Bangladesh'.

He completed a number of professional courses at home and abroad in his vibrant career. Notable among them are the Mine Warfare course from Turkey and the Navigation Specialisation course from India. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan was in command of several warships, including frigates, patrol craft and ocean-going salvage vessels of the Bangladesh Navy. He had been very successful as a commander of the School of Maritime Warfare and Tactics. He also served as the Officer-in-Charge and Instructor of the School of Navigation and Direction. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan also worked as Director Blue Economy at the Naval Headquarters, Deputy Drafting Commander, Staff Officer (Naval Recruitment -1) and as a Staff Officer at various departments of the Naval Headquarters.

Rear Admiral M. Shahjahan also served as the Member of the Chattogram Port Authority (Harbour and Marine), Member of the Blue Economy Cell in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources and Deputy Director General of Bangladesh Coast Guard at the Coast Guard Headquarters under the Ministry of Home Affairs. He was awarded the NPP and BCGMS peacetime medals, respectively, in recognition to his outstanding contribution to the development of the Chattogram Port Authority and the Bangladesh Coast Guard, two of the country's top bodies.

Under the UN mission, he was the team leader of the military observer team in Sierra Leone and the UN peacekeeping officer at the UN mission in BANCON-2 in Haiti.

*The outgoing CPA chairman Rear Admiral Abul Kalam Azad is handing over the charge to the new chairman Rear Admiral M Shahjahan. During the occasion, board members, Director (Admin) and port secretary were present.*





# Ease of Doing Business

## Bangladesh on a great leap

Jinarul Islam

### Prologue

No doubt, investment is the best cure for economic ailment, especially from the private sector. But that do not come easy. We must create a conducive environment in order to welcome investments. For it to start off without much ado, where it can build the infrastructure without hassles and the utility services come faster and at a low cost. In starting a business, you need to consider concerns such as bank loans, protection safeguarding the interests of small investors, the payment of taxes and the facilitation of border trades, as well. It is equally important to resolve any dispute and

bankruptcy as soon as possible. A good business environment depends on how easily, economically and quickly these services can be delivered, and that require relentless reforms and adjustments. World Bank ranks countries in the 'Ease of Doing Business' question based on the progress made of these reforms. This ranking acts as an influencer in the decision making moments of the local and foreign investors.

### The origin of a ranking

The concept of the 'Ease of Doing Business' comes from a research paper titled 'The Regulation of Entry' developed by the Bulgarian economist Simeon Djankov. The

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paper became widely known much before it came in light in 2002. Based on data obtained in 1999, Djankov and his co-researchers published facts and figures regarding the processes, timing and cost of starting a business in 85 countries. Later, in 2003, the World Bank published the data on their website, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Ease of Doing Business concept. In 2004, the World Bank published the 'Ease of Doing Business' report based on findings from 145 countries. However, the ranking first came up in 2005 when for the first time the report mentioned the 20 best and 20 worst countries regarding the ease of doing business. Since 2006, the

## What Doing Business measures -12 areas of business regulation

Indicator set	What is measured
Starting a business	Procedures time, cost and paid in minimum capital to start a limited liability company for men and women
Dealing with construction permits	Procedures, time and cost to complete all formalities to build a warehouse and the quality control and safety mechanisms in the construction permitting system
Getting electricity	Procedures time and cost to get connected to the electrical grid the reliability of the election supply, and the transparency of tariff.
Registering property	Procedures, time and cost to transfer a property and the quality of the land administration system for men and women
Getting credit	Movable collateral laws and credit information systems
Protecting minority investors	Minority shareholders' rights in related-party transactions and in corporate governance
Paying taxes	Payments time, and total tax and contribution rate for a firm to comply with all tax regulations as well as postiling processes
Trading across borders	Time and cost to export the product of comparative advantage and to import auto parts
Enforcing contracts	Time and cost to resolve a commercial dispute and the quality of judicial processes for men and women
Resolving insolvency	Time, cost, outcome, and recovery rate for a commercial insolvency and the strength of the legal framework for insolvency
Employing workers	Flexibility in employment regulation
Contracting with the government	Procedures and time to participate in and win a works contract through public procurement and the public procurement regulatory framework

Note: The employing workers and contracting with the government indicator sets are not part of the ease of doing business ranking in Doing Business 2020.

'Ease of Doing Business' ranking covers all countries across the world was primarily based on four key indicators.

Since then, different countries introduced different measures to make the investment environment easier. For example, in 2002, six steps had to be passed for starting a business in 13% of the countries. In 2014, more than half the countries achieved this while just one-fourth of the countries were able to complete all the processes within just a week. This advantage was available in less than 5% of the countries in 2002. With years, the number of indicators in the rankings has also increased. Efforts are also being made to improve reforms in all these indicators. As one of the fastest growing economies, Bangladesh is also a fierce contestant on that ranking table.

### Indicators that matter

Initially, the World Bank covered just a few countries judging their efficiency on a smaller number of indicators. Subsequently, both the scope of the indicators and the number of countries have increased. At present, the World Bank publishes ranks on 10 indicators that include starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering

property, getting credits, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

### Method of ranking

There were only five indicators when the first Doing Business report came in public in 2003. The study covered 133 countries at that time. At present, 190 countries are ranked on the basis of 10 indicators. In most of the countries, data from only the largest business cities are taken into account. In countries whose population exceeded 100 million by 2013, the World Bank procures data two busy cities. Bangladesh is one of those 11 countries and its scoring and ranking in Ease of Doing Business is based on the business environment that prevails in Dhaka and Chattogram. The scores goes from zero to 100. The higher a country's score, the higher it ranks on the list.

Certain standard is followed for the scoring. First, the World Bank's Doing Business team, along with experts, create a questionnaire and the answers are collected from local experts. This expert panel includes lawyers, business consultants, accountants and freight forwarders, as well as government officials and other professionals

who work as consultants for various legal and regulatory needs. These experts exchange views with the Doing Business team. These include conferences, written answers and on-the-spot inspections by the Doing Business team. Prior to the Doing Business 2019 report, members of the World Bank's team visited 28 countries to verify data and recruit the respondents.

### Position of Bangladesh

Bangladesh implemented 15 reforms before the World Bank released its latest Ease of Doing Business report. In the latest report, the reform work was done on three indicators. The process of starting a business has been simplified by reducing the company registration fees and time. Besides, electricity connection in Dhaka has been made easier through digitisation and investment in human resources. Similarly, the amount of security money has also been reduced in getting new electricity connections. At the same time, with the expansion of the Credit Information Bureau, loan-related information is becoming more readily available than before which have been reflected in the Ease of Doing Business Report 2020. Bangladesh improved its ranking by eight steps in the latest World Bank report published in 2019 which is 168 out of 190 countries that was 176 in the previous year.

Currently, the Doing Business score of Bangladesh stands at 45 out of a total of 100. Considering the individual score, most success has been achieved in the 'starting a business' indicator where the country scored 82.4 while for the others, it is 61.1 for 'dealing with construction permits', 34.9 for 'getting electricity', 29 for 'registering property', 45 for 'getting credit', 60 for 'protecting minority investors' interests, 56.1 for 'paying taxes', 31.8 for 'trading across borders', 22.2 for 'enforcing contracts' and 28.1 for 'resolving insolvency'.

### Bangladesh on the list of the best winners

Bangladesh has already made it to the list of top 20 countries that made outstanding development in creating conducive business environment.

*Currently, the Doing Business score of Bangladesh stands at 45 out of a total of 100. Considering the individual score, most success has been achieved in the 'starting a business' indicator where the country scored 82.4.*



The others on the list includes China, India, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Jordan, Kenya, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Togo, Uzbekistan and Zimbabwe.

In addition, the Ease of Doing Business 2020 report also lists 42 countries that have improved on three or more indicators through reforms during 2018/19 tenure. Bangladesh has made it on that list too.

#### Emphasis on improving in indicators

In the first year of the rankings, several countries, including Algeria, Burkina Faso, Malawi and Mali, called on the World Bank to provide specific direction for reform. The World Bank eventually developed a specific method of evaluation. Later, some countries started public campaign about their reform programmes, for example, Georgia made an open announcement to increase its position from 100 to 20 within two years. Since 2016, governments of Yemen, Portugal, Mauritius, El Salvador and India have also been campaigning for their reforms. Heads of state and government of many countries also spoke about this. For example, Indonesian President Joko Widodo announced that he would upgrade his country's position from 109th to 40th position in the Ease of Doing Business ranking. Kazakhstan's Finance Minister Erbolat Dosaev had vowed to stay in the list of top 30 countries while Serbia wants to be on top, claimed by its President Aleksandar Vučić.

This clearly shows the significance of the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking and Bangladesh puts great emphasis on the issue. The honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has instructed all to introduce necessary reforms in the business environment to place the country within two digit ranking. The reason is quite clear, the better the position in the ranking, the more it is possible to attract domestic and foreign investment.

#### BIDA- the focal point

Improving of business environment in the country is not a one-man-show. It is involved with several ministries, departments and agencies of the

government. All these organisations are working to improve the ranking since its beginning, however, for long they lacked coordination. A focal point was needed to sort out all the works. The initiative was taken in 2016 through the merger of the Board of Investment and the Privatisation Commission to form the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA). Since BIDA got the responsibility, it decides what reforms need to be brought in which ministry or department to improve the business environment. It started the work by determining the work plan accordingly. Although the work actually began in 2016, it gained momentum since 2018.

The two committees that are working specifically to achieve the double digit target 2022 are, one, the National Steering Committee chaired by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal MP and two, the National Committee for Monitoring Implementation of Ease of Doing Business Reforms (NCMID). The committee, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, provides guidance to government officials on the implementation of the reform plans adopted to improve the business environment and regularly monitors it. Besides, Mr Salman F Rahman

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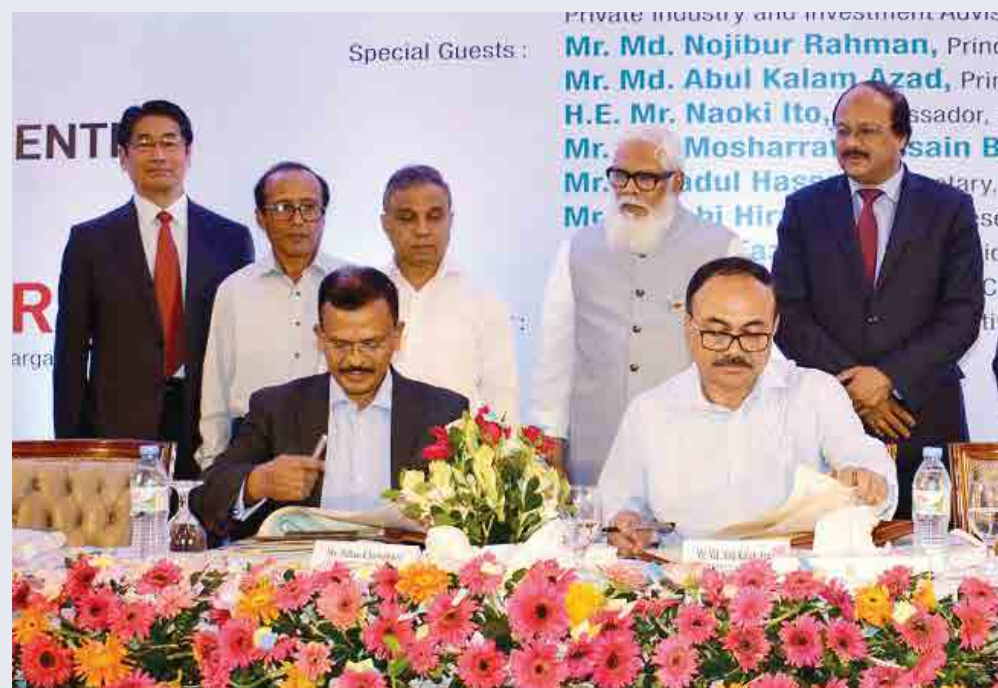
MP, Private Industry and Investment Adviser to the Prime Minister, is providing regular guidance to achieve the reform targets.

#### One Stop Service

One Stop Service (OSS) is one of the vital measures taken to make business easier. The One Stop Service Act was passed in 2018 to enable investors to get all kinds of services under one roof. In the interest of improving the living standards of the people of Bangladesh, the law provides for the timely implementation of domestic and foreign investment plans so that investors get any services, facilities, incentives, licenses, permits or clearances required for any of their proposed projects or initiatives. These include trade license, land registration, naming, environmental clearance, construction approval, electricity-gas-water connection, telephone-internet connection, explosive license and boiler certificate. In other words, there is no more need to visit different offices for initial approval and other formalities of any project.

The law includes Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority, Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority and Bangladesh Hi-Tech

In October 2020, the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) the One Stop Service (OSS) Centre to provide the investors with all necessary services from a single window.



Park Authority as the 'Central One Stop Service Authority'. BIDA started OSS on 24 February 2019 and on 10 May 2020, it published its rules and regulations for the OSS.

Initially, 150 services of 35 agencies were targeted to be provided from this single platform. Till 2019, only 18 services were provided online that added 23 more services since 2020 which has increased to 42 by now. It hopes to increase the number of services to 150 by January 2021.

In the primary stage, only government services were provided through BIDA's OSS platform, but now non-governmental organisations are also becoming more and more interested in it. BIDA has already signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry while the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka and the Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry have also expressed their aspiration to join the platform.

### Reforms and indicators

Bangladesh has undertaken major reforms in all the indicators of business facilitation which has also been reflected on various indicators. Some of these reforms are reflected in the World Bank's recent Doing Business report, as well, although that is not a complete reflection. This may be due to the limitation of World Bank's method of data collection. The matter has already been discussed with the representatives of the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Besides, many reforms have been completed in seven indicators in the fiscal year 2019-20 which have also been submitted to the World Bank, which will be reflected in the next World Bank report. The World Bank also admits that the business environment has become much stress-free for entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

#### 1. Approval to starting a business

The process of getting approval to start a business has been greatly reduced. Charges have been reduced for company name approval, certification, etc. Where in the past, it used to cost BDT 2,400 to register

*Bangladesh has undertaken major reforms in all the indicators of business facilitation which has also been reflected on various indicators. Some of these reforms are reflected in the World Bank's recent Doing Business report.*



*Bangladesh is a best place to start a business*

and it has now been reduced to BDT 1,200 only.

A circular has been issued by the Local Government Department to issue trade licenses in favour of any company registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies in Dhaka North and South City Corporation and Chattogram City Corporation area within two days of submission of application. This has been made possible by the elimination of the inspection process that preceded the issue of trade licenses in earlier days.

#### 2. Dealing with construction permits

The approval process for construction of warehouses has been reduced from 18 steps to 8 steps. CS map from Land Settlement Office in Dhaka, soil test report, project clearance from local authority such as Dhaka City Corporation Ward Counsellor, project clearance from Environment Department, fire safety clearance, load clearance from

DESCO and Power Development Board for load approval up to 250 kW, water and Sanitation clearance and inspection of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (RAJUK) will not be required any longer.

Similarly, seven processes have been cancelled for Chattogram. These are, CS map and certificate of ownership from Land Survey Department, project approval from Ward Counsellor, soil test report, fire safety clearance, clearance from Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), water and sanitation clearance and inspection by Chattogram Development Authority (CDA).

The time of the three processes that have to be done from RAJUK has also been reduced. Where it used to take 45 days to get a land use clearance from RAJUK, now it has been reduced to a maximum of seven working days. Project clearance and building construction approval will now be available in a maximum of seven



working days instead of 105 days. Applications for building construction and clearance permits can now be submitted within five working days instead of the previous 21 days.

The two CDA processes for building construction have also been shortened through reforms. Land use clearance from CDA will now be available in a maximum of seven working days instead of the previous 50 days. Permission to construct the building will be available in a maximum of seven working days instead of the previous 105 days.

### 3. Getting electricity

The suffering for getting electricity connection has also been reduced. It used to take 125 days to get electricity connection in earlier days while now it takes just 28 days.

In case of Dhaka, the cost of hiring contractors for procurement, testing and installing equipment for sub-station has been reduced from BDT 1,800,000 lac to BDT 1,238,500. In case of Chattogram, the expenditure has been brought down from BDT 1,400,000 to BDT 1,238,500. Earlier, it used to cost BDT 381,678 for submitting application and getting evaluation of BPDB for electricity connection in Chattogram while now it has been brought down to BDT 258,000 only.

In case of electricity for industrial need, pilot-based connection is given in two phases and within seven days. This means, investors are getting electricity connection faster than before.

### 4. Registering property

Registration of property has also been made easier. Time and cost have been reduced. Stamp duty on property registration has been reduced from 3% of the total value of the property to 1.5%. Separate Balam books have been introduced in the case of transfer of property from company to company. As a result, the original copy of the document is now available within seven working days. The time for mutation of property from company to company has also been reduced to seven working days.

The issuance of non-encumbrance certificate has been reduced to two working days. The registration fee has been reduced from 2% to 1% of

the value of the land. Effective and efficient grievance redress system has been introduced. Statistics on land disputes and property transfers are being released. An electronic database has been compiled on land boundaries, designs and other information.

### 5. Getting credit

Two reforms have been brought in the 'getting loan' indicator in the fiscal year 2019-20. The debtor's two-year data is now available at the Debt Information Bureau. At the same time, the coverage of information on credit has also been increased. At present, 7.12% of the adult population is covered. These are important reforms made to improve the Ease of Doing Business ranking.

### 6. Protecting of minority investors' interests

To protect interests of the investors, the shareholder rights index, disclosure index, corporate transparency index, ownership and control index and director liability index have been reformed.

#### (A) Extent of shareholder rights

**index:** No listed company can enter into an agreement to sell more than 50% of the company's tangible assets without the approval of its shareholders.

#### (B) Extent of disclosure index:

If the said company enters into such an agreement, the nature and quantity of the agreement must be communicated to the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) and the stock exchange within 30 minutes of the execution of the agreement. At the same time, the description of the assets in question and the declaration of any conflict of interest have to be published in two widely circulated Bengali and English dailies.

#### (C) Extent of ownership and control index:

The provisions of the Corporate Governance Code and other orders and notifications issued under Section 2CC of the Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969 must be complied. Otherwise, disciplinary action can be taken against any company listed on the stock exchange, such as, delisting or

suspension of transactions from the stock exchange.

#### (D) Extent of corporate transparency

**index:** In case of appointment or reappointment of a director to the board of directors of a listed company, his / her main work and involvement in other companies should be disclosed in the resume of the concerned director.

#### (E) Extent of director liability index:

Under Section 233 of the Company Act, 1994, shareholders may take legal action against the directors for any wrongdoing.

Besides, by amending the company law, the time for convening a general meeting has been increased from 14 days to 21 days. In addition, by amending the company law, the shareholders with 5% shares have been given the opportunity to submit agenda in the general meeting.

### 7. Trading across borders

There is a general notion that trade facilitation depends on trading across borders and that the responsibility lies with the port. Although the 'trading across borders' is one of the 10 indicators, the activities under this indicator are not the sole responsibility of the port. Bangladesh Customs House is also involved.

An outline is created to define what kind of reform is required for any sub-indicator of this indicator to achieve the two digit ranking. As the port is partially responsible for these reforms, so is the customs. The Chattogram Port Authority has already achieved their reform targets. However, due to the limitation in World Bank's data collection method, it was not reflected in the previous report.

The trading across borders indicator is based on the amount of time and expense it takes to complete documentation at the said port on import-export. A meeting chaired by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister's Office on 27 January 2019 set a new target for the Chattogram Port Authority to reduce time and cost for export (Border compliance) and Documentary compliance. The target was to reduce the export time (Border compliance) from 168 hours to 36 hours as well as reduce the cost of exports (Border compliance)

*The suffering for getting electricity connection has also been reduced. It used to take 125 days to get electricity connection in earlier days while now it takes just 28 days.*

from USD 408 to USD 200. Similarly, the cost for documentation of export (Documentary compliance) was asked to be reduced from USD 225 to USD 100 on average.

The Chattogram Port Authority and the BIDA have been working on the issue for a year. Later, on 27 February 2020, a World Bank team visited Chattogram port. The team monitored the containers there, recorded the export time (Border Compliance) and gets an average time of 22 hours. Besides, the World Bank team consulted with stakeholders at the Chattogram Custom House. They record the cost of export (Border compliance) stays between USD 200 and USD 210. Similarly, the documented cost of export (Documentary compliance) varied between USD 80 and USD 100.

However, there is a confusion about the HS (Harmonised System) codes of import and export products (Garments and auto parts), especially the HS codes of auto-parts. BIDA and customs authority want a solution to get rid of this confusion.

A meeting with all stakeholders was held on 29 October 2020 presided

*In case of export, time is spent in several steps. According to the latest calculations, it takes 2 hours for the product to be packaged in the factory for transportation. If the factory is located in Dhaka, it takes another 10 hours to reach the off-dock of Chattogram port.*

over by the Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority on the latest developments. Representatives of BGMEA, BKMEA, Shipping Agents, Freight Forwarders, BICDA, Truck and Covered Van Owners Association, C&F Agents Association and Chattogram Chamber and Commerce and Industries took part in the meeting. Export time and cost were finalised after detailed discussion. At the same time, it was said that it was not clear which product of Bangladesh will be considered in the case of export due to the problem of HS code. However, ready-made garments of Bangladesh are being considered as the main export item in this case.

## **(A) Spent time for export**

In case of export, time is spent in several steps. According to the latest calculations, it takes 2 hours for the product to be packaged in the factory for transportation. If the factory is located in Dhaka, it takes another 10 hours to reach the off-dock of Chattogram port. However, if the factory is located in Chattogram, then it takes 3 hours to reach the off-dock of Chattogram port. It takes

24 hours for a product to enter into a container from off-dock. Then, it takes 2 to 4 hours to take the container from the off-dock to the port gate. And it takes 22 hours to take the product on-board a ship from the port gate. In other words, the time required for bringing goods from Dhaka factory to its shipping at Chittagong port is 64 to 68 hours and for factories in Chattogram 57 to 61 hours.

The important point to note here is that the whole process is not the sole concern of the Chattogram Port Authority as the factory authority to the transport owners, workers and several other parties are also involved with it. The port falls under the jurisdiction of only a portion, especially from the gate to the shipping. The Chattogram Port Authority is taking less time than its target in there.

## **(B) Export expenditure**

Costs for export of goods (Border compliance) are basically spent in five steps. One of these is unloading goods from trucks and storing them in off-dock warehouses that costs at an average BDT 1,500 or USD 17.65

*Ready-made garments of Bangladesh are being considered as the main export item through Chattogram port.*







The pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh provides 97% of the total medicinal requirement of the local market.

per 15 metric ton of product at BDT 3 per 500 cartons. And for landing, the cost per 15 metric tons is BDT 3,105 or USD 36.9 at the rate of BDT 207 per metric ton. It costs BDT 4,500 or USD 53.6 to containerise the goods from off-dock. Then, from the port gate to on-board a ship it costs USD 65. The total cost is USD 173.35, which is much less than the target of USD 200. However, the Chattogram Port Authority gets USD 65 out of them and it is fixed. Considering this calculation, the export cost (Border compliance) for the port is much less than the World Bank account. Because in the Doing Business 2020 report, the export cost (Border compliance) showed USD 406 as export expenditure.

### (C) Document processing fees

Fees are charged in a total of six steps for processing documents. These are Bill of Export, Off-Dock Permission, Email or Photocopy, Bangladesh Bank, Utilisation Declaration (UD) and others. In all, in case of exports, BDT 5,000 or USD 59 is collected in bulk for processing documents. However, in the latest report, the World Bank has estimated the cost in this sector at USD 225. Nonetheless, there is an unresolved issue here and that is whether the C&F commission will be included in this expenditure or not.

### Reforms in the remaining three indicators

‘Paying taxes’, ‘enforcing contracts’ and ‘resolving insolvency’ were not reformed last year. However, the reform of these indicators started this year.

The National Board of Revenue has already reduced the corporate tax rate from 35% to 32.5%. Online income tax return and tax correction system will be introduced next year and steps have been taken to include e-payment via the online tax payment system.

A joint district judge or a senior assistant judge is being considered for the settlement of commercial disputes in the implementation of the contracts. The goal is to make it more powerful in the future by bringing it under digitisation through dedicated courts of which, one will be in Dhaka and the other in Chattogram. However, in the long run, the law ministry plans to set up a separate court to settle commercial disputes, because, according to the IFC, it takes an average of more than 1,400 days to complete a case. But if it takes more than 1,300 days, no point will be given in this indicator. So, the goal is to bring it down to 600 days.

Keeping in line with the Companies Act, the Bankruptcy Act, 1997 is

being amended to include provisions for effective restructuring, enhancing the rights of creditors in bankruptcy proceedings and improving the administrative system of debtors’ property. The Financial Institutions Division of the Ministry of Finance is responsible for it. IFC and BIDA are providing technical assistance in there.

Apart from this, a new law called Secured Transaction Act has been enacted to protect the interests of the investors to be supervised by the Financial Institutions Department and Bangladesh Bank. The law is being enacted so that small entrepreneurs can take loans with movable property collateral.

### End words

The Doing Business ranking process also has some limitations, which require consideration when interpreting data. First, the data of the top business city is collected in most countries and it, most of the time, does not truly represent other parts of the country. Second, data collection usually takes into account Limited Liability Company of a certain size, which does not represent other businesses. Above all, scoring in the indicators is mainly based on a lot of assumptions. Respondents also answer time-related questions on various indicators at their own discretion.

Despite these limitations, indicators of Ease of Doing Business are now universally accepted for determining the business environment in a country. Doing Business Index helps investors to decide in investing in a country. In order to attract investors in Bangladesh, the government is working on a large scale to improve the business environment through various reforms. The reform plan and its implementation so far clearly show that Bangladesh is on the way to take a big leap in the ranking of Doing Business.

*Despite these limitations, indicators of Ease of Doing Business are now universally accepted for determining the business environment in a country. Doing Business Index helps investors to decide in investing in a country.*

**Jinarul Islam**  
Reporter

# ‘Boosting Business is not a one man show’

*To raise the ranking of Bangladesh in the Ease of Doing Business, different ministries, departments and agencies of the government are carrying out several reforms. In there, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) is working as the coordinator. Now, how are they doing this? What benefits could come out from these reforms?*

**Md. Sirajul Islam**, Executive Chairman of BIDA unfolds the story for our readers in a close conversation with *Bandarbarta* Correspondent Tazul Haque and Jinarul Islam.

**BIDA is closely working with the World Bank to advance the Ease of Doing Business ranking of the country. Would you tell us a little more about the way it actually works?**

Well, one needs to follow some structured rules while working with the Ease of Doing Business issue. For this, the World Bank has created a table with 10 different indicators. Now the point is, if we collect data from sources all across the country, the workload becomes too heavy. So they have minimized it to the local jurisdiction, like, choosing one or more than one economically bustling cities. In Bangladesh they have chosen Dhaka, for it's the capital as well as the economically most vibrant city in country, and Chattogram, as it's the trade capital and because here lies the principal sea port of the country.

Each directory also needs to be approved by the World Bank on the basis of a few assumptions which are actually much smaller.





Generally, we try to convince our respondents that, this is your perimeter and your answer must contain within this perimeter. But they often tend to answer on a broader scale. However, those who are at the top in the ranking list, they have formed a target group and actually procure the answers right through them.

**As the central coordinator of these reform works, what are the roles BIDA is playing and in what different ways?**

The issue of Ease of Doing Business lies with the entire government involving with it the different ministries, departments and agencies of the government. This is not a one-man-show. And since, we must follow certain hierarchy to carry out an operation, BIDA has been assigned with the responsibility. BIDA acts as the focal point of Ease of Doing Business. In 2019, Bangladesh was one of the 20 best countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Index for its business reforms. The country ranked at 168, toppling 8 steps from its previous position, among 190 countries in the world.

I think this is a plausible achievement for BIDA. We made visible progress on three indicators in the 2019 report although we submitted for five. Last year we did a lot of work and submitted for seven indicators by the 30th of April. We then hoped we would be able to improve our rankings from the 168th position, the idea was to get below 150. Unfortunately, due to some internal issues, the World Bank did not publish the report in 2020. That is why, we cannot say at what position we are standing at the moment. In any case, the Honorable Prime Minister has instructed us to reach a double digit ranking by 2021 and we are moving forward to reach that goal. And I believe, as a result of these BIDA initiatives, our investors have already begun to taste the fruits.

The only sectors that could not achieve the expected reforms are the on the loan-grant, contract implementation and bankruptcy resolution index. This time we have

put great emphasis on them and greatly hoping to reach the double digit ranking next year.

**Bandarbarta: BIDA is working to bring down all the different services under one roof. The One Stop Service aims to connect more than 150 services of various government agencies and institutions. Would you tell us about the progress it has made so far?**

This is the age of the Digital Technology and BIDA is quite on par with it. The One Stop Service Act was passed in 2018 and BIDA commenced its own one stop service in February of 2019. Till the end of the year, we could only provide 18 services through online and that was e-payment enabled as well. In 2020, we added 23 additional services to this platform which eventually increased to 41 by now. We plan to provide 150 services by January, to clinch another great achievement on our part.

It was initially calculated that, 150 services from 35 companies would be offered from this single platform. But the situation is changing as the number of companies are increasing since the non-governmental organizations in increasing number are also being associated with it. For example, we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry for providing two services, their membership and Country of Origin. Chattogram Chamber and the Metropolitan Chamber have also shown keen interest in joining us.

When once, we are able to provide all these digital services in the digital age, I think the speed of work for reaching the BIDA goal, to increase investment, will greatly augment.

**Bangladesh has reached the 68th position in the ranking of 2020, toppling 8 steps since its last; how did you make it possible?**

The World Bank has a big role to play in this; Such as, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) is working with us. And

we have come up with a comprehensive plan of what needs to be done following the assumptions of each indicator, what the opportunities lie there to improve; which needs to be done immediately, and which in the medium term and which in the long run. We are moving forward according to that plan. Like, take the strategy we adopted last year; As we see, some of the reforms can be done with very little effort and at low cost. With that in mind, we submitted reforms for seven indices. In a word, we did it according to a specific plan and strategy and we will continue to do so in the coming future.

Frankly, here I must mention the contributions of the two committees who did us a great help. I will also mention the great support made by Mr. Salman Fazlur Rahman MP, Adviser to the Honorable Prime Minister on Private Industry and Investment. He is playing an important role here as he has a great deal of personal experience in global trade and business which enriched us to a great extent.

One of the two committees working on Ease of Doing Business is the National Committee for Monitoring Implementation of Ease of Doing Business Reforms (NCMID), headed by the Cabinet Secretary with all the concerned Secretaries as its members. BIDA is in charge of the Secretariat. Even in the midst of this pandemic, we continue to hold regular meetings at least once every two months.

The other is the National Steering Committee headed by the Finance Minister. Under the current pandemic scenario, we did have one virtual meeting of this committee. As the Executive Chairman of BIDA, I am the Member Secretary of this committee, from where we get all our instructions. The Finance Minister also gave us some excellent guidelines which is a wonderful job. As a result of these strategic actions, I definitely believe we will be able to go a long way by the next year.

*Bangladesh was one of the 20 best countries in the World Bank's Doing Business Index for its business reforms. The country ranked at 168, toppling 8 steps from its previous position, among 190 countries in the world.*



**The target is set to be in the double digit ranking by 2021 and that actually requires extensive reforms. Targets for the concerned organizations have also been fixed. As we know, Chattogram Port Authority has already reached their target. How about the other ones?**

The growth of the other bodies is also promising. Since the beginning, there has been a lot of progress in the area of launching a new business. It usually takes a lot of certifications to start a business and a great lot of time is actually wasted there. We are trying to reduce this time by engaging various organizations although most of these organizations, especially the City Corporation, are not affiliated with us. Nonetheless, they readily process the applications for registration within two days that are sent from us.

We have also asked to provide the clearance required by the Department of Environment within the stipulated time. And they've already joined us via the online platform.

There's been progress in building indicators too. Since these are

*I believe we can move forward by working on all the indicators in a planned manner, and other agencies are helping us a lot. I would say that government agencies are now fully prepared for Ease of Doing Business but there is still a lot of works to be done.*

mainly warehouses, many of them have been exempted from the certification process, resulting in saving time and money.

Some landmark measures have also been taken in the land registration sector. This will greatly reduce the time usually being spent for land registration and declaration of names. Apart from this, separate Balam books have also been issued for the transfer of land from company to company that applies not only to Dhaka or Chattogram, but everywhere across the country.

The three indicators that we could not work on last year have been undertaken this year and will continue until 30 April. A District Joint Judge or Senior Assistant Judge will be assigned to settle the commercial disputes. It will be further strengthened by bringing the procedure under digitization through dedicated courts.

One of them will be in Dhaka and the other in Chattogram. However, the law ministry has long term plans to set up separate courts to resolve commercial disputes. As we know, in case of an IFC, it takes an average

of more than 1400 days to complete. But when it takes more than 1300 days, you add no number to your credit. For this, we have set the goal to complete this within 600 days.

We have taken effective initiatives to amend the bankruptcy law to resolve the sickening bankruptcy. The Financial Institutions Division of the Ministry of Finance is doing it. BIDA along with IFC is providing technical assistance in this regard. We have taken initiative to enact another law called the Secured Transactions Act which is being done through the Financial Institutions Department and Bangladesh Bank so that small entrepreneurs can take loans by pledging movable property.

I believe we can move forward by working on all the indicators in a planned manner, and other agencies are helping us a lot. I would say that government agencies are now fully prepared for Ease of Doing Business but there is still a lot of works to be done. Although we began this, we could not do it effectively primarily due to the dreadful pandemic situation. We must however not forget, the main task lies here is to inform the beneficiaries for whom these reforms are being made. That's why we are going to run a series of workshops with them, if not physically, then virtually.

**What about the data procuring system of the World Bank?**

I do not want to raise any question about the World Bank's data collection method. Because, their method, applies the same for all countries across the world.

**Thank you so much for your valuable time.**

Thank you and the wonderful readers of Bandarbartā.





## Year Review 2020

*The New Year comes by pushing the old year into the pages of history. Thousands of small and big news are made throughout the gone year. Some were happy, some were fearful. And, some news went lost in the abyss of time. Some shows the path of the future. A collection of these events leaves an eternal impression on the mind; it becomes infallible in the memory. In this regard, CPA News has shed light on some of the news which made headlines in the maritime sector of Bangladesh in the year 2020.*

### January

#### COVID-19 warning at Chattogram port

January, 2020. COVID-19 had not yet reached widespread levels. COVID-19 positive patients had not been identified in Bangladesh. However, foreseeing the future, the Chattogram Port Authority issued a COVID-19 warning from an emergency meeting. This was to prevent the virus from spreading in the country through arrived ships at the port. As part of this, a special team from the port hospital was set up to take care of sailors infected with COVID-19. The ship's captains and agents were instructed to make an announcement about any suspected COVID-19 patients as soon as a ship came in the outer-anchorage. Besides, 100% scanning of sailors from East Asia was made compulsory. Chattogram Port Authority has been taking effective measures from the onset of the crisis to ensure that the infected person stays in isolation, maintains social distancing, uses a mask to prevent infection and keeps the workplace clean.

### February

#### No 'container ship' waits at Chattogram port

9 February 2020. A different view of familiar outer-anchorage of Chattogram port was seen. No container ship was waiting at the outer-anchorage. In other words, the average waiting time of container ship had become 'zero' days, which was a big achievement for the port. This had been made possible by the installation of 10 new quay gantry cranes at the

port, procurement of new container handling equipment, improved management, automation, capacity building and the decrease in import due to lockdown and shutdown to limit global COVID-19 outbreak.

#### Overcoming the COVID-19 fear, goods started coming from China

Most of the seaports in China have been reopened after the trepidation of the Novel Coronavirus. Most of production factories have also been operational, though full-scale production has not yet started in all the factories. Meanwhile, ships with raw materials for the textile industry, capital machineries and various industrial and consumer goods from China have started coming to the country.

After the port reopening in China, the first ship loaded with goods arrives at the jetty of Chattogram port on 3 March 2020. The ship 'Cape

*Chattogram Port Authority has been taking effective measures from the onset of the crisis to ensure that the infected person stays in isolation, maintains social distancing, uses a mask to prevent infection and keeps the workplace clean.*

Orient' started sailing with loaded containers from the Shanghai port on 17 February 2020, after the Chinese ports were reopened on 16 February 2020. The ship reached at the outer anchorage of Chattogram port on 29 February 2020.

The ship berthed at the port jetty on 3 March 2020. The ship carried various types of fabrics, capital machinery and chemical products for the garments industry of Bangladesh.

### April

#### Task force to handle congestion at Chattogram port

Under normal circumstances, 30-32 thousand TEU containers are stored in the yard of Chattogram port, but by May 2020, the number exceeded 50 thousand TEUs, whereas the total container capacity of the port is 49,018 TEUs. It was a troublesome situation for the Chattogram Port Authority in unloading containers from foreign ships due to congestion in the yard. Since the containers carrying imported goods could not be unloaded, the containers loaded with export goods also had to face difficulties to get loaded on the ship. All in all, a nonstandard condition was created in the port. To handle the situation, an emergency meeting was held on 26 April 2020 to form a task force comprising representatives of various agencies and organisations, including customs, port-users, police and private ICDs. The task force was empowered to take any necessary steps to handle container congestion.

Two Bangladeshi flag carrier container ships owned by Kamaphuli Group set sail for Singapore and Malaysia after a 10-year hiatus.





## May

### The port overcame COVID-19 fear

Container unloading from Chattogram port dropped uncharacteristically after the announcement of general holiday due to limit the COVID-19 outbreak. This situation was caused by the reluctance of the importers to take delivery from the port. But the condition has been changing since May 2020 due to the initiatives taken by Chattogram Port Authority and one of them was reducing fees for taking early delivery from the port. On 2 May 2020, a total of 8,420 TUE containers were handled from the ship in a single day. However, before this initiative, about 1,700 TEUs were handled in the port on a daily basis. From May 2020, the number has raised about 4000 TEUs daily. Container handling also continued to grow as space was emptied through daily deliveries. Besides, the workers have also started to work in shift during the general holidays to keep the port operational.

## June

### Bangladesh flag carrier container ships back in business at Chattogram port after long 10 years

In June 2020, two Bangladeshi flag carrier container ships owned by Karnaphuli Group set sail for Singapore and Malaysia after a 10-year hiatus. HR Lines Ltd, an affiliate of the Karnaphuli Group, is operating the two ships – Sahare and Sarera as the feeder operator.

A total of 84 foreign ships under the management of 22 feeder operators are operating at Chattogram port. The said foreign flag carrier ships used to carry goods from Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and China.

Bangladeshi flag carrier ship operation was stopped in 2010 at Chattogram port by stopping the operation of Bangladeshi flag carrier ships of HRC Shipping Company at that time.

Earlier, QC Shipping Company stopped the operation of their Bangladeshi flag carrier ships in 2007. As a result, there were no Bangladeshi flag carrier container ships at Chattogram port to carry goods in containers in last 10 years.

### Growth continues despite COVID-19 outbreak

2020 was an uncommon year. All sectors of the world started to

*In this time of crisis, stakeholders stood by the port as the port officials and employees kept on providing uninterrupted services.*

experience turmoil due to COVID-19 outbreak. And Chattogram port is not immune to the pandemic. However, the port did not take long time to cope with the threat of COVID-19. The port has been able to sustain growth in cargo handling till the end of 2019-20 fiscal years. Chattogram Port Authority handled a total of 101,565,272 tons of cargo in the above mentioned fiscal year. In the same period of the previous financial year, the amount of cargo handled by the port was 98,240,655 tons that indicates a growth of 3.4% in cargo handling. At the same time, container handling at the port has been 3,004,142 TEUs. And the number of container handling in the previous financial year was 2,919,023 TEUs. In other words, container handling increased by 2.9% in 2019-20 fiscal year. Chattogram port has also seen a growth of 1.75% in the 2019-20 fiscal year in ship handling. Although 3,699 ships were handled during March-June of 2018-19 fiscal year, this time the number has increased to 3,764.

## July

### Experimental transit to India using Chattogram port

Memorandum of Understanding was signed in June 2015. After the Cabinet's approval on 17 September 2018, on 25 October of that year, Bangladesh and India signed the 'Agreement on the use of Chattogram and Mongla ports for movement of goods to and from India'. After the signing of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on 5 October 2019, waiting came to end in July 2020. Experimental transit to India using

Chattogram port was conducted in July 2020. On 16 July 2020, four containers of goods were loaded from the Shyamaprasad Mukherjee port on the MV Senjuti. From there, the ship loaded the goods of Bangladeshi traders at Haldia port and left on 19 July 2020 and reached Chattogram port on 21 July 2020. After the formalities at the port and customs, the consignment of goods was taken to Akhaura land port in four prime mover trailers by road from the port. On 23 July 2020, the Chief Minister of Tripura Biplob Kumar Dev officially accepted the Indian goods.

### Chattogram port holds new record in export

The export through Chattogram port has set a new record despite the COVID-19 pandemic. In July this year, 72,000 TEU containers of goods were exported through this port, highest in the last 18 months. Bangladesh is overcoming the financial obstacles laid by the COVID-19 pandemic. Not just in exports, the country sees good come back in import sector as well. Traders say that the Prime Minister's bold decision to open up factories and businesses amid the pandemic has boosted exports.

The Main Line Operators (MLO), who are responsible for transporting goods from Chattogram port to various destinations, informed that 61,700 TEU containers were transported through Chattogram port in March. Due to the COVID-19 impact, exports came down to 13,000 TEU containers in April. The number increased slightly to 30,000 TEUs in May. In June, it increased to 50,000 TEUs. In July,

*The work for installing a tube under the Karnaphuli River to make tunnel road was completed on 2 August 2020, and boring for installing the second tube started on 12 December 2020.*





the number increased to 72,359 TEU containers - the highest among the first six months of the current year. This picture clearly illustrates that that Bangladesh has been overcoming the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

## August

### Chattogram port ranks 58th among world's top 100 busiest container ports

Chattogram port, the country's gateway of overseas trade, has advanced 6 steps in terms of annual handling of containers in this year's Lloyd's List, world's oldest journal on port and shipping.

The Port secured the 58th position among the 100 busiest container handling ports of the world in 2020. In 2019, the port was on the 64th position in the list of 'One Hundred Ports', prepared by Lloyd's List, the famous maritime journal.

Shanghai Port of China secured the top position in the list of 2020. It also topped the list in the two previous years.

As per Lloyd's List of 2019 the Chattogram port handled 3,088,187 TEUs of containers and in 2018 the Chattogram port handled 2,93,996 TEUs of containers. The growth rate was annual 6.3% container handling.

Increased foreign trade in recent years has been hailed by the port users for such growth in transport of containers through the port.

The Chattogram port entered the list first time in 2009 securing 98th position.

## September

### Matarbari deep sea port will be operational by 2025

Bangladesh's first ever deep sea port, Matarbari port will be made functional by 2025, said the officials at the contract signing ceremony for the Consultancy Services of Matarbari Port Development Project held at Hotel Intercontinental, Dhaka on 23 September 2020.

Planning Minister MA Mannan MP and State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury virtually joined the ceremony as chief guest and special guest respectively. Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, secretary of the Shipping Ministry chaired the programme.



Chattogram port secured the 58th position among the 100 busiest container handling ports of the world in 2020.

Senior officials from the government, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Embassy of Japan were present on the occasion.

Two contracts were signed between Chattogram Port Authority with the Nippon Koei JV and Roads and Highways Department (RHD) with Oriental Consultants Global Company Ltd.

Matarbari Port Development Project is an important Fast Track Project of the Government of Bangladesh. This project is an outcome of the concept of "BIG - B" (The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt) jointly announced by the premiers of Bangladesh and Japan in September 2014.

The objective of the project is to develop a reliable and low - cost logistic network for seaborne cargo/ freight handling and transporting facilities to maintain competitiveness of Bangladeshi products in the global market.

## October

### First online auction of Chattogram customs house

Chattogram customs house held its first online auction on 27 October 2020 as it sought to offer a simplified and transparent participatory process to draw more bidders, attain higher prices and free up space at the port's yards.

Some 547 tons of unclaimed goods was auctioned off, including 262 tons of scrap iron, 169 tons of soda ash, 87 tons of ginger, 12 tons of dates

and 11 tons of fabrics.

With physical tendering no longer necessary, bidders had to submit documents and place their offers using an e-auction link on Bangladesh Customs' website. For this, they got two days, 25 October and 26 October 2020.

Through the electronic process, the customs sought to attain prices higher than the reserve value, which is 60% of the price of the goods plus tax. It has already made the reserve value public.

Most of the items had been imported through the Chattogram port between 2010 and 2018 and the importers have not taken the delivery on time.

The customs law states that importers have to receive goods within 30 days after they arrive at the port. Defaulting on the timeline results in the customs authority starting the procedures to auction the goods.

## November

### Bangladesh calls for strategic partnership for marine scientific research in deep sea

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York Ambassador Rabab Fatima has said they need an equitable share of marine resources, especially in areas beyond national jurisdiction and in ISA controlled areas to maximise the full potentials of the Blue Economy.

Ambassador Fatima reiterated Bangladesh's deep interest to partner with the International Seabed

*Matarbari Port Development Project is an important Fast Track Project of the Government of Bangladesh. This project is an outcome of the concept of "BIG - B" (The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt) jointly announced by the premiers of Bangladesh and Japan in September 2014.*



Authority (ISA) and other stakeholders in conducting joint research in the deep sea. Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's vision 2041 to make Bangladesh a developed country, Ambassador Fatima mentioned that Bangladesh is investing heavily in capacity building for the effective utilisation and scientific management of its marine resources to support the achievement of that vision.

## December

### The first ship at Matarbari

The first ship has moored at the deep-sea port in Matarbari in Cox's Bazar.

The foreign ship reached the Matarbari Deep-sea Port as the authority conducted an experimental capacity test of the port under construction.

Loaded with steam generator parts, the Panama flag carrier "Venus Triumph" docked around 10:20am, sailing off from Indonesia's Pt. Pelabuhan Cilegon Mandiri port on December 22.

With the aim to navigate the ship, the Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh (CPGCBL) created a 14-kilometer channel with the width of 250 meter and depth of 18-meter. The ship entered into the channel from the Bay of Bengal.

### Mongla port sees record ship anchoring in December

Mongla port, the second largest sea port of the country, witnessed anchoring of at least 117 foreign ships throughout the month of December 2020 breaking all previous records. The record touched a milestone in the monthly statistics in last seven decades after establishing the port.

Ships mostly contained car, coal, fertiliser cement clinker, LPG crying vessels, ceramic materials, various raw materials and equipment of Rooppur nuclear plant and railway line project etc.

A total of nine development projects and four ADB programmes were implemented from 2009 to 2017 involving BDT 4.54 billion aiming to enhance capacity of the Mongla port.

### Construction of Bangabandhu Tunnel gaining momentum

Construction of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel, the first underwater road network in



Padma Bridge, a lifelong dream for the southern districts of the country, has become fully visible following the installation of its last span.

South Asia, has gained momentum after most of the foreign engineers and officials returned to their duty in Chattogram.

According to the progress report, the bore for installing a tube under the Karnaphuli River was completed on 2 August 2020, and boring for installing the second tube started on 12 December 2020. Each of the two tubes will have a two-lane road – making the tunnel a four-lane road.

The main tunnel's length is 3.5km, of which 2.5km is under the river. Boring work for 2.5km of one of the tubes is already completed and the installation of the tube is underway. The boring work for installing the second tube has already started and the overall progress stood at 61%. Around 273 Chinese and 654 Bangladeshi engineers, officials and workers have been working in order to complete the project by December 2022.

### Country's longest bridge and other mega projects

The much-awaited Padma Bridge, a lifelong dream for the southern districts of the country, has become fully visible following the installation of its last span.

The Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project (PMBP) authorities installed the 41st and last span of the 6.15km-long bridge on 10 December 2020. As of now, 82% of the total construction work has been done and 91% of the construction work of the main bridge is completed. The country's longest bridge, which has been funded domestically, will connect the capital with 21 southern

districts through road and railways. The current deadline for the PMBP is June 2021, meaning that the project is going to see another revision for time extension. The project cost rose to BDT 30,193 crore after several revisions.

Not only the Padma Bridge, other mega projects of the government are also moving forward at the same pace. Construction work of the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP) is progressing with an aim to open traffic on the day of opening of the Padma Bridge.

However, according to the project officials, progress of the project is around 35%. The deadline for the 68km-long rail link project between Dhaka and Jashore has been set December 2024.

More than 31% of the construction work of the Rooppur nuclear power plant has already been completed. The reactor of the first unit of the power plant, the pressure vessel has also arrived. The pace of work has also increased a lot. If this pace and momentum continues, the concerned people are hoping that the project will be completed within the stipulated time.

Despite the construction work of the metro rail project being suspended due to the coronavirus pandemic for a few months, the works have gained momentum since May 2020 following some steps by the authorities. Altogether 53% of the project has been completed. Construction works of three stations out of nine between Uttara North and Agargaon have been almost done.

*About 40,000 people, including port officials and their families live in the port area. The entire population receives health care from Chattogram port hospital.*



## ➤ Bangladesh lodges amended submission to UN on Bay of Bengal outer continental shelf



Bangladesh lodged an amended submission to the UN on the limits of its outer continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal on 23 October, 2020.

Once approved by the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) of the UN, the country will be able to explore and exploit natural resources on the seabed and subsoil in those areas.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima, handed over the submission to Dmitry Gonchar, Acting Director of the Division of Ocean Affairs and Law of the Sea, in New York.

Rabab Fatima expressed her expectation that the amended submission will be included in the agenda of the Commission in its next session.

The original submission to the CLCS was made on February 25, 2011. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the maritime boundaries of Bangladesh with Myanmar and India were delimited in 2012 and 2014, through an international adjudication process.

Settling a longstanding India-Bangladesh maritime boundary dispute, a Hague-based international court awarded Bangladesh 19,467 square kilometres out of 25,602 sq km disputed area in the Bay of Bengal.

On the other hand, the German-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea sustained Bangladesh's claim to 200 nautical miles of exclusive economic zone and territorial rights in the Bay of Bengal against Myanmar's claim.

The amended submission has been made to reflect the successful outcomes of those international processes.

As per rule, a sub-commission will subsequently be formed to examine the information provided by Bangladesh and make necessary recommendations on the limits of Bangladesh's outer continental shelf in the Bay of Bengal.

Admiral Khurshed Alam (Retd), Secretary at the Maritimes Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who led an expert team to prepare the amended submission, said there is no problem for exploring and exploiting the resources in the Bangladesh's territories in the Bay of Bengal after the international court's verdict.

## ➤ 11 more services of BEZA OSS centre come under online

To further augment scope of foreign investment in the country, 11 more services of the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) One Stop Service (OSS) Centre have come under online for ensuring quicker services for the investors of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs).

The services are titled Application for EIA, ECC (Red), ECC Renewal (Red), ECC (Green), ECC Renewal (Green), ECC (Orange A), Renewal ECC (Orange A), ECC (Orange B), Renewal ECC (Orange B), Approval of Repatriation of Technical Knowhow and Assistance Fee and Approval of Repatriation of Royalty.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus on 14 November 2020 inaugurated the services as the Chief Guest at a function at Sonargaon Hotel in the city while Executive Chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Md Sirazul Islam, Land Secretary Md Maksudur Rahman, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Secretary Ziaul Hasan and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Dr Rubana Hoque attended the function as special guests.

In his speech, Ahmad Kaikaus said the present government is determined to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous nation by 2041.

BEZA Executive Chairman Paban Chowdhury presided over the function.

## ➤ GPH Ispat started billet export to China



Steel manufacturer GPH Ispat started billet export to China on 19 November, 2020 with the first shipment of 25,000 tons worth USD 10.17 million through bulk cargoes.

'It is the biggest ever shipment of

raw materials for rod by any Bangladeshi company,' said Md Alamgir Kabir, Chairman of GPH Ispat.

'After fulfilling our country's demand, we are now exporting billets in large volumes.'

The government has taken several initiatives to give a boost to the sector that can ensure easy access of the entrepreneurs in the global market, Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun said at the virtual inauguration ceremony as the Chief Guest.

The minister also urged the entrepreneurs of the steel industry to make an effective contribution to the national economy by increasing the production of MS Billet and its export to the world market. The steel-maker's disclosure came a month after it expanded its annual billet production capacity from 2.1 lac tons in 2018 to more than 10 lac tons this year.





## ▶▶ Govt publishes list of 8,256 products duty-free in China

The Ministry of Commerce on 11 October, 2020 published a list of 8,256 Bangladeshi products that China recently exempted from tariffs.

The ministry published the list in English on its web portal, three months after the world's second largest economy offered a zero tariff facility on 97% of items imported from Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has 8,549 products in its basket. Among them, China offered duty-free and quota free access to 8,256 products – including ready-made garments, fish, agricultural products, and agro-processing products – on 16 June this year.

According to the Chinese embassy, Bangladesh exported goods worth over USD 1 billion to China in 2019. Of them, textiles, clothing and accessories accounted for USD 590 million or about 57% of the total exports to China.

Apparel exporters said they have the potential to export more as production costs in China have increased significantly because of a hike in the minimum wage to around USD 300 – which is one-third of that amount in Bangladesh.

## ▶▶ BGMEA incentives for foreign and joint venture entities



The apex garment manufacturers body in Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), is for special export incentives for foreign and domestic joint venture entities that are

located in the country's Export Processing Zones or EPZs.

According to media reports, BGMEA President Dr Rubana Huq has reportedly written a letter in this direction to Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi seeking 1% special incentives for 100% foreign as well as joint venture (between domestic and foreign entities) companies. The traders' body has reportedly underlined that owing to the fallouts of the coronavirus pandemic, type A and B companies which export garments to the USA and Canada, including the EU, and located at EPZs and Economic Zones (EZs) need 1% special cash assistance.

It may be mentioned here that there are three types of factories housed in the EPZs – type A, type B and type C. Type A are those that are 100% foreign-owned, as well as owned by non-resident Bangladeshis, type B factories are those set up under a joint venture between overseas and Bangladeshi entrepreneurs and type C consists of 100% Bangladeshi-owned enterprises. According to reports, type C factories are getting 1% cash incentive for exports to the EU, USA and Canada from the fiscal year 2019-20, which is in addition to the benefits.

## ▶▶ Construction for Matarbari Port Development Project begins

The works of Matarbari Port Development Project at a cost of Tk 17,775 crore began on 16 November, 2020.

Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad disclosed this at a press briefing, after the first meeting with Nippon Koei, a Japanese consultant for the Matarbari Port Development Project, on Bandar Bhaban premises in the port city.

He said that the Matarbari port, first ever deep-sea port of the country, will be operational by the end of 2025 or the beginning of 2026 and it will boost trade through the Chattogram port.

Earlier, the government appointed Nippon Koei through a contract, to provide consultancy services for the construction of a deep-sea port to handle its growing external trade.

The firm will work on details design, tender assistance, and construction supervision for marine and civil works of the JICA-funded proposed deep seaport at Matarbari area in south-eastern Bangladesh. In the next phase, the container terminal will be expanded to 70 hectares, with a 1,850-metre berth, and handle 2.8 million TEUs per year.

The port chairman said that the deep seaport will have a 16-metre water draft and it will be able to accommodate 8,500 TEU post-Panamax vessels, lessening Bangladesh's dependence on the feeder vessels to ferry export-import goods from different foreign ports.

## ▶▶ Incentive for big industries reaches BDT 40,000 crore

Another incentive of BDT 7,000 crore has been announced recently by Bangladesh Bank for the big industries. Total incentives for the big industries have reached now BDT 40,000 crore.

A statement was issued by the Banking Regulations and Policy Division of the Central Bank that the Prime Minister would provide a low-interest loan facility to revive the country's economic activities, keep workers employed and keep entrepreneurs competitive.

Under this, a package of BDT 30,000 crore was announced to provide loan facilities as working capital for the institutions. Later, the financial assistance package of BDT 30,000 crore was increased by BDT 3,000 crore to BDT 33,000 crore to pay salaries and allowances to workers and employees working in export-oriented industries. The package has been increased by another BDT 7,000 crore to BDT 40,000 crore.

Under the package, the Bangladesh Economic Zone Authority (BEZA), Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) and Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority have spent BDT 6,000 crore.

## ► Bangladesh retains its position as the largest ship recycling nation



Bangladesh's share in breaking ships, globally, has gone up by around 8%, with the country accounting for more than half the ships dismantled across the world last year, according to a report.

With this improvement, the country has also retained its position, like last year's, as the largest ship recycler in the world.

In 2019, Bangladesh captured the world market by dismantling around 55% of ships, confirmed the latest report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In 2018, it dismantled over 47% of the globe's ships. Industry players have called for the government's cooperation to retain this upward trend as the shipbreaking industry has started to recover after long ups and downs. Bangladesh received 6,682 thousand gross tons of ships for recycling last year, of which over 51% were bulk carriers, 19% oil tankers and over 15% container ships, said Unctad's annual flagship report titled 'Review of Maritime Transport 2020' published on 12 November.

Around 75% of the world's bulk carriers, around 64% of oil tankers and nearly 61% of liquefied gas carriers were recycled in Bangladesh in 2019, read the report.

Meanwhile, more than double the tonnage of vessels for recycling were sold to Bangladesh over India which had 3,251 thousand gross tons, or around 27%. Turkey bought 1,095 thousand gross tons or 9% of the global share. The report warned new waves of the pandemic are further disrupting supply chains and economies and might cause a steeper decline. However, UNCTAD projected maritime trade will recover in 2021 and expand by about 5%. At the beginning of 2020, the total world fleet amounted to 98,140 commercial ships of 100 gross tons and above, equivalent to a capacity of over two billion deadweight tonnage.

In 2019, the global commercial shipping fleet grew by more than 4%, representing the highest growth rate since 2014 but still below the levels, it observed during the 2004-2012 period.

China, Japan and South Korea maintained their traditional leadership in shipbuilding, representing over 92% of the new building deliveries in 2019. Talking about Bangladesh's progress, Mohammad Abu Taher, President of the Bangladesh Shipbreakers and Recyclers Association, said the government had increased the tax on scrap ship imports by 5% in July 2019 but traders had already imported a lot of ships before the tax hike. As a result, Bangladesh became the largest ship recycler in the world.

He also said the shipbreaking sector is still one of the key sectors of Bangladesh. This is because the materials required for setting up small and big industrial factories in the country come directly or indirectly from this sector.

## ► State Minister Khalid for private investment in waterway transport system



State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury has sought private investment to make the waterway transportation system more modern and comfortable.

He urged the private investors to extend their support in the

sector while talking to journalists at Sadarghat River Port in Dhaka on 10 November, 2020 while visiting the Buriganga River.

The state minister said the government is thinking to resume a modern water bus service in a circular way around the capital. Replying to a question, Khalid said, 'We had introduced the water bus service which is not in operation right now. We have gathered experiences from that initiative and we are thinking of restarting a better and more comfortable service. That is why we need support from private investors.' 'We want to welcome them in this sector so that travellers can enjoy a modern and more comfortable trip.'

Shipping Secretary Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Chairman Commodore Golam Sadeq and other high officials accompanied the state minister during his visit.

## ► BIDA beefs up its one stop service

Six more services, including application for electricity connections, are now available online for investors under the One Stop Service portal of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority.

The services include power connections by the Bangladesh Power Development Board and Dhaka Power Distribution Company Limited, assessment approval, terms of reference approval and zero discharge approval by the Department of Environment and industry import registration certificate by the Office of the Chief Controller of Imports and Exports.

The total number of services available on the OSS platform has now reached 41 with the addition of the news services. The investors will now get electricity connection within 18 days of application upon submission of all required documents.

Prime Minister's private industry and investment development adviser Salman F Rahman on 31 December, 2020 inaugurated the service at a programme held at the BIDA conference room in Dhaka.

BIDA Chairman Md Sirazul Islam said that another 10 services would be integrated onto the OSS portal in January. A total of 154 services from 35 agencies, all to facilitate investment in the country, will be gradually integrated onto the OSS platform to provide hassle-free and instant services under a single roof for the investors.



## ➤ Denmark offers Bangladesh assistance to go green

Denmark has offered technical assistance to Bangladesh to develop environmentally sustainable projects and make some existing ones environment friendly.

Visiting the environment minister Md Shahab Uddin at his office on 26 November 2020, the Danish ambassador Winnie Estrup Petersen offered to help Bangladesh on a variety of issues related to climate change, including development of surface water treatment plants, toxic water management, increasing use of renewable energy and solar energy, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Danish ambassador also expressed interest in assisting in turning Chattogram seaport into a green port.

The Danish ambassador also offered assistance for achieving the sustainable development goals, protecting the environment, and strengthening institutional capacities, added the release.

Shahab Uddin thanked the Danish ambassador for the offers and for providing continuous support to Bangladesh since the independence.

He said that the present government was working to address the negative effects of climate change and working to control environmental pollution.

## ➤ Ship movement begins through new channel at Mongla port



The vessel movement first ever in a new channel at Mongla port began on 19 November 2020 following 85% completion of dredging works in the last 68 years history of the country's second largest sea port.

Four goods laden foreign ships plied through the channel. Deputy Secretary

of MPA Mofakharul Islam said that the government had taken decision for creating a new channel at outer anchorage of the Mongla Port through dredging that aimed at increasing navigability of the port.

The executive committee of the National Economic Council in 2018 approved a project titled 'Dredging at Mongla Port Outer Bar Channel' at a cost of BDT 712.50 crore.

MPA signed an agreement with China Civil Engineering Construction Company for dredging 20 kilometres area after completion of tender processing on 13 December 2018. The dredging area stretches from Hiron Point of Sundarban to the Bay of Bengal. Over 8.5 metre draft has been created at Hiron Point area while 10.5 metre draft at Harbaria area after completing 85% dredging works at the channel.

Chairman of Mongla Port Authority Rear Admiral of M Shajahan said that ship movement and revenue collection would be enhanced through this channel.

'Mongla port is developing day by day as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very much sincere and cordial to turn the second largest sea port into a centre for export import activities in south-west region,' he added.

## ➤ BPC plans to build new LPG terminal at Matarbari



State-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has decided to set up a dedicated liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) terminal at Matarbari deep sea port in order to meet the growing energy needs of the country.

At present, the country consumes about 1 million MT of LPG annually. The figure was 47,000 MT in 2009, and projected to reach 2.5 million MT by 2025.

Three international consortiums, led by two Japanese companies, have already shown interest to set up LPG terminal and submitted separate proposals to BPC and also to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division.

One consortium is led by Japanese conglomerate Mitsui & Co Ltd, in which Korean company SK Gas and local East Coast Group are also collaborating, while the other two consortiums are- one led by Japanese

company Marubeni Corporation and the other led by Sumitomo Corporation.

The Netherlands-based Vitol Energy is part of the Marubeni-led consortium while Chungko Electric Power Co Inc is the partner of Sumitomo Corporation.

Mitsui Group has been one of the largest business groups in Japan having worldwide businesses in energy and infrastructure, while SK Group is the third largest conglomerate in South Korea owning and operating deep sea LPG terminals and big LPG carriers like VLGCs. The East Coast Group has 35 years of experience in the downstream petroleum sector, including LPG in Bangladesh.



## ► Bangladesh seeks to improve Japanese investment



A tripartite agreement between two local trade bodies and the Japan External Trade Organisation (Jetro) was signed on 23 November, 2020 to strengthen private sector engagement in trade and investment between Japan and Bangladesh.

The Chattogram Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI), the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI), and the Jetro inked the memorandum of understanding (MoU) at an event in the port city.

The MoU aims to develop a plan for private sector engagement and cooperation for the next 10 years to identify the challenges and new opportunities for strengthening ties between the two nations.

This includes identifying the challenges and opportunities for Japanese companies operating in Bangladesh, exploring areas of technical cooperation for innovation in the private sector and locating potential sectors for export and investment in collaboration with private sector leaders.

The deal also intends to facilitate government spending to strengthen the investment climate and attract Japanese investment.

## ► Fresh study on Karnaphuli River after six decades

HR Wallingford, a British consultancy firm, that conducted the last study on the Karnaphuli River back in 1961, is back to embark on a fresh study on the lifeline of Chattogram after almost six decades.

Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) and HR Wallingford signed a contract for the project at Bandar Bhaban on 19 November, 2020.

Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) Chairman Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson and HR Wallingford's local agent Dr Manzur Haque, among others were present at the signing ceremony.

According to the port officials, the study styled 'Detailed Hydrologic and Hydraulic Study in Karnaphuli River' has been undertaken to ensure maximum efficiency of the seaport.

Currently, Chattogram port can accommodate vessels with 9.5-metre draft. The study will explore the possibility if the port could accommodate larger ships.

Speaking on ceremony, CPA Chairman Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad said, 'The port had undertaken infrastructural plans based on the study conducted in 1961. The port will undertake its future plans in line with the recommendations obtained from the latest study.'

British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson thanked the port authority for selecting British consultancy firm for the study.

Martin Young, chief technical director, HR Wallingford, said, 'We first studied Karnaphuli River over 60 years ago, so are delighted to return to Chattogram to help the port go from strength to strength.'

## ► US interested in development plans for Chattogram port



Chargé d'Affaires at US Embassy in Dhaka JoAnne Wagner has said that his country is interested in the development plans for the Chattogram port due to its role as gatekeeper for Bangladesh's export economy.

Wagner conveyed it to Chattogram Port Authority Chairman Rear Admiral SM Abul Kalam Azad.

During the meeting, Wagner said the US Trade and Development Agency is eager to support infrastructure projects in high-growth emerging markets such as Bangladesh with feasibility studies, technical assistance, and pilot projects.

'US companies are ready to provide expertise and systems, including those to reduce congestion and boost efficiency,' she added.

Wagner discussed expansion plans for Chattogram port, including opportunities for participation by US companies; engagement with female entrepreneurs pursuing successful businesses and overcoming gender discrimination; and exploring further opportunities with the operators of Pahartali Textile and Hosiery Mills for using US-grown cotton.



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