



ISSN 2617-6122

July 2020, Volume 05, Issue 02

# CPA News

Premier Maritime Magazine of Bangladesh

## Chattogram port remains operational amid COVID-19 crisis

### MSP beacons the progress of Blue Economy

Bangladesh Flag carrier container ship back in business at Chattogram port after ten long years

Bangladesh seeks cooperation of ISA for 'Blue Economy' objectives

ADB predicts Bangladesh top GDP growth achiever in South Asia

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### CPA News

A Quarterly Publication of  
Chattogram Port Authority



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## Editorial

### COVID-19: Chattogram port is fighting against all odds and winning

COVID-19 has already made a huge negative impact on global economy, disrupting healthcare in developed countries in Europe and America. Busy towns have been deserted. People have become isolated from their daily activities, families and friends. However, to fight this miserable pandemic, the supply-chain and ports should be operational. Since the lifeline of Bangladesh's economy is Chattogram port and whose slogan is 'Country Moves with Us', the port has to be fully operational. In our lead story, we have detailed out Chattogram Port Authority's initiatives to prevent COVID-19 outbreak in the port as well as to solve on going crises arise from the pandemic.

While the Bangladesh is being ready to achieve the status of a developed country, it has become a necessity to utilise the ocean resources in the Bay of Bengal by sustainable planning and management. Although it is relatively a new concept, Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) should be the first priority in exploring and exploiting ocean resources. Integrated maritime spatial plans have been implemented by about 20 countries, and it is expected that by 2030, at least a third of the surface area of the world's exclusive economic zones will have government approved maritime spatial plans. Comprehending its gravity, an article describing the MSP and its necessity in the Bay of Bengal is accommodated in our 'Perspective' section.

In the 'Panorama' section we have featured the port fire service unit works to provide fire, accident and any kind of emergency services inside the port. More than 50 trained firefighters have been working in two shifts to provide round-the-clock service. The port fire service unit has modern equipment like a full-fledged and modern fire station. Equipped with 5 fire tenders, the fire unit is capable of extinguishing any kind of fire inside the port.

Besides, the 'Newsbytes' section will inform you of all the important maritime events and developments which took place during the second quarter of this 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



*It is safe to say that the economy will not be the same after COVID-19 global epidemic. There will be new polarisation of friendship, cooperation and economy between countries. In order to ensure the quality of life of the citizens in a middle income country like ours in the changed situation, there must be a strong coordination between Chattogram port and the port users.*



## Lead Story

# Chattogram port remains operational amid COVID-19 crisis

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## Perspective



MSP process accumulates and interprets information on the ocean, providing a more integrated basis for government's decision-making. It requires the participation of governmental institutions, private sectors, NGOs, academicians, scientists, etc., as well as all the levels of governance within an integrated system with reciprocal coordination.

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- Bangladesh and Bhutan set terms and condition for PTA signing
- Chattogram port workers are dedicated to keep the economy afloat amid COVID-19 pandemic
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- Chattogram port on highest alert for cyclone Amphan
- Store rent waiver extended amid COVID-19 shutdown
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- Banks asked to reopen branches in commercial areas of Dhaka, Chattogram
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## Panorama



Chattogram port fire service unit works 24/7 to deal with internal fire risk. Not only to implement ISPS code, but also as an international port a complete fire unit was set up from the beginning with trained firefighters and modern equipment. It has all kinds of service facilities like a modern fire service station.



## 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)



## Chattogram port remains operational amid COVID-19 crisis

Afroza Bithi

*Today's world seems to be stuck in a whirlpool named COVID-19 (coronavirus disease). It is turning the world upside down. Rich-poor, men-women, no one is able to escape from its grip. Till the end of June 2020, more than 10 million people in 196 countries have been infected with the virus. At the end of April 2020, the death toll has crossed 500,000 houses; no one knows when the havoc will be over. However, it is not possible to stop the spread of this virus all of a sudden. So, prevention is more important. Since no vaccine has yet been discovered, there is no other way to stay safe than to stay away from an infected person and maintain good personal hygiene. The developed countries of the world are also continuing their efforts by declaring general holidays, complete or partial lockdown, maintaining social distance and instructing the citizens to stay at home. The government of Bangladesh has also taken several important steps under the direction of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, which includes general holiday in the country from 26 March 2020, along with increasing COVID-19 testing arrangements, setting up specialised hospitals, closing educational institutions and closing all international flights. However, Chattogram port is an exception since it remains operational to keep the economy afloat, albeit in a limited and sustained manner. Port officials are also working relentlessly and with knowing the life threatening risk. They are the front line fighters in this epidemic.*

### COVID-19 impact on world trade

The COVID-19 has already made a huge negative impact on global economy, disrupting healthcare in developed countries in Europe and America. Busy towns have been deserted. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, people have become isolated from their daily activities, families and friends.

New UNCTAD data published on 11 June 2020 show that merchandise trade fell by 5% in the first quarter of the year and point to a 27% drop for the second quarter and a 20% annual decline for 2020. The latest UNCTAD figures were featured in the first edition of the Global Trade Update, the organisation's new quarterly report providing a comprehensive snapshot of international commerce and the main issues affecting trade flows. Although the coronavirus-induced trade slowdown has spared no one, forecasts show a particularly rapid deterioration for developing countries. While south-south trade saw a drop of just 2% in the first quarter of the year, UNCTAD data shows a dramatic 14% fall in April. Preliminary data for April suggests the sharpest downturn for South Asia and the Middle East, which could register trade declines of up to 40%. Meanwhile, the East Asia and the Pacific regions appear to have fared best, with trade drops remaining in the single digits both in the first quarter of 2020 as well as in April. China appears to have fared better than other major economies

in April, registering 3% growth for exports. But the most recent data indicates that the recovery may be short-lived, as the nation's imports and exports fell by about 8% in May. The report further shows that economic disruptions wrought by COVID-19 have affected some sectors significantly more than others. In the first quarter of 2020, textiles and apparel declined by almost 12%, while office machinery and automotive sectors fell by about 8%. In contrast, the value of international trade in the agri-food sector, which has so far been the least volatile, grew by about 2%. Preliminary data for April indicates further declines in most sectors, with a very sharp contraction in the trade of energy (-40%) and automotive (-50%) products. Significant decreases are also observed in chemicals, machineries and precision instruments, with drops above 10%. On the other hand, office machinery appears to have rebounded in April, largely because of China's positive export performance.

### Impact on Maritime Bangladesh

Pragmatic handling of the global pandemic under Honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has been succeeding since the day one of the infection. From 17 March 2020, all educational institution were declared close to limit the transmission. Besides, government declared general holidays from 25 March 2020 onwards. There were a complete shutdown of industries,

factories, shops, hotels, transport and other commercial activities throughout Bangladesh. People were advised to stay home. It was a nightmarish scenario though we have been gaining good results out of those hard days.

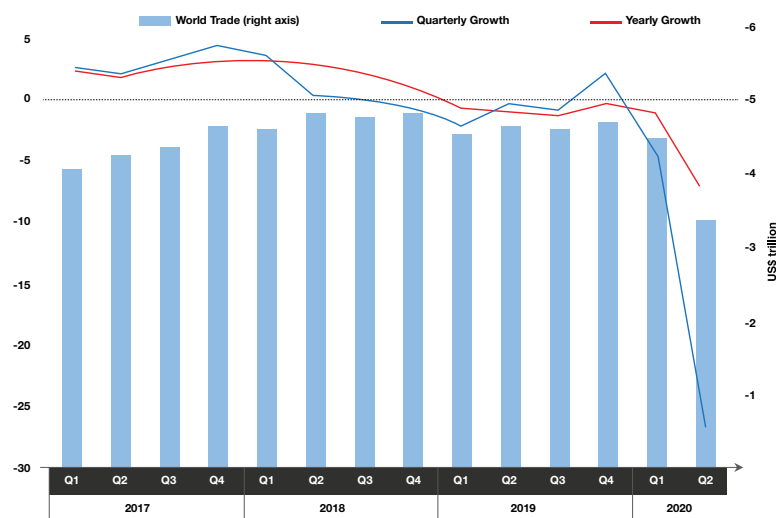
However, during this time, container vessels were coming to chattogram port. Vessels had been waiting at the outer-anchorage with loaded cargos. To tackle such situation, Chattogram Port Authority decided to handle containers and cargos from the vessels. Since factories and industries were closed, importers did not take delivery of their goods, as a result the storing capacity of the port started to run short. CPA observed sharp decline in delivery after declaration of general holiday on the 25 March 2020.

### Impact and prevention at Chattogram port

However, to fight this miserable pandemic, the supply-chain and ports should be operational since the lifeline of Bangladesh's economy is Chattogram port and it facilitates 82% of country's total imports and 91% of its exports. Therefore, a negative impact on the pace of import-export can create a huge impact on the economy of the country. To prevent the transmission of COVID-19, the country observes general holidays though Chattogram port had been operating 24 hours a day maintaining health guidelines issued by Director General Health Services (DGHS). In line with this, the activities of several port users were kept open.

The activities of Chattogram Customs House, responsible for port's Customs clearance, were also open, initially on a limited scale. To resolve the container and vessel congestion situation a meeting was convened by Divisional Commissioner of Chattogram with all port stakeholders to keep operation of Chattogram port. The meeting emphasised on 24/7 presence of all public and private stakeholders for the smooth operation of port and to reduce the congestion of both vessels and containers. After that meeting, Customs House started full operation under the revised directives of the NBR. The presence of plant quarantine, atomic energy officials and private stakeholders found more available to expedite delivery. Most of the containers arrive

World trade observes a 27% drop for the second quarter



Preliminary data for April suggests the sharpest downturn for South Asia and the Middle East, which could register trade declines of up to 40%.



at Chattogram port contain imported raw materials for ready-made garment factories. Raw materials for different industries take the second place. The rest are fruits, ginger, garlic, onions and marine fish mostly the perishable goods imported in reefer containers.

To decongest the port the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) waived store rent i.e. rent of all types of containers imported through the port as the importers can not take delivery of their cargo due to COVID 19 holiday declared by the government. The decision of store rent waiver helped Chattogram port to bring back the normal operation and it acts as an incentive to the importers.

In an ideal and normal situation, containers can be stored free at the port for four days after unloading from the ship. Then in the first step (next seven days), an importer has to pay USD 6 per day for each container. In the second step (eighth to 20th day), an importer has to pay USD 12 and in the last step (after 20th day) USD 24. Later, at the request of BGMEA, CPA waived the store rent for the second time only for the raw materials of the ready-made garment factories. However, as per request of the port, the Ministry of Shipping has taken the issue into consideration to ensure this facility for all and approved the discount for all types of goods. The discount was available if the containers imported during the general holidays and unloaded by 16 May 2020.

*Chattogram port has provided incentive facility of BDT 138 crore to traders and industrialists in the form of store rent waiver in two stages.*

## Areas at high risk of corona infection in the port

- Pilots and Marine Division
- Port security office and all gates of the port
- One Stop Service (OSS) points
- Terminal Manager's Office and DTM offices (CPA, ICD Dhaka, Pangaon ICT)
- CSF sheds and delivery points
- Port hospital and Workers Health Center as well as all cleaners involved in sanitary activities
- All officers and employees of the port

Chattogram port has provided incentive facility of BDT 138 crore to traders and industrialists in the form of store rent waiver in two stages. As a result, the port is going to face two types of losses. First, there will be a revenue shortage of BDT 138 crore. Second, the loss of operational cost for long-term storage and maintenance of these goods is at least BDT 20 to 30 crore. Moreover, low revenue means low income for the country since the government gets income tax at the rate of 25% on the income of the port.

## Coordinated efforts to overcome the crisis

The container capacity of Chattogram port is 49,018 TEUs. At the end of 14 April 2020, 47,413 TEU containers were stored in the port. On 15 April 2020, a letter was sent to the Ministry of Shipping seeking the approval of the National Board of Revenue to remove at least 15,000 to 20,000 TEU

containers from the port yard and send them to private Inland Container Depots (ICDs).

Meanwhile, an emergency coordination meeting was held at Chattogram Circuit House on 14 April 2020 in the presence of port authority, port users, administration, public representatives and heads of intelligence agencies. Chattogram Divisional Commissioner ABM Azad, Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority Rear Admiral SM AbulKalam Azad, Chattogram Customs Commissioner M FakhruAlam, City Mayor AJM NasirUddin, DGFI Commander Brigadier General Kabir Ahmed, Chattogram Port Board Member (Administration and Planning) Md. ZafarAlam and Board Member (Harbour and Marine) Commodore Shafiul Bari, Additional Divisional Commissioner Shankar RanjanSaha, Deputy Commissioner Mohammad IliasHossain, Additional Commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (Traffic) SM Mostaq Ahmed Khan, BKMEA Regional Head Shawkat Osman, Bangladesh Bank Director AKM Mohiuddin Azad, President of Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association AhsanulHaque Chowdhury, President of Birth Operators Association Fazlelkrum Chowdhury, Port Secretary of C&F Agents Association Liaquat Ali Hawlader, Director of BGMEA AnjanShekhar Das, Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA) Secretary Ruhul Amin Sikder were present among others.

Generally, 37 types of cargo containers, imported through Chattogram port, are unloaded at private Inland Container Depots (ICDs). An order of the National Board

State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury MP and Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping Mohammad Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury visited Chattogram port on 23 April 2020 to give necessary directions to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic





The Custom House has waived tariffs on certain items including emergency food and medicines, therefore, container congestion was increasing in at the port.

of Revenue (NBR) on 18 April 2020 approved the delivery of six types of goods from ICDs. The port authority insisted on unloading all kinds of goods to solve the problem quickly. As a result, on 23 April 2020 another order of NBR allowed the delivery of all types of goods. For that decision, it had been possible to remove about 27,000 TEU containers from the port.

However, there were a set of conditions. All containers must be scanned and scanning reports must be kept when transferring to ICDs.

Shipments of all commercial goods transferred to ICD must be 100% physically inspected by the Customs House and representatives of the Customs Intelligence Department. Action will have to be taken on the basis of the inspection report and this order of the National Board of Revenue will be automatically revoked after 30 June 2020.

#### Port visit of State Minister for Shipping

State Minister for Shipping  
 Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury MP  
 and Secretary to the Ministry of

#### Steps taken to continue 24/7 port operation

- Extra safety measures have been taken for front liners
- PPEs, as per DGHS and WHO guidelines, have been given to the front liners
- Promoting new Standard Operating Procedure SOP for work
- If required, port provides extra facilities
- Medical facilities have been provided as per government guidelines
- COVID-19 testing support at designated testing centers
- Isolation facility for quarantine support
- The port has been providing support for funeral activities
- Queue Management System at One Stop Service (OSS) to maintain Social distancing guidelines.
- The port has expanded the OSS area
- The port also exploring port dues payment system through Postal "NOGOD" apps

Shipping Mohammad MezbahUddin Chowdhury rushed from Dhaka on 23 April 2020 to give necessary directions to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic in the port area and to mitigate the crises emerged from the outbreak. At a press briefing after an exchange of views with CPA and service recipients at the port building, the State Minister for Shipping expressed hope for a 50% reduction in container congestion. Later, the State Minister and Secretary visited the port premises. Their visit encouraged everyone and had further accelerated the operational activities of the port.

#### Port's role in keeping the market stable

At present, each ship in the port has to pay around BDT 800,000 for an extra day's waiting. This ultimately rests on the consumer. CPA has given priority to ships carrying medicines, ginger, garlic and onion to enter the jetty on a priority basis.

In the last week of April, the port had a stock of 1,473 tons of onions, 475 tons of ginger and 850 tons of garlic. Besides, the stock of fresh fruits was 57,500 tons. In this situation, CPA took special measures to keep the price and supply normal. Ships with at least 150 containers of such products are preferred for jetty entry. However, only one ship at a time will get this benefit. This means that a ship enjoying such benefit will have to leave the place for another similar ship to enter. According to CPA, in case of multiple ships at the same time, priority will be given on the basis of maximum number of containers a ship is carrying.

Chattogram port has written letters to the importers to take delivery of the goods as soon as possible to keep the supply chain of the country normal. Initiatives such as sending letters directly to importers are rare in recent times. Apart from this, separate letters have also been issued to Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industries, C&F Agents Association, Bangladesh Fresh Fruits Importers Association and Bangladesh Fruit Traders Association.

If a container of consumer goods is left for a long time, the quality of the product and the commercial price will be lost. Therefore, CPA has started sending RL (Removal

*38 types of cargo containers, imported through Chattogram port, are unloaded at private Inland Container Depots (ICDs). An order of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) on 18 April 2020 approved the delivery of six more types of goods from ICDs.*





Chattogram port employees are well aware of the COVID-19 pandemic and have taken appropriate measures in order to keep the operation running

Letter) to the Customs authority to auction the goods which have exceeded the deadline. Chattogram Customs has been requested to settle 12 containers of consumer goods through speedy auction in the first phase to clear container congestion, to protect government's revenue interests and to eliminate shortage of goods in the market. This includes one container of ginger, two containers of garlic and nine containers of onion.

#### **The port is returning to its rhythm**

The country's major seaport is benefited from various initiatives to reduce container and shipping congestion. Container congestion problem is solved and the operation has returned to normal even during general holidays and lock-down. It was recorded that 8,682 TEU containers were delivered from the port in 48 hours from 8 am on 28 April to 8 am on 30 April 2020. Prime movers, trailers, covered vans and trucks carrying containers have also increased in the port area due to the increase in deliveries. Within 24 hours from 8 am on 29 April, 2,570 boxes and 3,935 TEU containers full of imported goods were unloaded at the jetty. With export goods and including

*An emergency meeting held at the office of the port's member (Harbour and Marine) Commodore M Shafiul Bari last March made it mandatory for the ship's captain and agent to make an appropriate announcement as soon as the ship is anchored.*

empty containers, 2,939 containers have been loaded on the ship. In other words, the total container handling has been 6,874 TEUs. At that time, 69 TEU went to Kamalapur ICD in Dhaka by train and 61 TEU containers arrived at the port. 1,800 TEU containers full of imported goods have been sent to various depots in 24 hour. The number of empty containers was 182 TEU. On-chassis delivery was 688 TEUs and 1,774 TEU containers were delivered from the yard.

Apart from this, eight general cargo shipments, six food grain shipments, 18 cement clinker shipments, three oil cargo ships are being unloaded in outer ships and goods are being unloaded in small ships.

Meanwhile, BGMEA has written a letter to CPA not to collect the demurrage or detention charges of the shipping line like store rent. On 30 April 2020, BGMEA's first vice president Mohammad Abdus Salam sent the letter to CPA Chairman.

#### **Assistance to government funds**

Officials and employees of Chattogram port have submitted one day's salary to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund to assist government's effort to prevent COVID-19. The Chattogram Port Authority handed over a fund of BDT 2,942,204 as the one-day salary from the April salary of about 6,000 port workers. Earlier, a grant of BDT 25 crore was given from the port fund through the Ministry of Shipping.

#### **Safety first**

During the announced holidays, the activities of all the departments were going on through the responsible persons as per the directive. Handheld thermometers, masks, hand gloves, PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), bleaching powder, protective goggles and disinfectant liquid and soap are being provided for the safety of the officers / employees of all the departments of the port. The port fire service unit is spraying disinfectant on the port building and its adjoining installations, various yards, jetties and residential areas every day to prevent COVID-19 outbreak.

An emergency meeting held at the office of the port's member (Harbour and Marine) Commodore M Shafiul Bari last March made it mandatory for the ship's captain and agent to make an appropriate announcement as soon as the ship is anchored. The master of an arriving ship must declare its COVID-19 status as soon as he arrives at the port limit. In addition, ships from other countries will be quarantined for 14 days after leaving the last port. Apart from this, when the ship reaches the Chattogram port waters, the port health officer will allow the sailors to enter the port only after scanning and declaring 100% of the sailors are not infected with COVID-19. For foreign sailors, no entry pass is being issued. At the same time, the opportunity to transfer a sailor of a ship has also been stopped. Efforts are underway

#### **CPA has a history of overcoming challenges**

The workforce behind Chattogram port is so efficient that it can overcome any natural or manmade challenges to keep the operation normal.

- After the independence of Bangladesh, the completely destroyed Chattogram port began its operation within very short span of time
- After the devastating cyclone of 1991, Chattogram port came back to full operation reviving its infrastructures
- During the global economic recession of 2009 and 2012, Chattogram port had shown positive growth
- In 2016, Chattogram port faced several operational challenges, such as accident of STS Gantry crane, cyclone and trade volume increased by 14%. Chattogram port authority efficaciously managed the crisis
- In this COVID-19 pandemic, CPA with the support of Ministry of Shipping keeps its operation up and running



to organise online berthing meetings to ensure social distance. However, container feeder vessels arriving from the container hubs of Bangladesh including Colombo, Singapore and Tanjung Pelepas port in Malaysia will be exempted from the 14-day quarantine requirement. Besides, a medical team under the supervision of the port health officer will be on duty round the clock at the port immigration desk.

On 1 July 2020, a COVID-19 unit was launched at Chattogram port hospital. It was inaugurated by the State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury. Earlier, the port authority introduced a COVID-19 testing unit for the officers and employees of the port. As a result, they were encouraged to conduct operational activities.

#### Caution in Mongla

Before reaching the fairway buoy area of Mongla, the second major seaport of the country, all vessel masters have to declare a de-rating certificate with assurance that no sailor is infected with the COVID-19 on the ship. Shore passes and sailor transfer opportunities are currently closed thereas well. The same applies for Payra port too. The Ministry of Industry has banned the import of vessels for breaking or scrapping and halted the opening of LCs (Letters of Credit) for this purpose from 25 March 2020 until further notice to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

On 26 April 2020, the Chinese flagship MV Chang Hang Jing Hai, carrying 24,000 tons of coal from Indonesia, arrived at Mongla port

with 20 sailors. Six Chinese sailors, including the ship's captain, have been kept in isolation on the ship because of COVID-19 symptoms. At the same time, the unloading of the ship's goods has been stopped, said the Monglaport health officer Dr SufiaKhatun. She said that six foreign sailors have been kept in isolation and the ship will not be allowed to unload until a full report from their medical team is received.

#### Some recommendations

As our globalised world is facing an unprecedented health, social and economic crisis, port cities are also strongly affected due to their connection to the world. On the one hand, they had to manage many risks, and on the other hand, they needed to turn this threat into an opportunity. As there is no vaccine available yet, there will be no sudden relief from the COVID-19 outbreak. The words 'stay home', 'quarantine', 'office from home' will control our lives for quite some more time. It is safe to say that the economy will not be the same after this global epidemic. There will be new polarisation of friendship, cooperation and economy between countries. In order to ensure the quality of life of the citizens in a middle income country like ours in this changed situation, there must be a strong coordination between Chattogrtam port and the port users. Institutions need to be supportive of each other. It is time to pay attention to speed up the work of the port as a whole. It is not about only increasing the efficiency of the port. The skills of other concerned institutions also need to be enhanced.

*On 1 July 2020, a COVID-19 unit was launched at Chattogram port hospital. It was inaugurated by the State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury. Earlier, the port authority introduced a COVID-19 testing unit for the officers and employees of the port. As a result, they were encouraged to conduct operational activities.*

#### A comparison between last year and current year

Cargo, Container and Vessel handling at Chattogram port (Chattogram port + ICD+ ICT) during January to June 2019

Month	Bulk and Containerised Cargo (M/Tons)	Container in TUEs	Vessel
January	8,637,937	247,004	315
February	8,090,891	224,440	290
March	10,025,387	239,118	338
April	9,091,720	241,833	341
May	7,786,939	224,547	277
June	7,202,421	241,563	286
<b>Total</b>	<b>50,835,295</b>	<b>1,418,505</b>	<b>1,847</b>

Cargo, Container and Vessel handling at Chattogram port (Chattogram port + ICD+ ICT) during January to June 2020

Month	Bulk and Containerised Cargo (M/Tons)	Container in TUEs	Vessel
January	1,089,468	285,979	357
February	9,398,779	241,940	364
March	10,264,402	249,669	366
April	7,024,025	132,921	257
May	5,343,915	204,801	223
June	6,395,242	219,150	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,322,831</b>	<b>1,334,460</b>	<b>1,804</b>

After comparing these two tables, it can be said that Chattogram port has been successfully limiting the effect of COVID-19 through utmost professionalism and pragmatism.

**Afroza Bithi**  
Contributor, Bandarbartta



**Dead on approach to Maritime Bangladesh**

## **MSP beacons the progress of Blue Economy**

**Rajeev Ahmed**

*The history of human is thoroughly interlaced with the ocean. Human-ocean relation has been guiding the philosophy, geography, military studies, navigation and seafaring, natural sciences, political sciences, and social sciences. Such relation has been featured in the various fields of art, literature, and music for millennia. Maritime planning is a relative newcomer in this long list of disciplines, bringing its very own standpoints and epistemologies. While the Bangladesh is being ready to achieve the status of a developed country, it has become a necessity to utilise the ocean resources of the Bay of Bengal by sustainable planning and management. Although it is relatively a new concept, Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) should be the first priority in exploring and exploiting ocean resources.*



## What is MSP?

MSP is roughly managing the distribution of human activities in space and time to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives and outcomes. It is a political and social process informed by both the natural and social sciences. Over the last 20 years, MSP has matured from a concept to a practical approach to moving towards sustainable development in the oceans. Integrated maritime spatial plans have been implemented by about 20 countries, and it is expected that by 2030, at least a third of the surface area of the world's exclusive economic zones will have government approved maritime spatial plans.

MSP was initially proposed in 1976 for the development of marine protected areas as a response to the environmental degradation of marine areas caused by human activities. In the early 1980s, zoning plans were created for the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. The Great Barrier Reef zoning plans also had a primary goal of marine conservation—a very different character and scope to the multiple-objective of MSPs.

It is believed that MSP is a fruitful solution to a modern problem and embraces our contemporary understanding of conservation and management. According to UNESCO definition, MSP is “a practical way to create and establish a more rational organisation of the use of marine space and the interactions between its uses, to balance demands for development with the need to protect marine ecosystems and to achieve social and economic objectives in an open and planned way”.

## Characteristics of MSP

MSP has certain characteristics, it has to be:

- Integrated across economic sectors and governmental agencies, and among levels of government.
- Strategic and future-oriented, focused on the long-term.
- Participatory, including stakeholders actively in the process.
- Adaptive, capable of learning by doing.
- Ecosystem-based, balancing ecological, economic, social, and

cultural goals and objectives toward sustainable development and the maintenance of ecosystem services.

- Place-based or area-based, i.e., integrated management of all human activities within a spatially demarcated area identified through ecological, socio-economic, and jurisdictional considerations.

## Oceans without MSP

Human activities regarding the sea will be increased significantly in the next 20 years. Traditional uses, such as marine transportation, sand and gravel mining, and maritime recreation will continue to grow. Oil and gas development will continue to push further and deeper offshore with many of its operations occurring only underwater. Fisheries will continue to exist, but at lower levels, due to the diminished stocks, and in more restricted areas because of competition for ocean space. New uses of the ocean, e.g., offshore renewable energy and offshore aquaculture, will compete with traditional uses for space.

Climate change will have modified species distributions and habitats; increasing ocean acidification will raise new concerns about the survival of some species. In many areas, increasing public concern about the health of the ocean will lead to significant areas set aside for nature conservation. Conflicts among human activities will increase, e.g., collisions of ships with wind turbines might occur, as might conflicts between wave parks and surfers and sailors.

## Benefits of MSP in sea use management

One of the major objectives of MSP is to resolve this conflict between existing and new uses by delimiting use based zoning. Spatial zones permit a specific activity within a physical boundary to reduce overlapping with other uses. For an example installation of offshore LNG stations might have conflict with fisheries, so zoning can limit fishing area to make space for hydrocarbon infrastructures.

Rapid declination of marine ecosystem due to human interventions is one of the major concerns of these days. One of the biggest challenges is to reduce this use-environment conflict in marine

ecosystem. Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) approach is an essential measure to manage development strategies in coastal and maritime areas. The goal of ecosystem-based management is to maintain an ecosystem in a healthy, productive and resilient condition so that it can provide the services to the humans needs. To conserve biodiversity, MSP has got considerable success elsewhere as an effective tool for EBM. For an example, in Chanel Island (USA) death rate of cetaceans due to heavy maritime traffic was decreased by implementing MSP. It led an integrated approach to manage environment gives a better understanding and long term vision for future ocean.

Increasing change of sea surface temperature due to climate change is influencing physical, biological and chemical properties of seas around the world. Changing climate is affecting all marine uses including fisheries, tourism, aquaculture as well as biodiversity degradation. Climate informed MSP can be an effective tool to adopt future challenges and uncertainties with inclusion of climate related disturbances in marine conservation planning.

One of the administrative benefits of MSP is it improves management capacity by linking different authorities for good governance. A lack of connection between the various authorities responsible for individual activities can led to serious uncertainty over future development objective. For an example, a single spatial scale can contain multiple

*One of the major objectives of MSP is to resolve this conflict between existing and new uses by delimiting use based zoning. Spatial zones permit a specific activity within a physical boundary to reduce overlapping with other uses.*

*MSP enhances our contemporary understanding of conservation and management*





plans like water management plan, municipality plan, urban plan, biodiversity conservation plan and various sectorial plans (fisheries, tourism and energy) led by different authorities. MSP acts as a connecting agent among different sectorial plans and their authorities as well. MSP, with an ability to deal with multiple objectives, improves decision making and accountability to coordinate between different plans, sectors in order to achieve a cumulative result.

Effective stakeholder engagement and management in every step of planning and implementation process makes MSP more connected to users groups and community. A focus on effective stakeholder involvement gives the provision to adopt bottom-up approach for decision making which is more inclusive than conventional top down approach.

Since all oceans are connected and marine ecosystem do not follow any political boundary, MSP gives a provision to plan beyond national jurisdictional water in an international scale. Many joint initiatives for cross border MSP are taking place which help to make better regional coordination between countries to develop common vision sustainable future. Planning Bothnia Sea, MSP in Adriatic sea, ESPON between Portugal and Spain are some example of on-going cross boundary MSP projects. We also have the opportunity to conduct cross

boundary MSP projects together with the Bay of Bengal littorals.

#### Methodological guidelines for MSP

MSP encompasses a methodological approach including different phases with set of activities. In most of the cases, MSP usually consist of three planning phases; pre-planning, planning and implementation. There have been several efforts to develop methodological guidelines for MSP. Out of them, probably the most influential guideline has been published by Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission UNESCO as 'Maritime Spatial Planning: A Step-by-Step Approach toward Ecosystem-based Management'.

#### The development and implementation of MSP involves a number of steps, including:

- (1) Identifying need and establishing authority
- (2) Obtaining financial support
- (3) Organising the process through pre-planning
- (4) Organising stakeholder participation
- (5) Defining and analysing existing conditions
- (6) Defining and analysing future conditions
- (7) Preparing and approving the spatial management plan

*MSP encompasses a methodological approach including different phases with set of activities. In most of the cases, MSP usually consist of three planning phases; pre-planning, planning and implementation.*

(8) Implementing and enforcing the spatial management plan

(9) Monitoring and evaluating performance

(10) Adapting the marine spatial management process

#### MSP for the Bay of Bengal

As a maritime nation, Bangladesh is blessed with rich and untapped maritime resources of the Bay of Bengal. To utilise those resources in a sustainable manner, Bangladesh needs MSP and good ocean governance in the light of Blue Economy. Here are the brief overviews of the potentials of the Blue Economy in the Bay of Bengal, which need MSP with cross boundary projects option open, are as follows:

#### Marine fisheries

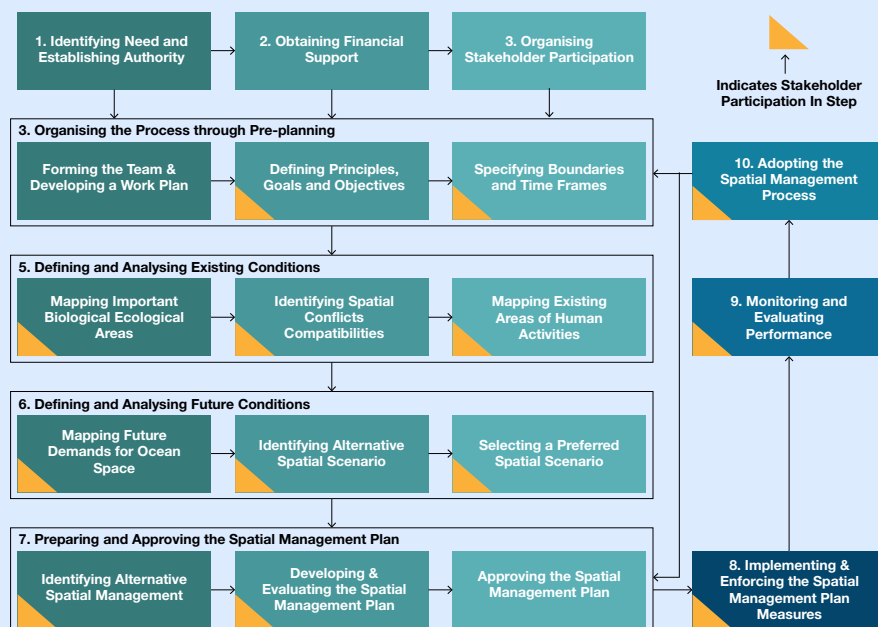
Fish is the largest trading item of developing countries, where one billion people depend on seafood for their primary source of protein. About 475 species of fish are found in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Bangladesh compared to 250 sweet water species on land. Marine fish contributes at least 20% of total fish production in the country. Bangladesh is estimated to catch only about 0.70 million tons of fish every year out of the total 8 million tons of fish available in the Bay of Bengal.

The fisheries sector in Bangladesh has been earning a notable amount of foreign exchange. In 2016-17, the sector earned BDT 4,287.64 crore by exporting almost 68.31 thousand MT of fish and fisheries products. According to the Bay of Bengal Large Maritime Ecosystem (BoBLME) project, about 60 million tons of fishes that constitute 16% of world production are produced annually from the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh mainly exports ten categories of fishery products (Frozen freshwater fish, frozen marine water fish, frozen shrimp, chilled fish, live fish, dry fish, salted dehydrate, live eel, live crab, and fish scale/shrimp scull) to more than 55 countries.

#### Aquaculture

Integrated multi-tropic offshore aquaculture is the fastest growing global food sector, now providing 47% of the fish for human consumption. Aquaculture under the Blue Economy will incorporate

#### A Step-by-step approach to marine Spatial Planning





the value of the natural capital in its development, respecting ecological parameters throughout the cycle of production, creating sustainable, decent employment and offering high value commodities for export.

### Marine biotechnology

One of the fastest emerging high-technology sectors in the Blue Economy is marine biotechnology with a market of about USD 4.6 billion. It has wide-ranging applications in industrial sectors including pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, nutritional supplements, molecular probes, enzymes and agrochemicals.

Marine biotechnology has the potential to address a suite of global challenges such as sustainable food supplies, human health, energy security and environmental remediation. Marine genetic resources like bacteria are a rich source of potential drugs. In 2017, there were over 36 marine derived drugs under clinical development, including 15 for the treatment of cancer. One area where marine biotech may make a critical contribution is the development of new antibiotics. The potential scope is enormous, by 2017 more than 14,000 novel chemicals had been identified by marine bio prospecting and 300 patents registered on marine natural products.

### Offshore energy and deep-sea mining

The largest chunk of developing

countries' ocean economy can be sourced from offshore energy exploration and mining. The seabed currently provides 32% of the global supply of hydrocarbons, up from 20% in 1980. Some 26 Tcf (trillion cubic feet) gas reserve has so far been discovered in Bangladesh, of which only about 1 Tcf is located in the offshore areas. However, it is necessary to carry out multi-client survey (using state of art technology) in the Bay of Bengal in order to identify potential oil and gas fields, and their reserves.

### Marine tourism and leisure

Globally, coastal and marine tourism represents 5% of world GDP. Tourism is human-resource intensive. Increasing involvement of local communities in the value chain can contribute to the development of local economies and poverty reduction. In 150 countries, it is one of five top export earners and in countries it is the first. It is the main source of foreign exchange for one-half of Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Tourist sector insiders hope the contribution of domestic tourism will increase to 4.7 % of the nation's GDP by 2024. According to the latest reliable statistics, at present, around 7,000,000 domestic tourists visit far-flung destinations in the country annually. The figure was 300,000 to 500,000 in the year 2000. New projections suggest that the total to hit the figure of 10 million in the next 5 to 6 years.

*There are more than 300 shipyards and workshops in Bangladesh and almost 100% requirement of inland vessels, fast patrol boats, dredging barges, passenger vessels, landing craft, tug, supply barges, deck loading barges, speed boat, cargo coasters, troop carrying vessels, hydrographic survey vessels, survey boat, pilot boats, water taxi and pontoons are being built by these yards.*

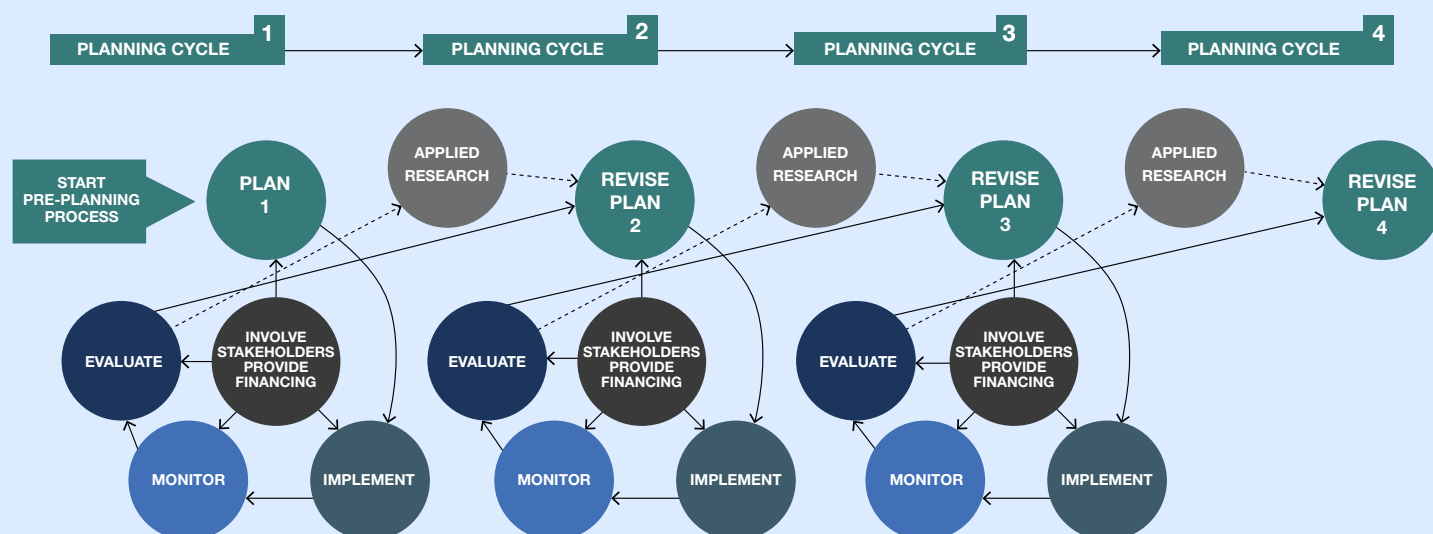
### Shipping, port and maritime logistics

About 80% of global trade by volume and over 70% by value is seaborne. Smart and deep-water ports, efficient shipping and logistics industries will be instrumental for the development of the Blue Economy. Presently Bangladesh's value of export and import stands at about USD 78 billion and are carried by more than 3000 foreign ships. Against our import and export value, during last ten years, importers, exporters and buyers has paid USD 95 billion as freight and related charges only to foreign shipping companies, air lines and freight operators to carry goods in and out of Bangladesh.

### Shipbuilding, maritime manufacturing and ship recycling

Maritime manufacturing consists of construction, repair and maintenance of boats, ships, fishing vessels, yachts, floating structures and other marine technology which is an important sector of Blue Economy. There are more than 300 shipyards and workshops in Bangladesh and almost 100% requirement of inland vessels, fast patrol boats, dredging barges, passenger vessels, landing craft, tug, supply barges, deck loading barges, speed boat, cargo coasters, troop carrying vessels, hydrographic survey vessels, survey boat, pilot boats, water taxi and pontoons are being built by these yards. Ship building yards are constructing 10,000 DWT sea going ships for export and are expected to upgrade their

### The continuing MSP planning cycle





Renewable energy enjoys almost 22% share of the global energy market

capacity to 25,000 DWT. Shipbuilding industry not only earns foreign exchange but also saves it.

It should be promoted and nurtured in all possible ways, including its horizontally and vertically linked businesses, and given opportunities and incentives for growth and expansion.

The ship breaking or ship recycling is also another growing industry in the developing countries. Bangladesh has a demand of 5 million tons of metal/steel. But, the domestic production is insufficient to meet this demand. In this case, the ship breaking industry plays a vital role via providing steels. More than 350 re-rolling mills have been using scrapped metals from the breaking yard. Ship breaking industry is currently supplying about 60% of raw materials for local steel industry.

#### Marine renewable energy

Renewable energy enjoys almost 22% share of the global energy mix. There are various forms of marine renewable energy like offshore solar energy, offshore wind energy, wave energy, tidal energy, ocean thermal energy, salinity gradient, ocean current energy and energy from marine biomass. Marine-based renewable energy such as wind, wave and tidal range and currents offers a significant potential to contribute to low-carbon energy supplies for regions with appropriate coastal features. Offshore wind covers all

activities related to the development and construction of wind parks in marine waters, and the exploitation of wind energy by generating electricity offshore. However, most suitable onshore locations for wind turbines need to be identified and the best (windiest) offshore sites have to be connected to the main transmission grid. Tidal energy, covering tidal range and tidal current, is the most advanced, Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) is based on the thermodynamic potential between the warmer upper water layer and the colder deeper water layer.

Activities provide important synergies with ocean renewable energies, e.g. wave energy converters may help to attenuate wave attack and generate electricity. Marine-based renewable energy can provide alternative employment opportunities particularly for coastal communities who were formerly reliant on fisheries.

All these maritime sectors need proper and modern spatial planning so that the country can yield sustainable economic benefits.

#### Steps taken by Bangladesh for sustainable maritime development in the context of MSP

In the past, certain maritime activities were not coordinated and thereby suffered from duplication of efforts, whereas various maritime industries were neither managed nor their performance supervised. However,

under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has peacefully resolved the long-standing maritime boundary disputes with its neighbours India and Myanmar, opening a new vista for maritime development in our country.

Today, we are witnessing an unprecedented wave of economic growth and remarkable development in social and economic indicators with substantial investment in regional connectivity, deep seaports, special economic zones, coastal industries, energy clusters and offshore oil and gas exploration. As a major Blue Economy initiative, Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 for the next century has been prepared by the government which would focus on sustainable delta management, integrated water resources management and adaptation to climate change. Meanwhile, Vision 2041, a long-term perspective plan for a developed Bangladesh, has identified Blue Economy as one of the essential drivers for development. Moreover, the goals of SDG 2030, especially SDG 14, i.e., Life Below Water, is being implemented with various maritime development agenda in Bangladesh.

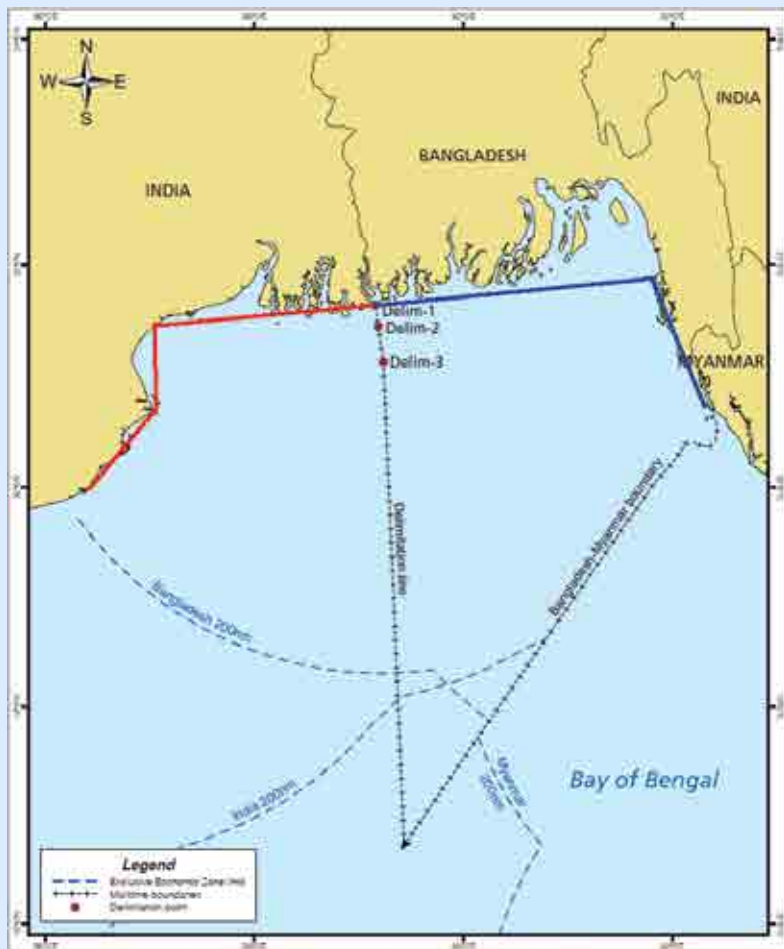
An independent Blue Economy Cell has been formed to ensure proper coordination of Blue Economy activities among all government and private sector maritime stakeholders. Moreover, Bangladesh Ocean Research Institute (BORI) has been established, whereas Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University (BSMRMU) was set up in 2013 for maritime higher education and research.

In fact, Bangladesh was one of the first countries in South Asia to focus on the aspects of Blue Economy leading up to the first international workshop on Blue Economy in September 2014 in Dhaka. However, the time has come to examine which ministries and organisations are better placed to monitor and coordinate among all private and public maritime stakeholders more efficiently.

There is the need for having a National Ministerial Board for facilitating policy making while an Ocean Advisory Committee comprising of maritime experts, scientists, academicians, entrepreneurs and industry leaders should be formed. A regional MSP

*Bangladesh was one of the first countries in South Asia to focus on the aspects of Blue Economy leading up to the first international workshop on Blue Economy in September 2014 in Dhaka.*





Maritime Boundary of Bangladesh

steering committee with members from the foreign office and other relevant public and private sector also merits consideration.

#### Ways to adopt MSP for Bangladesh

##### Founding special authority for MSP

The government should establish an authorised body vested with the duty to take the active step to adopt MSP in the Bay of Bengal. The authority should bring experts from multiple departments related to MSP.

##### Adoption of Integrated policy

The body established by the government should initiate a cohesive policy rather sector by sector plan for MSP. The plan should be integrated and multi-objective, strategic and future-oriented, and continuous and adaptive. The plan and framework should be developed and run by a special task force at the highest level of the government. All relevant contents from a number of existing

national policies, action plans and legislations should be compressed into one uniform legal framework. In this case, the stakeholder needs a special research team to analyse and scrutinise the existing MSP of the world like European Union and Great Barrier Reef of Australia.

##### Holistic coordination among multi-sectored bodies

All the relevant departments and organs should be brought to the single table for discussion and taking a final decision towards MSP in the Bay of Bengal. It may occupy sharing experience from MSP in other countries like Australia and Japan. MSP without a holistic and coordinated approach can never be functional.

##### Strong legislative protection and framework

Legislation is the protector and controller of human action. There should be a good legislation which reflects the all aspects of MSP in a codified form.

*If growths and investments to boost this economy occur without established standards and policies, they may lead to temporary gains at the cost of longstanding sustainability. As such, it is the need of the hour to move forward with MSP for sustainable ocean governance.*

#### Improving institutional capacity for marine research

A state establishes universities and institutions for research output that can be applied for the common benefit of the nation. There must have a strong liaison between state governing departments with the universities and institutions. The universities and institutions should be responsible for maritime research with a view to ensuring much efficient and effective plan and policy. Funding should be increased for research on marine affairs. Researchers should be brought from related multiple sectors but under a common platform.

#### Conclusion

MSP process accumulates and interprets information on the ocean, providing a more integrated basis for government's decision-making. It requires the participation of governmental institutions, private sectors, NGOs, academicians, scientists, etc., as well as all the levels of governance within an integrated system with reciprocal coordination. In Bangladesh, around 18.2% of the population is dependent on the country's ocean economy (World Bank Group, 2018).

If growths and investments to boost this economy occur without established standards and policies, they may lead to temporary gains at the cost of longstanding sustainability. As such, it is the need of the hour to move forward with MSP for sustainable ocean governance.

As a coastal state, Bangladesh must drive for marine resources in the Bay of Bengal under motivation of the Blue Economy concept. The exploration of marine resources and marine environment are reciprocal. Where there is exploration there is a possibility of pollution of the marine environment. Therefore, the government has to adopt an effective MSP for Bangladesh in achieving sustainable development as well as the protection of marine environment.

**Rajeev Ahmed**

Senior Editor, CPA news



## Chattogram port fire service unit **Born to fight fire**

Omar Farooq Emon

*Chattogram port is the most important seaport of the Bangladesh. It is an international seaport, and being so, Chattogram port has the highest quality of integrated security system to deal with any internal and external threats. Considering threats, risks and accidents, a comprehensive security measure has been formulated to ensure adequate level of protection. The security department is equipped with the necessary security equipment and it is being trained to become an efficient and vigilant security force. Chattogram port fire service unit is an important part of the security department. This unit works 24/7 to deal with internal fire risk. Not only to implement ISPS code, but also as an international port a complete fire unit was set up from the beginning with trained firefighters and modern equipment. Now, it has all kinds of service facilities like a modern fire service station.*

### Full time service

Uninterrupted container handling, container transportation and unloading of goods are done at Chattogram port 24 hours a day. Heavy equipment used to perform these tasks can cause fire, so does a combustible product. In addition, the inadvertent activities of the officers and employees from port or stakeholders working inside the port can cause unwanted fire. To deal with these risks, the port fire unit works to provide fire extinguishing services, deal accident or any kind of emergency services inside the port. More than 50 trained firefighters have been working in two shifts to provide round-the-clock service.

### Modern equipment

The port fire unit has modern equipment to run as a full-fledged modern fire station. Equipped with 5 fire tenders, the unit is capable of extinguishing any kind of fire inside the port. Besides, there are also three fire pumps to tackle any unwanted emergency situation. Port fire unit has placed adequate fire extinguishers in terminal sheds of the port, port buildings, residential areas, hospitals,





Fire fighting is exercised inside the port by comprehending the speed and nature of the fire

port-run schools, colleges and madrasas, and these installations are useful in extinguishing fire as soon as it starts.

#### Quick response

The port fire service unit is capable of providing service to entire port area to extinguish fire within 3-5 minutes. The head office of the port fire service unit is located at the gate number 4 of the port. There are 3 fire service controls rooms located in the head office, CCT (Chattogram Container Terminal) and in Dolphin oil jetty. In these 3 control rooms, full-time firefighters with necessary equipment are ready to attend the call of duty. Apart from this, to support safety mechanism related to fire, there is another fire service control room in Dhaka ICD (Inland Container Depot).

#### Awareness activities

The port fire service unit conducts awareness activities to prevent any fire-related accident in Chattogram port. All installations inside and outside of the port have signboards with instructions on what to do in case of fire hazards. Signboards detail what can and cannot be done, how to use safety equipment and what to do when a risk arises. In addition, all the officers and employees of the port are given basic training on what to do in case of fire hazard in the workplace. In this training, necessary instructions have been given to reduce the damage caused by fire and to ensure personal

safety. Such awareness activities play an important role in protecting individual as well as reducing institutional damage.

#### Fire fighting exercise

As the ISPS code implementing port, Chattogram port is supposed to conduct fire fighting exercises at least twice a year, but the port fire unit conducts exercises every month to prepare itself for any unwanted fire incident. In these exercises, fire fighting is practiced inside the port by comprehending the speed and nature of the fire. On the one hand, exercises not only makes them more adept at dealing with new kind of fire hazards, but also make them informed about

*All the officers and employees of the port are given basic training on what to do in case of fire hazard in the workplace.*

Firefighters of Chattogram port fire service unit



the capabilities of firefighters so that they can improve more.

#### Future plans

With the increasing export-import demand of the country, operational activities of Chattogram port are increasing in parallel. The Chattogram Port Authority has taken initiative to enhance services of the port fire service unit keeping in view port's increased size and future activities. It has taken a bunch of plans to increase the trained manpower as well as installation of modern equipment and new buildings. These include the development of a fire hydrant system, installation of an alarm system, collection of fireboats to help the ships stationed at the outer anchorage or port channel, procurement of modern equipment and construction of a six-storey building. Apart from this, the port authority has planned to procure more modern firefighting equipment for all the terminals to be constructed at the port.

**Omar Faroque Emon**  
Reporter, Bandarbarta

**Gratitude**  
**Masum Ud Daula**  
Assistant Fire Inspector  
Chattogram Port Fire Service Unit



## ➤ Government keeps operation of Chattogram port normal



After a view-exchanging meeting with senior officials of Chattogram port at the port building on 23 April 2020, the State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said that Chattogram port is determined to carry out its duty to keep the operational activities of Chattogram port normal for greater interest of the country despite the threat of COVID-19 outbreak.

“The people of the port are discharging their respective duties risking their lives. This risk is for the next generation,” he said.

Emphasising on ensuring safety of the port workers, the Minister assured the port authority of providing cooperation where it would be needed.

Shipping Secretary Mezbahuddin Chowdhury said that Chattogram Port Authority had been continuing their all operations in defiance of the threat of COVID-19.

On that occasion, Chairman of the Chattogram port Rear Admiral S. M. Abul Kalam Azad (G), NGP, NDC, PSC, BN and the port Member (Administration and Planning) Zafar Alam and high officials of the port were present.

## ➤ Transport, communication sector get highest allocation in national budget

The allocation for the transport and communication sector in the development budget in the proposed national budget for 2020-21 fiscal was the highest for the 8th consecutive year. In the new fiscal, percentage-wise allocation for the sector in the development budget is 25.2%. The percentage however decreased this year as it was 26.1% in the outgoing fiscal.

In the budget speech, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said that the government was implementing some projects for upgrading 1,140 kilometres important regional highways to standard wider and upgraded district highways. For improving waterways, as he added, capital dredging and other activities to increase navigability have been taken up on 53 routes of inland waterways.

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



After a long 10 years, a Bangladeshi flag carrier ship anchored at the jetty of Chattogram port on 21 June 2020.

The Bangladeshi flag carrier container ship MV Sierra will start its maritime voyage on 23 June 2020 with export containers from Chittagong port.

The Bangladeshi flag carrier container ship will ply the Chattogram-Singapore-Kelang port route regularly. Karnaphuli Group procured two ships named MV Sarera and MV Sahera, which are carrying Bangladeshi flags. Of these, MV Sarera anchored at the New-mooring Container Terminal (NCT) jetty-4 on 21 June 2020. The ship loaded with containers started from Chattogram port for Singapore on 23 June 2020. As a result, after one decade, a Bangladeshi flag carrier is carrying containers from Chattogram port.

The two ships MV Sarera and MV Sahera can carry 1550 TEUs of containers each.

Director of Karnaphuli Group Hamdan Hossain Chowdhury said, “We have planned to start our maritime trade and business again by our new ships MV Sarera and MV Sahera which are carrying Bangladeshi flag to the world. Once upon a time, our country had a heritage of own ships. Now, we are starting the maritime business with Bangladeshi flag carrier ships. I hope that we can expand our maritime trade and increase the number of ships in future.”

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.

There were two Bangladeshi flag carrier ships named Banglar Shikha and Banglar Robi which were owned by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation. Besides, QC Shipping Company owned two Bangladeshi flag carrier ships named QC Teal and QC Pintail while they had a total of seven foreign flag carrier ships.

## ▶▶ Bangladesh and Bhutan set terms and condition for PTA signing

On 16 June 2020, Bangladesh and Bhutan finalised the terms and conditions for signing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to increase bilateral trade.

“We have reached a consensus to sign a PTA, not the Free Trade Agreement (FTA),” said Sharifa Khan, additional secretary to the commerce ministry.

The documents were supposed to be finalised in March this year, but it was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Bhutan agreed to provide duty benefit on export of 100 different goods, including garments, processed agricultural goods and electronics.

On the other hand, Bangladesh agreed to provide duty benefit to 34 Bhutanese products including fruits, said Khan. Being members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), trade between Bangladesh and Bhutan is on the rise as both the countries have demand for products of each other.

Trade between Bangladesh and Bhutan that amounted to USD 26.52 million in fiscal 2012-13 reached USD 57.90 million in fiscal 2018-19, according to data obtained from the commerce ministry.

## ▶▶ NBR orders container transfer to private inland depots



On 23 April 2020, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) ordered the authorities concerned to transfer all types of import-laden containers from Chattogram port to 19 private Inland Container Depots (ICDs) in the district. The order was planned to remain effective till 30 June 2020.

The decision was taken following acute container congestion at the port due to the ongoing countrywide shutdown to prevent the coronavirus outbreak.

According to Shipping Ministry Secretary Md Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, around 18,000 TEUs of import-laden containers could be transferred to the private ICDs with the NBR decision.

## ▶▶ Chattogram port workers are dedicated to keep the economy afloat amid COVID-19 pandemic

Doctors are working hard to save the lives of people infected with COVID-19; the administration, law enforcement agencies and members of the defence forces are working to prevent the spread of the pandemic. And the workers of Chattogram port are working to save the livelihood of the people of the country. Port workers have been working tirelessly from the beginning to keep the supply of economic activities, especially import-export goods, normal. These imported products include not only consumer goods but also raw materials for making life-saving medicines and medical supplies.

82% of total import comes through Chattogram port- the lifeline of country's economy. And 91% of the export products go abroad from this port. So a slight negative impact on the pace of import-export has a big impact on the economy of the whole country.

Chattogram port has not been closed for an hour since the general holiday declared from 26 March 2020 to prevent COVID-19 outbreak. With 24 hours a running, there was no crisis in the supply of consumer goods in the country at such an important time of Ramadan.

Factories did not have to pause their operation to make medicines as raw materials were delivered from Chattogram port on priority basis. It was possible to make ventilators in the country since the supply of raw materials through Chittagong port was available. Besides, protective materials including masks, gloves, PPE have been manufactured in the country's factories as enough raw materials were imported and delivered from the port.

Several workers at the port have been infected by COVID-19 as they tried to keep these economic activities up and running. Two of the workers died by COVID-19 infection at the port. Knowing that there is a risk of COVID-19 transmission, the port pilots are carrying the cargo ships together with the foreign sailors following health guidelines. Workers are standing at the jetty from morning to night supervising goods handling. Security personnel are wearing masks and gloves to ensure security with safety through the gate. When frustrated at work, the officials went and encouraged the workers.

Three divisions are most important to keep the handling of import and export goods of Chattogram port active. The main one is the port transport department. About 1,200 workers in the department have shared work shifts to keep the port operational even during general public holidays. When a ship arrives, one terminal operator and 12 berth operators conduct cargo handling. They do the work under the leadership of the transport department of the port.

Another important division of the port is the Marine Division. Personnel of this department board the foreign ships coming from the outer-anchorage and come in direct contact with the foreign sailors. The ship with the foreign sailors is brought back to the jetty by the port pilots. In the same way, these pilots continue sail the ship at the outer-anchorage after delivering the goods.

After unloading the goods from the ship, the quick delivery from the port depends on the security guards at the port gate. In addition, the port security department had to ensure the COVID-19 related safety at the entrance of the protected areas of the port and at the same time this department has to prevent smuggling. The mechanical department is also working equally to keep the port equipment running.





## ➤ ADB predicts Bangladesh top GDP growth achiever in South Asia



Asian Development Bank (ADB) has placed Bangladesh on top of the list of South Asian nations as it predicted 7.8 per cent GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth for the country in 2020 fiscal amid COVID-19 across the world.

“GDP growth is expected to moderate but remain strong at 7.8% in FY2020 as domestic demand is supported by continued healthy growth in workers’ remittances. Private investment is expected to remain subdued,” said ADB in its report titled ‘Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020: What Drives Innovation in Asia?’

On average the South Asian region will gross 4.1% GDP growth while India will make 4%, Pakistan 2.6%, Bhutan 5.2%, Nepal 5.3%, Sri Lanka 2.2%, Afghanistan 3% and Maldives -3%.

ADB came up with this new forecast a day after the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) projected Bangladesh’s GDP growth 3.5 per cent in 2020 revising its earlier forecast of 7.7 per cent growth following the COVID-19 outbreak across the globe.

The report reads that the economic activity of Bangladesh will ‘accelerate in the second half of the year with expanded government development spending, higher imports of liquefied natural gas and construction materials, favourable trends in power production, and the authorities pursuing policies to boost exports.’

## ➤ Chattogram port on highest alert for cyclone Amphan

All the operations of the country’s premier port Chattogram remained suspended since 20 May 2020 morning as the port authority issued “highest security alert 4” due to cyclone Amphan.

On 19 May 2020 noon, the CPA issued alert 3 when Bangladesh Meteorological Department declared danger signal number six for the maritime port Chattogram and Cox’s Bazar. After issuing security alert 3, loading and unloading at port jetties and outer anchorage was suspended.

On 19 May 2020, mother vessels (large ship) were moved to Kutubdia-Cox’s Bazar coast, whereas lighter ships and other small vessels have been moved upstream of Shah Amanat Bridge.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk said goods unloading in outer anchorage stopped on 18 May 2020 and offloading in jetties stopped on 19 May 2020 morning after issuing alert-3. However, goods delivery to yards and container delivery to private depots were going on.

## ➤ Store rent waiver extended amid COVID-19 shutdown



Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) has extended the full exemption facility from payment of store rent on all types of import containers up to 16 May in line with the extension of the general holiday the government announced to tackle COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

On 5 May 2020, CPA issued a notice to extend the benefit saying that full exemption from payment of store rent would be applicable if the importers took delivery of the containers from the port yards by 16 May 2020.

The benefit will be applicable for containers whose four-day free time facility after arriving at the port expired on 26 March 2020 or later. The importers will face penalty rent if these containers are not taken delivery of from the port by the given deadline.

The port authority first offered the benefit on 27 April 2020 which was later extended up to 4 May 2020 as an incentive to the importers to ease container congestion at the country’s premier sea port.

CPA has extended the waiver facility as per the decision of the shipping ministry and following requests made by several trade bodies.

The port has been experiencing severe container congestion due to decline in the rate of containers released since the general holiday began. Later, container delivery gained momentum after CPA and National Board of Revenue took a number of measures, including introduction of the store rent waiver.

In late April, the number of undelivered containers surpassed the maximum store capacity (49,015 TEUs or twenty-foot equivalent unit) of the port. The rate of container delivery speeded up due to the benefits as the importers had been, on an average, taking delivery of more than 4,000 TEUs every day in the last few days.

The CPA in the latest circular requested the importers to take release of their goods under the scheme to help the authority restore normalcy in operations of the port and to make container handling smoother.

According to the existing rules, there is no store rent on containers for up to four days.

The importers have to pay a store rent ranging between USD 6 per day and USD 24 per day depending on the number of days containers stay at the port yards.

## ► Banks asked to reopen branches in commercial areas of Dhaka, Chattogram

On 23 April 2020, Bangladesh Bank asked all commercial banks to open their branches in Dhaka's Motijheel and Dilkusha areas and Chattogram's Agrabad and Khatungonj areas. The central bank issued the directive as a measure to help release imported goods and commodities stuck at Chattogram port.

The branches of the banks in commercial areas will carry out their cash transaction related operations from 10 AM to 2 PM. However, the branches and their head offices in the commercial areas will be kept open till 3:30 PM.

In another move, the central bank has also lowered the transaction charge of Mobile Financial Services (MFS) to aid workers of export-oriented industries.

MFS providers were asked to impose a maximum charge of BDT 4 on the withdrawal of workers' wages under the government stimulus package.

The government on 25 March 2020 announced a stimulus package of BDT 5,000 crore for export-oriented industries to fight the impact of COVID-19 on the country's economy.

## ► Export, import activities resume at Benapole



Export and import between Bangladesh and India through Benapole land port resumed on 30 April 2020 after a month.

Bilateral trade between the two neighbouring countries through the Benapole-Petrapole border remained suspended since 26 March 2020 amid the lockdown in both countries over COVID-19 pandemic.

The decision came on 29 April 2020 following correspondence between the diplomatic and customs levels.

Around 2,500 trucks loaded with goods, including essential and perishable ones, remained stuck on both sides of the land port due to the restriction imposed by the local administration of the West Bengal government fearing contagion of the outbreak.

Indian truck drivers were also reluctant to enter Bangladesh for the rules set by the West Bengal government that required them to stay in quarantine for 14 days after returning from Bangladesh.

As per the decision, the imported goods will be unloaded from Indian trucks at the zero point of the border and uploaded on Bangladeshi trucks and vice-versa for exported goods to avoid spreading of the virus through maintaining maximum social distancing.

Usually, the Indian trucks are allowed to enter into the Bangladeshi side up to the truck terminal of the Bangladesh Land Port Authority.

With the restarting of import-export activities with India, all the 24 land ports of the country have become busy again.

## ► World Bank approves fast-track USD 100mn financing for Bangladesh



On 3 April 2020, the World Bank approved a fast-track USD 100 million financing to help Bangladesh prevent, detect, and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen its national system

for public health emergencies.

'The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness Project' will be rolled out nationwide to help upgrade selected health facilities and laboratories to detect, manage and treat suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases and support screening in Bangladesh's designated health facilities and entry points.

It will benefit people with suspected and confirmed infections, at-risk populations, medical and emergency personnel, as well as public and private service providers, medical and testing facilities, and the national health system.

"The World Bank is working closely with the Government of Bangladesh to fight the spread of COVID-19," said Mercy Tembon, WB country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

"This project will support the implementation of Bangladesh's national plan to respond to the pandemic. Moreover, it will help strengthen the country's response by ensuring that effective surveillance and diagnostic systems are in place and that medical supplies, personal protective equipment, ventilators and isolation units are available in designated hospitals," she said.



## ▶ Chattogram port faces problem with reefer containers

The Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) is facing problems with reefer containers loaded with extra frozen goods. There are piles of reefer container in the port yard and more on the ship waiting to be unloaded.

CPA is trying to deliver these containers to avoid more troubles. This time it has been decided that if the reefer container is not released within the stipulated time, the penalty will be 4 times more than the stipulated penalty. This decision was effective from 16 May 2020. Chattogram port has some 1,500 active reefer plugs, but it's housing almost double that — 2,900 reefer containers - using additional temporary plugs.

The reefer container is a large type of deep freezer. These containers are used to transport temperature controlled products such as fruits, ginger, fish, meat, vegetables, field especially onions, milk, flowers and pharmaceuticals items.

## ▶ Bangladesh seeks cooperation of ISA for 'Blue Economy' objectives



Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN Rabab Fatima has said they will require access to equitable sharing of marine resources, especially in areas beyond national jurisdiction to fully realise the potentials of blue economy for the socio-economic development

of the country. Ambassador Fatima made the remarks while speaking at the "Ambassadorial Briefing on Equitable Sharing of Benefits from Sustainable Development of Seabed Resources: Opportunities for LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS" held in New York.

"To fully realise the potentials of the Blue Economy for our socio-economic development, we would require access to equitable sharing of marine resources, especially in areas beyond national jurisdiction," she said.

Organised jointly by the International Seabed Authority (ISA), and the chairs of LDCs, LLDCs and AOSIS, the purpose of the high level event was to brief member states about the initiatives taken by ISA to ensure equitable sharing of benefits from the development of deep sea-bed resources, said the Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN on 27 June 2020. The briefers, which included the ISA Secretary-General Mr Michael W. Lodge, highlighted the work being done by the ISA in developing regulatory framework for deep sea mining, awarding contracts for exploration of mineral resources and most importantly building capacity that can address the needs of LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS and support them achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

In her statement, Ambassador Rabab Fatima mentioned that Bangladesh is prioritising on unleashing the full potentials of ocean resources and made the Blue Economy the new frontier. She stressed on the need of the developing countries to receive support for capacity building and knowledge transfer, particularly in the form of training, secondment of technical staff, facilitating research and studies.

## ▶ Bangladesh to receive USD 100 million from ADB



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the government of Bangladesh signed a USD 100-million loan agreement to support the government's efforts to address the immediate public health requirements for preventing the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 30 April 2020, Economic Relations Division (ERD) secretary Fatima Yasmin and ADB country director Manmohan Parkash signed the loan agreements remotely on behalf of Bangladesh and ADB respectively.

The assistance under the 'COVID-19 Response Emergency Assistance Project' will help strengthen Bangladesh's response to the COVID-19 outbreak by providing urgently needed health equipment, medical supplies, diagnostic systems, and upgrading of the capacity of the health workforce.

The concessional assistance for the project will be sourced from ADB's ordinary capital resources with an interest charge at the rate of 1% per annum; a term of 40 years, including a grace period of 10 years; repayment of principal at 2% per annum for the first 10 years after the grace period, and 4% per annum thereafter. This project will support the immediate procurement of equipment and supplies for testing; upgrading medical infrastructure; and the development of system and community capacities for surveillance, prevention, and response to the pandemic in Bangladesh.

The project will equip 17 medical college hospitals with isolation and critical care units. Capacity and quality of at least 19 laboratories will be upgraded with COVID-19 microbiological diagnostic facilities. At least 3,500 health sector workers, about 50 % of whom are women, will be trained in modern skills and knowledge, and the recruitment of more health professionals and technical staff will be supported.

Bangladesh has taken decisive actions to manage the COVID-19 outbreak and this assistance will support the government's efforts in mitigating the health sector challenges in short and medium terms.

ADB has a strong track record of responding rapidly to provide targeted support to Bangladesh in times of emergencies.



## ➤ Sweden won't cancel garments orders

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven assured that his country will not cancel any garment product order from Bangladesh.

"We'll continue importing RMG products from Bangladesh," he said while talking to Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina over telephone on 29 April 2020.

In reply, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed her firm optimism that Bangladesh could fulfil the orders of the readymade garment (RMG) products of global buyers despite the COVID-19 outbreak. During the 15-minute conversation, the two leaders discussed trade and business issues, particularly the RMG sector.

"We're hopeful that we could meet the orders of the RMG products of the international buyers, including Sweden despite the present situation caused by the COVID-19 outbreak," Prime Minister said. She also said that the owners of garment industries in Bangladesh have reopened their factories by ensuring health protocols. The two prime ministers praised the steps taken by both the countries in containing the pandemic.

In this regard, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated her call to the international community to work together to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

## ➤ Overflowing oil reserves in the country

Due to the declining demand, the country's three types of fuel oil, diesel, jet fuel and furnace oil, have been in a state of overflow. For this reason, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has delayed the anchoring of three ships carrying fuel to Chattogram port for one month even after the opening of LC.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global energy demand, including Bangladesh, has come down.

BPC General Manager (Marketing) Mustafa Kudrat-e Elahi said, "We have enough reserve at the moment. However, the demand for diesel and jet fuel has been steadily rising since May. Compared to that, the demand for fuel for small cars is not increasing."

Bangladesh mainly imports oil from Singapore and Middle Eastern countries. In May, 10 oil-carrying ships were scheduled to arrive at the port. Each ship imports 30,000 metric tons of fuel. Five of the ships were unloaded at the Dolphin jetty in Chattogram port.

Till 5 May 2020, the country's diesel reserves were 682,000 metric tons. However, the reserve capacity is 631,792 metric tons. Similarly, for aircraft, about 70,000 metric tons of jet fuel and 155,600 metric tons of furnace oil were reserved though these two types of fuel have a storage capacity of 65,858 and 141,340 metric tons respectively. Therefore, Bangladesh has the overwhelming reserve of oil to meet the demand of domestic market.

## ➤ Steps to be taken to build trust in tourism sector amid COVID-19 crisis



Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry Senior Secretary Mohibul Haque said that necessary steps would be taken to build trusts among tourists about health care and safety amid

COVID-19 outbreak. He was speaking as the chief guest at the Zoom Conference organised jointly by Bangladesh Tourism Board, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism and Bhraman Travel Magazine.

He said that Bangladesh Tourism Board will formulate a guideline for all those involved in tourism and tourism business in the field of domestic and international tourism to ensure the health protection of tourists. All organisations involved in tourism, including hotels and motels, have to follow this guideline, he said. It will also be monitored whether these guidelines and hygiene are being followed properly in hotels, motels and tourist destinations, said Mohibul.

While discussing tourism at the conference, the speakers gave advice on various issues. Notably, the behaviour of tourists will change after COVID-19 situation.

## ➤ Committee formed to ensure incentives for Chattogram port employees

Initiatives have been taken to provide financial incentives to the port officials and employees who are keeping the Chattogram port operational 24 hours a day amid the risk of COVID-19. An eight-member committee has already been formed to prepare a report on the issue. The committee was asked to submit report by 11 May 2020.

The members of the committee formed by Chattogram port Director (Administration) Mominur Rashid are: Port Deputy Conservator Captain Faridul Alam, Director (Transport) Enamul Karim, Chief Finance and Accounts Officer Md. Habibur Rahman, Chief Audit Officer Md. Rafiqul Alam, Port Secretary Mohammad Omar Faruk, Port CBA President Abul Mansur Ahmed and Acting General Secretary Mohammad Nayeul Islam Fatik.

Earlier, the CBA had sent a letter to the CPA chairman regarding the issue of incentives. The letter made four demands. The first demands asked to pay the same amount of basic salary as incentive per month. According to second demand, the letter asked for BDT 500 to BDT 1000 per day as part of disaster management. In case of death of an officer-employee due to COVID-19, the third demand asked to provide immediate employment to a suitable family member as per his / her qualifications. Finally, the fourth demand asked to introduce the special financial incentive announced by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 13 April 2020.



## CPA NEWS

A Quarterly Publication of  
Chattogram Port Authority

