

## Operating with maximum caution **Chattogram port in the days of pandemic**

Ship handling operators: Men in outer anchorage

The diary of a COVID-19 sufferer

Hon'ble Prime Minister  
received SDG Progress Award

Chattogram port saw a growth  
in all performance indicators amid COVID-19

Bangladesh is the second largest exporter  
of goods in South Asia



ISSN 2617-6122

October 2021, Volume 06, Issue 03

## CPA News

A Quarterly Publication of  
Chattogram Port Authority



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## Editorial

### COVID-19 was unable to move Chattogram port from its ascending point

No one could have predicted how devastating and powerful the pandemic would become. The pandemic has changed the face of global trade, lifestyle, and politics in just a few months. Lockdowns and declarations of emergency in numerous countries have had little effect on the death toll. Ambulances, sirens, and masks have become part of our daily routine. However, the operation of Chattogram port, on the other hand, was not halted for a moment. It has been possible due to the outstanding display of commitment and excellent team work shown by the port employees. The cover article of this issue detailed Chattogram port's experience during the COVID-19 epidemic and how it has fought back since the beginning.

As the country's economic activity have grown, the number of ships arriving at Chattogram port has increased, owing to robust import and export. Chattogram port, the country's main seaport, has expanded its port of call in response to escalating demand. The outer anchorage has been expanded to satisfy future demands of the country's commercial zones, which include the Matarbari deep sea port. In addition to consistently growing its capacity in product handling, Chattogram port is working directly to increase the capacity of terminal operators, berth operators, and ship handling operators. At the port jetty, containerised goods are handled by berth and terminal operators, while ship handling operators are in charge of the entire outer anchorage. In this issue, we have a special feature on ship handling operators, who are the men who work at Chattogram port's outer anchorage.

Md. Mizanur Rahman, a Chattogram port engineer, and his mother both died of COVID-19. Afroza Bithi, his wife, has experienced two such horrific events in a row. She also got infected with COVID-19 along with her three children. The relatives were unable to attend to offer any consolation due to the risk of infection. Afroza Bithi recalls those dreadful days in the 'Port Community' section of this issue.

In addition, the 'News Bytes' section will keep you up to date on all of the major maritime events and developments that occurred in the third quarter of this year.

We gratefully accept your useful reviews and suggestions for new ways to enhance this maritime publication. Thank you for being with us all along, and please continue to be with us.

Thank you so much.

**Zafar Alam**

Editor



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*In order to ensure the quality of life of the citizens in a middle income country like Bangladesh by keeping the supply chain operational, there must be a strong coordination between Chattogram port and the port users. Institutions need to be supportive of each other. Everyone should pay attention to speed up the operation of the port. It is not enough to only increase the efficiency of the port. The efficiency of other concerned institutions also need to be increased.*



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## Ship handling operators: Men in outer anchorage



There is no other option for achieving the country's development goals and maintaining high economic growth except to increase the capacity of Chattogram port. Because of the development in trade, import and export are always expanding. Furthermore, with the advent of transit-transshipment of commodities from adjacent nations through Chattogram port, the capability of handling goods is rising with skilled ship handling operators.

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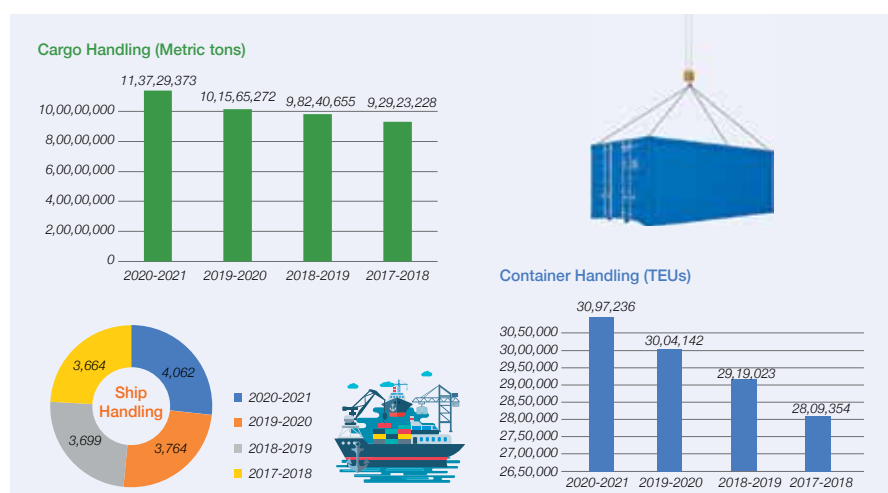
## The diary of a COVID-19 sufferer



Chattogram Port Authority arranged a job for me, thinking of this distraught and upset family after Mizan left. I was appointed as an assistant teacher last November at the CPA High School. I am also connected to the secretary department. This is why I am able to live with dignity with my three children without being dependent on anyone. I have no happiness, but there is peace from hard work.

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Growth of cargo and ship handling in Chattogram port in the last four financial years



## Operating with maximum caution

# Chattogram port in the days of pandemic

CPA News desk

*No one could have imagined that the pandemic would become so terrible and powerful. In just a few months, the pandemic has changed the face of world trade, lifestyle, and global politics. Lockdowns in various countries, and declaring the state of emergency is still not slowing down the death toll. Ambulance sirens, masks and social distancing have become our constant companions. We are prepared for natural disasters and have plans on how to deal with them. But there were no advance instructions to deal with the pandemic. In this situation, the government has to take the ultimate decision- what matters more? People's lives or livelihoods? How did the main port of the country pass those difficult days?*

### The pandemic is not new

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaken the world even during this time of medical progress. However, people have suffered more than this in the past. The effects of some pandemics were so severe that they have changed the course of civilisation. The Justinian plague began in 541 AD and lasted for almost two centuries. The pandemic killed about 50 million people in the Middle East, Asia and the Mediterranean. This bacterial disease spread through rats. In the 14th century, this plague turned into one of the deadliest pandemics in Europe, the Black Death. According to LiveScience, in 1346, the Black Death spread from Asia to Europe. According to many, the pandemic killed about half of all people in Europe. The pandemic of cholera has come up in

the literary works of many writers of Bengali literature. This disease has caused village after village to be devastated. One of the deadliest pandemics in modern history in regards to the number of people who died is the Spanish flu, first caught in 1918. Where World War I killed 11.6 million people in five years, the Spanish flu killed 20 million people in just two years. Unfortunately, at the beginning of last year, the world was exposed to a frightening virus called novel COVID-19. The World Health Organisation calls it the COVID-19 global pandemic in terms of infection capacity and mortality rate.

### The world was unprepared

On 31 December 2019, Chinese authorities first alerted the World Health Organisation about a pneumonia-like outbreak in Wuhan,

China. It was identified as COVID-19 disease caused by the novel COVID-19. Then on 11 January 2020, the first person died of this disease. But it started to spread like wildfire from the end of January. By March, the death toll had skyrocketed. If there is a COVID-19 patient on a ship, no country allows him to enter for fear of infection.

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. The whole world came to a standstill. At that time there were patients infected with COVID-19 in 114 countries. The virus has changed several times in one year as a result of genetic mutations. The disease has become more contagious and deadly in its new forms. The second wave is going on. Despite the invention of the COVID-19 vaccine, the world is still still





suffering. In just twelve months after the declaration of the pandemic, 14 crore people in 212 countries around the world have been infected with the virus, and more than 40 lac lives have been lost. 14 April 2021, on the first day of the Bengali New Year, a record 96 people died in our country.

### Bangladesh is very active in prevention

On 8 March 2020, the first COVID-19 patient was identified in Bangladesh. However, it is not possible to stop the spread of this virus globally. Therefore, prevention is more important than cure when it comes to COVID-19. There is no other way to stay safe than to stay at a safe distance from an infected person and maintain good hygiene. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the government has taken the following steps:

- Increasing opportunities for COVID-19 testing
- Constructing specialised hospitals
- Increasing number of ICU beds
- Closing all educational institutions
- Canceling all flights abroad
- Declaring a general holiday in the country from 26 March 2020

All kinds of shops and institutions are also closed. But in the case of the port, this isn't applicable. Ports, including the transportation of medicines and emergency goods, were exempt from the ban.

### Chattogram port was alert

At an emergency meeting held at the port building in March last year, it was made mandatory to make an announcement to the captain and agent as soon as a ship was anchored to prevent COVID-19 from

spreading to the sea. The master of the ship had to declare as soon as he reached the port that there were no COVID-19 infected sailors on that ship. In addition, ships from other countries would have to remain in quarantine for 14 days after leaving the last port. After reaching the Chattogram port, all of the sailors of the ship would be allowed to enter the port only if they were declared safe after being scanned by the port health officer. Shore passes (city entry passes) were not being issued to foreign sailors of ships which arrived at the port from abroad. At the same time, the opportunity to transfer a sailor of a ship had also been stopped. Efforts are underway to organise online berthing meetings to ensure social distance. However, container feeder ships arriving from Colombo, Singapore and Tanjung Pelepas ports in Malaysia, to the hub of Bangladesh's containerised goods, are exempt from the 14-day quarantine obligation. At the same time, a medical team under the supervision of the port health officer is on full-time duty at the port immigration desk.

Saif Powertech Limited is the operator of NCT and CCT, the two main terminals for container handling in the port. The company's Chief Operating Officer (COO) Capt. Tanvir Hossain said the highest precautionary measures have been taken at the port to prevent COVID-19. People would only be allowed inside the port after measuring their temperature and making sure that they had washed their hands. Most importantly, container handlers were being sprayed with disinfectants

all over once they were on the ship, and again when they were off from it. The company had also provided soap, water, hand sanitiser, mask and disinfectant sprays for the employees. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Department of Health jointly prepared the emergency response team by providing special training to port officials and doctors, which is under the overall supervision of the port health officer.

The port ambulance ship was kept ready for the quick transfer of patients from the ship to the hospital. A medical team under the supervision of the port health officer was on full-time duty at the port immigration desk. If any sailor wanted to go out, permission would only be given if a medical screening ensured that he was healthy.

For the safety of the officers / employees of all the departments of the port, hand held thermometers, masks, hand gloves, PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), bleaching powder, protective goggles and disinfectant liquid and soap had been provided. To prevent COVID-19, the port fire service sprayed disinfectants at regular intervals in port buildings, adjacent installations, various yards, jetties and residential areas.





Sample collection booths were set up for potential patients at the Chattogram port employees' council office from 27 May last year. An experienced physician and a pathologist were responsible for collecting the samples. The collected samples were sent to the lab of Chattogram Medical College Hospital for testing and the results obtained were uploaded online on the port's website.

## Dedicated COVID-19 Unit

Despite ensuring maximum security, several officers and employees of all departments including traffic, mechanical and administration of the port were infected. As of April, 18 people had died from being infected by COVID-19. As a result, it is important to ensure the health of the workers as well as proper medical care to keep the port operational. A specialised 50-bed unit for about 40,000 people, including all classes of port workers and their family members, was launched at the port hospital. State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury inaugurated the COVID-19 unit at the Port Hospital on 1 July last year. A total of 159 medical personnel including 13 doctors and 36 nurses have been recruited here. Patients infected by COVID-19 require oxygen support depending on the severity of their health condition. It takes sophisticated equipment to accurately diagnose oxygen levels every second. Severely affected patients need ventilation. With this in mind, uninterrupted high flow oxygen supplier, flowmeter, high flow nasal cannula, oxygen concentrator, ventilator and other medical equipment have been procured for the treatment of infected patients, most of which was funded by the port itself.

The government delegation has already inspected the immunisation facilities at Chattogram Port Hospital and the necessary training has been completed for the doctors and nurses involved in immunisation management. Vaccination has officially started at Chattogram Port Hospital from 12 April, the day after the pilot vaccination programme was conducted at the port hospital. Citizens wishing to be vaccinated at the Port Hospital centre can complete their registration in the Surokkha app or software. The port hospital became a new vaccination centre after the port authority sent a letter to the government's health department.

## COVID-19's impact on the port

The global economy has already crumbled due to the lockdown, and healthcare in the developed countries of Europe and



*During the crisis of COVID-19, Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority Rear Admiral M Shahjahan gave necessary instructions to the concerned officials by inspecting port activities regularly.*

America has collapsed. But if economic growth is to continue, there is no alternative to keeping the supply chain and the ports active. The lifeline of Bangladesh's economy is Chattogram port, whose slogan is 'Country Moves with Us'. The Chattogram port controls 82% of the country's total imports and 91% of its exports. So the slightest negative impact on the pace of import-export has a huge impact on the economy of the whole country. Officers and employees of all levels of Chattogram port are working non-stop, putting their lives at risk to maintain the normal supply of all kinds of essential commodities. These include medical equipment, raw materials, chemicals, and medicine. Last year, the Chattogram port was open 24 hours a day, even during the general holiday in the country. Its loading-unloading activities and supply chain was active. In keeping with this, the activities of a number of companies which use the port were also unhalted.

The activities of Chattogram customs involved in customs duty and clearance were also ongoing, but on a limited scale. 26 March 2020, custom house has been fixing the duty only on essential food items, including medicines and certain emergency goods. As a result, container congestion is increasing in Chattogram port. However, the work of customs is also in full swing under the post-government directives. The activities of commercial banks are kept open for three hours a day. Earlier, traders used to release four to four and a half thousand TEU containers full of goods from the port in a day. After the general holiday was declared to ensure social distance to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the number of deliveries has come down to

500-600 containers daily. The port has even seen days where there were zero deliveries.

The activities of all the departments are being carried out by the people responsible as per the roster during the declared general holidays. From the beginning of the general holiday on 26 March last year, the Chattogram Port Authority had given a complete discount on the store rent facility for all types of containers imported through the port. This discount is due to the fact that most of the companies have had to cut back on their facilities due to general holidays. However, the port authorities withdrew it from 20 April 2020, about a month later, as some importers did not clear the containers from the port within the stipulated time, which increased congestion of containers.

Later, at the request of BGMEA, Chattogram port waived the store rent for the second time only for the raw materials of the readymade garments factory. However, at the request of the port to ensure this facility for all, the Ministry of Shipping considered matter again and approved the discount for all types of goods. In April-May last year alone, Chattogram port provided an incentive of Tk 138 crore to traders and industrialists as the two-store rents were waived due to lockdown in the time of COVID-19. The port suffered two types of losses because of this. Firstly, the revenue income of Tk 138 crore is lesser than anticipated. Secondly, the loss from operating costs for long term storage and maintenance of the products is at least Tk 20 to 30 crore. Moreover, low revenue means low income of the state, because the government gets income tax at the rate of 25% on the income of the port.

### Reefer container arrangements in crisis

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 and in some cases onions, milk, flowers, pharmaceuticals items. After these containers are loaded, they are placed on the ship with an electrical connection. After reaching at the port, the port authority keep the containers electrically connected to keep the goods fresh. Dedicated power supply is required to keep these specialised containers at Chattogram port yard. The port yard has a little over 1,400 electrical plug points for storing refrigerated containers. And the storage capacity in the yard for refrigerated containers is 2,600 TEU. The plug points were allocated rationally when the number of reefer containers in the yard is higher than the number of plug points. After 3-4 hours the plug point is changed and given to another container. The yard's capacity for storing reefer containers was also exceeded as they were not delivered at their normal speed. Meanwhile, the port authorities announced a 100% store rent waiver on all types of containers as an incentive during the COVID-19 situation, but the delivery of the reefer containers remained slow. Release of containers from ships is also a problem due to the lack of space to keep these specialised containers in the yard. This is because it increases both the disembarking time (leaving the port) and the turnaround time (average stay time).

The lack of cold chain logistics in Chattogram port and adjoining areas became evident in this disaster. Plant

Quarantine and Atomic Energy Commission Radiation certification are required for food / agricultural products imported through refrigerators or other containers. Due to lockdown, delivery of such containers was limited as these offices did not provide proper service. The need for Plant Quarantine, Atomic Energy Commission, BSTI and BGMEA offices inside the port was acutely felt at this time.

### Simultaneous efforts to overcome the crisis

The container capacity of Chattogram port is 49 thousand and 18 TEU (each 20 feet container is considered as one unit). According to the port, on 14 April 2020, 47 thousand, 413 TEU containers were stored at the port. Special arrangements were also made to store imported containers in some vacant places and overflow yards. On 15 April last year, 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). At the same time, on the instructions of the Ministry of Shipping, an emergency coordination meeting was held on 14 April last year at the Chattogram Circuit House. The port authority, port users, administration, public representatives, and heads of intelligence agencies were present at the meeting. The meeting was attended by the Divisional Commissioner of Chattogram, Chairman of the port, Chattogram Customs House commissioner, City Mayor, two board members (Administration and Planning) and members (Harbour and Marine) of Chattogram port. This meeting served as a

turning point in overcoming the stalemate in the port.

Usually 38 types of cargoes imported through Chattogram port are released at private inland container depots (ICDs). As a result of the lockdown, last year on 18 April, the NBR approved the release of six more types of goods and another order on 23 April approved the release of all types of goods in the ICDs. However, this is subject to three conditions. 100% of the containers must be scanned and the scanning report must be stored when transferring to ICDs. The consignment of all commercial goods transferred to of ICDs must be processed on the basis of the report obtained by the Chattogram Custom House, Chattogram and the representatives of the Customs Intelligence and the Department. After 30 June, the order of the National Board of Revenue was automatically revoked, which was not extended.

### Visit by the State Minister for Shipping

State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury MP and Secretary to the Ministry of Shipping Mohammad Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury rushed from Dhaka on 23 April to give necessary directions in the new COVID-19 situation. At a press briefing, the State Minister for Shipping and the secretary expressed hope for a 50% reduction in container congestion.

Chattogram port officials have paid one day's salary to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund to prevent COVID-19. The Chattogram Port Authority has handed over a fund of Tk 29 lac 42 thousand and 204 to the bank comprised of one day's salary of about 6,000 employees from their April salary. Earlier, a one-time grant of Tk 25 crore was given from the port fund through the Ministry of Shipping.

### Stable market during COVID-19

At present, each ship in the port has to pay around Tk 8 lac for waiting one extra day, which ultimately affects the consumer. Since the onset of the pandemic, the Chattogram Port Authority has given priority to ships carrying medicines and ginger, garlic and onions to enter the jetty on a priority basis. The port authority took special measures to keep the market price and supply normal during the COVID-19 situation. According to the port's transport department, ships with at least 150 boxes of goods or 50 boxes or more of one type of goods will be given priority in the case of berthing at the jetty. However, only one ship at a time will get this facility. According to the port authority,

*In addition to ensuring the health and safety of the workers to keep the port operational, a specialised 50-bed COVID-19 unit has been introduced at the port hospital for all classes of workers and their family members to ensure proper treatment.*





in case of multiple ships at the same time, priority is being given on the basis of maximum number of containers.

The Chattogram port has also written to the importers to release the goods as soon as possible to keep the country's supply chain operational. This is the first time in recent times that an initiative has been taken to send a letter directly to the importers from the port to release the goods. This letter has been given to those who have imported goods lying in the port premises. The port also sent separate letters to Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industries, C&F Agents Association, Bangladesh Fresh Fruits Importers Association and Bangladesh Fruit Traders Association. Chattogram port sends RL (Removal Letter) to the customs authority to auction the goods which have crossed the

designated time during which they can be kept at the port. If the container of consumer goods is left for a long time, the quality of the product diminishes and the commercial price goes down.

## Gradually returning to rhythm

The benefits of various initiatives taken to reduce container and ship congestion in the country's major seaports continue to be found. Container congestion is normal even in the fastest time during lockdown. Till 8 am on Thursday, 30 April 2020, 8 thousand 682 TEU containers were delivered from the port in the previous 48 hours. With the increase in deliveries, the movement of container carrying prime movers, trailers, covered vans and trucks in the port area also increased.

Imports fell the most in April, May and June 2020 as a result of the global effects of COVID-19. However, product handling has been steadily increasing since July. Container handling of imported goods was at 1 lac 26 thousand 808 TEU (Twenty Foot Equivalent Units) in that month. Then in August 1 lac 26 thousand 803, in September 1 lac 28 thousand 68, in October 1 lac 39 thousand 635 and in November 1 lac 21 thousand 121 TEU containers were handled. From September, the Chattogram port regained its previous momentum in import trade. Chattogram port is ranked 58th in the busiest 100 ports listed by Lloyds last year on the basis of container handling. But the progress of the port has been hindered by the arrival of COVID-19. However, considering the last five years, the port's

## Global container crisis during the pandemic Chattogram port takes initiatives

In global trade, a large part of the total goods is transported by sea, the lion's share of which is transported in containers. In particular, about 90% of non-bulk cargo is transported by container vessels. As it is a safe and convenient medium, the major shipping companies of the world have been giving priority to containers for transporting consumer goods.

Shipping companies and port authorities all over the world were progressively ramping up to meet the increased demand. The global epidemic COVID-19 struck at this time, and the situation changed dramatically. The global economy has slowed to a halt. Consumer demand and industrial production both plummeted, and the supply chain collapsed. At the end of the first wave of the pandemic, there was a substantial increase in consumer demand. The maritime transportation industry has been unable to keep up with the fast changes in global trade. Container and ship congestion began to occur in several countries' ports as a result of the inclusion of numerous other factors. The port's routine operation, specially export, is also being hampered by a shortage of empty containers.

COVID-19 also caused the Asia-Pacific countries to take precautionary measures. In many countries, 14-day quarantine was

made compulsory for foreigners. Due to this rule normal activities of cargo ships were disrupted in these countries. Because of this constraint some shipping companies changed their schedule and route. Again, some of those who have kept the schedule unchanged have taken quarantine surcharge from the customers and some have demanded financial assistance from the government of the country concerned to compensate for the delay caused by quarantine. The pandemic has radically changed the consumer markets of Asia-Pacific countries. Consumer demand plummeted at the beginning of the pandemic, but suddenly increased at the end of the first wave.

Usually, containers imported from one country are released at the port and not returned empty. Only after loading the export-oriented goods from that country is the container re-loaded onto a ship. Now, if the amount of imports in a country suddenly increases, the flow of containers increases. But if exports do not increase accordingly, the containers get stuck there. As a result, on the one hand, container congestion is created in the ports of that country, on the other hand, exporters from other countries have to face container crisis. That is what is happening in the COVID-19 situation. It is estimated that 10% of the total

global transport capacity by sea remains unused due to container congestion and scarcity.

In particular, the global container crisis has impacted Chattogram port and hampering the activities of the port in two ways. When the number of containers in a port exceeds the capacity, it causes congestion. And this reduces the speed of handling in the port. On the other hand, when a sufficient number of containers are not available for exporting goods through a port, that deficit hinders export trade.

The sudden rise in consumer demand has led to an increase in imports, increased production and supply of goods to top industrialised countries, tide of e-commerce, blank sailing of ships, declining production of new containers and other reasons resulted in this container crisis. As this crisis is global, it cannot be solved by Bangladesh alone. However, Chattogram Port Authority has taken important initiatives to ensure that its impact on the country's import-export trade is minimised.

Most of the products imported to Bangladesh come from China. A number of products including raw materials for making garments, electronics products, cosmetics, fruits, spices, small appliances are imported in containers.



container and cargo handling have been growing at an average rate of 9.5 to 10%.

On the other hand, the impact of COVID-19 in handling export goods of Chattogram port was most visible in April and May. In those two months, 14 thousand 744 and 33 thousand 836 TEU containers were handled through Chattogram port respectively. In the next two months, when exports gained some momentum, 52 thousand 149 TEU containers were handled through the port in June and 74 thousand 849 TEUs in July.

### Already at new heights

COVID-19's impact has led to a slump in all types of business, including import-export trade, over the past year. In such a year, Chattogram port has become a part of history



24/7 port operation has been maintained in Chattogram port despite COVID-19 outbreak.

According to shipping companies, about the same number of containers, 20 feet and 40 feet in length, are used to import goods. On the other hand, buyers prefer 40-foot-long containers for garment exports from Bangladesh to Europe and America. Buyers have long been interested in saving on shipping, container handling charges and inland transportation costs. As a result, there is always a demand for more 40-foot-long containers than what arrives in the country. In addition, the world's leading apparel brands emphasise on shipping goods through the shipping companies that operate more ships from Chattogram to get the goods in the fastest time. This has created dependence on certain shipping line.

Congestion does not occur as a result of the port's insufficient handling capacity. On the contrary, multiple global influences have exacerbated the issue. Despite not being accountable, the Chattogram Port Authority is doing everything it can from its position to keep the country's import-export trade running smoothly.

The main function of Chattogram port is to handle import and export goods and to store them for a specified period of time. The customs duty and clearance of the goods have to be taken from the customs authority and the concerned department. In addition, there is a need to coordinate the work of freight forwarders, C&F agents and shipping agents in releasing and shipping goods. About 100% of the exported goods are handled in containers in private ICDs. After bringing the container from the ICD to the port yard, the

*The global container crisis has impacted Chattogram port and hampering the activities of the port in two ways. When the number of containers in a port exceeds the capacity, it causes congestion. And this reduces the speed of work in the container port. On the other hand, when a sufficient number of containers are not available for exporting goods through a port, that deficit hinders export trade.*

authority do the shipping work at the specified time. When the container crisis becomes apparent, exporters' organisations seek the government's help in emergencies. Chattogram port is self-motivated and emphasises on the implementation of seven recommendations to address the crisis. These include, requesting the High Commissioners of Sri Lanka and Singapore to take necessary action, introducing Common Carrier Agreement (CCA) and Direct Interchange (DI) between main line operators and feeder vessel operators, requesting buyers not to specify specific shipping lines and requesting to operate the ship directly to the importer's country. In addition, some more important decisions were taken at an emergency meeting in last July. These include giving priority berthing to feeder vessels headed towards Colombo, coordinating the Maersk Line on a basis for launching a minimum of three feeder vessels on the Chattogram-Colombo route and giving priority approval to interested new feeder vessel

operators. The port authority also requested BGMEA to re-negotiate with the buyers for not fixing specific shipping lines and ICDs. The shipping companies say that the proposal of Chattogram port to implement CCA to overcome the crisis is commendable. This creates the opportunity to transport containers from one shipping line to another as long as there is enough space on the ship.

Due to the dedicated efforts of Chattogram Port Authority, the container and shipping situation of the port has improved a lot. Whereas ports such as Rotterdam, Antwerp, Singapore and Port Klang take up to 10 days to berth due to congestion, statistics of the first 15 days of August have shown that container ships now have the opportunity to berth in one day at Chattogram port. In addition, the turnaround time of the ship has been reduced due to full handling in three shifts, which is satisfactory in the COVID-19 situation, according to the international media. ◀

for the first time. This month, Chattogram port has gained special recognition as a transit-transshipment port. Nepal's transit goods have been transported through this port before. However, last July under the formal transit agreement, goods were taken to India by road after being released from this port.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, several port officials were infected and lost their lives while working at the field level. Even in such hostile conditions, the port, though small in size, has shown its ability to transport transit and transshipment goods.

## The second wave hits

In the first quarter of this year, the private importers started to be active along with the imports of government projects as the industry started operating in the country after shaking off the influence of COVID-19. The port's import management activities have also been showing a positive picture in the last six months. Export activities have come to a standstill again due to the second and third rounds of lockdowns in various countries around the world, especially in European countries. This has led to an alarming decline in export container handling at Chattogram port.

The second phase of lockdown in the country started from 14 April this year. An office order signed by the Director (Administration) of Chattogram port on 13 April gave a detailed explanation of the coordination and activities between the various departments of the port during the general holidays.

- The Marine Department of Chattogram port will continue the piloting service for the ships arriving at the port as usual. The sailors will be quarantined as per the procedure announced by IMO and WHO before the ship is berthed. In addition, VTMIS and VTSS will be active all the time.
- The Department of Traffic will carry out all the activities of loading and unloading of ships arriving at the port 24/7 as before. The goods will be delivered promptly with minimum manpower, after the clearance given by the customs department.
- Chattogram Port Security Department will supervise all the security related activities of the port.
- The service activities of Chattogram Port Hospital will continue round the clock. The Chief Medical Officer will distribute the roster of doctors and nurses as required. Besides, other facilities like ambulances will be kept ready at all times.
- The Mechanical Department will ensure that all the equipment of the port is kept

operational at all times and the required minimum manpower will be kept ready for duty in various workshops. In addition, the required number of ECM drivers will be kept on duty at all times. The use of rented vehicles will be restricted. When the lockdown is over, the mechanical department will schedule and arrange for the transportation of the officers and employees working in different shifts.

- Power Department will ensure 24/7 uninterrupted power supply at all points including operational area inside Chattogram port.
- The fire service team of Chattogram port will be ready to perform their duties 24/7 as usual.
- Port System Analyst will keep CTMS and ICT based facilities operational.
- The Civil Engineering Department will have an emergency response team ready to provide various services. The team's mobile number, email address etc. will be sent to the Director (Administration), CPA (Chattogram Port Authority).
- To keep the official and operational activities of the port uninterrupted and for administrative purposes, the members of the Port's Board shall be able to act on behalf of each other.
- The Department of Traffic, Shipping Agents, C&F Agents, Berth Operators, Terminal Operators, Ship Handling Operators and other stakeholders will provide necessary assistance to the Customs Department to expedite the delivery of goods and containers from Chattogram port.
- All department heads will take care of official business through e-filing on urgent matters.
- Director (Administration) and CPA secretary will coordinate the office activities of CPA port building. Arrangements will be made for a minimum number of employees to be present during the holidays. All other employees will not be able to leave the workplace during the specified vacation period i.e. stay at home order will be compulsory. Legal action will be taken if any unauthorised employee is seen roaming in the port building or any other office.
- Director (Security) and Director (Traffic) will keep in touch with Port Health Officer Dr. Md. Motahar Hossain regards to the COVID-19 situation related issues both inside and outside the port (Telephone Number +880654456788). Besides, the emergency department of Chattogram Port Hospital can be contacted on 2520224.

- The Finance Department will make arrangements for regular payment of salaries, gratuities, etc. of all officers and employees.

A special team from the port medical department has been prepared to take care of the COVID-19 infected sailors. At the initiative of Chattogram Port Hospital, various steps have been taken to prevent the transmission of the virus.

## There's still hope

In the beginning, there was a lot of fear, indecision and mismanagement in the treatment of COVID-19. Since the virus was new, much of it was unknown. As a result, many things were not right in the beginning. There is now a growing awareness of hygiene, such as frequent hand washing, wearing masks, and avoiding crowds. With the advent of vaccines, people's panic has decreased.

Measures to deal with COVID-19 should also be considered as a model for fighting global climate change. Because there is no cure yet, there will be no sudden relief from COVID-19. The words stay home, quarantine, office from home will control our lives for quite some time to come. It can be said with guarantee that the economy will not be the same during and after the global pandemic. In order to ensure the quality of life of the citizens in a middle income country like ours by keeping supply chain operational, there must be a strong coordination between Chattogram port and the port users. Institutions need to be supportive of each other. Everyone should pay attention to speed up the work of the port. It is not enough to only increase the efficiency of the port. The efficiency of other concerned institutions also need to be increased. ◀

*This Lead Story is a translated version of an article from the April 2021 issue of 'Bandarbarta.'*

*As a collective work of CPA News desk, this article was written by three writers.*

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# Ship handling operators

## Men in outer anchorage

Omar Faroque Emon

*After the settlement of lengthy maritime disputes with India and Myanmar at the international courts, Bangladesh has won the rights over 118,813 square kilometres of sea region, 200 nautical miles of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and established sovereignty over all kind of resources up to 354 nautical miles from the Chattogram coast. Opportunities have been created to extract marine resources in the vast sea areas of the country. A large part of the economic activity of foreign trade is done almost entirely through these seas. The number of ship arrivals is increased as the country's economic activities have expanded, owing to increased import and export. In response to the rising demand, Chattogram, the country's principal seaport, has increased its port of call. The outer anchorage's boundary is expanded six and a half times in a decade, to 50 nautical miles. The water boundary area has been expanded to meet the future demands of the country's commercial zones, which include the Matarbari deep seaport.*

Large cargo ships from other nations are unable to reach the Karnaphuli channel. This channel is used by relatively small international feeder vessels with a maximum draft of 9 and a half metres and a length of 190 metres. As a result, large ships have to release goods on lighter ships. Although there is no container handling at the outer anchorage, most of the bulk goods are released there. The ship handling operators at the port release the goods under the direction, control and surveillance of Chattogram Customs House.

### Why ship handling operators

In order to understand why a ship handling operator is needed, one must first understand what lightering or transferring commodities from ship to smaller vessel entails. The process of transporting commodities between vessels of various sizes is known as lightering. The transfer of products from large vessels to small vessels or from small vessels to huge vessels can be an example of this. Lightering is a concept that dates back over 200 years. When carrying commodities from one country to another, large steam-powered vessels could not access a very tiny port. As a result, items were released

and transported to the port in small boats. Transporting commodities from the port to other parts of the country necessitates the use of lightering. Lightering is done by ship handling operators. Ship handling companies employ their own personnel and equipment to handle the cargo. At the outer anchorage of Chattogram port, registered ship handling operators are at work.

### Ship handling operators at outer anchorage

Many units are involved in the Chattogram port's massive workload. Berth and terminal operators handle containerised goods at the port jetty, while ship handling operators handle in the outer anchorage. At Chattogram port, thirty ship handling

operator companies are working to offload commodities at the outer anchorage. They are registered by the port on a five-year contract.

At the berthing meeting, the concerned shipping agent and ship handling operator must be given the most recent information on product lightering from the vessel. Customs and Ports' DTM (Operations) and Marine Departments coordinate the entire procedure. The receipt of revenue owing to lightering is also certified by the DTM office (Operations).

### How the goods are handled

Like the port jetty, 24 hours handling activities are carried out in outer anchorage for all seasons. When the sea becomes rough during the turbulent rainy season, the work of releasing goods is temporarily halted. Just as there are certain procedures for releasing goods at the port jetty, there are also certain procedures for releasing goods at the outer anchorage. The goods have to be released according to the customs and port regulations. Imported bulk goods are released at the outer anchorage. The amount of export product handling is





Importers provide lighter vessels to the ship handling operators so that the goods can be released at the outer anchorage. The importer must obtain lighter ship allocation from the Water Transport Cell (WTC), which is the lighter ship regulating authority.

absolutely negligible. The shipping agent declares the import of the goods by ship on behalf of the importer. The shipping agent's designated ship handling operator then begins the process of releasing the goods. The importer supplies lighter vessels to the ship handling operator. For this, the importer has to take the allocation of lighters through the Water Transport Cell (WTC) of the lighter ship regulatory body. Arriving at the vessel at the outer anchorage, the supervisor of the ship handling operator communicates with the supervisor and captain of the cargo ship and begins the evacuation process. After completing the survey of goods by the importer and ship surveyor, the releasing starts. Goods are usually released in two ways. One of these is to be released directly on a lighter ship by paying the port's river dues against the customs outpass bill of entry. The other is the releasing of goods from the ship under the supervision of PO Onboard in a specific lighter through 'Green Boat Note' against the customs guarantee and later the releasing of goods through 'Blue Boat Note' against the customs outpass.

## How the workers begin the work

At the start of the releasing, workers form gangs. The term 'gang' refers to the number of workers assigned to a crane on a cargo ship. Gangs of 5, 9, 11, and 18 persons are formed depending on the amount of the commodities and the ship. Gangs have been in place since the outset to help with the task. Each ship employs one foreman who supervises the workers' work. The entire releasing process is overseen by a

supervisor, and a reporter works on the work report. Tally clerk works on freight products alongside workers, foremen, and managers. The tally clerk's job is to keep the track of how much cargo is being transferred from large to tiny ships.

To release goods, ship handling operators must use both their personal and ship equipment. Graves, excavators, pay-loaders, and other machinery are among them. The workers of the ship handling operators operate these machines. The ship's crane is also operated by a winch man.

## Worker's safety

Carrying goods from ship to ship on the outer anchorage is not as easy as handling goods on ordinary jetties. Besides supervisors, reporters, foremen and workers have to be constantly vigilant in handing over the goods of the two ships. The first issue that comes first is the protection of workers. There are instructions to use safety equipment to ensure the safety of workers. This includes masks, hand gloves, helmets and other safety equipment.

## The goods which are handled

The quantity of import in Chattogram port has been steadily increasing in recent years, in keeping with the country's economy and ongoing development efforts. The Chattogram port is regularly confronted with difficulties in handling this massive amount of cargo. Imports of construction materials, such as stone, scrap metal used to make rods, and other heavy machinery, have increased particularly for infrastructure development projects. In addition to crucial

food and industrial raw materials, ship handling operators often handle development projects. Ship handling operators regularly handle rice, legumes, wheat, sugar, cement clinker, scrap steel, coal, and heavy machinery, in addition to goods brought in for development projects. Ship handling operators are in charge of releasing heavy equipment for the Padma Bridge and the nuclear power plant and delivering it on time.

## Where does the lightering take place?

At one time the outer anchorage area of Chattogram port was up to five nautical miles from the coast. Due to the increase in the number of ships arriving at the port, the area of outer anchorage was increased to 6.5 nautical miles in 2011. In the last few years, the number of ships arriving has exceeded 3,500. Furthermore, as part of a long-term strategy to support the LNG terminal surrounding Matarbari, the Matarbari seaport under development by JICA, and cargo ships in economic zones, the authorities have enlarged the outer anchorage area of Chattogram port from 7 nautical miles to 50 nautical miles. The proposal to increase the coverage of the outer anchorage was published in the form of a notification on 24 January 2019 by the order of the President after the vetting of the Ministry of Law and the approval of the Ministry of Shipping. As a result, the Chattogram port's outer anchorage has grown from the estuary of the Karnaphuli to Kutubdia. The outside berth is used for lightering throughout the year. As a result, lightering and ship positioning are far safer than they were previously. Ships from Payra port occasionally do lightering at the outer anchorage of Chattogram port when the weather is rough.

Pilots and sailors have to be careful to navigate and anchor in the outer anchorage area due to the strong tide of 6-7 nautical miles per hour. In particular, the port authority has instructed not to pass any other outboard ship at high tide, to keep the engine running, to travel at a speed of 6 nautical miles in case of emergency, not to be at the entrance of the channel, to check the position of the anchor after 2 to 3 tides. Pilots are instructed to navigate and locate from Port Radio Control to avoid accidents. In addition, pilots have to keep in mind the effects of monsoon winds and the tendency of rapid climate change from May to October, such as storms, rains and cyclones.

Large ships and lighter vessels have to be positioned side by side in goods lightering. Necessary fendering (mooring ropes, old tires) is required to ensure uninterrupted lightering as well as constant communication





Lighter ships are waiting to release goods upstream of the Karnaphuli river. These lighter ships are working to deliver the imported goods easily and at a low cost to the remote areas of the country from the outer-anchorage to the jetty of the port.

between the two ships, so that there is no collision between the mother vessel and the lighter ship due to the sway caused by the effects of tides and waves.

### Outer anchorage handles more ships than the port jetty

In both ship and cargo handling data, the share of outside anchorages is higher. According to the statistics, 2,204 ships of bulk goods have arrived at Chattogram port in the fiscal year of 2018-2019. Of these, 1,321 ships' goods have been released at the outer anchorage alone. 479 and 404 ships were released at the port's own jetty, specialised jetty and mooring, respectively.

In the fiscal year (2019-20), 2,309 ships of bulk goods arrived. Of these, goods of 1,484 ships were released at the outer anchorage alone. Besides, 491 ships have been released at the jetty and 347 ships had goods released at the specialised jetty and mooring. According to the statistics of the last fiscal year (2019-20), the share of cargo ship handling in the outer anchorage is about 63 %.

### Safe outer anchorage

The channel of Chattogram port is a safe destination for domestic and foreign shipping. Surveillance by law enforcement, regular patrols and constant communication

of ships with the control room of the port authority has reduced the number of criminal activities as well as keeping Chattogram port as a safe port and at the same time brightened the image of the port.

Increased crime in the country's outer anchorage exerts negative impact on the movement of foreign ships. Due to this negative impact, additional freight charge is imposed on the transportation of goods and the domestic importers and exporters have to suffer. Bangladesh Coast Guard, Bangladesh Navy and Chattogram Port Authority are constantly working to prevent piracy at sea. Chattogram port is implementing international security code ISPS Level-1. The Vessel Traffic Management Information System (VTMIS) has been upgraded to reduce the number of accidents, thefts or robberies to zero. There are also plans to buy high-speed ships and helicopters for surveillance purpose with its own initiative.

In addition to the outer anchorage, all the installations within the port limit, river mooring, jetties, terminals are in the process of being brought under more surveillance. A Rapid Response Berth has been set up at Patenga ghat 15, so that the Navy and Bangladesh Coast Guard can reach the scene directly at sea within 10 minutes if they receive any allegations of piracy.

### Scope has expanded, but will expand further

There is no other option for achieving the country's development goals and maintaining high economic growth except to increase the capacity of Chattogram port. Because of the development in trade, products imports and exports are always expanding. Furthermore, with the advent of transit-transhipment of commodities from adjacent nations through Chattogram port, the capability of handling goods is rising. In addition to consistently growing its capacity in product handling, Chattogram port is working directly to increase the capacity of terminal operators, berth operators, and ship handling operators. Chattogram port is determined to use all its potential to achieve the desired development goals. The image of Chattogram port is changing due to relentless efforts for development. The image of releasing goods in the outer anchorage is also changing. Chattogram port will soon rise to the top of the list of the busiest ports in the world; it is no longer a dream. ◀

Out of the total 68,473,414 metric tons of goods released at Chattogram port in the 2019-20 financial year, 54,254,827 metric tons have been handled at the outer anchorage. It is approximately 80% as a percentage.

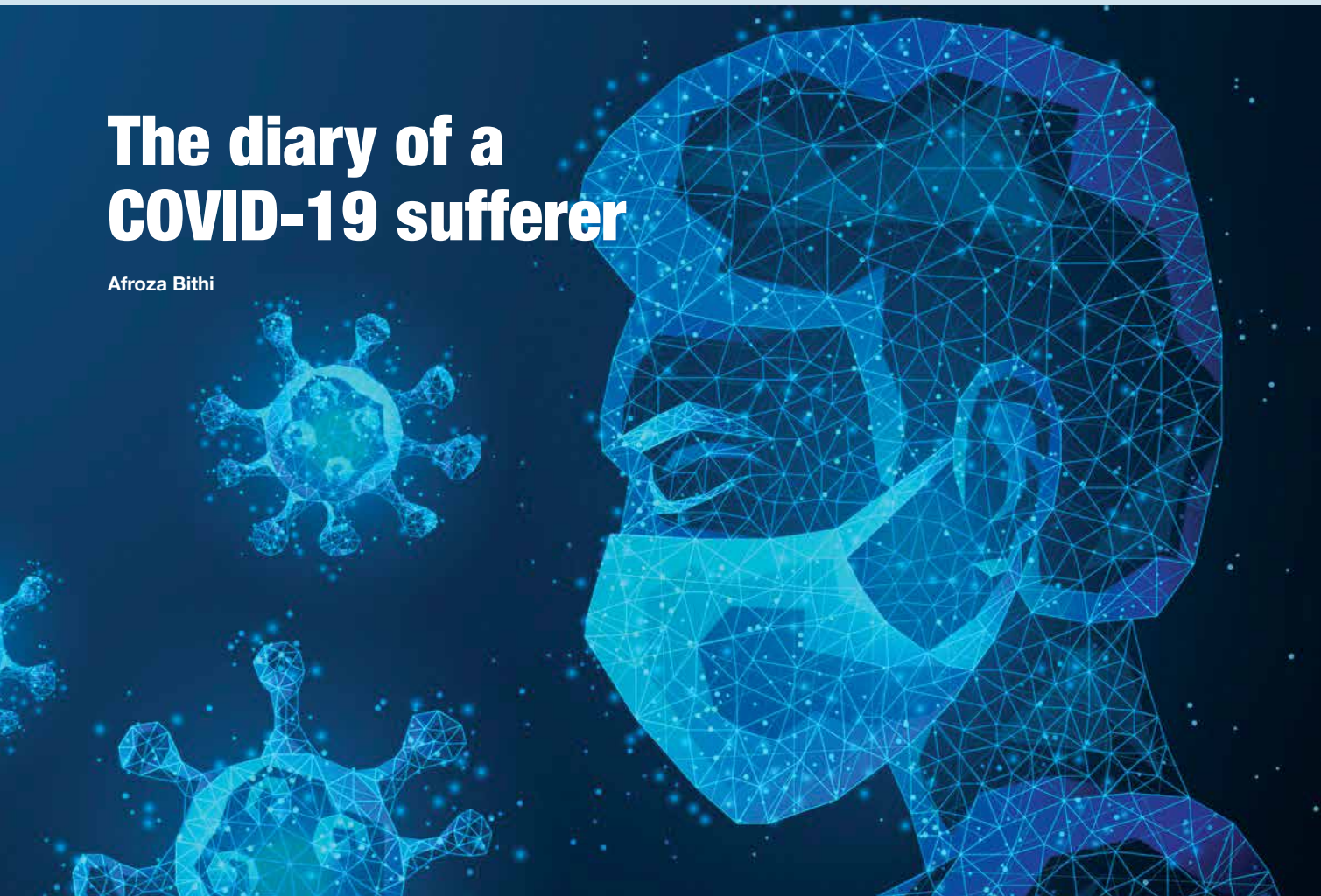


**Omar Faroque Emon**  
Reporter, Bandarbarata



# The diary of a COVID-19 sufferer

Afroza Bithi



*COVID-19 has changed our lives. Lockdown, social distance, and masks are our constant companions. But the horrors of COVID-19 are beyond our comprehension until we are infected. Only those families who have gone through this, lost loved ones will be able to realise it. Like many families around us, Chattogram port Senior Sub Assistant Engineer Md. Mizanur Rahman's mother and he himself died from COVID-19. His wife Afroza Bithi witnessed two such tragic incidents in a row. Along with her three children, she herself was infected with COVID-19. Due to the risk of COVID-19, their relatives could not come to give any consolation. Afroza Bithi remembers those horrible days.*

## Where will I get him?

I sat next to him in the car. Never again will we go anywhere together in one car. When the car turned on the port connecting road at the Nimtala Biswa Road junction, the dying light of that afternoon fell on his face. I looked at my beloved's face. We had talked for the first time on the roof of the house in one such twilight. He came

to see me as his bride-to-be. He may be a small man, but he has a good soul. Under that wonderful light, I got to know his inner personality. In my fourteen years of family life, I have learned that he was a straightforward man. He never spoke to please anyone, nor did he speak behind anyone's back. Only because of this I have fallen in love with him again and again.

He has worked as a Senior Sub Assistant Engineer of the port with a great reputation. I have never heard any complaint from anyone in his name. How could he be so ruthless! The hearse is taking this dear man out of my sight forever. Where will I find him?

January 2020. I often see on the scrolls of TV channels that many people are dying of a strange virus in China. It is spreading



from China all over the world very fast. Just like everyone else in the country our family is terrified about it. As someone's eldest child, eldest sister, eldest daughter-in-law, I give them mental support and try to console them. Otherwise, the various physical problems of being eight-months pregnant and the anxiety meant I couldn't sleep at all. My son Omar was born on the last day of February. The day my infant was one week old, the first COVID-19 patient was detected in the country. On the twenty-first day his father gave him Akika. The nationwide lockdown started right next week. But the port couldn't be closed. The port must remain operational to continue the supply of daily necessities and medical equipment and medicines. So Mr Mizan had to take turns to go on duty. My body had not yet recovered from the shock of C-section. I wanted a little rest. Instead, we had to let go of the household help. I was suffering from postpartum depression in addition to overworking. What will happen this time? My father, mother, and mother-in-law are old. Mr Mizan has diabetes, high blood pressure, and has to take medication regularly.

The month of Ramadan has come. A diverse menu was not arranged, iftar consisted of simple-digestible food. I believed in my heart that even if it happened all over the world, it would never happen to anyone in my family! I'm aware! Careful! And we were 'healthy' people. No one goes out except Mr Mizan. He always wears N-95 mask when he goes somewhere. After finishing the office, when coming back from the market, I keep the door open. Without touching the doorknob, he goes straight to the bathroom

and thoroughly cleans himself with soap and disinfectant water. At the same time he washes his clothes. Fish, meat, vegetables, fruits and all other products from outside are sprayed with alcohol and brought into the house. We were practicing and telling each other about the hygiene guidelines religiously.

### Endangered life

My mother-in-law was admitted to a nearby hospital on the 27th of Ramadan due to hypoglycemia. Then her diabetes reading was two. Along with that she had jaundice, shortness of breath. After being admitted to Port Hospital, a blood test and X-ray were done. The doctor said, her lungs were completely filled with fluid and were very visible on the X-ray plate. She was referred to Chattogram Medical College Hospital on suspicion of COVID-19. This meant taking her to the isolation ward, where there was a bustling crowd. Mr Mizan called me before I came home after admitting my mother-in-law to the ward. He was asked to stay in strict isolation from the office. The baby is only three months old, will I come home or go to a hotel and spend fourteen days in quarantine? I got mad at him. It was better to die together than to stay in quarantine. 'Come home!' I told him.

My mother-in-law had severe shortness of breath. On the third day of being admitted to the hospital, her reading on the oximeter kept dropping; from eighty, to seventy, to sixty and dropped to zero on 31 May at 5:30 am in the morning. My mother-in-law left, with whom I used to leave children



Mr Mizan was a port Senior Sub Assistant Engineer who died in COVID-19

while I finished my studies, and continued to work without any worries. That mother-in-law left who I would go to when I felt bad, and say, 'Amma, it has been such a long time since I have eaten the kachur lati or tangra macher paturi that you cook. I want to eat it.' She used to say, 'You are not well, right? Go lie down, I will take care of the rest.' I used to lie down with no worries and write or spend my free time on Facebook.

From the next day, everyone in the house had fevers and a cough at the same time. That home remedies was going around then? Hot water, ginger clove-lemon tea, hot steam. We had been doing all these from much earlier. On 4 June, the baby's fever went down, on the 5th, the eldest daughter's, and mine. But Mr Mizan's one decreased, and increased again. His cough, which was dry, was also more intense. First, I called 333 and started giving him antibiotics as per the advice of the doctor of the government helpline. The next day on the 6th, he went to Port Hospital with double mask, and the doctor there said that the right medicine was being administered and prescribed a COVID-19 test. He would go to give samples on the morning of 7 June. He woke up at six that morning. After many years, he missed Fajr time. He slept very well at night. But after waking up, he had difficulty breathing. He had never spoken of shortness of breath before. I was scared to hear it. My mother-in-law also suffered from shortness of breath ...!

I packed breakfast. He reluctantly ate papaya bhaji, eggs, bread, and tea. He ate because he had to take medicine. The shortness of breath remained as it were. I called a very close friend of his. 'Brother,

Mr Mizan and his wife, Afroza Bithi, with their new baby.





Mr Mizan and his daughters with new baby boy Omar- a photo that can not be recreated.

your friend is not doing well. Please buy a pulse oximeter for us. There is no one at home who could go out of the house'. He assured me that he would bring it as soon as the shop opened. At eleven o'clock in the morning, after measuring oxygen with that oximeter, I felt like the ground under my feet was disappearing! Fifty eight! I yelled at him a lot. Why did he buy a non-functional machine? He said, 'I bought it after measuring my own one!' His one was ninety-seven, mine was ninety-nine. Measured his one again. Sixty-four.

Oh no! He was suffering so much! But he kept reassuring me. He said, 'I am fine. Does that machine know everything?' I called an ambulance to take him to the hospital. It was on the way. But there was no COVID-19 treatment in our reliable Port Hospital yet. He will have to be taken to another hospital. But no hospital other than a government hospital was ready for the pandemic. My brother managed a seat in a private hospital through a doctor friend of his. That was the destination then. But if I go to the hospital with him, who will look after the children? Omar, who was three months old, drank only breast milk. A feeder or a milk pot was not bought for him in the lockdown, as it wasn't needed. What would happen then? What would he eat when I go to the hospital with Mr. Mizan? I mixed water and a little sugar with cow's milk and warmed it up. I told my ten-year-old daughter to feed her brother with a spoon from a cup. I will admit your father and buy a milk pot when I come home in the evening.

I packed a small bag for Mizan. Towels, lungi, a plate, a water bottle, mobile charger, some money. He is sitting on the verandah trying to breathe in fresh air. There is so much oxygen in the world, and he was not getting even a little bit of it? In the meantime he tells me, 'It's getting late, you should eat something. You can't tolerate being hungry.' The one who is suffering from deathly pain, how was he thinking about my hunger? I wanted to feed him some rice with me. He wouldn't eat. He wanted to drink a little lemonade with hot water-lemon. So the little girl made it.

All his colleagues loved this man who was very devoted to his work.



## He left me halfway through journey of my life

Mr Mizan went down alone and got into the ambulance. I was with him. The next story is very conventional. We went from one hospital to the next. We were told there were no seats, no empty ICU and turned away. As was often seen on the pages of newspapers or on social media, someone sitting next to a breathless relative broke down in tears – I felt as if I were one of them. I was reading *Ayatul Kursi* aloud. The ambulance was going from one hospital to another. Mr Mizan suddenly said, Bithi, take care of the children. He became unconscious while chanting the kalema. I was holding him. All the way I was doing CPR by putting pressure on his chest but it was not effective. Please look at me, Ahin's father. If I was nervous, if I was lost, didn't you used to say, I'm here, right? Why are you afraid? And I would be fine. I would glow with self-confidence.

On the way to the medical hospital, I realised that I had lost my Mizan. They did an ECG, all it showed were flat lines. I had never seen such an ECG. I was shouting, 'The connection must be faulty! Connect it properly!' How could the man die? He left his three-month-old son at home! The young doctor in the emergency room at the medical college was crying. 'Apa, calm down. Sign here. Tell me your names.' A sample of the COVID-19 test was taken, the death certificate was being prepared, I had to do all the paperwork alone. I called Al-Manahil Foundation and they would bathe him and perform *janaza*. I called Hakim Hujur to prepare a new grave next to Amma.





The port must remain open in order to keep supplies of daily essentials, medical equipment, and pharmaceuticals flowing. As a result, Mr. Mizan had to spend most of the time on duty.

There was a wave of phone calls, I could only say – no, he wasn't there anymore. Our little girl called. 'Mother, how is our father?' After swallowing the tears, I said in a very calm voice, 'Your father is sleeping.' No more trouble. How can I tell those two girls alone in the house, that their bicycle race partner, the person who took care of them when they were sick, the father who would walk with them on his lap all night when they were sick was no more! Is there any language in the world that can describe the pain I felt that day?

Due to COVID-19, only a few relatives and colleagues could be present at the *janaza*! After burying him, I am climbed the stairs to the fourth floor with a heaviness in my body. At the end were two newly orphaned girls, a child not old enough to hold up his own head, who would never be able to call someone a father in his life. I hugged the girls with both hands and said, y'Your father is no more.' The boy is crying in the next room, who knows whether it was from hunger or sadness? Seeing the way the two girls were crying, I also became unconscious. In a haze I heard my older daughter's voice, 'Mother, are you also going to leave us? Mother, please don't die like our father and grandmother!' I sat up. I wiped away the tears and said I am here, I am fine.

And whatever else may come, they have to be taken care of. Because we had definitely also been affected by COVID-19. There was no way for anyone to come to my house, to comfort me, to feed the children. I cooked the rice myself, the meat was already cooked in the fridge, I warmed

it up and fed them. Ah, if only someone would have fed me that day! But such is the pandemic, it has taken away the opportunity to sympathise with each other. At that time, I didn't even have the freedom to cry for a day. Who would look after the children then? The boy was calling his father so many times. His first word was Baba. Could he hear? He had said he would start going to the mosque with his son as soon as he had learned to sit. Now Omar can not only sit, but can also walk, will you not take him to the mosque?

The day after Mizan's death, father and uncle came to the house. I didn't want to open the door. Because even though there was no test report till then, I was somewhat sick with all the symptoms of COVID-19. I always kept thinking that I would leave behind the children and die alone in my room. On top of that, there was no point in putting two diabetes patients at risk. But logic loses to emotion. Father couldn't say anything because he was crying and his voice was choked up. His daughter's husband was like his own child, everyone was proud of the port engineer. In the death of that man, he could not perform the *janaza* prayer even though he was in the same city. Uncle came with his favorite Qur'an. He always carried the holy book which he had bought from Makkah when he came back from Hajj. He sat in Mr Mizan's room and read the Qur'an aloud for three days. We ate together, and cried together. The results of the COVID-19 test came eight days after he died. Three months old Omar, the girls, myself, and Mr Mizan all tested positive for COVID-19.

Exactly ten months later, on 7 April of the following year, uncle also tested positive for COVID-19 and died at Andhar Killa General Hospital. The one who raised me alongside my parents. Taught me how to read. He had explained percentages, had told the story of Khizir (A.). He was the one who had chosen Mr Mizan as my husband. Who, just twenty days ago, with immense satisfaction had eaten rice with the simple mashed potatoes I had made.

### Life moves on, but I can't

How strange human life is! We have lost so many of our loved ones, but life goes on all the same. Yet sometimes I am overcome with so much pain that I have no energy to move. I can't even move my hand. Yet we get hungry, sleep. It's almost as if the family lives with a dead person every day. If I do something which he didn't like, I can feel an invisible pair of eyebrows expressing disapproval. I was arguing with Mr Mizan that day too. Why was I cooking cucumber curry with katla fish? He wants to fry the fish with onion. I say, it's hot, there will be no frying. A light broth with light spices is easy to digest. At one point in the argument, I said, 'Will you fight with me even after you die?' Then I realised that I had been arguing with a dead man for all this time! The two girls are peeking into the kitchen. Mom is talking to someone alone! God, don't make me go insane. I have to stay healthy.

The Chattogram Port Authority arranged a job for me, thinking of this distraught, upset family after Mizan left. I was appointed as an assistant teacher last November at the CPA High School. I am also connected to the secretary department. This is why I am able to live with dignity with my three children without being dependent on anyone. I have no happiness, but there is peace from hard work.

We do not know how many more relatives will be taken away by the pandemic. But it has taught us how uncertain human life is! Stay close to loved ones. If you lose a loved one, where will you find him? ♦

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### Afroza Bithi

Wife of Md. Mizanur Rahman, Senior Sub Assistant Engineer of the Chattogram port who lost his life to COVID-19



## ▶ Chattogram Port Authority has observed National Mourning Day



Chattogram Port Authority has observed the 46th death anniversary and National Mourning Day of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with due dignity. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority, and members of the board first laid a wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu in front of Port Building on the morning of 15 August. This was followed by the Port Officers' Association, department heads and CBA leaders laying wreaths. The Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority inaugurated the tree planting programme by planting a tree sapling. He later attended the Khatam-E-Quran, Doa Mahfil and a discussion meeting organised by the Port Employees Council (CBA) as the chief guest.

During the discussion, Rear Admiral M Shahjahan said, 'Bangabandhu understood the importance of Chattogram port for the development of Bangladesh. That is why he had asked the President of the Soviet Union to demine Chattogram port after independence.'

At this time, he expressed his gratitude to all the officers and employees for keeping port operation uninterrupted during the time of COVID-19. He also prayed for the forgiveness of the souls of the officers and employees who lost their lives because of COVID-19 while working.

The meeting was chaired by acting President of the Port Employees' Council Mohammad Azim. Board members, directors and senior officials of the Chattogram Port Authority were also present. On the occasion of the day, a special issue of Chattogram port's maritime publication Bandarbarata was published.

## ▶ Opportunity to berth 10-metre draft ships at Matarbari

Ships with a depth of 10 metres can now be berthed at the jetty of Matarbari Power Station in Maheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar. If ships with a greater depth can be berthed at the jetty, more goods can be transported. This decreases the cost of transporting goods, while also increasing the capacity of the port.

At the main jetty of Chattogram port, ships with a maximum draft of 9 and a half metres (underwater part of the ship) or depth can now be berthed. At Mongla port it is 7 to 7 and a half metres. And in Matarbari, the project under Chattogram port, it is 10 metres, which will be gradually increased to 16 metres.

Construction of the 300-metre coal jetty at Matarbari is expected to be completed in December this year. It will be able to accommodate large coal-carrying ships at the jetty of the power plant from next year.

Construction of Matarbari deep sea port terminal will be completed in 2025. This will benefit import-export trades of Bangladesh. And if the road connection is introduced, this terminal will get full benefits from 2026.



## ▶ Chinese joint venture implementing the runway expansion project in Cox's Bazar

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina on 29 August unveiled the foundation stone of the runway extension project of Cox's Bazar Airport, aiming to enable it to offer a longer range of domestic and international passenger services. The prime minister inaugurated the construction work on the maritime runway, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, virtually from her official residence Ganobhaban.

The government has taken up an ambitious project to extend the runway at Cox's Bazar airport by reclaiming land from the sea. Once completed, the new 10,700-foot runway will allow much larger aircraft to take off and land at the airport, paving the way for it to operate international flights.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) inked the deal for the project with the Chinese joint venture of Changjiang Yichang Waterway Engineering Bureau (CYWEB) and China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) on February 9, 2021. The estimated cost of the project is Tk1,568.86 crore.

According to the project documents, the deadline to finish construction is May 10, 2024. However, a spokesperson for the contractor said they would be given additional commission if they could finish construction before November 14, 2023. Under the agreement, the contractor will extend the existing 9,000ft runway by 1,700ft towards the Maheshkhali Channel through coastal land reclamation.



## ➤ Bangladesh is the second largest exporter of goods in South Asia



Apart from readymade garments, Bangladesh is gradually consolidating its position in the world market by exporting various other products including jute, leather and textiles. According to the latest report of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) titled 'World Trade Statistical Review 2021',

Bangladesh ranks 39th in global exports and 2nd among South Asian countries. Bangladesh is ranked third in this area, trailing only India and Pakistan.

In 2020, Bangladesh exported goods worth USD 34 billion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, exports fell 15% from 2019, but Bangladesh's global share was 0.2%. India ranks at the top in South Asia, and with exports of USD 276 billion in 2020, it ranked 16th globally. Last year, the country's exports fell by 15%, but its share of the world market was 1.9%. Pakistan ranks 3rd among South Asian countries and ranks 45th in the world. In 2020, the country exported USD 22 billion worth of goods. Due to COVID-19, exports decreased by 6%.

On the other hand, Bangladesh is the 32nd largest importer of goods in the world. Last year, the import of goods was USD 52 billion. Imports decreased by 11% compared to the previous year. Global share is 0.4%.

Although it declined in the beginning of 2020, Bangladesh's exports started to turn towards the end. In the last fiscal year 2020-21, Bangladesh exported a total of USD 38.75 billion worth of goods, which is 15.10% more than the previous fiscal year 2019-20. Exports were valued at USD 33.67 billion that year. 81% of the total export income came from the readymade garments sector.

## ➤ Online EGM submission will speed up export trade

To ensure reliable export statistics, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is going to set up online Export General Manifest (EGM) modules at 17 inland container depots (ICD) in Chattogram. The NBR has said the implementation of this programme under the ASYCUDA software network will reduce fraud and money laundering. This will also save time and labour hours as well as provide reliable export statistics. The NBR will launch the programme at the Summit Alliance Port (East) depot under the Custom House, Chattogram on September 1. Gradually 16 other depots will get the EGM modules by 18 November. An EGM module was introduced experimentally at the Esack Depot on March 1, 2020.

The EGM contains information on export products, especially, what kind of product, what is its worth, where it is being exported, and on which ship the goods are being transported. The shipping agent submits the EGM to the customs office.

## ➤ The Prime Minister received prestigious UN SDG Progress Award



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has received the 'SDG Progress Award'. The award was given by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). She received this award for her response to the universal call for action to eradicate poverty, protect the world and ensure peace and prosperity for all and leading Bangladesh in the right direction. Speaking at a press briefing in New York on 20 September, Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen said, 'The Prime Minister is accepting the award and dedicating it to the people of Bangladesh.' He hailed the award as an important international recognition of the country's achievements in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDSN was established in 2012 under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, led by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, a prominent economist and development strategist.

The goal of this platform is to employ scientific and technological experts from around the world to strengthen realistic solutions for sustainable development. Jeffrey Sachs described Sheikh Hasina as the 'Jewel in the Crown of the Day'. He lauded Sheikh Hasina's leadership in carrying out SDG campaign activities even during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

## ➤ Another lighter jetty has been launched at Chattogram port

Leaseholder KSRM Steel Plant Limited has officially launched the fourth lighter jetty at Chattogram port at Sadarghat of Karnaphuli river. The inaugural programme was held on 8 July 2021 and was attended by senior officials of the Chattogram Port Authority and the leaseholder company.

Chief Executive Officer of KSRM Meherul Karim said that his company went one step further commercially with the launch of the lighter jetty. Sadarghat's fourth jetty will be fully managed by KSRM.

Commander M Arifur Rahman, Chief Hydrographer, Chattogram Port Authority, said the launch of the lighter jetty would increase the dynamism of Chattogram port as well as expand trade and commerce.



## ➤ Principle Secretary to PM visits Bay Terminal project area



Principle Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Ahmed Kaikaus visited one of the largest development projects of the Chattogram Port Authority,

the Bay Terminal project. He visited the project area on 24 September. Secretary of the Ministry of Shipping Mohammad Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury and Chairman of the Port Authority Rear Admiral M Shahjahan were present during the visit.

Dr Ahmed Kaikaus said, 'The Bay Terminal is being implemented because the Prime Minister has dreamed of it. Several developments, including the implementation of the ring road, have changed the image of the whole area.'

The Port Chairman said, 'We have received the final decision of the Prime Minister to implement it. We will move forward by hiring a consultant as soon as possible.'

After inspecting the project area, Chief Hydrographer Commander M Arifur Rahman, Deputy Manager (Land) Zillur Rahman and Executive Engineer Rafiul Alam highlighted the hydrographic information, land acquisition and detailed design of the Bay Terminal.

## ➤ Proposal to launch mother vessel from Chattogram port to Europe-America

Those associated anticipate a direct mother vessel service from Chattogram port to other ports in Europe and America for sea freight export. The leaders of BGMEA and Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA) agreed on this at a joint meeting on 4 July in Chattogram. They called upon the Ministry of Shipping to take initiative to launch mother vessel service directly.

At the meeting, BGMEA and BAFFA leaders took four decisions. These included:

- Meeting with the buyers forum to urge shipping companies to increase the number of large ships and containers through foreign buyers,
- Meeting with ambassadors of countries importing garments from Bangladesh to address the issue,
- Direct shipping from Chattogram port to European and American ports through the Ministry of Shipping of Bangladesh,
- To take initiative to operate feeder ships by strengthening Bangladesh Shipping Corporation.

## ➤ 47% of container ships are berthing at the jetty without waiting

It used to take two to three days for a container full of goods to reach the Chattogram port jetty after entering the port limit. Chattogram port has gradually returned to its usual pace after overcoming the hurdles of COVID-19. There were significant improvements in ship handling from August. During the month of August, 168 container ships full of imported goods arrived at Chattogram port. Notably, the ships were able to berth at the jetty after reaching the outer anchorage without waiting. 36% of the ships were able to berth at the jetty after only a day of waiting. About 12% of the ships could berth after waiting for two days. And only 4% of the ships had to wait for three days before docking at the jetty.

According to Abdullah Zahir, CEO of Saif Maritime Limited, the Chattogram port has made great progress for three reasons. These are: 1) the performance of Chattogram port, 2) normalisation of goods delivery and 3) the transfer of imported goods to private container depots.

## ➤ 17 commercial ships arrived at Matarbari jetty in six months



Throughout this time, the Matarbari Coal Power Station's jetty in Cox's Bazar was the

only jetty. To facilitate the construction of the deep sea port, another new jetty has already been built. From now on, two commercial ships will be able to releasing at the two jetties of Matarbari at the same time. This is a major milestone in the construction of Matarbari deep seaport.

On 29 December 2020, a commercial ship entered for the first time through a channel built for ships. The Matarbari channel was officially inaugurated through that entry. The initial jetty was originally used for releasing heavy lift or heavy cargo for the Matarbari Coal Power Plant. From then until June, over a period of six months, 17 commercial ships came to the Matarbari with construction materials for the power plant.

Before the construction of the country's first deep seaport at Matarbari in Cox's Bazar, a 250-metre-wide, 18-metre-deep and 14-kilometre-long channel was prepared.



## ▶ A high-level government delegation visited the development projects at Matarbari



A high-level government delegation led by Honourable Minister, Ministry of Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal visited the Matarbari coal power project and deep sea port area at Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar. On 28 September, the Home Minister and his delegation travelled to the Matarbari thermal power project from Dhaka in a helicopter. Later, they exchanged views in the conference room of Matarbari

Project office of Coal Power Generation Company Bangladesh Limited. The meeting discussed the progress and security of various ongoing projects in Matarbari.

After the meeting, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "Bangladesh is moving forward at a breakneck pace under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Megaprojects are being carried out all over Bangladesh. Several projects in Maheshkhali have been initiated. When these projects are completed, the look of the area will change."

Member of the Parliament (Cox's Bazar-2) Ashek Ullah Rafique, Cabinet Secretary Khandaker Anwarul Islam, Senior Secretary for Public Security of Ministry of Home Affairs Mostafa Kamal Uddin, Secretary of Ministry of Shipping Mohammad Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, Inspector General of Police Dr Benazir Ahmed, Senior Secretary of the Department of Energy and Mineral Resources Md. Anisur Rahman, Secretary of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Habibur Rahman, Chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation A.B.M Azad, Director General of BGB Major General Mohammad Shafinul Islam, Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, Commander of BN Fleet of Bangladesh Navy Rear Admiral S.M. Abul Kalam Azad, Petrobangla Chairman A.B.M Abdul Fattah and Deputy Director of Bangladesh Coast Guard Commodore Enamul Haque were present.

## ▶ Fares for cargo transportation on lighter ships are declining



Seven years ago, entrepreneurs from various industries started transporting their products after buying lighter ships. Entrepreneurs started investing in this sector due to high fares from Water Transport Cell, a company operating lighter ships. The rate of renting ships from the Water Transport Cell dropped at one point. As a result of this predicament, now companies are required to lower the ship fare.

The Water Transport Cell has finalised the draft of the new fare

by holding several meetings with the freight transport contractors. The rent is being reduced for four months till the next December.

Nurul Haque, joint convener of the Water Transport Cell, said that fares were reduced for the COVID-19 pandemic. Fares will be reviewed again next December.

## ▶ Meeting of Chattogram Port Security Advisory Committee



A meeting of the Chattogram Port Security Advisory Committee was held on 21 September. Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, chairman of the port authority, presided in the meeting. Committee members including representatives of Bangladesh Navy, Bangladesh Coast Guard, Police, RAB, Department of Shipping, Chattogram Customs House, Shipping Agents Association and C&F Association took part in it.

At the beginning of the meeting, the director of the security department, Lt. Colonel Mostafa Arifur Rahman Khan, gave details about the ongoing activities of the authority to ensure maximum security in Chattogram port. A report of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP), which deals with organised crime in the sea and port areas, has mentioned the outer anchorage of Chattogram port as a safe sea area for the movement and anchoring of ships. For this reason, chairman of Chattogram Port Authority thanked all the concerned organisations who played a role in making this happen.

Port Authority member (Administration and Planning) Md. Zafar Alam, member (Engineering) Commodore M Neamul Hasan, member (Harbour and Marine) Commodore Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman, Director (Traffic) Enamul Karim, Deputy Director (Security) Major Md. Wahidul Haque, S.M. Masudul Islam, and Terminal Manager Quadrat-e-Khuda Millat were present at the meeting.



## ➤ Chattogram port saw a growth in all performance indicators amid COVID-19



In the last fiscal year amid the COVID-19 crisis, Chattogram port has achieved growth in all the indicators of performance index. Compared to the last fiscal year, the port has handled 11.98% more cargo and 3.1% more containers. Besides, about 7.92% more ships have been handled.

In the fiscal year 2020-21, 11 crore 37 lac 29 thousand and 373 metric tons of cargo has been handled in Chattogram port by combining import and export. In the previous fiscal year, it was 10 crore 15 lac 65 thousand and 272 metric tons. As a result, the growth in cargo handling at the port has been 11.98%.

In the fiscal year 2020-21, the container handling at Chattogram port has been 30 lac 97 thousand and 236 TEUs (each 20 feet in length). In the previous fiscal year, the container handling was 30 lac 4 thousand and 142 TEUs. As a result, the growth of container handling at the port has been 3.1%.

In the same fiscal year, 4,062 ships were handled at the port's jetty and outer anchorage. In the previous fiscal year, it was 3,764. As a result, ship handling has grown by 9.72%.

The monthly review of the fiscal year 2020-21 shows that the highest import-export combined cargo handling was done in April of this year. During the month, the imported cargo handling was 1 crore 10 lac 52 thousand and 763 metric tons and the exported cargo handling was 6 lac 1 thousand and 315 metric tons. In total, 1 crore 16 lac 54 thousand and 68 metric tons of cargo was handled during that month.

Chattogram port handles more than 92% of Bangladesh's imports and exports and 98% of container goods. The port handles an average of about 7,000 containers per day. And the revenue collection is thousands of crores of taka daily.

However, despite the strict restrictions of the second phase of the COVID-19 outbreak, preparations have been made in advance to keep this port running, which contributes to the country's economy. The activities of the port have been kept running in a planned manner by utilising the experience of the first phase. Although the presence of officers and employees in the office has been controlled to some extent, the attendance of all was ensured in accordance with the hygiene guidelines during the operational work.

## ➤ Bangladesh will put emphasis on making the process of shipping easier

The Ministry of Shipping has proposed to hold the meeting between Bangladesh and India at the shipping secretary level from 18 to 22 October in Delhi.

At the meeting in Delhi, Bangladesh is preparing to emphasise on coastal shipping to increase trade between the two countries. Another important point is to focus on building infrastructure in land ports.

The topic of issuing 'on arrival visas' to Bangladeshi sailors who have jobs in foreign ships and tourists will be raised again for discussion. Six organisations have sent proposals to the Ministry of Shipping to discuss a total of 29 talking points. Meetings between the two countries have been postponed due to high COVID-19 infection rates.

As the rate of infection continues to decline, the two countries have written a letter announcing the possible timing of the meeting. The 21st Standing Committee meeting under the Inland Naval Protocol (PIWT&T) and the Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) on transport of Indian Goods using Chattogram and Mongla ports will also be held.

## ➤ Inauguration of Bangabandhu Corner at Chattogram Port College



The inaugural function of Bangabandhu Corner established at Chattogram Port College was held on 20 September. The function was arranged

at the college's conference room on the occasion of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of independence. The chief guest was Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, Chairman of Chattogram Port Authority and Chairman of Executive Committee of the College. The special guest was the Joint Secretary and a member of the Chattogram Port Authority (Administration and Planning), Zafar Alam, Member (Harbour and Marine) Commodore Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman and Secretary Mohd. Omar Faruk.

The chairman of the port said that practicing the ideals, studying the biography and learning the lessons taught by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are very important for our national consciousness. He called upon all, including the students, to work towards building a happy, prosperous and modern Bangladesh by learning more about the life of the Father of the Nation. At the end prayers were offered. College teachers were present on the occasion.



## ➤ Shipowners have to transport half of the goods on chartered ships



Industrialists have bought lighter ships to transport imported raw materials from ports to factories by river in less time and at lower cost. Multiple industry groups have invested in this sector after

benefiting from the transportation of goods on their own lighter ships. However, they are not authorised to transport 100% of their imported goods on their own ships now. They have to transport 50% of their imported goods in chartered ships.

The Department of Shipping has issued an emergency notification on 25 August, which indirectly contained such instructions. It was said in the notification that the policy of 2013 has to be followed for the transportation of imported goods from big ships in the waters around Chattogram port. It also called for legal action against boat owners, masters and sailors who would disobey orders.

Article 5.9 of the policy states that 50% of the raw materials imported by the cement factory should be transported by ships under the control of the Water Transport Cell (WTC).

Chief Engineer and Ship Surveyor of the Department of Shipping Manjurul Kabir said that new instructions have been given for the implementation of the policy. If necessary, the rent will be rescheduled or a new decision will be taken in consultation with all parties.

## ➤ E-payment launched in full swing at Chattogram Customs House



The e-payment system has been launched on 1 July at Chattogram Customs House, the country's largest customs station.

From now on, importers will be able to pay the tariff online through RTGS (Real Time Gross Settlement) gateway with user ID. This is to relieve the traders from the hassle of standing in line at the bank for hours.

With the introduction of this system, all illegal activities including fraud, tax evasion, collection of extra tax for false information, customs per import documents and collection of money from bank officials will be stopped. In addition, the C&F agent will submit a bill of entry at the customs station on behalf of the importer after importing goods from abroad under the new rules. The customs department will confirm the amount of duty to be paid on the consignment. According to the guidelines of the National Board of Revenue, in the first six months of the 2021-22 fiscal year, if a tax of more than two lac taka is levied against a bill of entry, a compulsory e-payment has to be made. E-payment has been made mandatory for all importers from January 2022.

## ➤ 'There is no risk of port congestion if containers are released quickly'- CPA Chairman

'If the importers release the containers as fast as they can, there is no risk of congestion at the port.' Rear Admiral M Shahjahan, Chairman of the Chattogram Port Authority, said this on 17 August. He said this during a meeting with a 22-member delegation of the BGMEA, led by Faruque Hasan, president of the association. The meeting was held on the recent crisis of export containers and expediting the export process. It took place at the conference room of Port Building. Appealing to the BGMEA leaders, he added, 'Imported containers should be taken away as soon as possible after arriving at the port. Problems arise if the containers left undelivered at the port.'

He also requested the BGMEA leaders to discuss with the Main Line Operators (MLOs) the issues of direct shipping to the buyer countries by sea, not to fix specific shipping lines for buyers, and to ensure that the goods reach the port within 24 hours cut-off time.

BGMEA 1st Vice President Syed Nazrul Islam, former 1st Vice President Nasir Uddin and former Director Anjan Shekhar Das also spoke at the meeting. Board members of Chattogram Port Authority, directors, and senior officials were present at the meeting.





## CPA NEWS

A Quarterly Publication of  
Chittagong Port Authority

