

No need to wait for berth at Ctg port nowadays

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, from Chattogram

In what can only be considered a rare development, the number of container vessels waiting for berths at the outer anchorage of the Chattogram Port is zero at present.

The current situation comes as a stark contrast to what it was a few months back, when the port was practically choked by acute vessel congestion during the two-and-a-half-month-long nationwide shutdown aimed at curbing the spread of coronavirus within Bangladesh.

A few weeks after the shutdown began on 26 March, the port reached full capacity due to ever-increasing stacks of import containers as most buyers did not accept their deliveries amid the pandemic.

In late April, the number of container vessels parked at the outer anchorage each day reached 36, with most of those ships being stranded there for at least 18 to 20 days before getting berths.

However, the situation improved gradually in the last two months.

"Vessels are now getting berths upon arrival without delay," said Enamul Karim, director (traffic) of the Chattogram Port Authority.

Three vessels -- the Kota Wangsa, Warnow Mate and MCC Cebu -- arrived at the outer anchorage on Tuesday and received berths on



RAJIB RAIHAN

the very same day.

No vessels were waiting at the outer anchorage on Tuesday or Wednesday, Karim said, adding that such incidents are a frequent occurrence nowadays.

The CPA is currently allowing bulk vessels carrying open cargos to berth at vacant container jetties.

The decline in imports led to a reduction in operating pressure at the port, according to various

sources.

Although imports have increased to some extent after the shutdown had ended on 30 May, it is still less compared with previous years, said Ahsanul Huq Chowdhury, chairman of the Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association.

Container movement at the port increased in the first 10 days of August from the month earlier,

according to Karim.

"This does not indicate that the pressure of container transport has been reduced."

The clearing and forwarding agents, who work on behalf of the importers, are currently trying to complete the release procedures at a much faster rate, accelerating the number of deliveries made each day along the way, Karim added.

Most of the importers who incurred huge losses amid the pandemic prefer quick release of their cargoes since they do not want to pay extra storage costs, Chowdhury said.

Besides, the 10 new quay gantry cranes added to the existing four made container handling brisker, allowing ships to depart as soon as possible, according to Karim.

Subsequently, operations can be conducted on time, leading to a lesser number of ships waiting at the outer anchorage.

However, port users want this reprieve from congestion to be sustained.

To achieve long-term benefits, it is necessary to change the port's direct delivery system, said Khairul Alam Sujon, director of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association.

Due to the existing system, a major portion of the imports is kept under sheds or at yards in the port before they are delivered.

"The port should not become a pseudo warehouse."

Steps need to be taken so that imported goods can be shifted from the port to other locations for delivery as it would immensely increase the port's efficiency and capacity, Sujon added.

Currently, 37 various import items are taken to privately owned off-shore docks, from where the cargo is delivered after completing customs procedures.

Youth employment prospects darkened by pandemic

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The ongoing coronavirus crisis has had a devastating effect on the education and skills development of young people, according to a study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that was released on Tuesday.

Ever since the outset of the pandemic, more than 70 per cent of the people who are still students or combine work with studies have been adversely affected by the closure of educational institutions and training centres, the ILO said in a statement.

According to the organisation's report titled, 'Youth and COVID-19: impacts on jobs, education, rights and mental well-being', 65 per cent of the youth reported having learning less after the coronavirus outbreak and the subsequent transition from physical to online classes.

Despite their efforts to pursue education and training, around half the people in the survey said that their studies would now have to be put on hold while 9 per cent said that they might fail their exams due to poor learning.

The situation is even worse for young people in lower-income countries who have less access to the internet, modern equipment or even a lack of space to do classes from home, the ILO statement said.

This highlights the tremendous 'digital divide' between nations as up to 65 per cent of the youth in high-income countries were taught via video-conferences while only 18 per cent were able to continue their studies online in low-income countries.

"The pandemic is inflicting multiple shocks on young people. It is not only destroying their jobs and employment prospects but also disrupting their education and training while having a serious impact on their mental well-being. We cannot let this happen," said Guy Ryder, director-general of the ILO.



Higher paddy prices have left seed sellers beaming

SOHEL PARVEZ

The current aman paddy cultivation season has come as a blessing for public and private seed producers and marketers as farmers, encouraged by higher prices of boro, bought a bigger amount of seeds this time to maximise profits by increasing harvest.

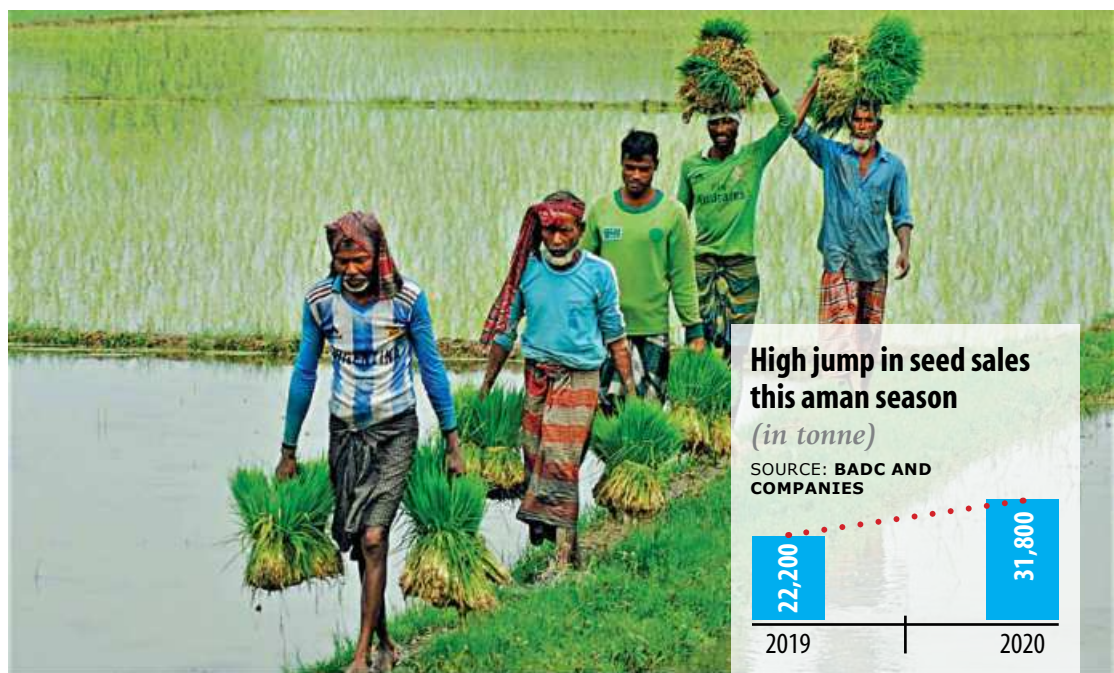
Public seed producer Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) and private firms sold nearly 32,000 tonnes of improved and hybrid seeds of paddy during the aman season, a whopping 43 per cent rise from a year earlier, according to top seed marketers.

Farmers have invested more in seeds in the hope of higher yields because they will earn some extra money even if they can get an additional half a tonne of rice, said FH Ansarey, managing director and chief executive of ACL Agribusiness, a division of ACL.

Aman is the biggest crop in terms of acreage as farmers grow the staple grain on more than 55 lakh hectares on average taking advantage of the monsoon.

Boro paddy, harvested in summer, is the second-biggest crop in terms of cultivation area.

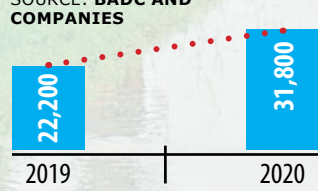
From a yield perspective, boro is the principal crop accounting for 55 per cent of the total annual rice production, followed by aman at 38 per cent and aus the rest.



High jump in seed sales this aman season

(in tonne)

SOURCE: BADC AND COMPANIES



During this aman season, the agriculture ministry has targeted to ensure cultivation on 59 lakh hectares, including more than three lakh hectares of sown or broadcast aman area.

Farmers grew paddy on 58.8 lakh hectares during the aman season last year, according to an estimate by the Department of Agricultural Extension. During the aman season, 188,000 tonnes of seeds are required, according to Md Azim Uddin, chief seed

technologist at the seed wing of the agriculture ministry.

Farmers generally use the seeds they grow and preserve for cultivation during this season, with BADC and the private sector seed sellers meeting only one-fifth the total requirement.

Apart from the higher prices of paddy this year, farmers' interest in using seeds marketed by the organised sector increased because of subsidy given by the government for seeds sold by the

state-run BADC.

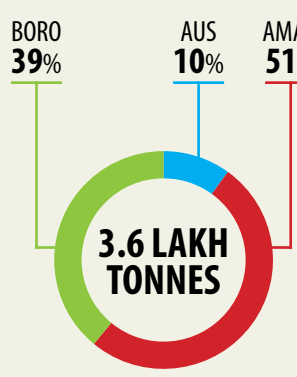
The government provided Tk 10 for each kilogram of improved seeds sold by BADC for the current season to encourage food producers to use certified seeds, which provide 15-20 per cent higher yield than the conventionally stored seeds, according to agriculture officials.

"We don't have any unsold seeds this year," said Mostafizur Rahman, general manager of the agro services division at BADC.

TOTAL REQUIREMENT FOR RICE SEEDS IN FY19

SOURCE: AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

BORO 39% AUS 10% AMAN 51%



The state agency sold nearly 21,000 tonnes of improved seeds during this aman season, up from 15,000 tonnes in the previous season. Last year, BADC had 3,000 tonnes of unsold seeds during the aman season.

"Farmers show increasing interest in quality seeds when they get better prices for their crops," Rahman said, adding that the germination percentage of BADC seeds is higher than those preserved by farmers.

Rahman urged the government to provide subsidy for seeds in the coming boro cultivation season as well.

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As per the report, 38 per cent of the youth are uncertain of their career prospects as the ongoing crisis is expected to create more obstacles for the labour market and to lengthen the transition from school to work for many individuals.

Some parts of the young population have already felt a direct impact as one in every six individuals lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

Young workers who are more likely to be employed in occupations such as support, services and sales-related jobs were highly affected by the recent economic crisis, making them more vulnerable to the coronavirus fallout.

Meanwhile, about 42 per cent of the people who continued to work have seen their incomes reduced.

Considering this, the situation has had an impact on their mental well-being as well.

The survey found that 50 per cent of the young generation are possibly subject to anxiety or depression while a further 17 per cent are probably already affected.

Despite the extreme circumstances, young people are mobilising to speak out on the fight against the coronavirus crisis.

According to the survey, one in four individuals participated in some kind of volunteer work amid the pandemic.

Ensuring that the voice of the youth is heard is critical for delivering a more inclusive response to the Covid-19 crisis.

Giving young people a say in decision-making while allowing them to articulate their needs and ideas will improve the effectiveness of various policies and programmes and give them a chance to participate in their delivery, the report said.

"The findings of this timely study clearly show how young men and women are the hardest hit by the ongoing crisis," said Tuomo Poutiainen, country director of ILO Bangladesh, adding that Bangladesh is no exception.

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STOCKS THAT GAINED THE MOST BETWEEN JULY 10 AND AUGUST 10

	PRICE (TK)	CHANGE
Zeal Bangla Sugar Mills	90.3	185.80%
Pioneer Insurance	68.3	127.70%
Eastern Insurance	78.6	124.60%
GQ Ball Pen	143.1	85.40%
Nitol Insurance	40	83.50%
Peoples Insurance	28.1	80.10%
Shyampur Sugar Mills	39.7	66.80%
Asia Insurance	29.4	61.50%
Savar Refractories	158.6	58.60%
Dhaka Insurance	41.1	57.50%
Pragati Insurance	50.6	54.70%
Paramount Insurance	101.7	53.90%
BSCCL	127.2	44.90%
Agrani Insurance	30.2	44.50%
Mithun Knitting	9.8	44.10%
Takaful Islami Insurance	41.5	44.10%
Meghna Condensed Milk	14.4	44.00%
Midas Finance	13.7	42.70%
Agni Systems	19.4	42.70%
Sandhani Life	27.2	42.40%

Interested investors can view the shuttered jute mills from next week

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Investors interested in taking up the recently shuttered state-owned 25 jute mills will be able to see the condition of the factories and other properties in the next one week, said the Ministry of Textiles and Jute in a statement yesterday.

The government closed the mills, employing 24,886 permanent workers and a large number of casual workers, from 1 July to bring an end to continuing losses resulting from use of decades-old machinery, corruption, mismanagement and operational costs racking up higher than those in the private sector.

The government allocated Tk 5,000 crore giving the golden handshake to the workers.

Since making the closure declaration, the government has been maintaining that it would give the factories, which were nationalised in 1972, a new lease on life under either public-



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This year farmers have increased their jute cultivation area by 8 per cent year-on-year to 7.20 lakh hectares, as per the Department of Agricultural Extension. Meanwhile, the recently shuttered state-owned 25 jute mills are set to get a new lease on life under either public-private partnerships, government-to-government initiatives, joint ventures or lease basis.

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As part of the plan, the ministry formed two panels to recommend measures to run the mills and rationalise the number of employees under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC). The committees started working, said the ministry statement.

And the decision to give scope to entrepreneurs to visit the closed factories was taken at a meeting of the committee headed by Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi on 5 August.

As per the decision, the BJMC issued a notice on 11 August to facilitate visits to mills of those interested.

Interested investors will be able to inspect the mills by 20 August and get an idea of the mills' equipment, installation and other properties, the BJMC said.

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