the importance of the existing Chittagong port.

It a sense, Mohiuddin was right: a new port at the point proposed by SSA, would have ultimately killed the Chittagong port. However, at the same time, the country has been deprived of having a new modern port for smooth handling of increasing volume of foreign trade.

As the mega proposal for a private port was rejected, no foreign investors have since come up with any such proposal. Nor did the government apparently feel the necessity of setting up a new port in spite of the rapid growth in export-import volume in the country.

wheat, rice, maize, fertilizer, and cement clinker mainly come to the second sea port, Mongla. Those, carry export items, mainly frozen foods, as return cargo. As the Chittagong port handles most of the incoming and outgoing cargo it always remains vibrant. It is now over-burdened with ships and containers.

New development in shipping sector

With the development of the container system for carrying export-import cargo the Chittagong and Mongla ports virtually became feeder ports. Earlier, the export-import cargo was carried by the ships in bulk. These ships used to move round the world.

Foreign dominance

Around 50 feeder vessels ply the routes between Chittagong-Mongla and ports in Singapore, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka. Most of the feeder vessel operators are foreigners. A Singapore-based syndicate of ship owners rules the feeder operation on this route.

Under the banner of Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC), they often hold the Chittagong port hostage and try to realize their demands. They also unilaterally increase the freight charges on various pretext. There are also a few Bangladeshi ship-owners in the syndicate, but they are cornered by the foreigners. HRC is the major

The Chittagong port actually handles cargo almost double its capacity. As a result, it always remains congested. The congestion of containers sometimes goes out of control. The outer anchorage of the port often has a long queue of waiting ships.



ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

Chittagong and Mongla are the two major sea ports in Bangladesh. Chittagong is the premier sea port as it handles more than 80 percent of the export-import cargo of the country. On the other hand, Mongla is now a dying port as it often suffers from dearth of ships. Sometimes Mongla remains completely vacant for weeks together due to non-arrival of ships. Besides, heavy siltation on the long channel made the port difficult for ships to enter. As a result, most of the big vessels show reluctance in coming upto the port terminal. Ships have to lighten half-way up the channel before anchoring at the terminal.

Ships carrying bulk food items like

But the system has been changing with the development of transport technologies worldwide.

Most of the bulk ships have been replaced by container ships, and around 40 percent of world cargo is now carried in containers. The container mother vessels, carrying 10,000-20,000 containers, do not come to Bangladesh ports. They anchor at the sea ports in Singapore, Malaysia, or Sri Lanka. The Bangladesh-bound container cargo is at first unloaded at those ports and later carried up to Chittagong and Mongla by feeder vessels. Similarly, the export cargo in containers from Bangladesh follows the same route.

Bangladeshi group, and operates 10 container ships on the route. The system of carrying bulk cargo has, however, remained unchanged. The government-owned Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) still operates eight bulk carrier ships.

The Chittagong port actually handles cargo almost double its capacity. As a result, it always remains congested. The congestion of containers sometimes goes out of control. The outer anchorage of the port often has a long queue of waiting ships.

Bad image abroad

To compensate for the loss due to congestion, the feeder operators often impose additional surcharge on