term in the shipping sector. It means the time taken for a ship to enter the port and come out after unloading and loading the cargo. Due to lengthy process and burden of cargo, the turn-around time at Chittagong is much higher than that of other ports in neighbouring countries. According to a World Bank report, the turn-around time at Chittagong is 6-10 days, compared with two days in Bangkok and one day in Singapore.

The Chittagong port also does not follow the cut-off time for loading and unloading cargo. The port starts taking booking after a ship anchors at the terminal, and it continues for 24 hours. The shipping agents can increase the cut-off time with the permission of the port authority.

But the ports in Singapore and Malaysia cease booking of export cargo at least 12 hours before anchoring the ship at the terminal. Those ports do not take booking of the return cargo after anchoring the ship at the terminal. Therefore, the ships do not stay at the terminal more than the 12 hours required for loading and unloading cargo.

Cumbersome official and customs procedures are another problem in Chittagong port. The staffing and unstaffing of containers also take place at the yard, which is one of the major causes for congestion of the containers at the port yard.

Apart from strikes and internal labour unrest, national politics also overshadow the port activities. The hartal and blockade programs hamper the loading and unloading activities. The activities of the port remained closed for several weeks during the recent political agitation. Before that, a serious row over operation of the QGC by a private company heavily disturbed the port activities.

Development and expansion of Chittagong port

The government took some development and expansion programs at the Chittagong port over the years. First of all an exclusive container jetty, Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT), was set up beside the general yard in the 1990s.

The jetty can handle three container ships at a time. The new-mooring container terminal (NCT) set up recently, at a cost of Tk 700 crore, is yet to be commissioned fully. Although five container ships are supposed to anchor at the terminal at a time, only two ships can anchor there at present. The construction of the terminal was targeted to be completed by October 2006 but many parts of the terminal are still incomplete. The Chinese construction company has left Bangladesh without completing the construction work.

There is one public sector inland container depot (ICD) that is located in Kamlapur, Dhaka. The main purpose of the depot is to ease container congestion at the port jetty. The container is brought to Kamlapur in Dhaka directly by train immediately after being unloaded from the ship. The goods are released from the depot. The export cargo is also stored at the depot. The government also allowed private entrepreneurs to set up inland container depots. A total of 10 private depots have been established in private sector located at different places near Chittagong port.

The container handling at the lone public sector ICD at Kamlapur, however, is facing various problems due to inefficiency of the private handling company. The government had appointed Global Agro Trade Company (GATCO) for handling the container at the depot.

The company showed inefficiency in handling the containers, as the handling equipment it installed there often



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