

Star BUSINESS

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Outer anchorage at Ctg port now congestion-free

RAFIQ HASAN

On enforcement of some measures taken by the caretaker government, the outer anchorage of Chittagong port, the country's premier seaport, is now free of congestion because the container ships no longer require to wait there before berthing.

Sources said the ships have been directly entering the channel for berthing for the last five days as the container handling is accelerated. As a result, berthing space for more ships has been created at the terminal.

Earlier, ships had to face wastage of time for at least seven to fifteen days at the outer anchorage due to lack of such space for berthing.

According to the sources, during the political turmoil that resulted in non-functionality of the port, the number of waiting container ships at the outer anchorage even jumped to 40-45. And, usually 10-15 ships would wait at the outer anchorage.

The ships at the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) are no more allowed to wait for loading export cargo as a new cut-off time for their arrivals has come into effect since April 1. The crane-less ships are forced to leave the terminal after loading the export cargo, whatever it is available at the terminal.

Accordingly, many ships are

leaving the terminal within 48 hours into their arrivals at the terminal.

On the other hand, the export cargo is allowed to enter the terminal for a period of 48 hours on anchorage of a ship at the general berth. The ships at the general berths have been asked to leave the terminal within 72 hours.

As a result, the turnaround time of the ships has reduced drastically. "I have been observing long queue of ships at the outer anchorage of the Chittagong port for long time. This is for the first time I have heard that the outer anchorage is free from waiting ships," said a high official of the Department of Shipping.

Handing of ships at the port hit a record highest at 81 in the month of March. Earlier, this rate was 45-50 a month.

The pace in container handling at the terminal has now come in conformity with that at other regional ports, observed a shipping agent. "We need to keep it up as it would drastically reduce the cost of business," he pointed out.

"The business community is happy as the port operation is now faster than ever before," said Amirul Haque, chairman of the standing committee on port and shipping, constituted by FBCCI and Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI).

"The taskforce that was formed by the joint forces to improve the port situation deserves the credit for being the port free from conges-

tions, which is first-ever in a span of 15 years," Haque happily noted.

The measures taken by this taskforce is yielding positive results. The handover of operation of Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) to a private company, Saif Powertec Limited, is one of such measures.

The port authority has also started a process to handover the charges of all general berths to private operators, sources in the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) said.

"These positive trends give us a lot of optimism that indeed -- if certain key challenges can be addressed -- poverty can be significantly reduced, if not eliminated, within a generation in South Asia."

"But there are still some very significant challenges that need to be addressed," added Roome, who spoke to reporters during a trip to Tokyo for talks with the Japanese government.

"The first one is to sustain and accelerate the rates of growth. In order for that to happen, one of the key bottlenecks is going to be infrastructure," he said.

Governance concerns and wealth inequalities were also problems, he said.

The new cut-off time is aimed at bringing down the average turn around time of vessels at the country's premier seaport.

Under the new cut-off time, no vessel will be allowed to stay at Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) for more than 24 hours after making delivery of containers, sources said. Earlier, the cut-off time was 48 hours.

However, the cut-off time for vessels berthing at other jetties of the port will remain unchanged.

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S Asia can cut poverty within generation

Says WB economist

AFP, Tokyo

South Asia has the chance to eliminate poverty within a generation if it can sustain strong growth, improve its infrastructure and reduce wealth inequalities, a World Bank economist said Wednesday.

Rapid economic growth in recent years along with a significant reduction in poverty and improvements in education and healthcare suggest a bright outlook, said John Roome, the Bank's operations director for the South Asia region.

"These positive trends give us a lot of optimism that indeed -- if certain key challenges can be addressed -- poverty can be significantly reduced, if not eliminated, within a generation in South Asia."

"But there are still some very significant challenges that need to be addressed," added Roome, who spoke to reporters during a trip to Tokyo for talks with the Japanese government.

"The first one is to sustain and accelerate the rates of growth. In order for that to happen, one of the key bottlenecks is going to be infrastructure," he said.

Governance concerns and wealth inequalities were also problems, he said.

NEW CUT-OFF TIME FOR VESSELS AT CCT

Our staff correspondent from Chittagong adds: Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) enforces a reduced 24-hour cut-off time for the vessels berthing at CCT from today.

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