

Star BUSINESS

MONGLA PORT

CARGO HANDLING (in tonnes)

Total	
FY16	57,97,521
FY21	119,44,608

PRESENT AND PROJECTED GROWTH OF DEMAND AND HANDLING CAPACITY OF THE PORT

	Berth	Cargo	Container	Car
2022:	25	1.0cr tonne	100,000 TEUs	20,000
2041:	31	3.3cr tonne	1,500,000 TEUs	51,000

COMPLETED AND UNDER IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Dredging of outer bar
Vessel Traffic Management and Information System
Purchase of 75 handling equipment

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Construction of 2 jetties under PPP
Construction of 2 jetties under Indian credit
Building of 2 jetties under Chinese funding

AVERAGE MONTHLY ARRIVAL OF SHIPS AT MONGLA PORT

SOURCE: MONGLA PORT AUTHORITY

2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021

DISTANCE FROM DHAKA

Chattogram: 260km
Payra: 190 km
Mongla: 170km*
(*After Padma Bridge opening)

Mongla port turns around

Awaits a further fillip from Padma bridge

SOHEL PARVEZ

Mongla port, the country's second biggest seaport, has made a strong comeback as it sees an increased arrival of ships, making it a major gateway for Bangladesh's overseas trade once again. Officials and port users say the opening of the Padma bridge will give a further boost to the port. The monthly arrival of ships, which fell below 10 in 2008, grew several times in recent years. In 2021, 71 vessels arrived at the port every month on average, up from 46 five years ago, showing signs of steady growth in activities thanks to the completion of dredging at the outer bar of a nearly 140-kilometre channel to improve navigability and enable

the movement of vessels that require a higher draft. The dredging involving Tk 712 crore was completed in December 2020. And the Mongla Port Authority (MPA) is in process of buying 75 pieces of equipment and machinery to handle cargoes under a Tk 433 crore project. Besides, the port authority is buying six vessels to handle ocean-going ships under another project involving Tk 767 crore. Users say these steps have given impetus to businesses to use the port at an increasing rate at a time when the country's biggest seaport in Chattogram faces repeated congestion as it is running at full capacity. "Arrivals of ships have increased as the economic growth has fueled domestic

demand. Besides, the Chattogram port, in one sense, is saturated in its current capacity. Many are looking for an alternative," said Commodore Md Abdul Wadud Tarafder, member for harbour and marine at the MPA. Activities of the port in the southwest region began to pick up after the government took several projects to revive its old glory. The port has registered 17 per cent annual average growth in ship handling since 2012, while the volume of cargo handling grew 19 per cent over the past decade. It can handle one crore tonnes of cargo, 100,000 twenty-foot equivalent units of containers, and 20,000 cars annually. In 2020 21, cargo handling stood at 1.19 crore tonnes, just double the volume five years ago. "We don't have any waiting time for ships," said Tarafder. The port has 25 berthing facilities, including five jetties. Yet, it suffers from an inadequate draft at the jetty that restricts the entry of vessels of more than seven metres draft. Dredging at the inner bar of the Pashur channel is underway

to enable ships with more than nine metres draft to use the jetty. The Tk 793 crore dredging project is expected to complete by June next year. "Once dredging is complete, the arrival of ships will increase a lot," Tarafder said. The opening of the Padma bridge, scheduled for June this year, along with the establishment of the railway link will make the port more attractive to businesses, at home and abroad. The opening of the bridge will shorten the distance between the Mongla port and Dhaka, the main economic and industrial hub in Bangladesh, and it will be the closest from the capital compared to Chattogram and Payra ports. The distance between Dhaka and Chattogram is 260 kms and the completion of the Padma bridge will narrow the distance between Dhaka and Mongla to 170 kms from 274 kms now. Tarafder said the port is going to be connected by railways along with the existing road and waterways, and the use of the port by businesses will increase once the bridge opens to the public. "We are working to be a

regional port." Its closest ports are located in landlocked Nepal and Bhutan. It is located on the artery of regional waterways under the India-Bangladesh protocol route on inland water transit and trade. "These unique location and features have provided the port a greater opportunity to be a vibrant and dominant port in the region," said Tarafder. The overall turnaround time of ships at the port is expected to halve to 24 hours from the present 48 hours after the purchase of equipment and gantry crane. "The prospect of the Mongla port is very bright. Activities have increased and the demand for using the port will jump just after the completion of the Padma bridge," said Syed Mohammad Arif, chairman of the Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association. He said the cost of shipping goods through the port will reduce because of the much-talked bridge. "So, exporters will be interested in using the port," he said, adding that congestion at the Chattogram port will decline as more ships will come

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Shipping lines sceptical about new ICD policy

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chattogram

Shipping lines in Bangladesh have expressed concern over some provisions in the recently published policy for private inland container depots (ICDs), citing that certain measures may cause adversities in running operations. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a gazette on the "Private Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station Policy-2021" on December 19 last year, setting guidelines for the establishment and operation of private ICDs. The Bangladesh Container Shipping Association (BCSA), a group of major shipping lines working in the country, expressed its concern over the new policy through a letter to the NBR issued yesterday. BCSA members

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Red and yellow, colours representing spring, feature in clothing put on display at Aziz Cooperative Super Market in Shahbagh of Dhaka yesterday marking Pahela Falgun, the first day of spring and 11th month of the Bangla calendar.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

NBFIs barred from disbursing loans on BB cheques

Misuse revealed during probe into scams

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank yesterday ordered non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) not to disburse loans using cheques of current accounts they have to maintain with the central bank. Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) and Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) had discovered that the cheques were used in some of the major scams perpetrated in the NBFIs sector, said officials of the central bank. Every NBFIs has to have a current account with the central bank to maintain their cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio. The NBFIs are allowed to use the cheques when they want to withdraw funds from the central bank or settle any inter-bank loans or liabilities such as call money. Some delinquent NBFIs used the cheques to give out loans to the scammers so that no suspicion arose among watchdogs, explained a BB official. Usually no question is raised when cheques of current accounts with the central bank are placed for withdrawal or transfer of funds. The cheques enabled the scammers to seamlessly withdraw funds from banks. And this was what the swindlers capitalised on to siphon off funds, unearthed the BFIU and the ACC. And this has prompted the central bank to send letters to all NBFIs, barring them from disbursing any loans using the BB current account cheques. Prashanta Kumar Halder, also known as PK Halder, swindled a large amount of money from four NBFIs using the BB cheques. Halder, a former managing director of

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Banks asked to duly provide inland LC data

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh Bank yesterday asked banks to appropriately provide relevant data of inland letters of credit (LCs) to the online import monitoring system (OIMS). Although the central bank had earlier asked the lenders to submit the data on a regular basis, some have not followed the instruction. Under the inland back-to-back LCs, local businesses import raw materials from exporters staying within the country. The businesses import the items to produce goods, which are usually exported abroad. The lenders now grant "acceptance" to corresponding banks in favour of inland LCs without placing the data on the OIMS. Acceptance means a bank takes responsibility of an importer to pay the worth of the imported items to the corresponding bank, through which the products are exported. On receiving the acceptance, the corresponding bank pays the cost of exported items to the exporters without realising the funds. The central bank says that the corresponding banks also do not verify the local or inland bills using the OIMS while purchasing those in order to settle the LCs. This has created complexities in settling the bills, according to a central bank notice. The central bank has asked banks, which purchase the bills, to make payments to exporters after ensuring that the inland bills were available on the OIMS.

STOCKS	
DSEX ▲	CSCX ▲
0.05% 7,089.52	0.01% 12,473.95

COMMODITIES	
Gold ▲	Oil ▲
\$1,858.90 (per ounce)	\$93.96 (per barrel)

CURRENCIES				
BUY TK	85.05	95.88	114.50	13.13
SELL TK	86.05	99.68	118.30	13.81

ASIAN MARKETS			
MUMBAI ▼	TOKYO ▲	SINGAPORE ▲	SHANGHAI ▼
1.31% 58,152.92	0.42% 27,696.08	0.03% 3,428.95	0.66% 3,462.95