

**PRESS NOTE 14.12.16**

The Kolkata Police had earlier imposed a restriction between 0800 hrs to 2200 hrs on the movement of all classes of port-bound goods vehicles, with the purpose of easing traffic congestion in the port area, through a notification dated 20.09.2016.

With the usual Puja-time restrictions coming into force soon after, an adverse, though a temporary effect was felt on the to and fro movement of cargo between the port and the factories, warehouses, Container Freight Stations and Empty Container Yards. In short, the port, which served as the gateway to the trade, commerce and industry in the eastern hinterland, including the land-locked countries of Nepal and Bhutan, was suddenly rendered inaccessible for the major part of the 24-hour operational cycle. The average daily evacuation rate of containers came down to 750 TEUs from the usual daily average trend of 1000 TEUs in the 'pre-restriction period'. The deceleration in the evacuation rate at the Port, led to a build-up of container inventories, despite all out efforts being made to ensure that matters were in relative control and the inconvenience posed to the port users was also kept at the minimum level.

The Port authorities, in consultation with the Kolkata Police and the State Government, initiated an intensive dialogue, engaging all constituents of the trading and transportation fraternity. As an immediate reprieve, a large parking lot, the second of its kind in the area, was thrown open temporarily, to help the police in pre/re-positioning the trucks and trailers, which were so long clogging the arterial port roads, prior to entry to/ exit from docks. Also, new parking lots were identified and groundwork initiated on a war footing for construction of permanent parking lots (cost: Rs.5.5 crores) in the Coal Dock, Bhutghat and ITC Parking extension. These were aimed to add to the existing capacity of off-dock parking in a substantive way, within a six-month to one-year period, to comprehensively address the problem of traffic congestion in the port area.

Further, immediate repair work of almost all the roads owned by the port was initiated. A task-force was constituted with the Police and Port to identify the critical structural breaches in the roadways and action initiated on an urgent basis, to repair CGR Road, Taratolla Road and Hide Road. Funds from the Central Government were also received under the Sagarmala Project for permanent and comprehensive repairs to three major arterial roads, viz. Coal Dock Road, Sonai Road and Sonapur Road. Initial repairs have since been completed for all these roads and permanent repairs are to be undertaken shortly. The Port had also complemented the above slew of measures with a fast, hassle-free entry and exit of vehicles at the gates to reduce detention.

All the above measures, with full cooperation extended by port users, had brought immediate relief to the impasse, with the Police lifting the restrictions almost totally from all kinds of road traffic movements. As a strategic measure to help the public use the common port roads alongwith port-bound traffic, two busy public windows, i.e. from 0800 hrs to 1200 hrs and 1600 hrs to 2100 hrs have been allotted only for movement of public vehicles in the weekdays, while Sundays, Saturdays and Public Holidays have been made free round the clock. This has resulted in a complete reversal of the earlier scenario with normalcy restored in port functions, with remarkable improvement also noticeable in the movement of traffic in the port network. The monthly container handling has sharply improved to 49,945 TEUs in November 2016 vis-à-vis 42,852 TEUs in October 2016. The average pendency of containers has also come down to a remarkable low of 5026 TEUs in December, 2016. **At present, the port is free of any congestion, detention or build-up, and the situation has further improved vis-à-vis the pre-24.9.16 period trends at the Kolkata Dock System and its Container Terminal.** The trading fraternities have widely welcomed the positive developments which they believe will usher in a lasting and favorable impact on their operations at Kolkata Port.

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