

## **Shri Mansukh Mandavia says conclusion of SOP with Bangladesh on Chattogram and Mongla ports a win win situation for both countries**

### **The SOP will open 8 routes to North Eastern states through Bangladesh**

**7<sup>th</sup> October, 2019:** Shri Mansukh Mandavia, MoS(I/C) Shipping has said that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's foreign policy initiative regarding use of Chattogram and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India will bring revolutionary cost-cutting in shipments to and from the North Eastern States.

During the official visit of H.E Sheikh Hasina ,Prime Minister of People`s Republic of Bangladesh to India , a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) wherein Bangladesh allowed the use of its Chattogram and Mongla Ports for movement of goods to and from India through its territory was signed and exchanged by India and Bangladesh before the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh on 5.10.2019 . The SOP on use of Chattogram and Mongla ports has been finalized after the two countries signed an MOU on 6.6.2015 and an Agreement on 25.10.18.

The agreement and SOP permit the movement of goods in Bangladesh through waterways, rail, road or multi-modal transport. Eight routes are provided under the Agreement which would enable access of North East Region (NER) via Bangladesh. The routes are:

- i. Chattogram/Mongla Port to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhura
- ii. Chattogram/Mongla Port to Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil
- iii. Chattogram/Mongla Port to Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola
- iv. Chattogram/Mongla Port to Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar

(and vice versa)

The conclusion of the SOP on Chattogram and Mongla ports would reduce distance, time and logistic cost for transport of goods and is a win win situation for both the economies.

Three landlocked states of India viz. Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura will get access to open sea trade routes from Chattogram and Mongla ports via Indian ports. Tripura will be connected to Chattogram Port through the Maitree Setu on Feni river at Sabroom in South Tripura and Ramgarh in Bangladesh. While Agartala is 135 kms from Sabroom, Chattogram port is 75 kms from Sabroom.

Cargo transportation through IBP waterway route from Kolkata/ Haldia to North East is limited to 2000 ton vessels. Now, larger ships carrying cargo destined for North East can call at Chattogram and Mongla ports thereby increasing trade volumes and reducing logistic costs.

The expected cargo to North East is construction material, iron & steel, fertilizer, consumer goods, POL, cement etc. Foodgrains, fruits, organic products, tea, fish, jute etc are the cargo expected to be transported from the North East to various parts of India through Chattogram and Mongla ports.

On shipping and maritime affairs, India and Bangladesh have had very close cooperation in the last few years. Under the Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, in addition to the five Ports of Call (POC), Dhubri (India) and Pangaon (Bangladesh) have been added and both countries have agreed to add for more POCs in each country. Dredging has commenced under an MOU signed by the two countries on development of fairway in selected stretches of Bangladesh waterways with Government of India bearing 80 % of the project expenditure and the balance by Govt. of Bangladesh. Cruise services have also commenced between the two countries promoting people to people contact after an MOU and SOP were signed.