

JNPT's proactive steps ensure ZERO congestion at port, says Mr. Sethi

After the outbreak of COVID-19, India's largest container port, JNPT, has taken a slew of measures to ensure seamless movement of EXIM cargo and minimize hardship to exporters and importers. JNPT handles more than 5 million containers a year and it has a share of more than 50% in India's container cargo volume.

In an interview to MVIRDC World Trade Center Mumbai, **Mr. Sanjay Sethi, IAS, Chairman, JNPT** informs that the various measures taken by the port after COVID-19 outbreak has ensured ZERO congestion and has helped in protecting traders from any disruption.

Excerpts of the interview:

1. JNPT has waived dwell time charges, charges for shifting mode of transport and extended the delivery timeline for goods under DPD. How do you expect these measures to benefit the industry?

Last month, JNPT took some proactive measures at JNPCT and extended reliefs to the trade in order to support port users and end users like - No dwell time charges will be levied for all import containers moved by road (CFS/DPD/Empty) which were discharged from 22.03.2020 till 14.04.2020; No shifting charges levied for import containers for which change of mode activity (from truck to rail) is performed to facilitate movement of CFS/DPD containers by Rail and Delivery of DPD containers will be allowed from Terminals beyond the 48 hour period.

This has resulted in ZERO congestion at the port and has helped in protecting the trade channel from any disruption. Also the port is handling 8,000 containers per day on an average since March 22, 2020 and this includes 5308 Twenty foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) and the remaining Forty foot Equivalent Units. The port is also well prepared and has adequate space to store the containers for at least a month in case of slow evacuation of imports.

JNPT has also set up a control room in the port administrative building and are regularly coordinating with all stakeholders concerned and private terminals. The port is also constantly in touch with the ministry and is monitoring the dynamic environment, and adapting its approach based on the situation on ground. Our inclusive approach to these challenges will only make us more agile and enduring.

2. How can freight forwarders, customs brokers and exporters can make use of the online portal, Port Community System (PCS 1x), to address the logistics bottlenecks in this time of crisis?

PCS 1x has provided one communication platform for all maritime stakeholders which has reduced the time and overall cost for documentary and border compliance for imports and exports by eliminating unnecessary duplication of activities on different portal.

During such difficult times this system will help the stakeholders in an efficient way by being a single source, integrated and standardized platform for meeting the requirements of all members of community as it functions as an e-commerce platform for the members of the community, provides adequate, accurate and timely information. It improves the response time of stakeholders to their customers by improving track and trace efficiency.

It will provide shipment or service visibility and generate alerts about delays or problems if there are any. It will enable moving towards similar procedures across all communities. To further minimize errors and improve efficiency it will provide opportunities for re-engineering, adopting best practices.

In order to make the process easy during these challenging times we request all the stakeholders to use this system as it is easily accessible and secure and which is easy to learn, operate and support.

3. Exporters and importers are worried about delay in securing export certification, congestion in ports and lack of manpower. What is your message to the distressed exporters and importers in this challenging time?

The port falls within the ambit of essential services and all terminals of JNPT continue to remain operational as per directives from the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India for maintaining of supply chain link within the country. Post the directives coming out, JNPT facilitated smooth operations bringing together all stakeholders including 33 CFS and 15 empty container yards operators to keep the operations up and running. Ever since the outbreak of novel Coronavirus in India, the Central government directed all the states to follow a set protocol for scanning of the crew of cargo ships that are dock at port.

The port has taken various measures to limit the impact of the outbreak while also protecting the trade channel from any disruption. Since 13th April, 14 trains evacuating a total of 1260 TEUs of Direct Port Delivery (DPD) containers have departed to ICD Mulund. The Extended Gate Facility is an inland intermodal terminal, where customers can leave or pick up their containers directly and easily.

The Port authorities have ensured free movement of container from/to CFSs & Port by getting the requisite amendments in the Prohibition Orders issued by Central & State Governments. Given these notifications, various other agencies such as Shipping Lines, Container Fright Stations (CFSs), Custom House Agents (CHAs), Transporters, CONCOR, Private Container Train Operators, Truck Transporters, BPCL Liquid Cargo Jetty & associated Tank Farms, Empty Yard Operators, Partner Government Agencies like FSSAI, Plant Quarantine linked to Port Operations remain operational and continue to operate as per schedule to help the port perform its duties during these difficult times.

In order to assist Exim trade, JNPT is waving off the dwell time charges for import containers moved by the road, also lifts shifting charges off import containers which require a change of mode from truck to rail, the delivery of DPD containers from the terminal will be now be permitted even after 48 hours.

Centralized Parking Plaza (CPP) is a key initiative under our continuous endeavor to provide Ease of doing business to the EXIM Trade at the Port and JNPT has invested approx. Rs. 170 crore for its development and is the only port in India which has planned for a facility of this scale. The CPP is aimed at streamlining the traffic movement and improve the port efficiencies. It is a land parcel measuring about 45 Hectares having capacity to park 1,538 Tractor Trailers at one time.

CPP will streamline the traffic movement and improve the port efficiencies using IT services, at the same time provide convenience facilities and amenities to Truck drivers who travel long distances to reach the Port. The CPP consists of a dormitory for stay of truck drivers, Canteen for providing healthy food to truck drivers, clean and maintained toilets, area for vehicle repairs & maintenance and commercial building.

The investment on CPP was made before COVID 19 outbreak and the initiative was planned before the COVID 19 outbreak; however, this initiative will take care of the hurdles during the outbreak. It will ensure there is no overcrowding of trucks in one place and help the truck drivers to wait without any inconvenience. Also, it will ensure smooth movement of the trucks and avoid overcrowding.

Our port has also set up a control room for resolving issues faced by Port customers, they can reach at 022-27244077/67814022 between 8am to 8pm or email controlroom@jnport.gov.in. As a result of above efforts all the five containers and a liquid terminal are functioning smoothly and the movement of containers to/from CFSs has crossed 8000 TEUs plus as on 31st March. These initiatives will further enhance the seamless trade experience for the traders at JNPort.

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