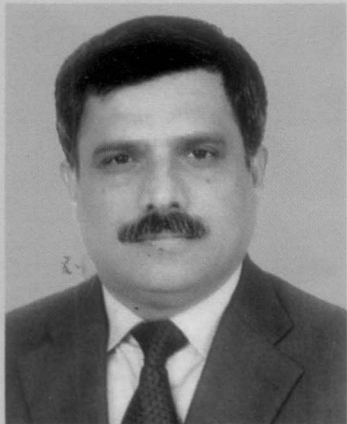


Industry leaders express their views on an issue of great consequence for ex-im movement

Experts from Mumbai



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What do you think are the reasons behind the road congestion and how are they impacting cargo movement?

JNP was commissioned for container operation in 1989 and over the past 2½ decades, it has risen to handling almost 4.3 million TEUs. During these 25 years period, the Port has created additionally two private container terminals, liquid terminal and shallow

water berth to cater to coastal movement and break-bulk cargo. The overall traffic has gone up from 0.04 to 4.3 million TEUs in container handling with a total traffic of 0.7 million tonnes to 57.91 million tonnes. We are all well aware that the most important determinant factor for capacity addition is simultaneous prompt evacuation. There is no added advantage in merely planning and developing capacity additions unless a comprehensive plan for the infrastructure in the hinterland for free movement is made like connectivity by road/rail, parking places *en route*, etc. to overcome all detriments.

Regret that the infrastructure outside the Port is not at all developed commensurate with steadily increased volumes being handled today. Road and rail network, parking areas for vehicles/containers, procedural issues, maintaining strict discipline for queuing up of vehicles among the users, issues related to coordination between the private terminals and their sub-contractors and other interested parties, accountability and restriction for movement of containers due to closing of export gates in advance are the few main reasons for this present chaotic conditions persistently prevailing at JNP terminals. Terminals are not at all keen to solve any such issues mainly because of inherent capacity constraints in the operations of the terminal or just a sort of reluctance to handle additional volumes due to various reasons.

Due to this inadequacy of connectivity for catering to handle

the present heavy traffic, the vehicles have to wait more than required to enter the Port CY acutely affecting and restricting the movement of import/export containers and other traffic in and out from the Port area.

What is the solution to the problem? What is the kind of infrastructure augmentation and other measures required?

The ideal solution is to create capacity, i.e. larger than the actual requirement which means infrastructure with additional spare capacity, not with an intention of utilising 100 per cent of the same fully but with a long-term vision. Out of 4.3 million TEUs presently being handled at JNP, almost 70 per cent of volume moves by road. It is obvious that there is a need to create well planned and exclusive expressway connectivity with ROB for CFS, factory-stuffed containers and other vehicles to move in and out from the Port without any hindrance. Besides, it is essential to create parking plaza for empty and export-laden containers with all facilities for carrying out Customs documentation, etc., without much delays as this project is already approved by JNP. It is also necessary to ensure immediate implementation of all pending road projects by the nodal agency and regular coordination meetings with all stakeholders to identify and study the existing problems for elimination and plan to enhance efficiencies and maximise the utilisation of the present infrastructure to cater to the current volumes.

Is it also the case that some of the trailers do not have proper documents?

Yes, this is one of the pertinent issues which is faced by the trade today. However, we need to understand where these vehicles will park till such time they clear the Customs documentation. Unless the authorities create parking zones for such vehicles, these problems are likely to continue. The authorities need to understand the shipping cycle and create need-based infrastructure for permanent remedy instead of suggesting and implementing solution's stop gap / in isolation which are likely to become obsolete and impracticable in the long run.

How smooth are the verification procedure and cargo movement to and from CFSs/terminals be streamlined?

We need to automate the procedures at the gate. The working level of the gate counter has to be raised to such an extent that the trailer driver should be able to handover the documents at single counter and at once the procedure with Customs and terminal authorities has to be completed without necessitating the driver coming out of the vehicle. The multiple or duplication of documentation procedure/s with the security agencies have to be dispensed with and eliminated. The Port gate system has, therefore, to be upgraded so as to capture all container and vehicle details prior to their arrival at the gate from CFS, buffer yard or from the factory; separate queue has to be maintained for CFS trailers and empties which are passing out to CY to pick up empty containers; internal movements of trailers have to be permitted by upgrading or interfacing of the systems of all terminals; all available gates have to be operated with full manpower to avoid any congestion and delays at the terminal gates and simultaneously alternative connectivity and developments of new roads have to be undertaken. JNP has to approach the concerned railway authorities to open up railway gate near the Karal bridge. This will assist the Uran bound vehicles for unidirectional movement without unduly congesting the Karal bridge.
