

New terminals may be set up to facilitate cargo handlings: PQA chief

KARACHI: The navigation channels on Port Qasim area offer ample opportunities for establishment of new terminals to provide facilities to international cargo handlings, said the Port Qasim Authority's chairman Asad Rafi Chandna.

"More terminals will be set up in near future. Some projects are already in pipeline," he told reporters who were visiting Pakistan International Bulk Terminal (PIBT), a designated coal, clinker and cement handling facility at the Port Qasim, here on Tuesday.

PQA chairman said different delegations were visiting the area and evincing profound interest in investment here.

Presently, PQA has one main 45 kilometre long navigation channel which provides safe and convenient navigation for vessels. Port Qasim handles around 40 percent of Pakistan's cargo.

The other navigation channel is still unutilized, however, the authority is conducting studies for its operations. He said it is a long process so surely take some time.

"The Authority (PQA) is making its all out efforts to ensure night navigation handlings at the port to enhance its efficiency," he said, adding that it needs proper infrastructure, including lightning and also have to appoint new pilots to navigate ships through a particular stretch of water.

Chandna also appreciated the PIBT for handling of imported coal adopting latest international practices. He said the world has explored best ways of coal utilization as fuel. Coal is one of the options in addition to wind and coal energy sources to meet the energy needs of the country. He was of the view that coal handlings through conventional ways had devastating environmental and marine life impacts. However, after the Supreme Court's intervention, the coal handlings have been shifted from Karachi Port Trust (KPT) to the Port Qasim where coal handling operations are being carried out in a good way.

PIBT Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Shariq Azim Siddiqui on this occasion said the PIBT is the county's first terminal designated for handling coal clinker and cement at Port Qasim Authority on the build-operate-transfer (BOT) basis on a 30-year concession. The company invested over \$300 million, most of that an investment on setting up global coal handling standards and purchase of state of the art equipments to mitigate the coal pollution. "We are away from the city; hence, the hazard of environment pollution is minimal," he said.

Earlier, PIBT officials Naveed and Zeeshan Liaquat gave separate briefings on the project. They said PIBT has built capacity for handling up to 12 million tons of coal and 4 million tons of cement and clinker per year. Capacity can be further enhanced up to 20 million tons per year. The terminal has been setup for handling and delivering coal to power and cement plants by utilizing the railroad and sea network.

They said the terminal is operating more efficiently than Karachi Port's. They elaborated that unloading of a coal cargo ship of similar tonnage currently takes around five to six days at KPT whereas, at PIBT, it can be handled less than that, thanks to modern and mechanized handling system.

As corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) they said that PIBT has planted mangroves on 520 hectares of land against the target area of 500 hectares during the year 2012-14. The survival of the plant, during the period, was observed around 76 percent and monitoring is still being carried out time and again. More plantations are underway at different areas in collaboration with IUCN. A nursery of some 50 thousand plants has also been developed just outside the bulk coal dumping facility.