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Attn: News Editor/ Chief Reporter/ Assignment Editor /Business Page-in-Charge:

**Upkeep the Success of handling COVID19 for Long Term Benefits**

To disseminate and reemphasize the core health safety guidelines to prevent further spread of the disease and maintain trade and business activities of the economy following the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) and International Finance Corporation organized

a virtual workshop on Workplace Health Safety for Business Continuity with Inland Container Depot (ICD) during COVID-19 on March 7, 2021.

This initiative is supported by Bangladesh Investment Climate Fund II, which is implemented by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank Group and funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The objectives of the workshop were to sensitize concerned service providers and service takers to maintain health safety measures to run businesses even in the post-COVID stage to mitigate export losses.

In the beginning Ferdaus Ara Begum, CEO, BUILD welcomed the participants and informed that Inland Container Depot (ICD) contributed a lot for attaining revenue collection which is continuously increasing and the documentation processing time has also been reduced further. She reiterated that Bangladesh has been qualified as a developing country by the UN which has enhanced the country’s image while posing new challenges. In the coming days, we will have to run our businesses maintaining our health safety issues.

Saiyab Amal Ahmed, Consultant, International Finance Corporation (IFC) presented the key note and explained how IFC works closely with NBR in regard to preparing policies, health safety guidelines and implementation of favorable trade policies. In this respect he referred to the salient points of the WBG global guidance notes and acknowledged the role of NBR, ICD greatly.

Mr. Nazmul Hoque, Additional Commissioner, Dhaka Custom Inland Container Depot (ICD) appreciated and thanked IFC for supporting them in preparing health safety guidelines to tackle COVID situation. Because of continuing business while maintaining health safety guidelines during COVID19, revenue collection was almost uninterrupted. They have kept ICD operation open 24/7 days to support business & private sector.

He also mentioned a number of online measures such as e-payment, e-filling, e-auction, pre-arrival processing and automated risk-based management for keeping the revenue collection at a normal stage. He also informed that special fund for health and safety issues to protect customs officials was also announced. In course of discussion, he informed that by the 1st January, 2022, electronic payment will be fully operational.

Dr. Mohammad Abul Hasnat, International Public Health Specialist, emphasized on the decision making process and appreciated the role of the government for all time-bound policies to address the pandemic. It was apprehended that casualty will be much more in Bangladesh but it did not happen because of able leadership of the government, even vaccine availability of Bangladesh has been ensured much earlier than a number of developed countries. He informed the meeting that the impact of a virus may remain for 2-3 years to be contained fully, and thus we need to maintain all safety practices throughout 2021. In the “new normal”, everyone needs to adapt and carry out their activities while maintaining the safety protocols even after the introduction of the vaccine. Referring to Bangladesh Customs as one of the Frontiers, he said it needs to be recognized nationally.

Ivan Peterson, Consultant of IFC also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the importance of pre-arrival process, AEO widening, e-payment which as per his opinion will bring transformational change in the revenue collection system.

Sangeeta Bhattacherjee, Quarantine Entomologist (Export), Plant Quarantine Wing of Department of Agriculture informed that, because of the full-time services even in the COVID situation they have been able to issue 13,212 Phytosanitary Certificates and 22,507 Import permits which allowed them to earn 1.5 million Taka - a hallmark achievement of their services. They are trying to depend on automated service so that people can get their services from their home.

Mr. Sheikkh Naimul Haque, Divisional Engineer, Bangladesh Railway informed that they worked very closely in coordinated manner along with ICD so that health risk can be avoided

President, Shippers Council Mr. Md Rezaul Karim Informed that, because of the skill, honesty and sincerity of Komolapor ICD business loses has been reduced.

Mr. Hafizur Rahman Pulok, President, Courier Services Association of Bangladesh informed that they have provided free services, logistic and delivery throughout the whole COVID situation. They maintain guidelines of WHO, Health Ministry of Bangladesh and tried to keep employment of this sector intact. He recommended for Courier service included as a “service sector” in the industrial policy.

Ms. Tania Wahab, Managing Director of Karigor told that businesses have experienced growth after the coronavirus pandemic, since import of goods mostly from China was interrupted, especially the gift items, resulting in local demand growth, although local businesses were seriously affected in the beginning of COVID-19.

Having underscored the automation of all customs support, Rashedul Karim Munna, Director, DCCI acknowledged the role of ICD and other customs houses. He added that, in keeping with the 2041 goals to turn Bangladesh into a developed country, there is a need for extensive improvement of logistics and supply chain so that business can be done smoothly.

A number of business representatives and concerned officials from public and private sector were present to interact.

Sincerely



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