

Foreword from Chairman's Desk

From the Port Commission set up on the 17th of October in 1870 to the Kolkata Port Trust of today, being a precursor to the growth of a thriving megapolis, it has been a long and eventful journey of 134 years. What was described as “one of the best and most convenient ports out of Europe” by the Lt. Governor of Bengal in 1877, still retains its pre-eminence among the nation’s ports as is evident from its current performance, judged against any conventional yardsticks.

During the course of its long journey of 134 years, Kolkata Port, like the river Hugli, also had its fair share of vicissitudes, but it has also learnt to harness the adversities to its advantage.

There has been a phenomenal growth of traffic at Kolkata Port Trust in recent years. The port has registered the highest absolute increase in traffic amongst all Indian Major Ports for the last two consecutive years signifying increase of more than 10 million tonnes, with its share in the all India major ports’ traffic pie, also registering a rise. This is indeed a creditable feat considering that it is the only riverine port, competing with several other major sea ports of India. The number of vessels handled at Kolkata Port during 2003-2004 was also the highest among all Indian Major Ports.

The future plans of unleashing the hitherto untapped potentials of the deep drafted areas within the Port at Sandheads and Saugor,

and the strategy of developing the essentially riverine port into a major Inland Water Transport hub, are all pointers to the opening up of an ever widening expanse of growth and diversity for our port.

The future shines bright for KoPT, with large number of new business opportunities beckoning on the frontier. The 'Look East Policy' of the country, the proposed Trans-Asian Railway corridor, opening of India-China road and proximity to Lhasa will all contribute to making Kolkata the hub port for Asia.

On the occasion of its 134th anniversary, Kolkata Port Trust is also happy to join you all in saluting an exclusive icon of the city of Kolkata, in fact of the whole country - " Rabindra Setu"(better known as Howrah bridge) on its completing 60 years of services to the nation. This is a rare moment of pride and joy for Kolkata Port Trust and its engineers who have tirelessly contributed, since inception, towards building of the bridge and its quality maintenance over the years. A balanced cantilever with two spans at both ends, a rare architectural marvel, Rabindra Setu has become a totemic identity for the city of Kolkata . It has stoically borne the ravages of time and has stood as a mute structural wonder, transporting over a lakh of vehicles and innumerable pedestrians daily ,serving the twin cities of Kolkata and Howrah,

thus registering a record for itself as one of the busiest bridges in the world.

134 years, a mere speck of dust in the sands of time, is nevertheless, a long innings for any organization and particularly so, for a riverine port like Kolkata. Over such a long time horizon, one often tends to respond to the external stimuli in an expedient manner, bereft of long term perspective related to the emerging issues from the organization - environment interface and compulsions thereof. Time boundaries, in which the organization tends to relate its decisions, get short circuited, thereby adversely affecting the life of the organization itself in the long run. Being internal to and very part of the system, one is inexorably sucked into the vortex of myriad cross pulls and pressures and get overwhelmed by them. It is not always easy to identify dispassionately the fundamental issues and concerns that mark the making and evolution of an organization, from a mesh of curious happenstances that are often imposed by the quirks of time.

It is therefore important for every organization to undertake an occasional introspection, down the memory lane, as this helps it to rediscover itself and re-orient its objectives and missions, in keeping with the demands of changing times. Anniversary celebrations afford us with such an opportunity and it would only be at our own peril if we fail to seize it. Such occasions help us to look at our own selves from a distance, from without, as it were, even from a non-conventional stand point; letting the fresh air to sublimate our thoughts and understanding of the whole processes that characterize the organization's being and becoming.

It is with this object that we have initiated from this year the “KoPT Anniversary Lecture” to be delivered by eminent personalities from different walks of life. We hope to compile the series of lectures and publish them in an anthology which would serve as a lodestar for the future, apart from being an important referral material, for scholars and researchers alike.

We are immensely grateful to Prof. Dr. Sankar Sen, formerly Vice Chancellor, Jadavpur University and Minister-in-Charge, Power, Science and Technology, Non-Conventional Energy Sources, Government of West Bengal and an eminent educationist, who, despite an extremely busy schedule, has kindly consented to deliver the inaugural lecture this year, on an important theme:- ‘Healthy Oceans’.

We are also indebted to Prof. (Dr.) Satyesh Chakraborty, formerly Professor , Indian Institute Of Management, Calcutta and Director, Indian Institute of Port Management and an eminent scholar who has been gracious enough to deliver the keynote address on the theme ‘Story of a River Port’ .

A cross flow of ideas through discussions and debates spurred by some of our society’s finest minds is perhaps the best means to stay ahead of time, to weigh the current imponderables vis-à-vis the imperatives of tomorrow. We hope that the learned and incisive addresses of our speakers today would help glean our collective experience and responses, in the light of the new co-

ordinates of the *zeitgeist*, redeeming them into enduring lessons for the future.

Kolkata

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Trust

Dr. A. K. Chanda

Chairman,

Kolkata Port