



## 'We're trying to attract big container ships'

Chief of Cochin Port Trust on the way ahead

V SAJEEV KUMAR

The resurgence of Willingdon Island, once a thriving business hub of all port-related activities, has been on top of the agenda for the Cochin Port Trust ever since the migration of container terminal operations to the Vallarpadam Island in 2011.

But the establishment of the liquefied natural gas (LNG) Terminal in the nearby Puthuvypen Island in Kerala seems to have sharpened this focus, particularly with the completion of the Kochi-Mangaluru pipeline of GAIL.

The port will also be focusing on Willingdon Island to equip it for cruise tourism and setting up of captive berths (operated by companies for their in-house needs) as well as leasing out some berths based on the landlord development model with specific customers in mind, said M Beena, Chairperson, Cochin Port Trust.

The port management is pinning its hopes on Puthuvypen to create around it a new area of development for LNG-based ancillary units by leasing out land to industries to boost revenues, she added.

At the same time, the port trust is in the process of redesigning Willingdon Island by transforming it into a global vista for rest, rejuvenation and recreation by encashing Kerala's tourism potential. A proposal to prepare a master plan to transform the island into a sustainable global tourism destination is on the table, Beena told *BusinessLine*.

With the GAIL pipeline, the port would see a rise in the volume of gas consumed by industries in the region. This would facilitate the terminal to double its capacity, which, in turn, would bring more earnings to the port as well as the State, she added.

The port plans to lease 1.20 hectares in the SEZ for 30 years to investors for setting up, near the LNG terminal, a cryogenic warehouse which can use the cold energy released from the terminal during the re-gasification process.



Calling the shots M Beena

The cryogenic warehouse can be used for storage — both for domestic consumption and export — of fruits and vegetables, meat and marine products, pharmaceutical goods and so on.

The port trust is looking to set up logistics parks, port-based industrial parks and warehouses on 100 acres at the south end of Willingdon Island along NH 966 B. The facility can act as a hub for freight movement, enabling aggregation and distribution of goods.

With major container lines resorting to cooperation for covering global trade routes through the sharing of ships of varied sizes and draft requirements, the draft available at the International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT) at the port might not cater to all the ships of a particular service, which was a limitation, Beena pointed out.

"There is a good ecosystem in Colombo and they are more business-friendly. We have to address several issues before moving forward for trans-shipment of containers in a big way," she said.

The port recently attracted big vessels of container shipping lines MSC and Maersk Line on an ad hoc basis and has been trying to make it a regular service. Discussions are also in progress with other lines to call at Cochin, Beena added. "We are trying to attract big container ships to Cochin on regular services," she said.