

**Port Efficiency and Trade Competitiveness:An Analysis of Challenges in
Bangladesh's Major Seaports**

Internship Organization

Digitifyx

Prepared by

Sumaiya Ahmed

ID: 212011068

Supervised by

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman

Senior Lecturer

School of Business

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration



September,2025



Internship Report Approval Form

Student Name: Sumaiya Ahmed

ID No. 212011068

Major: Supply Chain Management Year: 2025

Mobile Phone: 01935059320

Email: sumaiya.ahmed2.bba@ulab.edu.bd

INTERNSHIP INFORMATION

Internship Organization: Digitifyx

Internship Report Topic: Port Efficiency and Trade Competitiveness: An Analysis of Challenges in Bangladesh's Major Seaports

Term (Tick one): ☐ Spring 2025 ☒ Summer 2025 ☐ Fall 2025

SUPERVISOR APPROVAL (Tick One)

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved ☐ Partial Re-write ☐ Full Re-write

Remarks (For Not Approved):

Name: Shawkat Tanveer Rahman

Date: 01/09/2025

Title: Senior Lecturer

E-mail: shawkat.rahman@ulab.edu.bd

Phone: 01621240000

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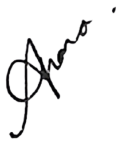
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Student ID: 212011068



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Letter of Transmittal

September,2025

Shawkat Tanveer Rahman,
Senior Lecturer ULAB School of Business (USB)
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)
Satmasjid Road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209

Subject: Submission of Project Report on “ “Port Efficiency and Trade Competitiveness:An Analysis of Challenges in Bangladesh’s Major Seaports”

Dear Sir,

With due respect, I would like to inform you that I have completed my Project on Bangladesh Port Capacity and Challenges. The project report paper titled “Port Efficiency and Trade Competitiveness:An Analysis of Challenges in Bangladesh’s Major Seaports” has been prepared for the fulfillment of my Project according to the prerequisites of my undergraduate program, Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) in the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). In this report, I have tried my best to compile the concepts that I have learned in my Bachelor of Business Administration, along with some experience gathered from the internet to take relevant information regarding the Project. I hope that it will find your acknowledgement. I am looking forward to your valuable feedback.

Sincerely,

Sumaiya Ahmed
ID: 212011068
Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA); Concentration: Supply Chain Management
ULAB School of Business (USB)
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB)

Acknowledgement

I would like to address certain people with due honor and respect who assisted me not only in solving the challenge and completing my project paper but also in introducing me to this new situation without any trouble. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude to them. I am grateful to Almighty Allah for providing us with the patience and courage to complete this challenging task, within its deadline.

I am grateful to my supervisor, Shawkat Tanveer Rahman (Senior Lecturer, ULAB), for his advice and encouragement. He patiently provided valuable suggestions, motivation, and thoughtful assistance throughout my report submission process.

My successful study would not have been possible without his support and diligent efforts.

I am grateful for the internet's ability to facilitate knowledge sharing and success in every domain. I collected all the necessary data and documents for this report using the internet and Google.

Lastly, I am deeply thankful to my family and friends for their unwavering love, support, and encouragement. Their faith in me, particularly my husband's constant encouragement throughout my undergraduate years at ULAB, has served as a guiding light. Despite my limited experience, I attempted to write a compelling and insightful project report that was infused with genuine understanding. Their unwavering support has truly been the foundation of my journey and achievements.

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List of Abbreviations

LDC – Least Developed Country

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

AI – Artificial Intelligence

ICT – Information and Communication Technology

TIS – Technology and Information Systems

MLO – Main Line Operator

BRD – Business Requirement Document

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

Matarbari Port – Matarbari Deep-Sea Port

ICD – Inland Container Depot

CFS – Container Freight Station

TEU – Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit

PPP – Public-Private Partnership

RMG – Ready-Made Garments

TFA – Trade Facilitation Agreement

Chapter 1: Internship Preparation

1.1 Motivation and What I Expect to Learn from This Internship

As a BBA student majoring in Supply Chain Management at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, I recognize the importance of complementing academic knowledge with hands-on experience. My primary motivation for joining the internship at Digitifyx, a software-based startup founded in 2021 and located in Mohammadpur, is to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application. Digitifyx specializes in providing digital solutions, including web and mobile app development, for small and medium-sized businesses—an environment where innovation, agility, and collaboration are key.

As a Business Analyst Intern, I assist in analyzing clients' needs and help translate them into functional digital solutions. This role allows me to observe how technology and data play a vital role in business decision-making—an area that closely intersects with supply chain management. I am particularly interested in learning how agile methodologies are applied in real-world settings, how project progress is monitored through dashboards, and how tools like Power BI and Excel are utilized for data analysis and reporting.

Another motivation for joining this internship is to improve my professional and communication skills. Being part of a dynamic team requires effective interaction with developers, clients, and project managers. This experience helps me build confidence, understand workplace culture, and develop soft skills such as time management, adaptability, and teamwork—skills that are essential in any supply chain or business role.

Furthermore, this internship will give me valuable insight into the kind of career I might pursue after graduation. By working closely with professionals in a tech-driven environment, I can explore how digital transformation is shaping modern businesses, including supply chain operations. This exposure will help me better define my career goals and choose a path that aligns with both my interests and strengths.

1.2 Internship Search Process

Finding the right internship was an important part of my academic journey as a BBA (Supply Chain Management). I knew the importance of gaining real-world experience before graduation. I started my internship search with a clear goal: to find an organization where I could apply my academic knowledge, develop relevant skills, and gain exposure to the practical aspects of business operations. I was particularly interested in companies that work in fast-paced and dynamic environments, such as startups, because I believed they would offer a broader learning experience.

I began my search by exploring various job platforms, university career resources, and LinkedIn. I also spoke with seniors, faculty members, and friends to get recommendations. During my search, I came across Digitifyx, a software-based startup located in Mohammadpur. I was immediately interested because of its focus on digital solutions like web and mobile app development for small and medium businesses. After reviewing the company's profile, I realized that their work involved areas where technology and business analysis intersect—fields that are increasingly important in supply chain and business management.

I applied for the Business Analyst Intern position, as it matched both my academic background and my interest in understanding business needs, analyzing data, and supporting strategic decisions. After going through their selection process, I was thrilled to receive the opportunity to join their team. The internship at Digitifyx has proven to be a great platform for learning, and I am grateful that my search process led me to a role that is both relevant and engaging.

1.3 Internship Interview Experience

My interview experience with Digitifyx was both insightful and encouraging. After submitting my application for the Business Analyst Intern position, I was contacted by the company for an initial interview. As this was my first professional interview experience in the tech industry, I prepared by researching the company, understanding its services, and reviewing key concepts related to business analysis, data interpretation, and agile methodologies.

The interview was conducted virtually and was led by a member of the HR and project management team. The atmosphere was friendly and professional, which helped ease my initial nervousness. I was asked about my academic background, particularly my major in Supply Chain Management, and how it relates to business analysis and digital transformation. I was also asked situational questions to assess my communication skills, problem-solving ability, and how I handle teamwork and deadlines.

One part of the interview focused on my familiarity with tools like Microsoft Excel and Power BI, as these are commonly used at Digitifyx for data analysis and dashboard reporting. While I

had basic experience with these tools, I made it clear that I was eager to learn more and develop my skills further during the internship.

Overall, the interview felt more like a conversation than a formal evaluation. The interviewers were open about the company's expectations, work culture, and learning opportunities. I appreciated their interest in my willingness to learn and adapt, especially since Digitifyx is a fast-growing startup environment.

Being selected for the internship after this process was a proud moment for me, and it gave me the confidence that I could contribute meaningfully while continuing to grow professionally.

1.4 About the Organization

Digitifyx is a software-based startup company founded in 2021 and located in Mohammadpur, Dhaka. The company specializes in delivering digital solutions to small and medium-sized businesses, focusing primarily on web development, mobile app development, and custom software solutions. As a startup, Digitifyx operates in a fast-paced and innovation-driven environment, aiming to help businesses grow through digital transformation.

The organization follows the Agile methodology, which emphasizes collaboration, flexibility, and continuous improvement. Teams work in sprints to ensure timely and efficient project delivery. Digitifyx also uses modern tools like Power BI and Microsoft Excel to analyze data, monitor project progress, and maintain performance dashboards. These tools help both internal teams and clients track development metrics and make informed decisions.

Despite being a young company, Digitifyx has built a strong reputation for its client-focused approach and ability to provide tailored tech solutions. The startup culture encourages learning, creativity, and problem-solving, making it an excellent place for interns and young professionals to gain hands-on experience in both technology and business analysis. As a Business Analyst Intern, I have had the opportunity to observe and contribute to the organization's client engagement process, requirement gathering, and digital solution design. This experience is helping me understand how a tech-driven company operates and how digital tools can support efficient business processes.

1.4.1 Mission

The mission of Digitifyx is to empower small and medium-sized businesses through innovative and customized digital solutions. The company aims to bridge the gap between technology and business by delivering high-quality web and mobile applications that enhance productivity, improve customer engagement, and support sustainable growth. Digitifyx is committed to using

modern technologies and agile practices to help clients stay competitive in an increasingly digital world.

1.4.2 Vision

Digitifyx envisions becoming a leading provider of digital transformation services for small and medium enterprises, both locally and globally. The company aspires to create a future where every business, regardless of its size, has access to reliable, scalable, and user-friendly digital tools that drive innovation and long-term success.

1.4.3 Commitments

Digitifyx is committed to:

- **Client-Centered Solutions:** Understanding each client's unique needs and delivering personalized digital products.
- **Innovation and Quality:** Continuously improving through research, feedback, and the use of the latest technologies.
- **Transparency and Integrity:** Building trust through honest communication, ethical practices, and reliable service.
- **Team Collaboration:** Promoting a collaborative, agile work environment where creativity, learning, and growth are encouraged.
- **Sustainable Impact:** Supporting digital inclusion and helping businesses build sustainable and future-ready operations.

Chapter 2: About the Internship

2.1 Activities of the Department

At Digitifyx, I was placed in the Business Analysis and Product Development department. This department plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between client needs and the technical development team. It is responsible for understanding client requirements, translating them into technical documentation, and ensuring that the final product aligns with business goals.

During my internship, I had the opportunity to observe and assist in various key activities of the department, including:

- **Requirement Gathering:**

One of the core responsibilities of the department is to gather detailed information from clients about their business needs. This involves attending client meetings, conducting interviews, and preparing requirement documentation.

- **Business Process Analysis:**

The team analyzes existing business processes and identifies areas where digital solutions can improve efficiency. I assisted in documenting workflows and business models to support development planning.

- **Project Documentation:**

I helped prepare documents such as Business Requirement Documents (BRDs), user stories, and feature lists. These documents serve as a guide for the development team to ensure clarity and accuracy in project execution.

- **Client Communication:**

The department maintains ongoing communication with clients to clarify doubts, present prototypes, and get feedback. I occasionally participated in these discussions to better understand the client's perspective.

- **Dashboard and Data Analysis:**

The department uses tools like Power BI and Microsoft Excel to track project progress, generate reports, and support data-driven decisions. I was trained on how to interpret dashboards and assist in basic data analysis tasks.

- **Agile Methodology Implementation:**

The team follows an agile development process, working in sprints and conducting regular stand-up meetings. I had the chance to attend sprint planning sessions and sprint reviews to understand how tasks are prioritized and tracked.

These activities gave me a practical understanding of how business analysis supports software development and ensures that client expectations are met efficiently. I also learned the importance of clear communication, teamwork, and detailed documentation in delivering successful digital projects.

2.2 Work Environment

The work environment at Digitifyx is dynamic, collaborative, and innovation-driven, reflecting the spirit of a modern tech startup. As a relatively young company, Digitifyx maintains a flat organizational structure where open communication and teamwork are highly encouraged. This environment helped me feel comfortable as an intern and motivated me to contribute actively from the very beginning.

The office is located in Mohammadpur, and although the team is small, it is composed of passionate professionals from diverse backgrounds—including developers, designers, project managers, and business analysts. Everyone works closely together, creating a culture of mutual respect and learning. Team members are approachable and willing to share their knowledge, which made it easy for me to ask questions and seek guidance whenever needed.

One of the key characteristics of the work culture is the use of Agile methodology. Regular team meetings, sprint planning sessions, and daily stand-ups keep everyone aligned with their tasks and project goals. The use of collaboration tools and dashboards to track project progress promotes transparency and accountability across all departments.

Flexibility is another positive aspect of the work environment. Digitifyx supports a results-oriented culture, allowing team members to manage their time efficiently while ensuring that deadlines and quality standards are met. The management also fosters a learning atmosphere by encouraging interns and employees to explore new tools and technologies

Overall, the work environment at Digitifyx is both supportive and challenging. It gave me the opportunity to grow professionally, enhance my communication skills, and adapt to a fast-paced, tech-oriented setting. This experience has helped me understand the importance of teamwork, time management, and adaptability in achieving both individual and organizational goals.

2.3 Duties and Responsibilities as an Intern

As a Business Analyst Intern at Digitifyx, I was entrusted with several important tasks that contributed to the company's project development process. My role involved working closely with the Business Analysis and Product Development team to assist in understanding client requirements and supporting the creation of digital solutions. Some of my key duties and responsibilities included:

Assisting in Requirement Gathering: I participated in meetings with clients and internal teams to understand business needs. I helped take notes, ask clarifying questions, and summarize the requirements for documentation purposes.

Preparing Documentation: I supported the preparation of various documents such as Business Requirement Documents (BRDs), user stories, feature descriptions, and flowcharts. These documents served as a communication bridge between the clients and the development team.

Analyzing Business Processes: I was involved in reviewing and analyzing clients' existing business operations to identify gaps and areas that could be improved through digital solutions.

Supporting Dashboard Monitoring: Using tools like Power BI and Microsoft Excel, I assisted in tracking the progress of ongoing projects, helping the team visualize data and identify bottlenecks.

Participating in Agile Activities: I attended sprint planning meetings, daily stand-ups, and sprint review sessions. I observed how tasks were assigned, tracked, and reviewed, gaining hands-on experience in Agile project management.

Client Communication Support: On some occasions, I drafted emails, prepared presentations, and helped summarize client feedback for the internal team to implement necessary changes.

Learning New Tools and Techniques: I took the initiative to learn about different digital tools and project management techniques used by the company to improve my technical knowledge and efficiency.

These responsibilities gave me valuable exposure to real-world business operations, strengthened my analytical and communication skills, and deepened my understanding of how business analysis supports successful software development

Chapter 3: Self-Reflection

3.1 Feedback on Internship

My internship at Digitifyx was an incredibly valuable and enriching experience. It was my first time working in a tech-based environment, and I gained hands-on knowledge and skills that were far beyond what I could have learned through classroom lectures. Overall, I would describe my internship experience as highly positive.

The internship allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. As a Business Analyst Intern, I had the opportunity to assist in requirement gathering, business process analysis, and project documentation. Before joining Digitifyx, I had limited experience in understanding how businesses apply technology to solve real-world problems. However, through working with the team, I gained a solid understanding of how digital solutions are designed, developed, and implemented.

The work environment at Digitifyx was dynamic and collaborative. The team was very welcoming and treated me as part of the group from the very beginning. The project managers, developers, and business analysts explained their roles to me and gave me small but meaningful tasks that allowed me to learn through hands-on involvement. I appreciated their approach, which always made me feel included and encouraged me to ask questions when needed. A key area of growth was in improving my communication skills. I was responsible for assisting in client meetings, helping to prepare Business Requirement Documents (BRDs), and interacting with the team to ensure smooth communication between clients and developers. Initially, I was nervous about interacting with clients, but over time, I gained the confidence to communicate effectively and explain processes clearly and professionally. Another significant takeaway from this internship was learning time management. In the fast-paced startup environment of Digitifyx, deadlines were often tight, and multiple tasks needed to be managed simultaneously. This experience taught me the importance of staying organized, prioritizing tasks, and working efficiently to meet deadlines without compromising quality. Additionally, I learned important professional skills such as maintaining a professional attitude, working as part of a team, and following organizational rules. These soft skills are critical in any work setting, and I am confident they will be valuable in my future career.

If I had one suggestion for improving the internship experience, it would be to provide a more structured onboarding process. Although I was able to learn on the job, a brief training session at the start would have helped me better understand the company's systems, tools, and processes, making the transition smoother and increasing my confidence early on.

3.2 How I Could Do Better and How the Organization Could Utilize Me Better

While my internship at Digitifyx was a valuable and productive experience, there are areas where I believe both I and the organization could have improved to make the experience even more beneficial.

3.2.1 How I Could Do Better:

As an intern, I was eager to learn and contribute, but I realized there were times when I could have been more proactive in taking the initiative. While I completed assigned tasks responsibly, I now understand the importance of going beyond expectations by suggesting ideas, asking for additional responsibilities, and seeking feedback more frequently. Additionally, improving my technical skills—especially in tools like Power BI and Excel—before starting the internship could have helped me contribute more efficiently from the beginning. I also believe I can improve my time management and multitasking abilities to handle overlapping tasks more effectively in future roles.

3.2.2 How the Organization Could Utilize Me Better:

Digitifyx provided a supportive environment and assigned me relevant tasks, but there were some opportunities where my skills could have been used more strategically. For example, involving me more directly in client-facing activities or user testing processes would have given me deeper insights into product delivery and customer expectations. I also feel that assigning a mentor or conducting weekly feedback sessions would have helped me better track my progress and identify areas for development in real-time. Furthermore, giving interns ownership of a small project or allowing them to present their work at the end of the internship could enhance both our learning and contribution to the organization.

Overall, this internship has taught me the importance of self-initiative and open communication. With more structured guidance and active engagement from both sides, I believe my potential could have been utilized even more effectively.

3.3 Recommendations

Based on my experience as a Business Analyst Intern at Digitifyx, I would like to offer a few recommendations that may help enhance the internship program and contribute to the overall growth and effectiveness of the organization.

3.3.1 Functional Improvement

- **Structured Onboarding Process:**

A more detailed onboarding process at the beginning of the internship could help new interns better understand company tools, workflows, and expectations. Providing a short

orientation session or a digital guidebook would be very helpful.

- **Defined Learning Objectives:**

Setting clear learning goals for interns and aligning them with project tasks can increase engagement and allow interns to track their progress more effectively. This also ensures that both the intern and the organization benefit equally.

- **Mentorship System:**

Assigning a mentor or supervisor to each intern can significantly enhance the learning experience. Regular check-ins and feedback sessions would help interns understand their strengths, areas for improvement, and how they can contribute more effectively.

- **Greater Involvement in Projects:**

Allowing interns to participate in a broader range of project phases—including testing, client interaction, and review—would give them a more complete understanding of business processes and improve their skillset.

3.3.2 Wellness Plans

- **Work-Life Balance Encouragement:**

Although startup environments are fast-paced, encouraging interns and employees to maintain a healthy work-life balance is important. Promoting realistic work hours and discouraging unnecessary overtime can boost long-term productivity and well-being.

- **Team-Building Activities:**

Organizing occasional virtual or in-person team-building sessions, games, or casual meetups can improve team bonding and reduce workplace stress, especially in small, collaborative environments like Digitifyx.

- **Mental Health Awareness:**

Even small initiatives like sharing mental health resources, inviting a guest speaker for a short session, or simply creating an open space to discuss stress management could contribute to a more positive and supportive work culture.

- **Wellness Check-Ins:**

Implementing short, optional wellness check-ins or surveys can help the organization understand how interns and employees are feeling and whether they need support in any particular area\

Chapter 4: Personal Development Plan

4.1 Career Plan and My Next Step

My internship experience at Digitifyx has played a significant role in shaping my career goals and plans. As a BBA student majoring in Supply Chain Management at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, I have always been interested in how businesses operate efficiently and deliver value through optimized systems, data-driven decisions, and effective technology use. This internship gave me practical exposure to how digital tools and analytical thinking contribute to real business solutions, especially in dynamic and tech-driven environments.

After completing my undergraduate studies, my short-term goal is to gain further experience through entry-level roles in areas such as business analysis, supply chain coordination, or data analytics. I aim to work in organizations where I can apply my academic background, improve my technical skills (particularly in tools like Power BI, Excel, and ERP systems), and learn from experienced professionals.

In the medium to long term, I plan to pursue a master's degree or professional certifications related to Supply Chain Management, Business Analytics, or Project Management (e.g., CSCP, PMP, or CBAP). These qualifications will not only enhance my knowledge but also improve my career prospects in both local and international markets.

My ultimate goal is to work in a role that combines technology, analytics, and supply chain strategy—possibly as a Business Analyst, Supply Chain Analyst, or Operations Manager in a multinational company or a growing tech-enabled enterprise. I also have an interest in entrepreneurship and hope to explore how digital platforms can improve logistics and supply chain systems for small businesses in Bangladesh.

To achieve these goals, I plan to:

- ❖ Continue learning relevant tools and software (Power BI, Tableau, ERP systems).
- ❖ Improve my communication, leadership, and project management skills.
- ❖ Attend workshops, webinars, and industry events to stay updated.
- ❖ Build a strong professional network through LinkedIn and local industry forums.

This internship has given me the confidence and clarity to move forward with a defined path. My next step is to apply for full-time roles or advanced internship programs that align with my career goals and allow me to continue developing both professionally and personally.

4.2 Technical and Interpersonal Skills I Want to Develop

During my internship at Digitifyx, I became more aware of the key skills required to succeed in a professional business environment. As I move forward in my academic and career journey, I am determined to strengthen both my technical and interpersonal skills to become more efficient and adaptable in the workplace.

On the technical side, I want to improve my proficiency in tools like Microsoft Excel and Power BI by learning advanced data analysis functions, dashboard creation, and reporting techniques. These skills are particularly useful in business analysis and supply chain-related roles, where data-driven decisions are crucial. I also want to become more familiar with project management which are commonly used in agile and collaborative work environments like Digitifyx.

On the interpersonal side, I aim to develop stronger communication skills, both verbal and written, so that I can express ideas clearly, share feedback professionally, and communicate confidently with clients and team members. I also want to enhance my problem-solving and critical thinking abilities to approach challenges with a logical and analytical mindset. Furthermore, improving my time management and prioritization skills will help me handle multiple responsibilities efficiently, especially in fast-paced work settings. Finally, I hope to grow as a team player and future leader by strengthening my ability to collaborate, listen actively, and contribute positively to group projects while building leadership skills over time.

4.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, my internship experience at Digitifyx has been an incredibly valuable part of my academic and personal development journey. As a BBA student majoring in Supply Chain Management, this opportunity allowed me to step outside the classroom and gain hands-on exposure to how a technology-driven organization operates in the real world. Working as a Business Analyst Intern helped me understand the importance of business communication, data analysis, project coordination, and the role of digital solutions in modern business practices. Throughout the internship, I developed new skills, strengthened existing ones, and gained a clearer understanding of my career goals. I also learned how to work in a team, meet deadlines, and adapt to a fast-paced and agile work environment. The guidance and support I received from my colleagues and supervisors at Digitifyx played a major role in making this experience meaningful and rewarding. This internship has given me the confidence to move forward in my career with a more focused vision. It has reinforced my interest in pursuing roles related to business analysis, supply chain optimization, and digital transformation. I am grateful for the experience and excited to apply what I've learned as I continue my academic and professional journey.

**PART B: Port Efficiency and Trade
Competitiveness: An Analysis of Challenges
in Bangladesh's Major Seaport**

Executive Summary

Bangladesh's economic growth, driven largely by the ready-made garments (RMG) sector, relies heavily on its major seaports—Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra—which handle over 90% of the country's international trade. Despite their strategic importance, these ports face critical challenges that undermine efficiency and competitiveness. Chattogram suffers from limited berths, shallow drafts, yard congestion, and dependence on feeder services, while Mongla remains underutilized due to siltation and poor connectivity, and Payra's development is slowed by incomplete hinterland links. Operational inefficiencies—including long container dwell times, low crane productivity, manual customs processes, and trucking delays—further constrain trade. Governance and institutional issues, such as dual roles of port authorities, fragmented agencies, union influence, and limited private sector participation, exacerbate these problems. Consequently, logistics costs in Bangladesh remain high (~15–16% of GDP), reducing export competitiveness compared to regional peers like Vietnam and Sri Lanka. To address these challenges, the study recommends deepening channels, expanding berths, improving hinterland connectivity, adopting digital and automated cargo handling systems, streamlining customs, strengthening governance through a landlord port model and inter-agency coordination, and investing in workforce skills and environmentally resilient infrastructure. Implementation of these measures can transform Bangladesh's ports into efficient, competitive gateways, lowering logistics costs, reducing delays, supporting sustained growth in the RMG sector, and enabling export diversification into higher-value industries, thereby securing Bangladesh's position in regional and global trade.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Bangladesh's economic growth trajectory over the last three decades has been remarkable, driven primarily by its export-oriented industrial base. The country has become the second-largest exporter of ready-made garments (RMG) globally, and its export growth has created unprecedented demand for efficient logistics and port services (World Bank, 2020). Seaports, particularly Chattogram, Mongla, and the developing Payra Port, are therefore the backbone of Bangladesh's trade network, handling over 90% of international trade volumes. Without well-functioning ports, Bangladesh's integration into global value chains would be significantly undermined, jeopardizing its ambition to achieve middle-income status by 2031 and developed economy status by 2041 (UNCTAD, 2022).

Despite this importance, Bangladesh's ports have long struggled with systemic inefficiencies. Chattogram Port, for example, operates at near-saturation capacity, suffering from yard congestion, inadequate container handling equipment, and long vessel turnaround times. Average container dwell times stand at 11 days for imports and 4 days for exports, far above global benchmarks of 3–5 days (Herrera Dappe et al., 2020). Such inefficiencies increase logistics costs, which in Bangladesh are estimated to account for more than 15% of GDP, compared to 8–10% in more efficient economies such as Vietnam or Malaysia (ADB, 2019). These inefficiencies erode the competitiveness of Bangladesh's exports, especially in time-sensitive industries like garments, where buyers demand quick turnaround times and reliability.

The rationale for this research stems from the recognition that improving port performance is not simply a matter of enhancing infrastructure—it is a strategic requirement for national development. Efficient ports will reduce costs, increase reliability, and facilitate export diversification beyond garments to pharmaceuticals, leather, light engineering, and agrifood sectors (Rahman, 2022). Moreover, addressing inefficiencies in governance and intermodal connectivity can unlock broader economic benefits, such as decongested urban roads, reduced emissions, and more balanced regional development. Hence, this study is necessary to systematically identify the challenges in Bangladesh's ports and recommend corrective measures for sustainable economic growth.

1.2 Research Question

The guiding research question for this study is: *What challenges exist in the major ports of Bangladesh?*

This broad inquiry is supported by the following sub-questions:

- A. What infrastructural and operational inefficiencies constrain the performance of Bangladesh's major ports?
- B. What role do logistics costs and congestion play in undermining trade competitiveness?
- C. What corrective measures and reforms can address these persistent challenges?

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyze and explain the challenges faced by Bangladesh's major ports and evaluate their implications for trade and economic growth. Specifically, the study aims to:

- A. Examine infrastructural and capacity constraints that affect port performance in Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra.
- B. Assess operational inefficiencies, including dwell times, cargo handling delays, and inadequate use of technology.
- C. Evaluate the broader impact of port inefficiencies on logistics costs, competitiveness, and integration into global value chains.
- D. Provide recommendations to improve port efficiency, with emphasis on policy, governance, and operational reforms.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is deliberately narrow to ensure depth of analysis. It focuses exclusively on Bangladesh's three principal seaports—Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra. These ports are the country's primary gateways for international trade, handling more than 95% of seaborne cargo. The study does not examine land ports, inland water transport terminals, or airports, except where these intersect directly with seaport operations (e.g., in container evacuation).

Chapter Two : Literature Review

2.1 Infrastructural Challenges

Bangladesh's major seaports face significant infrastructural bottlenecks that undermine their efficiency and competitiveness. Chattogram Port, the largest in the country, handles about 90% of Bangladesh's trade but suffers from severe capacity constraints. The port has a limited number of berths relative to demand, restricted yard space, and inadequate container handling equipment. The port's channel depth is limited to about 9.5 meters, preventing larger vessels such as post-Panamax or new-generation container ships from calling directly (World Bank, 2020). Instead, most Bangladeshi trade must be transshipped via regional hubs like Colombo, Singapore, or Klang, adding both time and cost. This reliance on feeder services creates structural inefficiencies that Bangladesh cannot resolve without significant investment in dredging and port deepening.

Mongla Port, despite being the second-largest in Bangladesh, remains underutilized. Located on the Pasur River, it suffers from siltation, which restricts vessel sizes and requires constant dredging to maintain navigability (ADB, 2019). Its hinterland connectivity is weak, with road and rail links to Dhaka being inadequate for handling high cargo volumes. Consequently, industries and exporters often prefer Chattogram despite its congestion, perpetuating a cycle of over-reliance on one port and underuse of another.

Payra Port, inaugurated in 2016, is designed to become Bangladesh's third maritime gateway. Strategically located in Patuakhali District, Payra is envisioned as a deep-sea port capable of accommodating larger vessels. However, progress in infrastructure development has been slow, and its hinterland connections remain incomplete. Without strong road, rail, and inland waterway links, Payra cannot effectively relieve pressure from Chattogram (Rahman and Saha, 2023).

Infrastructural deficiencies are not merely technical challenges but have broader implications for trade. Limited berthing capacity and shallow drafts increase vessel waiting times and costs, which are ultimately passed on to exporters and importers. In comparison, ports in Vietnam and Sri Lanka have invested heavily in deep-sea capabilities, positioning themselves as regional transshipment hubs (UNCTAD, 2022). Unless Bangladesh addresses its infrastructural bottlenecks, it risks losing competitiveness to these neighbors.

2.2 Operational Inefficiencies

Operational inefficiencies are among the most pressing challenges at Bangladesh's seaports. These inefficiencies stem from outdated handling practices, congestion in container yards, and lengthy customs clearance processes. At Chattogram Port, container dwell times are much higher

than international benchmarks—averaging 11 days for imports and 4 days for exports compared to 3–5 days at well-managed ports in East Asia (Herrera Dappe et al., 2020). Such prolonged dwell times occur due to congestion, limited use of off-dock container depots, and firms using the port as a storage facility rather than evacuating cargo promptly.

Crane productivity is another major challenge. Chattogram’s gantry cranes achieve only 8–12 moves per hour, whereas international best practices exceed 20–25 moves per hour (Rahman, 2022). This low performance results from equipment shortages, inadequate maintenance, and limited workforce training. Moreover, yard operations are often managed manually, creating inefficiencies in container tracking and movement. Unlike ports in Singapore or Malaysia, which use automated container management systems, Bangladesh continues to rely heavily on paper-based processes.

Customs clearance is also characterized by procedural inefficiency and unpredictability. Although initiatives such as the National Single Window are under development, many clearance steps remain manual, requiring physical submission of documents and multiple interactions with officials. Such processes not only delay clearance but also create opportunities for informal payments (Holguín-Veras et al., 2021).

In addition, trucking inefficiencies exacerbate delays. Trucks often face long waiting times outside port gates due to limited entry lanes and poorly managed scheduling systems. The dominance of trucking unions also means that freight rates are not fully competitive, adding further to costs. Altogether, these operational inefficiencies significantly reduce the reliability of Bangladeshi ports, discouraging time-sensitive industries and limiting the country’s attractiveness to global buyers.

2.3 Governance and Institutional Constraints

Governance and institutional inefficiencies are among the most complex challenges facing Bangladeshi ports. Unlike many modern ports that operate under a landlord port model, where private operators manage terminals under concession agreements, Bangladesh’s ports are largely run by port authorities that combine both regulatory and operational functions (Mustafizur Rahman et al., 2023). This structure creates inefficiencies and conflicts of interest, as the same institutions responsible for oversight are also directly involved in cargo handling operations.

Decision-making is fragmented across multiple agencies, including the Ministry of Shipping, port authorities, customs, road and rail regulators, and the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority. This institutional fragmentation makes coordination difficult and slows reform implementation. For example, customs regulations currently allow only 37 commodities to be cleared outside Chattogram Port, restricting the role of inland container depots (ICDs) and

forcing most cargo to be processed at the port itself (World Bank, 2020). Such restrictions increase congestion and undermine efforts to develop intermodal systems.

Furthermore, trucking unions and freight brokers exert considerable influence over logistics operations, often resulting in non-transparent pricing and artificial shortages (ADB, 2019). These vested interests resist reforms that might undermine their control, creating political economy barriers to efficiency improvements. In contrast, countries like India have created high-level logistics coordination authorities to harmonize policies across modes and actors, a model Bangladesh has yet to replicate.

Institutional weaknesses also discourage private sector participation in port operations. While international terminal operators have shown interest in Bangladeshi ports, the absence of a clear legal and regulatory framework for concessions reduces investor confidence (Holguín-Veras et al., 2021). Without governance reform, Bangladesh will find it difficult to attract the private capital and expertise required for modernization.

2.4 Competitiveness and Regional Perspective

In terms of logistics performance, Bangladesh lags behind regional competitors such as India, Vietnam, and Sri Lanka. On the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI), Bangladesh scores lower on customs, infrastructure, and timeliness, reflecting systemic inefficiencies (World Bank, 2020). This comparative disadvantage undermines its competitiveness in global markets, particularly in industries like fast fashion, where speed and reliability are crucial.

Vietnam, for instance, has invested heavily in port automation and deepwater facilities, making its ports well-integrated into global supply chains. Sri Lanka's Colombo Port has positioned itself as a transshipment hub, serving not only domestic trade but also regional cargo. By contrast, Bangladesh's over-reliance on Chattogram, coupled with long dwell times and feeder dependency, creates higher costs for exporters (Saha and Rahman, 2023).

These inefficiencies have tangible economic implications. Higher logistics costs—estimated at 15–16% of GDP in Bangladesh versus 8–10% in more efficient economies—reduce margins for exporters and discourage investment in non-traditional exports such as agro-processing or light engineering (ADB, 2019). Moreover, unreliable port services reduce Bangladesh's ability to respond quickly to shifts in global demand, weakening its position in just-in-time supply chains.

Regional comparisons thus underscore the urgency of reform. Without significant improvements, Bangladesh risks losing its garment export edge to competitors like Vietnam, which already benefits from faster port clearance and better global connectivity (UNCTAD, 2022). Port reform is therefore not only a logistical issue but a strategic necessity for sustaining Bangladesh's growth model.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Types of Research

This study adopts a qualitative research design. Unlike quantitative methods that rely on statistical models and numerical data, qualitative approaches are better suited for exploring complex, multifaceted challenges such as those facing Bangladesh's ports. Port performance is shaped not only by physical capacity but also by governance, institutional arrangements, and policy frameworks—all of which require interpretive analysis (Creswell, 2018).

The research uses secondary data sources including academic articles, policy reports, and government publications. By synthesizing these diverse materials, the study builds a comprehensive picture of the challenges facing major ports and the systemic issues underpinning them.

3.2 Content Analysis

The methodology is grounded in content analysis, which systematically reviews documents to identify recurring themes, trends, and relationships. Sources reviewed include:

- World Bank's comprehensive diagnostic (*Moving Forward: Connectivity and Logistics to Sustain Bangladesh's Success*) (2020).
- Academic journals such as *Maritime Technology and Research* and the *Journal of Maritime Research*, etc.
- Policy reports from ADB and UNCTAD etc.

Content analysis allows the researcher to go beyond descriptive accounts of port inefficiencies and identify deeper structural issues such as governance fragmentation and policy misalignment (Krippendorff, 2019).

3.3 Thematic Analysis

To organize findings, the study employs thematic analysis, which clusters evidence into coherent categories. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model, data was coded into four thematic areas:

1. Infrastructural Limitations – shortage of berths, shallow drafts, inadequate cranes.
2. Operational Inefficiencies – congestion, long dwell times, lack of automation.
3. Competitiveness and Global Integration – impact on trade costs and supply chain performance

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings: A Thematic Breakdown of Challenges in Bangladesh's Major Ports

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, organized around four interconnected themes: infrastructural limitations, operational inefficiencies, governance and institutional constraints, and competitiveness with regional positioning. The analysis draws on secondary sources, including international organizations, academic research, and sectoral studies, to highlight the bottlenecks in Bangladesh's port system.

The findings indicate that while Bangladesh's ports, particularly Chattogram, remain central to the country's trade flows, they suffer from congestion, limited infrastructure, outdated operational practices, and governance challenges. These weaknesses not only raise logistics costs but also reduce the competitiveness of Bangladeshi exports in comparison to regional peers such as Vietnam and Sri Lanka. The following sections explore each theme in detail, supported by evidence and comparative insights.

4.2 Overview of Constraints in Bangladesh's Port Sector

1. Infrastructural Limitations

Bangladesh's major ports face significant physical constraints that restrict efficiency. Chattogram Port, which handles more than 90% of trade, suffers from limited container berths and a shallow channel depth of about 9.5 meters. This prevents the entry of large container vessels, forcing reliance on feeder services through Colombo, Singapore, or Klang. The result is higher freight costs and longer shipping times compared to countries such as Vietnam, which has deep-sea access (World Bank, 2020; UNCTAD, 2022).

In addition, container yard congestion is a recurring issue at Chattogram. Inland Container Depots (ICDs) were introduced to ease pressure, but restrictive customs regulations allow only certain goods to be cleared off-dock, limiting their utility (ADB, 2019).

Meanwhile, Mongla Port remains underutilized due to costly dredging needs and poor connectivity with Dhaka (Rahman & Saha, 2023). Payra Port, despite being inaugurated as a deep-sea facility in 2016, has yet to attract significant cargo due to weak hinterland connections and slow infrastructure development (Mustafizur Rahman et al., 2023).

2. Operational Inefficiencies

Operational challenges are highly visible and directly impact cargo movement. Containers at Chattogram remain in port for 11 days on average for imports (compared to 3–5 days globally) and 4 days for exports, creating serious delays for industries like garments that depend on speed (Herrera Dappe et al., 2020).

Cargo handling operations are also inefficient: crane productivity is 8–12 moves per hour, far below the global best practice of 20–25 (Rahman, 2022). This is largely due to outdated equipment, inadequate maintenance, and limited technical training.

Customs processes remain heavily paper-based, with limited progress toward automation. The lack of a fully functional National Single Window means traders still face procedural uncertainty, multiple verification layers, and opportunities for informal payments (Holguín-Veras et al., 2021).

Road access adds another layer of inefficiency—trucks often wait hours to enter the port, with trucking unions exerting strong control over freight rates and supply. These factors create artificial bottlenecks and add costs for shippers.

3. Governance and Institutional Constraints

The governance structure of Bangladeshi ports creates systemic inefficiencies. Unlike the widely used landlord port model, where authorities regulate but do not operate, the Chattogram Port Authority combines regulatory oversight with direct operations (Mustafizur Rahman et al., 2023). This dual role creates conflicts of interest and discourages private competition.

Institutional fragmentation further complicates port management. Multiple agencies—including the Ministry of Shipping, customs, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, and the Bangladesh Railway—operate in silos with poor coordination (ADB, 2019). For instance, customs restrictions on clearing goods off-dock exacerbate congestion despite the presence of ICDs (World Bank, 2020).

Political economy factors also matter: trucking unions and labor groups wield influence, often resisting automation that could reduce their bargaining power. Corruption and informal facilitation payments are frequently reported in customs clearance and port services, adding hidden costs for businesses (Holguín-Veras et al., 2021).

4. Competitiveness and Regional Positioning

The combined effect of infrastructure, operational, and governance constraints reduces Bangladesh's competitiveness in global markets. The Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranks Bangladesh below peers such as India and Vietnam in customs efficiency, infrastructure, and timeliness (World Bank, 2020).

Feeder dependence means Bangladeshi exporters face 7–10 days of extra transit time and 15–20% higher shipping costs compared to direct connections (UNCTAD, 2022). This affects not only garments but also emerging export sectors such as pharmaceuticals and agro-processing,

which are more sensitive to logistics costs (ADB, 2019).

While Sri Lanka has developed Colombo into a regional transshipment hub, and Vietnam has built deep-sea ports like Cai Mep–Thi Vai supported by foreign investment, Bangladesh risks marginalization in regional supply chains (Saha & Rahman, 2023). Without reform, the country may struggle to diversify exports beyond garments and could face declining competitiveness in global trade.

4.3 Challenges at Bangladesh’s Major Ports

Category	Chattogram Port	Mongla Port	Payra Port
Infrastructural Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited berths, shallow draft (9.5m) restricts large vessels • Severe yard congestion • Heavy reliance on feeder services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River siltation, needs constant dredging • Restricted vessel size • Poor road & rail links to Dhaka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned as deep-sea port but incomplete • Hinterland connectivity (road, rail, waterways) underdeveloped • Infrastructure progress slow
Operational Inefficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long dwell times (11 days imports, 4 days exports) • Low crane productivity (8–12 moves/hr vs global 20–25) • Manual customs & paperwork • Trucking delays at gates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low utilization due to exporters preferring Chattogram • Delays from periodic dredging • Limited container handling facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet handling significant volumes • Limited operational capacity • Lack of automation in cargo handling
Governance & Institutional Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port authority acts as regulator & operator (conflict of interest) • Multiple agencies, weak coordination • Restrictions on ICD usage • Influence of unions, corruption in customs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited investment focus • Lack of government incentive policies to attract users • Weak governance support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak integration with national logistics strategy • No strong regulatory framework for PPP/private investment • Governance framework still evolving
Competitiveness & Regional Positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handles ~90% of trade, creating overdependence • Logistics costs 15–16% of GDP (higher than regional) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underutilized, cannot relieve Chattogram’s burden • Less attractive to exporters • Struggles to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future potential as transshipment hub • Currently unable to attract major shipping lines • Weak competitiveness

	peers) • Delays hurt RMG & time-sensitive exports	position as regional hub	compared to Sri Lanka & Vietnam
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4.4 Summary of Key Findings

Theme	Main Issues Identified	Implications	References
Infrastructural Limitations	Shallow draft (9.5m) restricts large vessels; limited berths; congested yards; underutilized Mongla due to poor connectivity; Payra lacks hinterland links	Higher shipping costs; feeder dependence; increased dwell times; reduced competitiveness	World Bank (2020); ADB (2019); Rahman & Saha (2023); UNCTAD (2022); Mustafizur Rahman et al. (2023)
Operational Inefficiencies	Long dwell times (11 days imports vs 3–5 global benchmark); low crane productivity (8–12 moves/hr); manual customs processes; trucking bottlenecks	Delays for exporters, especially RMG sector; higher logistics costs; scope for informal payments	Herrera Dappe et al. (2020); Rahman (2022); Holguín-Veras et al. (2021)
Governance & Institutional Constraints	Port authorities combine regulator and operator roles; fragmented agencies; resistance from unions; corruption in customs	Weak coordination; limited private sector participation; informal costs; slowed reforms	ADB (2019); World Bank (2020); Mustafizur Rahman et al. (2023); Holguín-Veras et al. (2021)

Competitiveness & Regional Positioning	Dependence on feeder services via Colombo/Singapore/Klang; logistics costs ~15–16% of GDP; weak diversification; Vietnam & Sri Lanka outperform	Reduced export competitiveness; delays in global supply chains; missed opportunities for FDI	World Bank (2020); ADB (2019); UNCTAD (2022); Saha & Rahman (2023)
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Chapter 5: Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be proposed to address the infrastructural, operational, and governance challenges in Bangladesh's port sector and to strengthen its regional competitiveness.

A. Infrastructure Development and Modernization

- **Deepening and dredging of channels:** Investments should be made to increase channel depth at Chattogram and Payra to accommodate larger vessels and reduce feeder dependence (World Bank, 2020; UNCTAD, 2022).
- **Expansion of berth and yard capacity:** New container berths, yard automation, and modern handling equipment are necessary to increase capacity and reduce congestion (ADB, 2019).
- **Enhanced hinterland connectivity:** Improving road, rail, and inland waterways linkages to ports—particularly Mongla and Payra—would distribute cargo volumes more evenly and reduce overreliance on Chattogram (Rahman & Saha, 2023).

B. Operational Reforms and Digitalization

- **Adoption of automation technologies:** Expanding the use of gantry cranes, automated gates, and digital yard management systems could raise crane productivity to international benchmarks (Rahman, 2022).
- **Streamlined customs clearance:** The implementation of a fully functional **National Single Window** and adoption of electronic data interchange (EDI) should reduce documentation time and minimize informal payments (Holguín-Veras et al., 2021).
- **Truck fleet management reforms:** Introducing slot-booking systems and regulating trucking union influence would help smooth access to ports and reduce artificial shortages.

C. Governance and Institutional Strengthening

- **Transition to landlord port model:** Separating regulatory oversight from operational functions would attract greater private sector participation, improve transparency, and align Bangladesh with global best practices (Mustafizur Rahman et al., 2023).
- **Improved inter-agency coordination:** A high-level logistics authority should be established to harmonize policies across customs, port authorities, shipping, rail, and inland water agencies (ADB, 2019).
- **Anti-corruption measures:** Digitization of payment systems, increased transparency in customs processes, and stricter accountability mechanisms could reduce informal practices and build investor confidence.

D. Enhancing Regional Competitiveness

- **Development of transshipment capacity:** Positioning Payra or Mongla as a future transshipment hub could reduce reliance on Colombo or Singapore while attracting regional cargo (Saha & Rahman, 2023).
- **Diversification of exports through logistics efficiency:** Reducing logistics costs from 15–16% of GDP toward the 8–10% range of efficient economies would make non-garment sectors such as agro-processing, electronics, and pharmaceuticals more competitive (ADB, 2019).
- **Strategic partnerships and FDI:** Attracting foreign investment in port infrastructure and management, as seen in Vietnam and Sri Lanka, can accelerate modernization and global integration (UNCTAD, 2022).

5.3 Conclusion

The analysis has shown that Bangladesh's seaports face a complex set of challenges that constrain trade efficiency and weaken competitiveness. Infrastructural bottlenecks such as shallow draft and limited berths, coupled with operational inefficiencies in cargo handling and customs clearance, significantly raise logistics costs. Governance weaknesses—including fragmented institutional arrangements and resistance to reform—further slow down modernization. As a result, Bangladesh lags behind regional peers such as Vietnam and Sri Lanka in logistics performance and risks marginalization in global supply chains.

However, these challenges also present opportunities. Strategic reforms in port governance, coupled with targeted investments in infrastructure and digitalization, could transform Bangladesh's ports into regional gateways rather than bottlenecks. Enhancing hinterland connectivity and reducing overdependence on Chattogram would unlock the potential of Mongla and Payra, while better operational efficiency could cut delays and lower costs for exporters.

Ultimately, the competitiveness of Bangladesh's export-led economy depends on addressing these challenges urgently. If reforms are implemented effectively, the port system can support not only sustained growth in the garment sector but also the diversification of exports into higher-value industries. Without such reforms, however, Bangladesh's trade future will remain constrained by the very gateways meant to facilitate it.

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Appendix- I

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Appendix-II

May 04, 2025

Sumaiya Ahmed
Business Analyst
DigitifyX
Kallyanpur, 16/18, block-b
Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1207

DIGITIFYX

Dear Sumaiya,

We are pleased to offer you the position of Business Analyst Intern at DigitifyX. This position is designed to provide valuable hands-on experience in a fast-paced and growth-focused technology company.

Internship Terms:

- Position: Business Analyst (Intern)
- Location: Kallyanpur, Dhaka (with flexibility for remote work)
- Start Date: As mutually agreed
- Duration: As per company requirements and agreement
- Remuneration: As negotiated

Key Responsibilities:

As a Business Analyst Intern, your primary responsibilities will include:

- Conducting research and analysis of business processes
- Gathering and documenting business requirements
- Supporting the product and strategy teams with planning and data analysis
- Assisting in the preparation of reports and presentations for internal and client use

We expect a high level of professionalism, attention to detail, and commitment to maintaining confidentiality throughout your engagement with DigitifyX.

Acceptance & Confirmation

Please confirm your acceptance by signing the acknowledgment section below and returning a scanned copy of this letter.

We look forward to your contributions and are excited to welcome you to the DigitifyX team.

Farhan Masud
Farhan Masud
CEO

Accepted by:
Name: Sumaiya Ahmed
Signature: *Sumaiya Ahmed*
Date: 06-05-2025

☎ +8801627715573 ✉ info@digitifyx.com 📍 Kallyanpur 16/18 block-b, Dhaka, 1207

Appendix-III



INTERNSHIP PROPOSAL FORM

Name:	Sumaiya Ahmed
ID:	212011068
Department:	BBA
Supervisor's Name (Faculty):	Shawkat Tanveer Rahman
Organization Name:	University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh
Internship Title:	Port Efficiency and Trade Competitiveness: An Analysis of Challenges in Bangladesh's Major Seaports

Student's signature & date

Supervisor's signature & date

