

Evolution of Cochin Port

It is believed that the Cochin Port was formed in AD 1341 as a result of the heavy floods in the river Periyar. The then harbour Muziris got silted up during the floods and a new opening formed at Cochin. Thereafter, Cochin was developed as a trading hub and visited by several international travellers. Colonial conquerors having trading interest administered the Kochi area for centuries. The transformation of Cochin from a mere roadstead into a modern harbour is credited to Sir Robert Bristow, the harbour engineer who implemented the decision of the then rulers by creating a proper shipping channel by cutting the sand bar at the mouth of the harbour, during his two decades stint at Cochin (1920-1941).

The first ship entered the Cochin harbour on 26th May 1928. Thereafter, road-rail networks were introduced to Cochin, connecting important inland trading points, making the harbour the important trading hub on the Kerala coast.

Milestones & events

1341	Closure of the ancient port of Muziris and widening of Cochin Gut.
1400	Visit of Ma Huan, Chinese Ambassador and Nicolo Conti, Italian traveller.
1500 December 24	Arrival of Portuguese Admiral Cabral.
1503 September 27	Foundation stone laid for the first Portuguese Fortress in India.
1663	Capture of Cochin by the Dutch.
1795 October 20	The Dutch surrendered to the British.
1836	First chart of Cochin harbour made.
1859	Arrival of Captain Castor, first Port Officer.
1870	Aspinwall's memorandum suggesting developing a sheltered harbour in Cochin.
1880	Memorandum by Cochin Chamber of Commerce to Duke of Buckingham.
1900	Memorandum by Cochin Chamber of Commerce to Lord Curzon, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.
1904	Chamber of Commerce offer to finance experimental dredging.
1915	Alan Campbell's proposal to extend the railway line to Candle Island via Bolghatty, to reclaim land and build deep water piers there.
1918	Report of Sir John Wolfe Barry & Partners.
1920 April 13	Arrival of Sir Robert Bristow.
1920 July 9	Appointment of ad hoc Committee under the chairmanship of E.F. Thomas, I.C.S., Collector of Malabar.
1921	Approval for experimental dredging.
1922	Experimental cut on outer sand bar started.
1924	Approval of Third Stage.
1926 May	Commissioning of dredger "Lord Willingdon".
1928 March 30	Sand bar at the mouth of the harbour cut open.
1928 May 26	First vessel crosses the channel and enters the harbour - SS <i>Padma</i> of Bombay Steam Navigation Co., commanded by Capt. Bullen.
1928 August	First foreign going vessel <i>Croxteth Hall</i> entered the harbour.
1929 March 13	Widening of channel completed.
1930-31	Port thrown open for vessels up to 30ft draft.
1936 August 1	Administration of Cochin Harbour taken over by the Government of India

1936 August 12	Maharaja of Cochin laid the foundation-stone for the Fourth Stage works.
1939 June 2	<i>Braunfels</i> , the first ocean-going ship to berth alongside Mattancherry Wharf.
1948 September 13	SS <i>Bharat Kumar</i> , the first vessel to berth in the expanded Mattancherry Wharf.
1953 August 15	SS <i>Jayabrahma</i> , the first vessel berthed alongside South Coal Berth.
1955 December 31	Commissioning of the North Tanker Jetty.
1956 February 6	First tanker SS <i>British Fortune</i> berthed alongside South Tanker Jetty.
1959 November 11	Commissioning of North Coal Berth.
1964 February 24	Cochin Port Trust constituted (under the Major Port Trusts Act).
1964 May 19	Commissioning of Ernakulam Wharf.
1966	Experimental loading of palletised cargo started.
1969 December 13	Open berth Q9 commissioned.
1973 November 27	<i>President Tyler</i> , first container vessel to enter any Indian Port, berthed in Ernakulam Wharf.
1978 March 13	First Ro-Ro ship SS <i>Gauguin</i> called at the Port.
1978 September 7	Cochin Fisheries Harbour (first stage) commissioned.
1979 April 27	Container Freight Station inaugurated.
1981 November 11	Commencement of work on Integrated Development Project.
1984 January 12	Cochin Oil Terminal commissioned.
1984 June 15	Linking of Cochin Port with Coimbatore ICD.
1985 September	Preliminary report on Vallarpadam Mother Terminal was handed over to Government of India.
1984-85	Dedicated fertilizer berth commissioned.
1992-93	Container Freight Station commissioned.
1993-94	Dock Labour Board merged with Cochin Port Trust.
1994-95	Dedicated container handling facility 'Rajiv Gandhi Container Terminal' commissioned.
1996-97	The New Administrative Office opened.
2001-02	Boat Train Pier (BTP) reconstructed as 330m long Multi Purpose Berth.
2007-08	Offshore Crude Oil handling facility (SBM) commissioned.
2010-11	Commencement of first phase of International Container Transshipment Terminal, Vallarpadam with 1 million TEU capacity. A four lane NH and a new link rail to the national rail grid from the Terminal created.
2012-13	LNG Regasification Terminal commissioned. First LNG vessel MV <i>Wilenergy</i> berthed.
2012-13	Samudrika – cruise passenger facilitation centre at BTP Jetty commissioned.
2015	First LNG bunkering.
2021	First seaplane bunkering.
2022	Cochin Port notified as Major Port Authority.

References:

- *Cochin Saga* by Sir Robert Bristow, C.I.E. published by Bristow Memorial Society.
- *A Queen's Story – Five Centuries of Cochin Port* by D. Babu Paul IAS.