

NBR introduces new licensing rules to boost efficiency in shipping cargo

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Dhaka: The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has rolled out a fresh regulatory framework titled “Shipping Agent Licensing Rules, 2025” in a bid to streamline maritime trade operations and strengthen transparency across the country’s ports.

Announced through a notification issued in early January, the new rules mark a major policy shift for the sector, which previously operated under the Customs Agent Licensing Rules, 2020, without any dedicated regulation for shipping agents.

According to the release, the introduction of specialized rules is expected to modernize procedures, promote fair competition, and enhance accountability at all sea and river ports. One of the key reforms is the simplification and speeding up of the licensing process. Licensing authorities will now be able to determine the number of licenses for

each customs station without seeking prior approval from the NBR, significantly reducing procedural delays.

The NBR has also scrapped the previous requirement for written and oral examinations at the Customs, Excise, and VAT Training Academy. If applicants submit complete and accurate documentation, licenses will be issued within a maximum of 30 working days.

Another notable feature of the new rules is the expansion of operational jurisdiction. While earlier licenses were confined to a specific port under an issuing customs station, the 2025 regulations will now allow shipping agents to operate at any sea or river port across Bangladesh.

The NBR said these measures are aligned with its broader efforts to build an investment-friendly environment and make import-export activities more efficient and business-friendly nationwide.

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