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TRAUTALK

Dangerous Goods: Are rules keeping pace?

14



When AI makes the next move in freight forwarding

18



Air cargo defies slowdown: August demand surges 6%

20



Central Asia to build strong global cargo links

24



Industry seeks GST 3.0 reforms to cut compliance costs

26



Sector needs capacity and process reforms

30



TCI plans 2 coastal vessels in FY27 to support modal shift

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More cargo capacity is not enough

A shipment rarely gets delayed for just one reason. Sometimes it is a congested terminal, sometimes a missing approval, a disconnected system, or a process that requires the same information twice. For the customer, though, the explanation hardly matters. The cargo is late, the cost goes up, and the promise of a reliable supply chain takes a hit.

That is the reality India's cargo industry must confront as it prepares for its next phase of growth.

This issue of **CARGOTALK** brings together developments that point to the same question. India is investing in airports, warehouses and transport infrastructure. Technology is changing freight management, new cargo gateways are emerging, and export ambitions continue to grow. But are we connecting all these pieces well enough?

The proposed Integrated Transport & Logistics Authority (IT&LA) and Kochi's Cargo Vision 2030 are important steps towards better coordination. Both reflect a larger truth: Cargo does not move in neat, separate boxes labelled air, road, rail, or sea. It moves through a chain, and the efficiency of that chain depends on how well its links work together.

Technology presents a similar challenge. Artificial Intelligence can flag delays, identify missed cut-offs and help freight forwarders make better decisions. But digitising an inefficient process does not automatically make it efficient. We need connected systems, reliable data, and clear accountability, alongside people who can turn information into action.

Growth also brings responsibilities that cannot be treated as afterthought. Our cover story on dangerous goods highlights why updated regulations and better facilities must go hand in hand with accurate declarations, appropriate packaging and trained personnel. Safety must be built into every handover, not just checked at the terminal gate.

Other issues deserve equal attention. Goods and Services Tax disparities between air and sea freight, airport congestion, cold-chain connectivity, and the limited use of coastal shipping, all affect the competitiveness of Indian businesses. These challenges cannot be solved by individual stakeholders working in isolation.

Government agencies, airports, airlines, handlers, freight forwarders, and shippers must coordinate more closely. Technology providers must make systems interoperable, while the industry invests in skills and consistent operating standards.

Most importantly, we need to measure progress by outcomes: Shorter dwell times, fewer avoidable delays, safer handling, predictable costs, and better access to international markets.

India can build a cargo network that supports its manufacturing and export ambitions. The next phase must be about making the entire system work better, not simply making individual parts bigger.

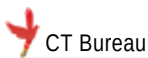
Because the real test of a cargo network is not how much it can handle on paper, but how reliably it gets goods where they need to be.





One authority, one plan for transport & logistics

India is moving towards an integrated approach to logistics planning, with the Union Cabinet approving the setting up of ITLA. The proposed special purpose vehicle is likely to coordinate across transport modes, strengthen project planning, and support more data-led decisions on infrastructure development.



CT Bureau

The Integrated Transport & Logistics Authority (ITLA) will function as an apex institution for integrated transport and logistics planning, research, project appraisal, monitoring, policy support, and data analytics. Its mandate will cover roads, railways, ports, shipping, civil aviation, inland waterways, coastal shipping, urban mobility, and logistics, said, Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister of Railways, GoI.

One framework

A key responsibility will be preparing a long-term National Transport Master Plan while reviewing short-term sectoral and annual plans of transport ministries.

The objective is to ensure that individual projects and sectoral plans remain aligned with the broader transport framework and support multimodal infrastructure development. The authority will also undertake technical appraisal of government infrastructure projects costing ₹500 crore and above. It will monitor the implementation of such projects, provide a coordinated mechanism for



“The aim is to ensure individual projects and sectoral plans remain aligned with the transport framework and support multimodal development.”

resolving issues, and assess their impact after completion. Financial appraisal will continue through existing mechanisms.

Freight networks

The authority's role will extend beyond infrastructure planning. ITLA is expected

to create a unified transport data repository by bringing together datasets from sources including GSTN e-way bills, FASTag, VAHAN, GPS-based systems, and urban traffic management platforms. The move could give policymakers a broader view of how freight networks operate across modes, supporting planning, monitoring, and impact assessment based on consolidated data rather than isolated datasets.

For the logistics sector, the significance lies in linking infrastructure decisions more closely with actual movement patterns and network needs.

ITLA will support capacity building, training, and skilling, while aiding in the review and updating of the National Logistics Policy (NLP). The authority's effectiveness will depend on how well data, planning, and implementation are coordinated across ministries and agencies. If that coordination translates into better project selection and execution, ITLA could provide a more unified planning lens for India's evolving transport and logistics network. 🚚

From reactive to predictive supply chains

Supply chains are facing growing uncertainty, from shifting demand and supplier constraints to logistics disruptions and geopolitical risks. The key to resilience is moving beyond firefighting to anticipating risks early, enabling faster, smarter decisions before disruptions become critical.

Supply chains today operate in an environment defined by uncertainty. Demand shifts, supplier constraints, transportation disruptions, and geopolitical developments can change priorities with little warning. While organisations cannot control every external variable, they can determine how prepared they are when conditions change.

For many businesses, reacting to unexpected events has become routine. Teams expedite shipments, rebalance inventory, identify alternate suppliers, and resolve last-minute exceptions. While these actions keep operations moving, constant firefighting increases costs, consumes resources, and places sustained pressure on employees. The opportunity lies in identifying emerging risks early to make informed decisions before they become urgent.

Insight alone does not create resilience. Its value depends on whether teams can interpret the signal, agree on the appropriate response, and act quickly

Predictive capabilities are not about achieving perfect forecasts. Their value lies in helping organisations identify patterns, assess probabilities, and understand how current conditions could influence future outcomes. A decline in supplier performance, a shift in demand, or rising transit times may appear insignificant. But viewed together, these signals can indicate a developing risk. Acting on them early gives leaders time to review inventory, adjust



sourcing strategies, and revise production schedules before a constraint becomes critical. The aim is not certainty, but preparedness.

Analytics

Organisations do not necessarily lack data. The challenge is fragmented information, unclear decision rights, and inconsistent processes. Procurement, manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, sales, and finance may operate through separate systems and planning processes, limiting visibility across the supply chain.

Technology and AI can help process large volumes of information, identify patterns, and generate early-warning signals. But insight alone does not create resilience. Its value depends on whether teams can interpret the signal, agree on the appropriate response and act quickly.

Prudence

Supply chain decisions involve competing priorities — cost, inventory, production capacity, sustainability, and supplier relationships. Predictive tools can

quantify risks and recommend potential actions, but experienced professionals provide business context that algorithms may not fully capture.

This becomes particularly important during geopolitical disruptions, regulatory changes, or sudden market shifts when historical data may no longer reliably predict the future. In such situations, leaders must combine data-driven insights with experience, stakeholder input, and scenario-based thinking. 📌



(The views expressed are solely those of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same)



DANGEROUS GOODS

Are rules keeping pace?

The cargo network handles everything from lithium batteries and industrial chemicals to pharma and radioactive materials, each requiring classification, packaging, documentation, and handling. Misdeclaration can endanger workers, aircraft, vessels, and other cargo. As India updates regulations and expands capacity, the challenge is to ensure that safety procedures, staff competence, and compliance keep pace with the growth of the logistics sector.

 Pallak Kashyap

Dangerous goods (DGs) are substances or articles that can threaten health, safety, property, or the environment during transport. Risks

include fire, explosion, leakage, toxic exposure, and contamination. Lithium batteries, flammable liquids, gases, and radioactive materials present different hazards and must be prepared according to applicable transport requirements.

Hidden hazards

Risk varies with the substance, quantity, packaging, and transport conditions. A damaged battery, leaking chemical container, or incorrectly secured package can endanger people handling the



“Trained and certified manpower is the strongest safety control, helping identify hazards and reduce incidents related to human error.”

later stages, even when suitable facilities and equipment are available.

Rules tighten

India has updated its regulatory framework for DGs in air and maritime transport. The Ministry of Civil Aviation notified the Aircraft (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026, on 17 February 2026. Separately, the Directorate General of Maritime Administration lists the Merchant Shipping (Carriage of Dangerous Goods) Rules, 2026, dated 7 September 2026. These are distinct frameworks for their respective transport sectors.

Updated rules alone do not guarantee safe handling. Shippers must declare goods accurately, while freight forwarders, handlers and carriers must perform the checks required for their roles. An error during packing or declaration can pass through several handovers before it is identified. Clear responsibilities across the supply chain are essential: Every organisation must know which checks it owns and when a shipment needs additional scrutiny. Consistent procedures help teams identify discrepancies early instead of allowing them to pass unnoticed to the next stage.

There is measurable progress in aviation training. The Ministry of Civil Aviation's 2025 annual report stated

shipment and other goods travelling alongside it. Correct identification is essential before HAZMAT cargo enters the logistics chain. Such checks matter because errors can remain hidden until much later in transport.

For air transport, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) establishes international requirements through Annex 18 and its Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air. These cover classification, packaging, marking, labelling, and documentation. Operators must follow the applicable edition and amendments.

Keku Bomi Gazder, Managing Director and CEO, Aviapro Logistic Services, identified misdeclaration, unsuitable packaging, and inadequate handling as key risks. Air transport requires particular care because pressure and

temperature conditions can affect certain goods. An error may affect more than one consignment, making compliance at origin important.

Neetu Chadha, Assistant Vice President, Air Products, ISSGF India, said that hazards are not always apparent from a package's appearance. Radioactive materials, for example, may require specialised instruments for detection. She stressed that safety responsibilities extend to everyone involved in packing, documentation, acceptance, storage, handling, and transport.

Information sharing matters as much as ground handling. When a particular shipment changes hands, accurate documentation helps the next party understand its contents and the precautions required. Missing or incorrect information can undermine checks at

that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) implemented Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) across all 17 dangerous goods (DG) training organisations, which it reports as fully compliant with CBTA standards.

Radharamanan Panicker, Managing Director, Dangerous Goods Management India, argued that training must establish whether staff can apply procedures in practice, rather than simply record attendance. He advocated role-specific assessments and audits that test whether workers can identify hazards and respond correctly. Different jobs involve different responsibilities. A person checking shipment documents might need to identify missing declarations, while a handler must understand safe handling and segregation



“ Dangerous goods safety is a shared responsibility across the air cargo supply chain, and every stakeholder must prioritise safety over speed.”

requirements. Training is more useful when it reflects these duties and prepares staff for situations they may encounter at work. Panicker also witnessed a need for greater consistency in training across maritime, road transport, warehousing, and shipper operations. The challenge is maintaining standards across modes and facilities.

Airport readiness

At Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru, DGs form part of cargo operations. **Arun Chandra**, Vice President, Aviation Business, Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL), said that cargo terminal operators use personnel with valid DG training certification, while airlines conduct additional checks. BLR Airport's official cargo facilities information lists a separate DG room. The



airport's cargo terminal information also describes 24-hour operations. These arrangements support cargo handling but do not make every shipment risk-free.

Chandra identified undeclared or misdeclared consignments, including e-commerce shipments containing lithium batteries or aerosols, as an ongoing concern. Screening technology can help identify potential threats, but it cannot replace accurate declarations, compliant packaging, and trained personnel.

A package may appear routine while containing goods that require specific precautions. When shipment types vary, screening equipment is one part of a wider process involving documentation checks, staff training, and correct preparation before consignments reach



“ Stop measuring dangerous goods safety by the number of people trained; measure it by the number competent to perform safety-critical functions.”

the airport. In a recent report, Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Civil Aviation Minister, GoI, said that air cargo volumes were around 3.5 MMT and the government aimed to triple these by 2030.

As cargo expands, safety requires attention to capacity as well as throughput. More shipments mean more consignments to identify, check, handle, and transfer. Procedures should remain effective during busy periods when skilled teams manage multiple movements and time-sensitive cargo.

Competence matters

Chadha advocated practical, role-specific instruction and refresher training so staff can recognise hazards, check documents, and follow correct procedures. Shippers also need clear guidance, since



errors made before cargo reaches a cargo terminal can create risks throughout the journey.

Gazder called for stronger competency mapping, recurrent training, and wider access to learning, including at smaller and regional locations. Panicker similarly called for practical assessments and compliance audits that test whether staff can perform their duties safely. Training should help staff recognise when a shipment must be stopped for clarification.

Escalating an unclear declaration or suspected packaging problem is part of safe operations. Staff need to know the correct procedure and when to seek guidance rather than allow cargo to proceed. Competence should be measured by what people can do, not only by their certificates.

Shared responsibility

HAZMAT's safety depends on coordinated action. Shippers should identify



“ Safety and compliance cannot be compromised for speed. Accurate declarations, digital visibility, and early checks help dangerous goods move safely and efficiently.”

and declare cargo correctly, logistics providers should verify information and follow applicable procedures, cargo carriers must meet transport requirements, and regulators must oversee

compliance. Each handover is an opportunity to confirm that the shipment and its documentation remain consistent. If information is incomplete or a package fails to meet requirements, the issue must be resolved before the cargo moves further through the chain.

Clear communication can prevent problems escalating. Chandra's emphasised safety over speed reflected a central operational principle: Moving cargo quickly is not enough if a hazard has been missed.

Accurate information, suitable facilities, trained personnel, and clear escalation procedures must work together at every handover. The country has also updated its air and maritime rules and documented progress in dangerous goods training. As air cargo volumes rise, consistent implementation will be essential to ensure safety practices hold from the shipper's premises to the final destination. 🇮🇳



ACCB elects Pramod Menon as President for 2026–27

The Air Cargo Club of Bombay (ACCB) has formed its new Managing Committee for 2026–27, with **Pramod Menon** of Rainbow Aviation taking over as President. The objective of the team is to strengthen industry collaboration, member engagement, and networking through year-round initiatives.



CT Bureau

The Air Cargo Club of Bombay (ACCB) has elected Pramod Menon, Vice President, Cargo, Rainbow Aviation as its President for the 2026–27 term at its recent Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The meeting saw the formation of a new Managing Committee, with members reaffirming their commitment to strengthening engagement and collaboration within the air cargo fraternity.

The newly elected office-bearers include Sachin Lokhande as Vice President, Aji Chacko as Secretary, and Shailesh Sharma as Treasurer. The Managing Committee members are Arunkumar Menon, Biju Shankar, Chaitaly Mehta, Joji Varghese, Malcolm D'Souza, and Manoj Waingankar.

The new panel aims to provide a unified platform for members to collaborate, exchange ideas, and take part in social activities throughout the year

The objective of the new committee is to provide a unified platform for the members to collaborate, exchange ideas, and participate in social activities throughout the year and to further strengthen professional relationships within the industry. The newly elected team expressed its gratitude to the ACCB past presidents, senior members, and advisors for their continued guidance, support, and contributions to the organisation.



Office-bearers

- **Pramod Menon – President**
- **Sachin Lokhande – Vice President**
- **Aji Chacko – Secretary**
- **Shailesh Sharma – Treasurer**

MC members

- **Arunkumar Menon**
- **Biju Shankar**
- **Chaitaly Mehta**
- **Joji Varghese**
- **Malcolm D'Souza**
- **Manoj Waingankar**

When AI makes the next move in freight forwarding

The freight forwarding industry is moving beyond basic automation, with AI supporting documentation, shipment monitoring, and operational decision-making. This shift comes amid growing cargo volumes. For forwarders, the opportunity lies not in automating repetitive tasks, but in linking data across the cargo life cycle.



Pallak Kashyap

A freight forwarder handles information: quotations, invoices, packing lists, airway bills, customs declarations, carrier schedules, delivery updates and billing records. Automation reduces manual effort.

Data first

Amit Maheshwari, Founder and CEO, Softlink Global, said that AI can extract data from invoices and transport documents, prepare quotations, answer routine shipment queries and flag missing

information. Automation moves checked information through workflows.

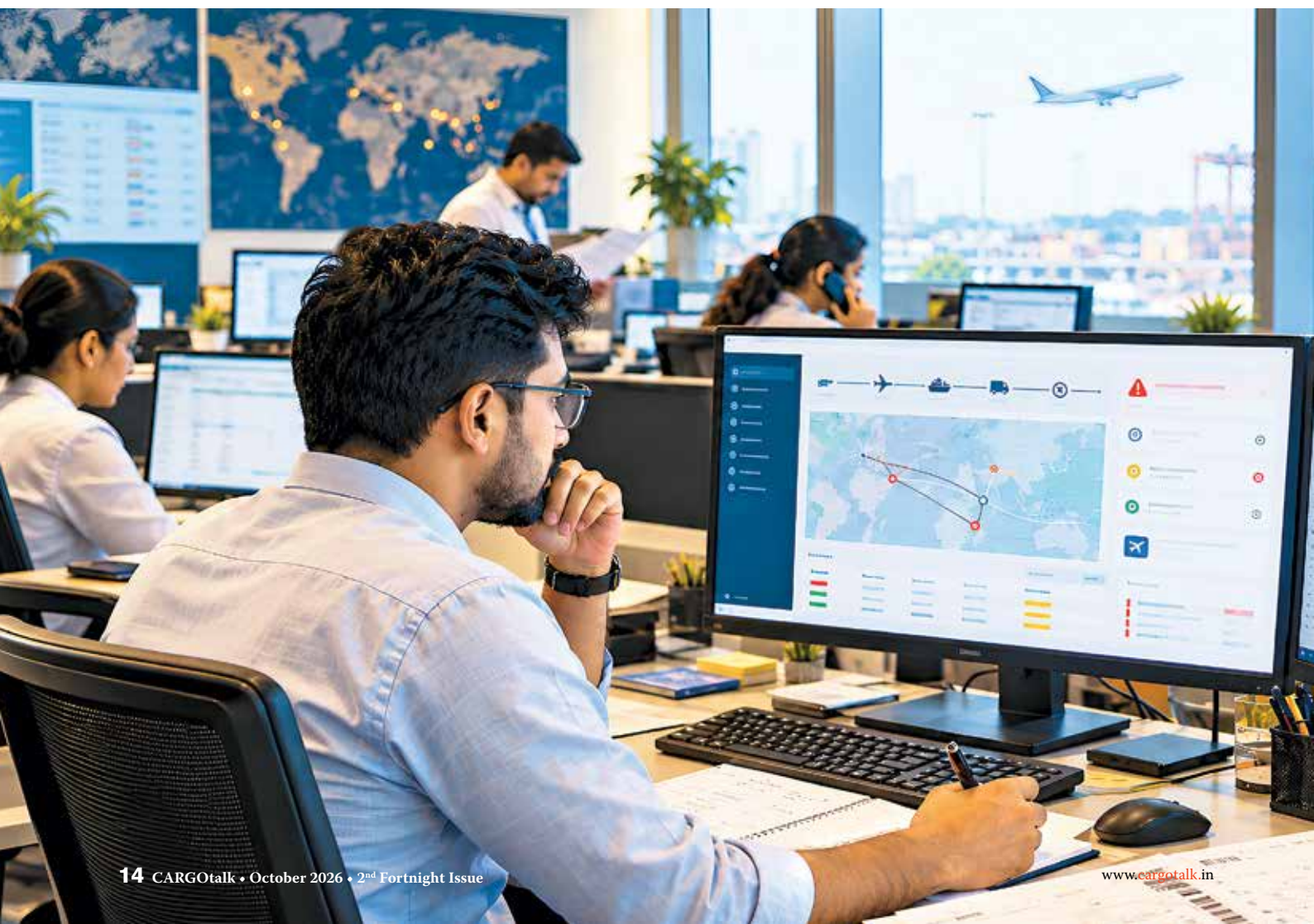
AI agents can track deadlines, identify unbilled costs, compare routing options, and alert employees before delays or losses occur

The opportunity is AI agents within linked enterprise systems. They can track deadlines, identify unbilled costs, compare routing options, and alert

employees to exceptions before delays or losses occur.

India's cargo base is expanding. The Ministry of Civil Aviation's latest annual report says air cargo volume rose from 2.53 MMT in FY2014–15 to 3.72 MMT in FY2024–25. Cargo operations cover 74 airports. The ministry reported 2.98 MMT handled up to December 2025 in FY2025–26.

More shipments mean more documents, requests and operational decisions. Systems that quickly read





Amit Maheshwari
Founder and CEO
Softlink Global

“ AI agents can streamline freight forwarding by tracking deadlines, flagging unbilled costs while human judgement remains essential for shipment outcomes.”

ICEGATE-linked filing systems, electronic documentation tools, and APIs connecting operations, bookings, billing, cargo, and compliance. Bringing information together could help AI identify issues earlier and alert the person responsible.

Agent model

An AI agent differs from conventional automation. A traditional workflow performs a predefined action when a condition is met. An agent interprets information and supports the next action within defined limits. Instead of simply alerting a forwarder that a shipment has missed a connection, an agent could identify the disruption, assess available information, and present alternatives. The employee would still decide when commercial, regulatory or customer commitments are involved.

Vineet Malhotra, Co-founder and Director, Kale Logistics Solutions, spoke about the opportunity in hand-offs between parties. “An agent is only as good as the data it sees, and that data lives in the community platform.”

Kale’s platforms link airports, ports, customs authorities, trade partners, and logistics service providers. Its portfolio includes AI tools for document processing, predicting bottlenecks, and identifying supply chain exceptions. The firm said its Cargo Community System

information and identify what needs attention are important. But AI does not remove the need for controls. Maheshwari stressed that actions involving money, compliance, and customer commitments require permissions and approval checks. The aim is better information before problems affect shipments, not handing every decision to software alone.

Digital base

AI needs structured information, making India’s cargo and customs digitalisation

important. The Express Cargo Clearance System (ECCS), launched in 2017, automates courier consignment clearance. CBIC stated that it operates at nine courier terminals: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Cochin.

CBIC’s 2026 advisory list records risk-based processing for e-commerce returns and rejects, enhanced Return to Origin functionality, automation for courier-mode SEZ imports and exports, handheld devices for arrival scans, a pan-India refund module and two-factor authentication. ECCS is moving towards API integration through an NGINX-based API Gateway for bulk uploads.

Launched in February 2025, Ekal Anubandh advanced paperless trade. Importers and exporters can use a single All-India Multi-purpose Electronic Bond through ICEGATE instead of separate transaction-wise bonds at different ports. It enables electronic execution, digital stamp-duty payment and online linkage of electronic bank guarantees. These are not AI applications; they create connected digital information flows.

Parvinder Singh, Managing Director, Hans Infomatic, said that this is the foundation for more active AI systems. He said that AI can work with invoices, packing lists, airway bills, prepare customs filings, match rates, and generate quotations. “The real value of AI in forwarding is not speed. It is acting before the customer asks.” Hans Infomatic’s portfolio includes an ERP system for forwarders and customs brokers,





Parvinder Singh
Managing Director
Hans Informatic

“The real value of AI in freight forwarding is handling routine tasks and providing timely updates, while people retain control over decisions.”

serves 5,500 entities across 50 countries and 125 airports and ports as direct beneficiaries.

Kale is developing AI capabilities and talent in India. In February 2026, it hosted KaiTETHON, a 48-hour AI hackathon

in Mumbai focused on port and airport cargo community systems, sales, business operations, and human resources. In March, it announced a partnership with Tech Mahindra to support digital transformation across ports and airports, focusing on visibility, efficiency, and sustainability.

Human role

AI agents will not make the forwarder's role disappear. They will change where expertise is used. Maheshwari expects forwarders to spend less time copying information and more time handling exceptions and balancing cost, speed, and risk. He said, “AI can take on routine work; responsibility for the shipment remains with the forwarder.”

Singh expected professionals to spend less time processing shipments and more time coordinating them. Malhotra described the change as an upgrade rather than removal of the forwarder's role. Technology can support data entry, tracking and document checking, while professionals focus on exceptions, customer advice, and supply chain coordination.



Vineet Malhotra
Co-founder and Director
Kale Logistics Solutions

“AI can improve freight-forwarding handoffs by identifying missed cut-offs, evaluating alternatives, while forwarders retain responsibility for exceptions.”

Freight professionals need logistics knowledge, data literacy, and the ability to question AI recommendations. Oversight matters when decisions affect compliance and costs. AI may prepare information or recommend an action, but responsibility cannot simply be transferred to the system.

The physical network is developing alongside this digital layer. The Ministry of Civil Aviation stated that air cargo warehousing capacity is being augmented through new facilities at NIA and Navi Mumbai, while AAICLAS is enhancing infrastructure at Dibrugarh, Dimapur, Dehradun, Jodhpur, Srinagar, and Vijayawada. The Economic Survey 2024–25 reported that India's airport cargo-handling capacity reached 8.0 MMT in FY2023–24.

Next move

The next stage depends on how well information moves between systems and how well technology supports those responsible for shipments.

Electronic customs, courier clearance, and cargo infrastructure are creating a stronger foundation. Technology providers are adding AI-based document processing, visibility, exception management, and predictive capabilities; forwarders must decide where these tools deliver value. 📌



ASSOCHAM flags need for integrated cold chains

Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) Cold Chain and Warehousing Summit highlighted India's expanding cold storage capacity. The association also called for integration, utilisation, and end-to-end connectivity to save perishables and reduce post-harvest losses.



Air cargo defies slowdown: August demand surges 6%

Global air cargo is showing little signs of summer slowdown. Volumes increased 6 per cent year-on-year in August while cargo capacity remained flat, keeping cargo rates elevated and giving shippers limited relief despite a gradual month-on-month decline, says **Niall van de Wouw**, Chief Airfreight Officer, Xeneta.



CT Bureau

Strong demand and constrained capacity are keeping the global air freight market resilient, while easing rates offer forwarders only limited relief. Global air cargo demand remained robust in August 2026, with volumes increasing 6 per cent year-on-year, according to industry analysts at Xeneta.

The growth followed a 5 per cent rise in July, extending what Xeneta described as a 'hot summer' for air cargo, despite the traditionally quieter seasonal period.

The continued strength in volumes is delaying a sharper correction in freight rates. Global spot rates averaged US\$ 3.13 per kg in August, remaining 24 per cent above the same month last year. However, the pace of year-on-year

rate growth continued to moderate, falling from 41 per cent in May to 38 per cent in June, 28 per cent in July, and 24 per cent in August.

On a month-on-month basis, global spot rates declined 3 per cent in August, following a 6 per cent drop in July.

The pace of YoY rate growth continued to moderate, falling from 41% in May to 38% in June, 28% in July, and 24% in August

The market remains a seller's market, with rates expected to decline further but not at the pace many shippers are seeking, said Niall van de Wouw, Chief Airfreight Officer, Xeneta.

More capacity

Capacity remained flat year-on-year in August, while Xeneta's dynamic load factor rose three percentage points to 61 per cent, indicating continued pressure on available capacity.

Shippers are increasingly turning to the short-term market as they wait for rates to ease further. However, continued demand growth, combined with rising jet fuel prices, is limiting the speed of the decline.

Xeneta expected international air cargo market growth to reach around 4 per cent in 2026, suggesting that the sector is outperforming expectations made at the end of last year.

New headwinds

One of the most significant changes in the market is emerging from cross-border e-commerce. China's low-value and e-commerce exports fell 11 per cent year-on-year in July, with shipments to Europe declining 25 per cent.

The decline coincided with the European Union's removal of the €150 duty-free threshold for low-value goods from 1 July, alongside the introduction of a flat €3 customs duty per item.

However, Xeneta expected the impact to be temporary. A similar initial decline followed the removal of the US de minimis threshold last year, but China's e-commerce exports to the US subsequently recovered to 23 per cent above the previous year's level in July 2026. The impact is already visible in freight rates. China-Western Europe

Global lane developments of the general air freight market August 2026

North America			
To	DLF	vs '25	
EU	43 %	+ 4.0%	
ME	52 %	- 1.4%	
AP	50 %	+ 3.4%	
LA	76 %	+ 5.3%	

Europe			
To	DLF	vs '25	
AP*	43%	+ 1.0%	
ME	64%	+ 5.5%	
NA	66%	+ 6.1%	
LA	68%	+ 3.1%	
AF*	61%	- 3.9%	

Asia Pacific			
To	DLF	vs '25	
EU*	82%	- 0.8%	
ME	83%	+ 0.2%	
NA	89%	+ 1.2%	

Latin America			
To	DLF	vs '25	
NA	75%	+ 2.1%	
EU	47%	- 1.2%	

Africa			
To	DLF	vs '25	
ME	46%	- 1.6%	
EU*	53%	+ 0.0%	

Middle East & C. Asia			
To	DLF	vs '25	
EU	75%	- 1.7%	
AP	34%	- 1.8%	
NA	73%	- 1.7%	
AF	62%	- 6.0%	

Year-over-year (YoY) percentage points difference:

>+5% <-5% <+5% >+5%

*The dynamic loadfactor and capacity analyses for these lanes also include the flights between Asia Pacific/Africa and Middle East
Notes: Dynamic loadfactor (DLF) is in absolute percentage and Year over year growth (YoY) is based on the change in percentage points
Source: XENETA

Global summary of the general air freight market August 2026

Region	Dynamic load factor		
	Aug '26 Abs. in %	vs Aug '25 Change in p.pts	vs Jul '26 Change in p.pts
Global	61%	+2.6%	-0.4%
Outbound:			
- Asia-Pacific	71%	+1.4%	-0.3%
- North America	51%	+4.1%	-0.3%
- Europe	63%	+5.2%	-0.8%
- Middle East & Central Asia	56%	-0.8%	-1.2%
- Latin America	54%	+1.3%	+1.6%
- Africa	48%	+1.9%	+3.8%

Source: Xeneta

spot rates averaged US\$ 3.85 per kg in August, down 6 per cent month-on-month after a sharp 22 per cent decline in July. Northeast Asia–Europe rates fell 3 per cent, while Southeast Asia–Europe rates dropped 7 per cent to US\$ 4.20 per kg.

The international rate picture masks significant differences across individual trade lanes. Middle East-bound rates

Ample summer belly capacity kept Europe–North America spot rates at 25% below late-February levels, although rates showed early signs of strengthening

remained elevated in late August, with spot rates still above late-February pre-conflict levels. On the transpacific,

AI-related shipments continued to support demand, with Northeast Asia–North America and Southeast Asia–North America rates 36 per cent and 34 per cent higher, respectively, than late-February levels.

Northeast Asia–North America averaged US\$ 5.76 per kg in August, up 2 per cent month-on-month.

The transatlantic market presented a contrasting picture. Ample summer belly capacity kept Europe–North America spot rates 25 per cent below late-February levels, although rates showed early signs of strengthening with a 2 per cent monthly increase.

Resilience is the key

For now, the air cargo market appears to be balancing strong demand against limited capacity rather than moving towards a sharp correction. While forwarders remain under pressure from elevated cargo costs, the underlying market continues to demonstrate resilience.

The coming months will determine whether cargo demand moderates enough to accelerate the decline in rates or whether capacity constraints and seasonal demand provide airlines with more pricing power.

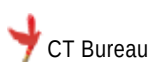
For the international air freight industry, the immediate outlook is one of gradual normalisation rather than a rapid rate reset. 🍷





Central Asia to build strong global cargo links

The Central Asia Aviation Cargo Summit 2026 brought together as many as 340 industry leaders in Tashkent, highlighting the region's growing importance as an air cargo and multimodal logistics gateway connecting Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.



CT Bureau

Held between September 30 and October 1, the two-day Central Asia Air Cargo Summit brought together airlines, airports, logistics providers, technology companies, regulators, and freight specialists to examine the opportunities and challenges shaping Central Asia's rapidly evolving cargo market.

The discussions reflected an air cargo market moving beyond capacity expansion. While airlines are adding capacity and airports are investing in infrastructure, the next phase of growth will depend on digitalisation, multimodal connectivity, customs modernisation, e-commerce, and skilled manpower.

Cargo corridors

The summit opened with remarks from Catalin Radu, CEO & Director General, RGC AvNet FZCO and Henrik Hololei, aviation expert and former Director-General for Mobility and Transport, European Commission. Their participation set the tone for discussions around Central Asia's growing role in global aviation and trade.

Sessions on the regional cargo market examined global standards, aviation

The sessions on the regional cargo market examined global standards, aviation insurance, AI, cargo sales, and airport development

insurance, AI, cargo sales, and airport development. Focus was on the development of multimodal corridors. Representatives from Silk Way West Airlines, Saudia Cargo, and DHL Global Forwarding discussed the integration of air, rail, and road networks and the potential to fortify links between Central Asia and China, Europe, and the ME markets.

Digitalisation

Digital transformation has emerged as one of the summit's central themes. An IATA roundtable brought together representatives from IATA, Lufthansa Cargo, Qatar Airways, Centrum Air/My Freighter, and the Customs Committee of Uzbekistan to discuss certification, ONE Record, regulatory modernisation, and digital data exchange. Moving away

from manual processes and fragmented data will be critical to improve visibility, efficiency, and cargo connectivity across the region.

New demand

The growth of cross-border e-commerce is creating new cargo flows across Central Asia, while demand for perishables, high-value shipments, and specialised cargo is creating opportunities for regional gateways.

Discussions involving Aelia, YDA Group, Pacific Air Holdings, and EMEX/FedEx Central Asia examined the changing requirements around customs, insurance, regional gateways, and last-mile logistics.

The first day concluded with a panel on Eurasian cargo synergies, bringing together airlines, airports, technology companies, logistics providers, and charter specialists. The discussions explored capacity, infrastructure, digital platforms, express logistics, and the development of Tashkent, Almaty, Navoi, and other regional airports as cargo gateways.

Future cargo growth

The second day focused on infrastructure and operational capabilities needed to support future growth.

Chapman Freeborn discussed air chartering, while Atlas Air highlighted ACMI solutions for the region. Tashkent Airport and Navoi International Airport presented their cargo development and infrastructure plans,



underlining Uzbekistan's ambition to strengthen its position within Eurasian logistics networks.

Terminal automation, cyber security, and ONE Record also featured in the discussions, reflecting the importance of technology in building scalable cargo infrastructure.

With new routes, projects, and commercial partnerships emerging, Central Asia is fortifying its position as a bridge between major global markets

Talent requirements

As aviation and logistics activity expand, workforce development is emerging as another significant requirement. Representatives from Qanot Sharq, Centrum Air, Jupiter Jet, and SCAT Airlines discussed education, professional skills, and the talent requirements of a growing regional aviation industry.

The summit provided opportunities for business networking, meetings, partnership discussions, and signing ceremonies complementing the formal conference programme.

Potential bridge

The discussions in Tashkent highlighted a broader transformation underway across Central Asian air cargo. The region's ambitions are no longer limited to adding aircraft capacity or expanding terminals. Digital standards, multimodal connectivity, e-commerce, customs, automation, workforce development, and regulatory alignment are interconnected.

With new routes, infrastructure projects, and commercial partnerships emerging, Central Asia is fortifying its position as a bridge between major global trade markets. For the industry, the next chapter of Central Asia's growth will depend not only on how much cargo the region can handle, but on how efficiently and digitally it can connect that cargo with the world. 🇷🇺







Industry seeks GST 3.0 reforms to cut compliance costs



K Vaitheeswaran, advocate, tax consultant, and GST expert, believes the next phase of reform must focus on simplifying compliance, embracing tech, and creating an integrated regulatory ecosystem. He discusses the impact of 18% GST on air cargo, need for GST 3.0, and what India must do to fortify its position as an air cargo hub.

 Ritika Arora Bhola

How do you view the current GST framework, especially the 18 per cent GST on air freight compared with just 5 per cent on sea freight?

When Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on 1 July 2017, air freight was taxed. Subsequently, thanks to representations from various stakeholders, the GST Council introduced exemptions for the air freight export segment and sea freight. That exemption continued for some time and expired on 1 October 2022.

After the exemption ended, air cargo became subject to 18 per cent GST, while sea freight continued at 5 per cent.

The rationale for such a significant difference in taxation between the two modes is not immediately apparent. Ultimately, both modes are facilitating international trade and supporting India's exports and imports.

Air freight is inherently faster but also more expensive than sea freight. An 18 per cent GST rate therefore adds a significant cost burden to an already expensive mode of transportation.

There is another important aspect that needs to be considered. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) is a major cost component for airlines, but it remains outside the GST framework and is subject to state VAT. Since there is no corresponding GST input tax credit available for the VAT paid on ATF, the tax burden effectively gets embedded in the cost structure.



“ Air cargo is faster and more expensive than sea freight. An 18 per cent GST rate adds a cost burden to an already expensive mode of transportation.”

When air freight is subsequently taxed at 18 per cent, the cumulative impact ultimately affects the freight forwarder, the business and, in some form, the end consumer. Globally, export freight is generally zero-rated or exempted in many jurisdictions. India should therefore consider revisiting the current policy.

What kind of GST reforms would you like to see for air cargo and logistics?

GST 2.0, particularly the rate rationalisation undertaken in September 2025, was a significant exercise. There was a reduction in tax rates across several categories of goods, with many items moving to the 5 per cent slab most items in the 28 per cent rate being rationalised at 18 per cent.



The next stage should be GST 3.0, and its focus should be simplification and EoDB. Here we need to ask some basic questions: How can we simplify the system? How can we eliminate unnecessarily complex forms? How can we reduce endless reconciliation requirements? How can we avoid multiple notices from different authorities for the same issue? How can we build trust between the taxpayer and the administration? If we can create a system based on simplicity and trust, everyone benefits.

Do you expect reforms to become part of the next phase of GST development?

I am optimistic about it. The government and the GST Council are willing to undertake reforms and respond to the changing needs of the economy. Every state is focused on economic growth, and India has ambitious growth objectives. When the broader objective is growth, regulatory systems need to support that objective. Alignment will, naturally, lead to further reforms and changes. Some of the decisions taken at the 57th GST Council meeting is aimed at ease of doing business.

How vital are digitalisation and tech integration in simplifying GST compliance and making India a global cargo hub?

Technology has changed the way we conduct daily transactions. There was a time when paying an electricity bill meant standing in a queue for several hours. Booking a railway ticket involved filling out forms and waiting for long periods. Today, many of these activities can be completed instantly. That change has taken place due to technology, digitalisation, and reforms that have supported digital infrastructure.

The same principle applies to business and logistics. Digitalisation is no longer optional. Businesses that do not embrace technology will find themselves less competitive and less efficient.

We need to recognise that digital transformation brings with it new responsibilities. The Digital Personal Data



Protection Act, for instance, lays emphasis on how data is collected, processed, and protected, as well as the mechanisms through which consent is obtained. These developments will transform the way businesses operate. Technology, data governance, and regulatory compliance will become interconnected.

What are the challenges India's industry needs to address over the next five years?

India is experiencing growth across sectors. Air cargo is growing rapidly, partly driven by changes in global supply chains and geopolitical developments. This growth is putting pressure on the existing infrastructure. We have bottlenecks in several areas — cargo movement, transportation, airport access, road connectivity, vehicles waiting

India is experiencing growth across sectors. Air cargo is growing rapidly, partly driven by changes in global supply chains and geopolitical developments

outside cargo terminals, and paperwork within airports. These should not be permanent challenges. Most of them can be addressed through better planning, technology, and coordination.

For instance, technologies such as Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

can be used to manage vehicle movements efficiently. Dedicated holding areas or truck lounges can allow vehicles to wait outside the main airport cargo facility rather than creating congestion at the terminal. Bengaluru has shown how such systems can work, with truck operators able to wait in designated facilities while RFID-based systems help manage vehicle movement. There are many solutions available.

India has set an ambitious target of handling 10 MMT air cargo by 2030. Is the industry moving in the right direction to achieve this?

It will take time, but the aim is achievable if the entire landscape works in tandem towards a common vision. One of the biggest challenges is that different agencies and stakeholders often operate in silos. Each agency may have its own rules, processes, and objectives. A process that has been streamlined by one authority can be delayed by another requirement elsewhere in the supply chain.

For example, a particular transaction may comply with one set of regulations, but another agency may require an additional form that may have little relevance to the actual transaction. Such duplication delays cargo movement. The solution is greater coordination. Every agency involved in the ecosystem should work towards the same objective rather than operating independently. 🚀

Sector needs capacity and process reforms



Rising export volumes, investments in airport infrastructure, and emergence of new aviation hubs are creating opportunities. Congestion, constraints in airport handling capacity, regulatory processes and fragmented digital systems challenge the industry, says **Reshma Zaheer**, COO, TT Logistics & Cargo.



Ritika Arora Bhola

How does the sector evolve with rising demand and operational challenges witnessed at airports?

There is no denying that investment in infrastructure and technology has benefited the industry considerably. The development of new airports, such as NIA and NMIA, is also important.

However, with exports from India growing rapidly, we are still falling short on airport cargo handling capacity. We need more capacity at cargo terminals, but that alone is not enough. We also need to ensure that cargo moves through the system quickly and efficiently, particularly during peak periods. Another important area is process re-engineering. We have spoken extensively about technology, but digitalisation should not mean moving existing processes from



“Delhi and Mumbai remain two of India’s largest gateways, and congestion during peak periods is a challenge. There is a clear need for more capacity.”

paper to a screen. We need to rethink the way we work and make our processes more efficient.

The air cargo industry needs to embrace digital transformation, but equally important is interoperability. A good example is the banking sector. When UPI was introduced, banks did not have to abandon their existing core banking systems. UPI provided a common framework through which different systems could communicate and transact with one another. We need a similar approach in air cargo. Freight forwarders, airlines, GSAs, customs, handling agencies, and other stakeholders should be able to exchange information seamlessly while continuing to use their own systems. This could significantly improve efficiency across the cargo chain.

The government has set a target of 10 MMT by 2030. Do you think the industry is on the right track?

The direction is positive, particularly with the infrastructure investments taking



place. But achieving such an ambitious target will require us to address capacity and operational bottlenecks quickly.

Delhi and Mumbai remain two of the country's largest export cargo gateways, and congestion during peak periods is a challenge. We need additional cargo handling capacity, including more terminal space, adequate equipment, and manpower to handle growing volumes. New airports are an important addition to India's aviation infrastructure. However, the necessary cargo handling facilities and regulatory approvals must also be in place to support operations.

The industry's request to the government is that regulatory approvals should progress alongside infrastructure development. When an airport becomes operational, the supporting permissions and processes should ideally be in place to support cargo operations.

How do you assess the performance of different airports, particularly Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru?

Bengaluru has been one of the stronger-performing airports from an operational perspective. What stands out is its responsiveness. When an operational issue arises, there is a willingness to address it quickly, adjust processes, and maintain business continuity.

Delhi and Mumbai handle significant volumes, particularly export cargo. Congestion during peak periods is therefore a challenge. Both airports have made efforts to manage the situation, but the need for additional cargo handling capacity remains.

What regulatory changes would make a difference to the cargo industry?

The priority should be to review existing processes. This should not involve any compromise on national security, safety, or airline security requirements. The aim should be to modernise processes and eliminate duplication wherever possible. For example, if a particular security or regulatory approval can be granted at an



Greater interoperability would make transactions faster, reduce paperwork, and improve visibility across the shipment journey

all-India level, there should be scope to avoid repeating the same process independently at every airport. Streamlining such procedures could reduce administrative delays and improve ease of doing business.

Another important area is digitalisation. Today, different stakeholders operate through different IT systems. We need to find ways for these systems to communicate and exchange information. This would improve transparency, reduce duplication, and help cargo move faster.

How can a unified digital platform benefit the logistics sector?

A genuinely integrated platform could connect freight forwarders, airlines, GSAs, customs, ground handlers, and

other stakeholders through a common digital framework. The objective should not simply be to digitise individual processes, but to connect them. This would reduce paperwork, speed up transactions, and provide better visibility across the shipment journey.

It would help lower logistics costs, improve EoDB, and make it easier for Indian exporters to move their cargo efficiently to global markets.

As India prepares for the next phase of air cargo growth, what should the industry's priorities be?

Our priorities must be clear: More airport handling capacity, faster regulatory approvals, and better processes. We have invested in infrastructure, but handling capacity and the way we process cargo must keep pace with the growth in volumes. The country has an opportunity to build an efficient, technology-driven air cargo network. For this to happen, the government agencies, airports, airlines, and logistics companies need to work together to remove bottlenecks and make the movement of cargo more seamless. 🚚



Kochi Airport charts cargo growth with Vision 2030

With cargo volumes increasing and Kerala's export ecosystem expanding, Cochin International Airport Limited is looking beyond airport operations to build a connected logistics ecosystem that can link the state's producers and businesses more efficiently with international markets.

 CT Bureau

Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) has unveiled Cargo Vision 2030, a long-term strategy aimed at transforming Kochi from an air cargo gateway into an integrated logistics hub linking air freight with sea, rail, road and inland waterways. The strategy comes as CIAL seeks to build on growing volumes and fortify Kerala's access to global markets. During FY2025–26, CIAL handled 72,178 MT of cargo, ac-

counting for nearly 60 per cent of Kerala's air cargo traffic.

CIAL has expanded its cargo infrastructure to support future growth. Its Import Cargo Terminal, commissioned in January 2024, has an annual capacity of 1 lakh MT. The expanded Export Cargo Terminal, opened in December 2025, can handle approximately 1.25 lakh MT annually. Together, these facilities provide nearly 2.25 lakh MT of international cargo capacity.

The aim is to move beyond conventional airport handling and establish Kochi as a logistics gateway for South India, said S Suhas, MD, CIAL.

Perishables & pharma

Perishables remain a key pillar of CIAL's cargo strategy, with 30,000 MT handled in FY2025–26. The airport plans to strengthen the segment through an integrated farm-to-airport logistics model.

A proposed Integrated Packhouse-cum-Logistics Park, for which a feasibility study has been completed, could support grading, processing, and packing

A proposed Integrated Packhouse-cum-Logistics Park, for which a feasibility study has been completed, could support aggregation, grading, processing, packing, and cold chain handling of agricultural and other perishable products.

CIAL is expanding its temperature-controlled capabilities. The Export Cargo Terminal supports 2°C to 8°C and 15°C



to 25°C storage, while additional sub-zero temperature infrastructure is being developed. Pharma logistics is another emerging focus. CIAL has initiated Good Distribution Practices certification for a pharma cargo facility of around 2,500 sqft, with an initial targeted capacity of around 2,500 MT annually.

Multimodal cargo network

A defining element of Cargo Vision 2030 is CIAL's ambition to link airport cargo with the wider logistics ecosystem around Kochi. The airport is exploring linkages with Kochi Port, Vallarpadam, rail networks, highways, and inland waterways. Discussions are underway with the relevant authorities.

Such integration could facilitate sea-air, air-sea, rail-air, and road-air cargo movements. CIAL sees Kochi's combination of airport, port, rail, road, and waterway connectivity as an opportunity to develop a multimodal cargo interchange serving Kerala and the wider South Indian market.

Cargo transshipment

CIAL is seeking to strengthen Kochi's role in cargo transshipment. A dedicated Transfer Cargo Security Hold Area is being developed in coordination with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and other regulatory agencies to facilitate different categories of transfer cargo.

Subject to regulatory approvals, the facility could enable consolidation of domestic and global cargo at Kochi



Cargo Vision 2030 aims to create a dedicated cargo marketing function focused on attracting airlines, freighter operators, exporters, and logistics firms

and support India's objective of retaining more transshipment volumes within the country.

Freighter linkage is another priority. CIAL has handled Boeing 747-400, Boeing 777, and Airbus A321 P2Fs and has demonstrated turnaround times of less than three hours for Boeing 777F operations. The airport has established a dedicated Freighter Task Force to coordinate cargo, ground handling, security, and airside operations. CIAL aims to

attract more scheduled freighters, new operators, larger aircraft, and international cargo routes.

Digitalisation

Technology will form another key pillar of the strategy. CIAL is evaluating a Cargo Community System to digitally connect airlines, customs, terminal operators, freight forwarders, customs brokers, and transporters. The proposed system could enable paperless processes, real-time visibility, and faster data exchange, while helping reduce cargo dwell and truck turnaround times. CIAL is progressing handling automation, including ULD weighing workstations, castor-deck platforms, and mechanised cargo movement systems.

Logistics gateway

Cargo Vision 2030 builds on Mission Cargo was launched two years ago to set up cargo as a growth vertical for CIAL. It created a dedicated cargo marketing function focused on attracting airlines, freighter operators, exporters, and logistics firms.

The strategy now brings together capacity, cold chain infrastructure, pharma logistics, freighter linkage, digitalisation, and multimodal transport under a single framework. For CIAL, the ambition is clear: To move from handling cargo arriving at or departing from an aircraft to create an integrated logistics ecosystem where goods can be processed, tracked, and moved across transport modes. 🚚



TCI plans 2 coastal vessels in FY27 to support modal shift

The sector is entering a new phase of growth, driven by expansion across e-commerce, q-commerce, pharma, automotive, and specialised supply chains. With emphasis on rail, coastal shipping, organised warehousing, and digital visibility, firms are looking to cut costs, says **Vineet Agarwal**, MD, Transport Corporation of India.



CT Bureau

Which segments do you expect to drive the next phase of logistics growth?

The next phase of logistics growth will be driven by sectors where speed, reliability, and end-to-end visibility are critical. Q-commerce, FMCG, and organised retail will continue to expand, while automotive, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals will drive demand for specialised, compliance-led logistics services.

Cold chain logistics and organised warehousing will grow as e-commerce and temperature-sensitive supply chains mature. This trend is reflected in the

demand for integrated supply chain solutions and our expanding warehousing footprint, which stands at 17 million sqft.

Continued infrastructure investment, digitalisation, and industry formalisation will help these segments deliver more efficient, scalable, and sustainable logistics growth.

How can India reduce logistics costs without compromising service quality?

Reducing logistics costs requires optimisation rather than compromise. India needs to shift freight to the most efficient mode for each leg, with greater use of rail and coastal shipping integrated with road transport for first- and last-mile

connectivity. This can reduce the cost per tonne-kilometre.

The modal shift must be supported by modern warehousing, automation, digital visibility, streamlined processes, faster transshipment, secure parking, and electronic clearances. Continued dependence on road transport, alongside the low share of coastal shipping, highlights significant scope for optimisation.

“Despite India’s coastline and the cost, scale, and sustainability advantages of coastal movement, coastal shipping accounts for 6% of domestic freight.”

When these measures are implemented together, they can reduce dwell time and waste while improving reliability, service quality, and overall supply-chain efficiency.

Which logistics segment remains the most underutilised, and why?

Coastal shipping remains one of the most underutilised logistics segments. Despite India’s extensive coastline and the cost, scale, and sustainability advantages of coastal movement, it accounts for about 6 per cent of domestic freight.

Infrastructure gaps, limited hinterland connectivity, regulatory friction, and the historical preference for road transport have constrained its growth. As port capacity, multimodal gateways, and last-mile connectivity improve, coastal





Vineet Agarwal
Managing Director
Transport Corporation of India

shipping can shift substantial freight volumes from roads, reduce logistics costs, and lower carbon emissions.

At the company, we are acting on this opportunity by expanding our coastal fleet by 20 per cent, with two new vessels planned in FY27 to support a scalable and sustainable modal shift.

Which emerging trend is the industry still underestimating?

The logistics industry may still be underestimating the value of fully connected logistics networks. Future competitive advantage will depend less on excelling in a single transport mode and more on synchronising transportation, warehousing, and fulfilment through real-time visibility, automation, and data-driven decision-making.

The gathering provided a platform for industry stakeholders to discuss emerging opportunities, operational challenges, and India's air cargo future

Seamless integration can reduce buffer inventories, shorten lead times, and enable dynamic capacity allocation. The result is lower costs, better service levels, and supply chain resilience.

We are, therefore, investing in digital platforms and integrated operations because technology-enabled orchestration, rather than isolated efficiency gains, will define the next generation of logistics leaders.

What should the top logistics priority over the next five years be?

India's priority should be to build a globally competitive and multimodal freight ecosystem that is efficient, resilient, and digitally enabled.

This requires investment in rail and coastal connectivity, seamless last-mile links to industrial clusters, organised warehousing, and modern transshipment hubs. These infrastructure investments should be supported by policy reforms that reduce regulatory friction.

Digital platforms and automation must be scaled to improve visibility, optimise asset utilisation, and shorten lead times. Together, these measures can lower logistics costs, improve service

We are scaling value-added services across organised warehousing, LTL, and specialised logistics.

The objective is to translate technological capabilities into measurable user benefits, faster lead times, higher asset utilisation, and lower total cost of ownership. By combining technology and integrated operations, we aim to remain responsive, reliable, and future-ready as the logistics ecosystem evolves. 📈



quality, and strengthen India's position as a manufacturing and export hub.

What are your priorities as the industry becomes more technology-driven?

Our priority is to make tech the backbone of logistics. We are investing in automation, advanced digital platforms, and CoE to improve real-time visibility, predictive decision-making, and process standardisation across our network.

Why connected data matters in supply chains?

Ashutosh Varshney, Senior Director, SCM & General Affairs Division, Canon India, speaks about the shift from visibility to predictive SCM, the role of technology in building resilience, and why collaboration, workforce readiness, infrastructure, and sustainability will be critical to shaping more agile supply chains in India.

 Pallak Kashyap

Where is AI delivering the most value in supply chains, and where does its potential remain untapped?

Today, AI is helping us improve demand forecasting, optimise inventory, and strengthen real-time visibility across the supply chain. Combined with ML, Big Data, and IoT, AI helps us monitor delivery timelines, inventory levels, and potential disruptions, enabling faster responses. In terms of its larger potential, the opportunity lies in moving from visibility to prediction and optimisation. AI-led predictive analytics are likely to enhance visibility, planning, and responsiveness further.

Emerging concepts such as digital twins are being explored to simulate and optimise supply chain scenarios, while edge computing and blockchain are expected to strengthen



collaboration, risk mitigation, and last-mile efficiency.

How has real-time data improved Canon India's supply chain operations?

Real-time data has enhanced transparency and visibility across our supply chain, enabling better coordination, faster response rates, and improved

“The opportunity lies in moving from visibility to prediction and optimisation. AI-led analytics is likely to enhance visibility, planning, and responsiveness further.”

decision-making. Key systems such as the Integrated Information System (IIS) and Electronic Data Interchange System (EDIS) enable data exchange with suppliers, improving order management and delivery tracking. We collaborate with logistics partners using IoT sensors, vehicle telematics, and automated systems to enable real-time tracking and coordination. Leveraging AI, ML, Big Data, IoT, and Cloud Computing has fortified real-time data analytics and demand forecasting.

Automation and data analysis play a vital role in ensuring efficient inventory management, better demand forecasting, and faster response to market



demand. Robotic Process Automation helps minimise repetitive tasks, while wearable scanners within warehouses enhance picking accuracy, and reduce manual errors.

How can firms improve demand forecasting while keeping inventory efficient?

Our data-driven approach is central to how we anticipate market requirements, optimise inventory, and deliver value efficiently. We monitor critical KPIs like delivery timelines, inventory levels, and supply chain disruptions through advanced analytics. Leveraging technologies such as AI, ML, Big Data, and IoT, Canon has enhanced transparency, real-time tracking, and demand forecasting, enabling us to respond faster to changing demand.

Seamless data exchange through systems such as the IIS and EDIS improve coordination with suppliers, order management, and delivery tracking. Combined with automation and data analysis, these capabilities help improve inventory efficiency, strengthen demand forecasting, respond faster to demand, and maintain product availability without compromising operational efficiency.

What has Canon learnt about building a resilient supply chain?

SCM has indeed transitioned from a support function to a strategic enabler at the heart of business growth. This shift has



made agility and resilience critical to ensuring continuity and meeting evolving business needs. At Canon, we fortify this agility through real-time visibility across inventory, delivery timelines, and potential disruptions, enabling us to anticipate changes, make timely decisions, and respond proactively. Equally important is coordination across planning, logistics, sales, service teams, suppliers, and

Real-time data enhanced transparency and visibility across our supply chain, enabling coordination, faster response rates, and improved decision-making

logistics partners. The use of advanced analytics and AI, among other tools, supports demand forecasting, real-time tracking, and faster decision-making.

How is the evolving logistics infrastructure changing supply chain networks?

India's logistics infrastructure is enabling firms to build more connected and efficient supply chain networks. At Canon, developments such as highway expansions, DFCs, and increased investments in ports and logistics hubs are

fortifying logistics capacity and connectivity across India.

Digital technologies are making these networks more responsive. Our warehouses use material handling equipment (MHE) along with IoT sensors, vehicle telematics, and automated information exchange systems to improve storage, handling, and movement of goods. These automated systems strengthen connectivity with suppliers, vendors, and logistics partners, ensuring real-time and accurate exchange of information across the network.

What role does workforce readiness play in digital transformation?

Workforce readiness is critical to making digital transformation meaningful and sustainable. At Canon, our progress came when we fostered real-time collaboration between logistics, planning, sales, and service teams. Digitisation has enabled visibility across operations, but it is cultural alignment and continuous skilling that made our supply chain responsive and resilient. For organisations embarking on this transition, investing in people and processes is vital. Technology should translate into a better end-user experience. 🚀



AISATS to double capacity at Noida airport

Air India SATS Airport Services will double its cargo capacity at Noida International Airport following rising demand from Uttar Pradesh's growing manufacturing, logistics, and exporter community. UP's economy has more than doubled over the past eight years, crossing ₹30.25 lakh crore.



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Air India SATS Airport Services (AISATS) is set to double its operational capacity at the multimodal cargo hub (MMCH) at Noida International Airport (NIA) during the upcoming winter schedule, in response to growing cargo and logistics demand from Uttar Pradesh's expanding industrial and export ecosystem.

The AISATS MMCH commenced domestic cargo operations in June 2026 and is presently handling a diverse mix of shipments, including electronics, auto components, agricultural produce, perishables, and e-commerce.

The planned capacity expansion is likely to strengthen the facility's ability to support the state's growing trade volumes and provide businesses with more efficient access to domestic and international markets.

According to the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO), Uttar Pradesh is India's fifth-largest exporting state and the leading exporter among landlocked states. Gautam Buddha Nagar was the state's largest exporting district in FY2025–26, accounting for nearly half of Uttar Pradesh's exports, valued at approximately ₹97,703 crore.

With cargo operations set to commence at NIA, the MMCH is positioned to fortify connections between UP's manufacturing and global markets

Spread across 87 acres, the AISATS MMCH includes a 30-acre Integrated Cargo Terminal and a 57-acre Integrated Warehousing and Logistics Zone. The facility brings cargo handling, warehousing, trucking, and digital cargo management together within a single ecosystem,

enabling more streamlined movement of goods.

The expansion comes as Uttar Pradesh continues to strengthen its economic and trade base. According to the state's economic survey, Uttar Pradesh's economy has more than doubled over the past eight years, crossing ₹30.25 lakh crore, while its contribution to the Indian economy reached 9.1 per cent in 2024–25.

With international cargo operations set to commence at NIA, the MMCH is positioned to strengthen connections between manufacturing and production clusters of Uttar Pradesh and the international markets. The facility is also likely to create new opportunities for exporters and businesses while supporting more efficient supply chains and strengthening Uttar Pradesh's role in the country's growing logistics and trade network.





Moving express parcels on Namo Bharat Corridor

A new logistics partnership could bring rail infrastructure closer to the country's evolving express delivery ecosystem, as Blue Dart Express and National Capital Region Transport Corporation explore the use of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor for express parcel movement.

 CT Bureau

Blue Dart Express has signed an MoU with National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) to examine the feasibility of moving express parcels through the 82-km Namo Bharat corridor, connecting Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Meerut.

The collaboration will assess how Blue Dart's existing pickup and delivery network could be integrated with the regional rail system to create an efficient link between key transport hubs and businesses across the NCR.

The two organisations will evaluate operational requirements, potential parcel volumes, station infrastructure, service standards, and commercial considerations before determining the feasibility of the proposed model.

The corridor's multimodal connectivity could provide a foundation for such an integrated logistics solution. The Sarai

Kale Khan Namo Bharat Station is linked with Hazrat Nizamuddin Railway Station and the inter-state bus terminal, while the Anand Vihar station provides connectivity with Anand Vihar Railway Station and two inter-state bus terminals. These connections could enable parcels to move between established transport nodes and Blue Dart's existing first- and last-mile delivery network.

The initiative reflects a shift towards using integrated transport infrastructure to improve the efficiency and sustainability of urban and regional logistics

The initiative reflects a broader shift towards using integrated transport infrastructure to improve the efficiency and sustainability of urban and regional logistics. Rather than creating a separate freight network, the proposed model seeks to examine whether the existing regional railway connectivity

can complement established express logistics operations.

"The partnership provides an opportunity to explore how Namo Bharat infrastructure could contribute to the freight ecosystem while supporting the wider objectives of regional connectivity, reduced road congestion, and lower emissions," said Shalabh Goel, Managing Director, NCRTC.

For Blue Dart, the proposed collaboration is part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen its integrated transportation network and explore new solutions as customer requirements and supply chains evolve.

"The company would work with NCRTC to identify areas where the semi-high-speed regional rail network could complement Blue Dart's pickup and delivery capabilities while supporting more sustainable logistics solutions," said Balfour Manuel, Managing Director, Blue Dart Express. 

Transindia acquires land for Dankuni warehouse

Transindia Real Estate of Allcargo Group has acquired 45 acres in Dankuni, near Kolkata, for a warehousing project involving ₹1,000 crore, said Ram Walase, CEO, Real Estate, and Head, Global Procurement, Transindia Real Estate. The facility will add 10–12 lakh sqft of warehousing capacity and is likely to be operational in 24 months. The project will target e-commerce, logistics, and industrial users, marking Transindia's first investment in Kolkata and its entry into eastern India. About ₹100 crore has been earmarked for the land, while another ₹400 crore will be spent on basic infrastructure. End users are expected to invest about ₹500 crore in internal warehouse infrastructure and handling equipment.



AAI acquires land to ease Chennai congestion

The AAI has acquired 19.06 acres near Chennai Airport for ₹278 crore, with the land parcel to be used for parking cargo trucks, currently queuing outside the cargo terminal, an AAI official said. The acquisition follows complaints from exporters and forwarders about waits of several hours for cargo delivery and collection. An existing stadium on the site behind Meenambakkam Metro Station is likely to be converted into a truck parking area, while demolition work may create more space. The airport's cargo terminal handles 400 tonnes of exports and 800 tonnes of imports daily, nearly 30 per cent more than a year earlier. Truck congestion affects traffic on GST Road, especially during evening peak hours, the official added.



KN opens technology centre in Chennai

Kuehne+Nagel (KN) has opened a Tech Centre in Chennai, with 250 technology and engineering professionals expected to be based there by early 2027, said Marcus Claesson, Chief Information Officer. The centre will support development of the company's digital platforms, including SALOG, its global sea and air freight forwarding platform. The Chennai facility expands KN's engineering presence in India and will focus on developing and scaling digital logistics solutions. The firm is working with Accenture on building the centre's workforce. The investment comes as logistics operators use digital platforms for shipment management and supply chain visibility.



Indian Railways turns to AI for freight wagon security

Indian Railways has introduced Project DRISHTI, an AI-based system developed by Northeast Frontier Railway and IIT Guwahati, to monitor freight wagon doors, locks, and seals during transit, said railway officials. The system uses high-speed cameras, intelligent lighting, and secure networking to inspect wagons as trains pass designated monitoring points. The AI-based system identifies wagon numbers, checks whether doors, locks, and seals are intact, and flags possible irregularities or pilferage for attention. Inspection findings are recorded digitally, enabling railway personnel to respond without relying solely on manual checks.



Driver Logistics opens tyre mother hub in Vizag

Driver Logistics has started operations at an 80,000 sqft mother hub in Visakhapatnam for ATC Tyres AP, a Yokohama Group company, to handle storage and distribution of passenger car and off-highway tyres, said Rashad M, Chief Operating Officer (COO). The mother hub will also serve Yokohama and Alliance, Galaxy, and Primex tyre brands and support distribution across agricultural, construction, industrial, and forestry segments. The hub adds to ATC's existing tyre distribution network, which has facilities in Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Gujarat, according to a company statement. 🇮🇳



Cathay Cargo introduces AI-aided trade screening

Cathay Cargo has introduced AI-assisted screening to assess shipment descriptions against trade-control needs before cargo moves, helping identify potential permit obligations earlier in the process. The system goes beyond keyword-based checks, using language analysis to interpret the context of goods descriptions and flag shipments that may require compliance review. Shippers remain responsible for declarations, while human oversight continues during the screening process. Cathay has redesigned its frontline screening display, allowing teams to see why a shipment was flagged and what follow-up may be required. The carrier said early results have shown timely alert handling.



WFS opens 25,400 sqm cargo terminal in Lyon

Worldwide Flight Services (WFS) has opened a terminal measuring 25,400 sqm at Lyon-Saint Exupéry Airport, consolidating its Lyon operations at a single facility within the airport's Cargo port zone. The new terminal includes 4,400 sqm of temperature-controlled rooms and 36 import/export docks, including five dedicated to pallet transfers. The facility is designed to handle sensitive cargo, including pharma, healthcare, biotechnology, reflecting demand from Lyon's industrial base. It supports WFS' 380 customers in the region and its second-largest French operation after Charles de Gaulle. The new terminal consolidates handling closer to the runways and is likely to back support cargo flows between landside access.



Emirates handles 1 million pharma shipments

Emirates SkyCargo has handled 1 million pharma shipments through its Dubai hub, representing over 800,000 tonnes of pharma cargo since its specialised pharma product was



launched a decade ago. Currently, the carrier moves an average of 1.5–2 million kg of pharma products each week across its network. Its Dubai operation has 16,500 sqm of GDP-certified handling and storage space across Dubai International Airport and Al Maktoum International Airport, supported by over 55 temperature-controlled cool dollies for cargo transfers. The carrier's pharma origin markets include India, Germany, Belgium, the UK, the USA, and Switzerland.

SATS, Tocumen explore Asia–Americas cargo link

SATS and Tocumen International Airport have signed an agreement to explore cargo infrastructure and handling operations at Tocumen Cargo City, with the aim of developing new air cargo



flows between Asia and the Americas. The proposed collaboration will examine cargo area development at Tocumen International Airport and the expansion of handling capabilities in line with the airport's master plan. SATS will bring its air cargo handling expertise and global network to the discussions. For cargo operators, the focus is to strengthen Panama's role as a transit point for cargo moving between Asian markets and the Americas.

flydubai outsources full ULD management

flydubai has signed a long-term pact with Unilode Aviation Solutions for management of its Unit Load Device (ULD) fleet, covering passenger and cargo operations. The arrangement comes as the airline expands its business and prepares for future fleet growth, including Boeing 787 operations. Unilode will handle ULD supply, maintenance, repair, fleet planning, repositioning, and digital tracking, covering the containers used to load aircraft. The pact will support flydubai's dedicated freighter operation, which began with three Boeing 737-800Fs based at DWC. The ULD programme will cover flydubai's passenger aircraft and freighters, with digital tracking intended to provide visibility of equipment location and utilisation across its network.



Movements



PORTER Bengaluru, India

Shruti Ranjan Satapathy has been named Chief Product Officer at Porter. In his new role, he will oversee product management, UX design, user research, and data, fortifying the firm's product strategy and supporting its growth. Satapathy held leadership positions at Porter, including

Chief Technology Officer and AVP Engineering. Earlier, he worked at Rocket Fuel Inc and completed research internships at Microsoft Research India.



JINDAL STEEL LTD New Delhi, India

Aditya Vardhan has been elevated to the post of Vice President IT and Group CISO at Jindal Steel Limited. In his new role, Vardhan will oversee IT and cyber security, using his expertise in cyber resilience and information security. Earlier, Vardhan served

as Associate Vice President, IT and CISO, at Jindal Steel. He has also worked at CMS IT Services, Cairn Vedanta Oil & Gas, and Adani Group.



DFCCIL Noida, India

Alok Tiwari has been appointed Managing Director at Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL). This is apart from his responsibility as Additional Member (Bridge), Railway Board. Tiwari will focus on efficiency, asset reliability, technological innovation, and

infrastructure across the DFC network. Previously, he has served as Chief Administrative Officer at South East Central Railway and Principal Chief Safety Officer at South Western Railway.



MARS SNACKING New Delhi, India

Arijit Sengupta will serve as Chief Marketing Officer, India, at Mars Snacking. He will lead the marketing agenda for the firm in India, focusing on brand building, innovation, and business growth. Sengupta will work towards strengthening the marketing ecosystem in line with the

evolving needs of India's snacking market. Sengupta has previously held senior leadership roles at Zydus Wellness, Reckitt, Unilever, and Colgate-Palmolive.



VERTIV HOLDINGS Westerville, USA

Michael Resha has been appointed Executive Vice President, Manufacturing, Logistics, and Operational Excellence, at Vertiv Holdings. Resha will deploy the Vertiv Operating System and help position the firm to capitalise on growth opportunities. He joins Vertiv from Stellantis,

where he recently served as Senior Vice President and Global Head, Injection and Stamping, overseeing operations across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia-Pacific.



ELEMENT FLEET MANAGEMENT Toronto, Canada

Manpreet Rana was promoted to Senior Vice President at Element Fleet Management. Rana will focus on advancing priorities across the organisation, building on his leadership of Fleet Care & Logistics, Maintenance, Collision, and Contact Centres.

His mandate includes strengthening operational performance, enhancing service delivery, advancing digital capabilities, and creating value for clients. He has previously worked in ICICI Bank and IBM. 🇮🇳

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