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Amit Maheshwari, Founder & CEO and Kunal Maheshwari, CGO, Softlink Global



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Policy reforms, technology to boost air cargo potential



From disruption to definition: The power of vision



Will ACAAI chart the next decade of air cargo?



Industry must stay agile amid rising trade constraints



Skill manpower to get tech-ready for sector



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EDITOR: Sanjeet

CHIEF EDITOR

Nisha Verma
nisha.verma@ddpl.com

EDITORIAL HEAD

Eva Young
eva.young@ddpl.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Ritika Arora Bhola
ritika.arora@ddpl.com

DESK EDITOR

VVN Murthi
vvn.murthi@ddpl.com

ASST. VICE PRESIDENT: Abha Gupta
abha.gupta@ddpl.com

GENERAL MANAGER: Harshal Ashar
harshal@ddpl.com

MANAGER: Jaspreet Kaur

ASSISTANT MANAGER: Samantha Pereira

DESIGN: Nityanand Misra

ADVERTISEMENT DESIGNER

Nitin Kumar, Aditya Pratap Singh
Anil Khatri Chhetri

GM (PRODUCTION)

Anil Kharbada

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Ramesh Gupta

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Ashok Rana



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Partnerships and policy vision key drivers for India's cargo future

With new airports coming up in New Delhi and Mumbai, and more capacity at existing global hubs, India is set to witness growth in connectivity and trade. These developments are poised to attract global carriers and strengthen India's position as a link in the global supply chain, says **Samir J Shah, President, ACAAI**.



Ritika Arora Bhola

Could you share your immediate priorities and vision for the Association under your leadership?

ACAAI is an old association with a wonderful legacy of serving its members; the airlines and other stakeholders and participating in policy discussions with the Government of India. There is so much happening in logistics, especially air cargo — new airports; new challenges; more regulations and much more. ACAAI will increase its outreach with all stakeholders, especially the

government; airlines and custodians. Having led Jeena and Company through various phases of industry trans-

“We will increase our interaction with the govt and other stakeholders. Continuous dialogue will benefit all of us.”

formation, I understand the importance of collaboration and innovation. “My objective is to bring that same spirit of partnership and progress to ACAAI's initiatives. I am for-

tunate to have a wonderful team of Managing Committee members and a capable secretariat along with experienced Advisors to help me in the journey.”

As an experienced air cargo professional, how do you plan to steer ACAAI toward addressing the evolving needs of the freight forwarding and logistics community?

We will increase our interaction with the govt and other stakeholders. A continual dialogue will benefit all of us. We also propose to bring out a few white papers on topics of current interest. ACAAI



Samir J Shah
President
ACAAI

will also be working towards setting up their own institute for training personnel of our members on all related topics in addition to DG regulations. Drawing from the learnings at Jeena & Company, where



adaptability and technology-led processes have been key to our success, ACAAI will focus on helping members embrace similar best practices and build future-ready capabilities that align with global standards.

What are your focus areas for strengthening collaboration between ACAAI members, airlines, regulators, and airport authorities?

We all need each other in this ecosystem, and fostering co-operation and mutual respect is central to our approach. Building a sense of ease and understanding among stakeholders such as members, airlines, regulators, and airport authorities is a must for progress. Our experience at Jeena & Company has shown trust-based partnerships can overcome even the toughest

“The new airports in New Delhi and Mumbai, and more cargo capacity at existing global facilities, will attract carriers to India.”



operational issues. ACAAI will strive to cultivate the spirit of collaboration and shared purpose across the industry.

The sector is at a pivotal stage of growth. What opportunities and challenges do you foresee in the near to medium term?

The new airports in New Delhi and Mumbai and added cargo capacity at existing international facilities will attract more carriers to India. We will work to empower our

members to participate in this growth.

How will ACAAI engage with the govt to advocate for reforms to promote efficiency and competitiveness?

My committee and advisors have extensive experience in policy engagement. We will be leveraging the same with many bodies not only civil aviation. The present movement in the government is in a mode to address ease of doing business and growing our economy to

be a leader in international business. We shall actively participate with the govt in all its initiatives. We shall endeavour to be a bridge between them and other stakeholders — the members.

The upcoming 49th ACAAI Annual Convention brings together stakeholders from across the supply chain. What themes or discussions will take centre stage this year, and how do they reflect your leadership agenda?

The theme of the convention as decided is “Connected yet constrained – transforming trade amidst rising barriers”. The sessions will be around this theme. We shall also have our mandatory sessions on the individual. The evenings will be filled with fun; games and celebrations. I am a big believer in empowering the individual to achieve greater heights that can be imagined.

As the new ACAAI President, what message would you like to convey to ACAAI members and the wider air cargo fraternity as you begin your term of leadership?

The association is for you; envisaged for you and my committee will endeavour to serve you to the best possibility.



ACAAI CONVENTION TO NAVIGATE GLOBAL CARGO CHALLENGES

The Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI) Convention comes at a pivotal time when air cargo is grappling with a whirlwind of developments. The event will focus on how stakeholders are gearing up with strategies to deal with rising trade barriers, evolving regulations, and global market fluctuations, creating challenges and opportunities for the sector. The event will foster discussions on the challenges posed by regulatory changes, market shifts, and logistical constraints.





Ritika Arora Bhola

Technologies such as AI, automation, and IoT are transforming the way the industry operates, driving efficiency and innovation at an unprecedented pace. This reliance on technology is reshaping traditional workflows, requiring businesses to adapt efficient strategies to remain competitive in a highly dynamic global market. While the world is becoming digitally connected, global supply chains

While the world is becoming digitally linked, expanding supply chains enable easy, fast, real-time cargo tracking and decision-making

stretching across continents — enabling easy, fast, and accurate AI-driven real-time cargo tracking and decision-

making, geopolitical frictions, increasing compliance complexities, unavailability of data, and fragmented data standards, especially in the Indian market — are creating a landscape that is linked yet constrained. These complexities remain areas of concern.

AIR CARGO NEEDS 'DIGITAL DETOX'

No doubt, air cargo serves as a lifeline for time-sensitive goods, including pharma, electronics, e-commerce shipments, and perishables,

yet despite advanced digital tools and resilient logistics networks, the industry continues to grapple with regulatory bottlenecks that challenge speed, reliability, and efficiency. Addressing these constraints is critical for airports, terminal operators, airlines, agents, and MSMEs and for nations seeking to strengthen their role in global trade. Cargo tracking apps and automated documentation systems provide visibility that would have been unimaginable a decade ago,



but despite these technological advances, trade remains highly constrained.

GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS

In recent years, tariffs, geopolitical tensions, rising protectionism, export controls, sanctions, and shifting alliances have posed challenges for Indian EXIM trade. The global environment remains unpredictable, with products facing new tariffs or regulatory hurdles almost overnight. Conflicts and diplomatic disputes in key regions have disrupted traditional trade routes, compelling logistics operators to explore alternative pathways that are costlier and slower.

Global slowdown, the Russia-Ukraine war, tensions in the Middle East, and periodic airspace closures, have tested the Indian trade's resilience. Despite these challenges, India has shown its ability to adapt and thrive. Investments in infrastructure, including modern cargo hubs, MMLPs, DFCs, expanded airport capacities, and advanced logistics technology have ensured smoother operations and improved efficiency.

Diversification of routes and a proactive engagement with global regulatory

ACAAI 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

- ➔ Automation and compliance
- ➔ Changing practices at cargo terminals, new facilities
- ➔ Multimodal cargo hubs
- ➔ Transforming trade against rising barriers
- ➔ Air Freight Stations

framework and associations such as FIATA have enabled Indian exporters and importers to navigate complexities effectively. By leveraging tech, diversifying markets, and adopting flexible supply chain strategies, India has mitigated the impact of global disruptions, and reinforced its position as a reliable and resilient player in global trade. These strategies continue to fuel growth and ensure Indian trade remains agile and competitive in an ever-evolving global landscape.

VITAL TO BE RESILIENT

To remain resilient and agile amid evolving global challenges, the industry should focus on adaptability, innova-

tion, and collaboration. The first step is to strengthen infra and technology adoption. Investing in modern cargo handling facilities, digitised processes, and advanced tracking systems can improve efficiency, reduce delays, and provide real-time visibility across the supply chain. Automation, AI, and IoT should be leveraged to optimise operations, anticipate disruptions, and respond proactively.

Cargo operators must explore new markets, trade lanes, and customer segments to lower dependency on certain regions or industries. Partnerships with carriers, forwarders, and regulatory authorities can help navigate changing trade policies, tar-

iffs, and sanctions, ensuring smoother operations even during disruptions. India should focus on creating SEZs near ports to attract global manufacturers and logistics firms. Partnerships with global shipping lines and integration with global trade routes can boost volumes. Adopting global best practices in port governance and reducing bureaucratic hurdles will enhance competitiveness. India's large coastline and strategic location between Europe and Asia offer natural advantages, which, if leveraged effectively, can position it as a major transshipment and maritime trade hub in the Indo-Pacific region.

Workforce upskilling is another key area. Training teams to handle complex logistics, compliance, and technology will strengthen operational agility. Sustainability initiatives, such as fuel-efficient operations and carbon reduction programmes can enhance international competitiveness and future-proof the air cargo industry. Continuous engagement with government bodies, trade associations, and global stakeholders is vital. By maintaining a collective, informed, and proactive approach, the industry can withstand global

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uncertainties and seize emerging opportunities for growth and innovation.

As per industry experts, building continuous training programmes so that people can work alongside automated tools is essential. They suggest accelerating end-to-end digitalisation to enhance visibility, predictive planning, and real-

“Govt plays a critical role in establishing clear and transparent policies, and streamlining regulatory frameworks.”

time decision-making. Building flexible capacity models through multimodal integration and data-driven demand forecasting can help manage disruptions. Investing in sustainability and green logistics and aligning with global carbon goals is a must to improve efficiency.

Strengthening partnerships across airlines, airports, freight forwarders, and regulators is critical to harmonise standards and streamline processes. Together, these steps will enable the air cargo industry to navigate uncer-

tainty, while driving long-term, sustainable growth.

PPPs TO FOSTER LONG-TERM GROWTH

Reducing trade friction and enhancing logistics efficiency requires proactive collaboration between the public and private sectors. Govt plays a critical role in establishing clear and transparent policies, and streamlining regulatory frameworks, thereby ensuring that trade facilitation measures are consistent and predictable. Timely updates on tariffs, export controls, and compliance requirements help businesses plan ops effectively and avoid costly delays. Logistics opera-

tors, forwarders, airlines, and exporters should engage with authorities to share ground-level insights, highlight operational challenges, and propose practical solutions. Associations, such as ACAAI, AMTOI, ACFI, FIATA, and others can serve as a bridge between stakeholders, facilitating dialogue, training programmes, and policy recommendations that reflect the realities of day-to-day trade.

Collaborative initiatives could include digital trade platforms, single-window clearances, open sky policy, and standardised documentation, which reduce bottlenecks

and accelerate cargo movement. PPPs in infrastructure development — modern cargo terminals, cold chain facilities, and expanded airport capacities can boost efficiency. Initiatives such as PM Gat-iShakti and NLP have been game changers, integrating multimodal transport networks and providing a unified infra roadmap.

Aligning logistics, highways, ports, railways, and airports under one digital platform, enables faster cargo movement, reduces bottlenecks, and improves last-mile connectivity. By combining govt oversight with private



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As an IATA Authorised Training Centre (ATC), TT Skill offers 10 globally recognised aviation programmes in e-learning and self-study modes, mentored by IATA-certified inhouse trainers with dedicated learner support.

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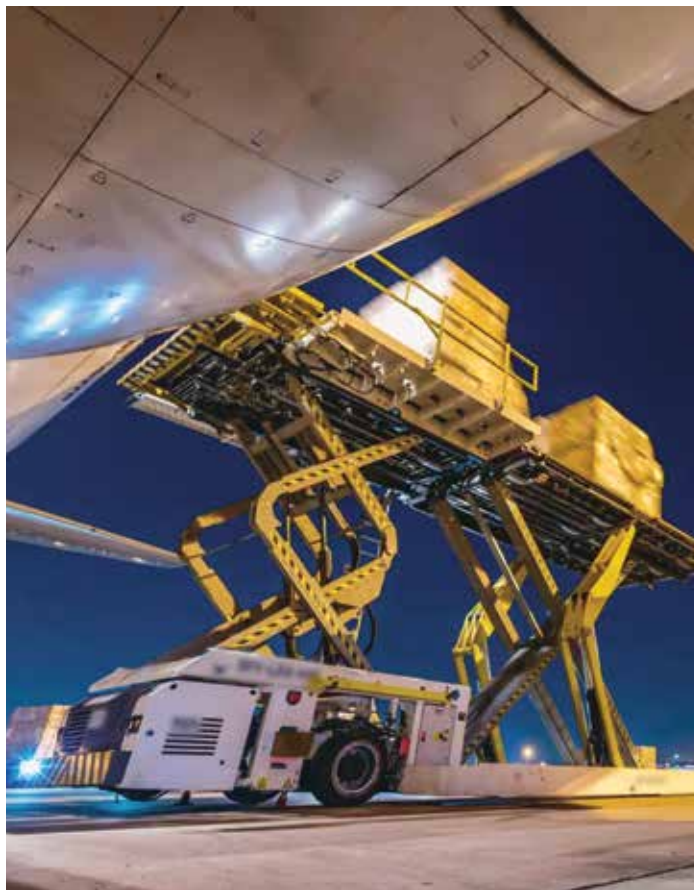
sector agility, India can create a seamless, transparent, and efficient logistics ecosystem, reducing trade friction, lowering costs, and strengthening its position in the global logistics landscape.

LOOKING AHEAD

While geopolitical tensions, tariffs, sanctions, and evolving regulations have challenged trade flows, India has shown resilience through investments in in-

Investments in modern handling facilities, digitalisation, AI-driven tracking, and workforce upskilling will enhance efficiency and agility

fra, tech, and multimodal logistics networks. PMGS and NLP are enabling faster, integrated cargo flow, improving last-mile connectivity, and reducing bot-



tlenecks. The industry's growth hinges on adaptability, diversification, and collaboration. Investments in modern handling facilities, digitalisation, AI-driven tracking, and workforce upskilling will enhance efficiency and agility. PPPs, engagement with global regulatory frameworks, and fortified collaborations with airlines, forwarders, and ports will continue to streamline processes and reduce trade friction. By leveraging innovation, technology, and a collaborative ecosystem, the industry is navigating global uncertainties and positioning itself as a resilient, competitive, and forward-looking hub in global trade. The sector is poised to change challenges into opportunities, driving sustainable growth and reinforcing India's critical role in the global logistics network.

Is India future-ready with a 'connected yet constrained' logistics ecosystem? **CARGOTALK** discusses with trade experts.

Partnership vital to streamline processes

“ The air cargo and logistics industry demands a balance between transformation, collaboration, and sustainability to remain resilient. Focus should be laid on building flexible supply chains, which are enabled by real-time data, predictive analytics, and automation. Partnerships between airlines, forwarders, and regulatory bodies has become important to streamline processes and reduce bottlenecks. Investment in skill development and greener operations will ensure the industry adapts to evolving trade dynamics. The government and logistics players must work closely to resolve the hindrances, affecting smooth and quick processes.”



Cyrus Katgara
Partner
Jeena & Company

The govt and logistics players must work closely to resolve the hindrances

Infra gaps obstruct cross-border movement

“ Digital connectivity and trade constraints continue to rise due to geopolitical, economic, and regulatory factors that tech alone cannot solve. Protectionism, regional conflicts, and shifting trade alliances have led to tariff barriers, policy fragmentation, and disrupting supply chains. Infra gaps, inconsistent digital standards, and data sovereignty laws hinder smooth cross-border movement. While digital tools improve visibility, they cannot offset challenges, such as capacity shortages, environmental regulations, and rising compliance demands. To remain resilient amidst rising trade barriers, the industry must focus on innovation, collaboration, and adaptability.”



Vikram Kumar
Vice President
ACAAI

To remain resilient, the industry must focus on innovation and collaboration

Cargo industry throttled by cost pressures

“ The theme of the convention is insightful as it captures the core duality and future mandate of the modern air cargo industry, especially from the Indian perspective. The theme of the ACAAI Convention reflects the current market reality: An essential, high-tech industry throttled by geopolitical and cost pressures. It is imperative to use Indian connectivity to drive the transformation and neutralise international headwinds. We are more connected than ever through digitalisation— electronic Airway Bills, CCS, and Internet of Things — enabling international networks and strategic moves, such as the 'China plus one' diversification.”



Dinesh Krishnan
Honorary Treasurer
ACAAI

It is imperative to use Indian linkage to drive transformation and neutralise the headwinds

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Industry made strides through advanced tech

“ In unprecedented digital connectivity, global trade continues to face rising barriers from protectionist policies, regulatory complexity, and infra constraints. The industry has made strides through predictive analytics, AI-driven routing, and end-to-end visibility. These advancements alone can't offset systemic constraints. Diversifying trade corridors, investing in data-driven decision-making, and upskilling is a must to sustain competitiveness. When tech and collaboration converge, trade friction reduces, reliability improves, and growth accelerates. Air cargo is a cornerstone of economic resilience.”



Rajen S Bhatia
Managing Director
Tulsidas Khimji

AI-driven routing, and end-to-end visibility can't offset systemic constraints

The need is to invest in sustainable skills

“ The theme of the convention captures the mood of trade today. India is more digitally connected than ever, yet face growing regulatory, geopolitical, and infra challenges that slow us down. While technology has brought huge efficiency gains, the country deals with capacity gaps, compliance layers, and uneven digital adoption. For air cargo industry, resilience will come from collaboration, — between airlines, freight forwarders, handlers, and policymakers — to simplify processes and make data flow across the value chain. The firms need to invest in skills and automation so that growth is sustainable.”



Reshma Zaheer
COO
TT Logistics and Cargo

India is digitally linked, yet infra and regulatory challenges slow us down

Public-private collab to yield fruitful outcome

“ The cargo trade fraternity should look for trusted carriers and associates in logistics networks to better manage the supply chain. Encourage learning and innovation to meet customers' expectations and market demands. Having a workforce of skilled personnel will yield the desired results. PPP will combine the public sector's regulatory authority with the pvt sector's finances, operational expertise, which may lead to partnerships yielding fruitful outcomes, such as developing infra to meet commercial needs to reduce bottlenecks with lower costs based on the inputs from logistics providers, forwarders, and the carriers.”



Sunil Kohli
Managing Director
Rahat Cargo

PPP will combine the regulatory authority with the pvt sector's finances

Cargo industry must embrace digital ecosystem

“ The convention's theme captures the paradox of today's trade environment. Despite unmatched digital connectivity, rising compliance complexities, fragmented data standards, and friction continue to slow down cargo flow and information. To stay resilient, the industry must embrace intelligent digital ecosystems unifying visibility, documentation, and decision-making through AI and automation. PPP must focus on creating digital infra for customs, ports, airports, real-time data exchange between trade systems, co-development of standards for security filings, and sustainability reporting.”



Amit Maheshwari
Founder & CEO
Softlink Global

Convention's theme aptly captures the paradox of today's trade environment



Connectivity yet to remove core friction

“ The theme captures a paradox: Digital systems link stakeholders and speed information, yet physical, regulatory, and geopolitical barriers impede cargo flow. WiseCS platform show how single-window automation and standardised data exchange turn linkage into operational resilience. Connectivity has improved visibility and speed, but it hasn't removed friction. Regulations, mismatched data formats, and physical bottlenecks at ports and airports slow down trade. Adopting single-window processes, and investing in digital and physical infra will turn linkage into facilitation.”



Parvinder Singh
Managing Director
Hans Infomatic

Connectivity has improved visibility and speed, but it hasn't removed friction

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Digital cargo handling systems to boost dwell time & quality

The sector is experiencing a growth trajectory, driven by policy reforms, digital adoption, and expanding trade opportunities. In an interview, **Vikram Kumar, Vice President, ACAAI**, discusses the cargo sector's growth outlook, policy priorities, and the association's role in fostering collaboration across stakeholders.



Ritika Arora Bhola

What are the key factors driving current growth of air cargo?

We are witnessing consistent growth — projected between 6–9 per cent annually over the next five years. This momentum is driven by factors, such as e-commerce boom, increased manufacturing of high-value goods like electronics, pharma, and exports. Initiatives such as PLI scheme, PMGS, and NLP are also playing a vital role. Infra development at key airports and

adoption of digital handling systems should improve turnaround time and service quality.

What policy interventions or regulatory reforms will speed up efficiency?

We need to push forward on a few critical fronts. Customs processes must become more streamlined — an integrated single-window clearance system will eliminate redundancies, including all partner govt agencies. Expanding 24x7 customs ops across airports will reduce dwell times. Harmonisation of regulatory



Vikram Kumar
Vice President
ACAAI

procedures across agencies and states will result in reduction of inefficiencies. Finally,

policy incentives for dedicated freighter ops, cold chain infra, and green logistics will help unlock India's full air cargo potential.

What is ACAAI's role in bridging flaws between private players, regulators, and policymakers?

ACAAI is a facilitator and industry advocate. We represent the voice of forwarders, consolidators, and LSPs in policy forums. Our role is to ensure alignment between private sector requirements and policies — be it customs moderni-



sation, digital transformation, or infra planning. We engage with MoCA, DGFT, DPIIT, DGCA, BCAS, CBDT, and CBIT to ensure air cargo-spe-

ACAAI holds training programmes to align all players with the best practices, including security regulations, DGR handling, etc.

cific concerns are heard and acted upon. Beyond advocacy, the ACAAI also supports capacity building, training, and information-sharing across the ecosystem.

What key themes can delegates expect from this year's convention?

Delegates can deep dive into digital transformation in cargo handling, policy pathways to reach 10 MMT by 2030, and discuss how India can emerge as a regional transshipment hub. Sustainability and Environmental, Social, and Governance in logistics will be key themes. The convention will also focus on how stakeholders can collaborate to overcome bottlenecks and scale up the nation's air cargo capabilities.

What should the industry's top three priorities be for the next decade?

Firstly, we need more cargo terminals, better regional airport connectivity, and investments in cold chain and pharma logistics. Secondly, full-scale digital adoption, including e-AWBs, digital customs clearance, and end-to-end visibility. This would include change of mindset for on ground formations to move from restrictive to facilitative approach. Thirdly, we must begin integrating green practices, including the use of SAF, energy-efficient warehousing, and emissions track-

ing. These are non-negotiable if we want to remain internationally competitive.

How do airlines, freight forwarders, and ground handlers collaborate?

ACAAI engages with all stakeholders through structured dialogue platforms, working groups, and joint task forces. The association facilitates problem-solving sessions at national and airport levels, where issues, such as slot management, documentation delays, or handling processes are resolved. We conduct training programmes to align all players with the best practices, including security regulations,

DGR handling, and customs compliance. The goal is to build a unified and responsive cargo ecosystem that delivers efficiency and reliability.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ➔ ACAAI engages with all stakeholders through structured dialogue platforms, working groups, and joint task forces
- ➔ ACAAI must begin integrating green practices, including the use of SAF, energy-efficient warehousing, and emissions tracking



Roadmap to a stronger, more inclusive air cargo industry

The first woman to serve on ACAAI's Board, starting as Western Region Treasurer and rising through the ranks to **Honorary Secretary, Chaitaly Mehta**, brings a blend of experience, inclusivity, and forward-thinking leadership to the role.



CT Bureau

As ACAAI's Honorary Secretary, what is your perspective on the current state of the air cargo industry?

Geo-politics is affecting everyone everywhere. But to me, and this is purely my opinion, it is increasingly showing the vulnerabilities in world trade. What was just being spoken about until last year — tariffs, duties, impact — became a reality and caused ripples in so many industries that it led to various shippers' associations writing to the govt requesting intervention, assistance, and finding new markets. To me, the industry has been affected. How could it not?



Chaitaly Mehta
Honorary Secretary
ACAAI

Before the tariffs were to be enforced, there was a major surge in cargo as everyone wanted their products to reach the destination. Later, I came to know of some export industries, which have been majorly affected. Some are feeling the impact more than

“Cargo ecosystem thrives due to the strength of shippers, importers, and logistics partners — one can't exist without the other.”

others, and there are many reasons to it. But according to me, everyone has been impacted, but the degree varies. This is a defining chapter for the industry, including the exporters, because traditional markets may not be lucrative along with traditional methods of doing business.

A deeper look into key export-driven sectors reveals shifts in certain industries.

These changes are being monitored by the govt, which has been proactive and vocal in engaging with stakeholders across the spectrum — from trade associations and logistics providers to exporters and importers.

It is encouraging to see our concerns and inputs being heard and acknowledged. It is important to recognise that the industry does not, and cannot, operate in isolation. The cargo ecosystem thrives because of the collective strength of shippers, importers, and logistics partners — one cannot exist without the other. The interdependence within the value chain underscores the need for collaboration, understanding, and adaptability. In many ways, this period shows the resilience of the industry.

Contd. on next page ▶

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Much like water finding its own course, we continue to adapt and move forward, discovering new ways to sustain and grow. Across the board — whether among exporters, importers, forwarders, or customs brokers — there is a shared realisation that the industry must look beyond traditional boundaries and seek fresh opportunities not just here in India but worldwide.

What areas do you think require attention to strengthen India's position as a global cargo hub?

In the Director of EKF Global's opinion need be addressed on a priority basis because with the Make in India initiative and the popularity of the Prime Minister, everyone's eyes are on India. "I was in South America recently and

It not only increases the financial burden but also makes many Indian goods non-competitive in a competitive market

almost everyone I met told me: Indian goods are superior. China is No. 1, but they believe we will take that position. India is making fabulous products, and their clients are seriously looking at India to not only source existing prod-



ucts but also for new products to open up new markets in their countries".

The persistent infrastructure issues at ports and airports include capacity & space limitations, not enough hi-tech terminals, second and third-tier airports development, not enough reefer vehicles fleets, and modernisation of infrastructure for handling temperature-controlled cargoes.

Gaps in multimodal integration

❖ Regulatory inefficiencies including lack of coordination between central and state govt agencies, and PGA issues among others, are increasing compliance burdens.

❖ GST has been a long-standing demand of the trade

to remove GST on freight. It not only increases the financial burdens but also makes many Indian goods non-competitive in a competitive market. More structured GST reforms are required. It is a SOS requirement.

❖ Digital ecosystem fragmentation, issues with existing technology that cause delays in clearances, processing, lead to an increase in costs.

❖ Skill gaps are being addressed by the govt and logistics associations, such as FFFAI at national level and BCBA at local levels. But more is needed.

❖ Waste management: While govt initiatives are underway, their effective implementation is crucial for improving India's global competitiveness in logistics.

ideas from next gen and new entrepreneurs. ACAAI should have trainers in order to encourage DG training. Transparent working, increased teamwork, having women on the board at national and regional levels, strengthening our relationships with all stakeholders, and not limiting ourselves to anyone or anything as long as it's within the purview of ACAAI guidelines — are just some of the messages I would like to convey.

It is simple. Collective effort, steady progress, and fostering a team that works together to strengthen the industry along with expanding ACAAI's presence in regions where there is no presence are the order of the day. With our current leadership — the ACAAI President and Managing Committee — we should be able to achieve all this and more and do many good things.

What message would you like to convey to stakeholders ahead of the ACAAI Convention?

ACAAI is the premier association when it comes to air cargo in India. Over the years, the association has quietly and behind the scenes, under various Presidents and Managing Committees, solved problems of the industry. It is time to herald a new era at ACAAI. An era of inclusivity, collaborations, and increased participation by women. This will bring new energy by way of fresh

HIGHLIGHTS

- Skill gaps are being addressed by the govt and logistics associations such as FFFAI and BCBA
- Goods Services Tax on air freight not only increases the financial burden but also makes many Indian goods non-competitive in a competitive market





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Policy reforms, technology to boost air cargo potential

The ACAAI Convention will unite regulators, airlines, forwarders, and airport operators to tackle operational bottlenecks, high dwell times, and capacity constraints. With a vision to triple volumes to 10 MMT by 2030, India is positioning itself as a global logistics hub, says **Dinesh Krishnan, Honorary Treasurer, ACAAI**.



Ritika Arora Bhola

Can you elaborate on this year's theme and objectives?

The aim is to outline actionable growth strategies for the industry amid global turbulence. This year's focus goes beyond basic digitalisation toward achieving true end-to-end visibility and data integration through India's ULIP and IATA's ONE Record.

It will examine the impact of protectionism, regional conflicts, and sustainability im-

peratives, including pathways for SAF and green logistics. The goal is to foster consensus among regulators, airlines, airports, and forwarders, aligning ops with national logistics objectives and bringing global best practices to India.

How does ACAAI facilitate collaboration between airlines, forwarders, airport operators, and regulatory authorities?

ACAAI serves as the bridge linking all stakeholders and transforms relationships to strategic partnerships. The



Dinesh Krishnan
Honorary Treasurer
ACAAI

ACAAI engages with MoCA, CBIC, and DPIIT to simplify procedures and push for har-

“Convention's focus will be on achieving end-to-end visibility and data integration through ULIP and IATA's ONE Record.”

monised standards across airports. It provides data-driven insights to help reduce logistics costs and works with DGCA and BCAS on standardising mandatory training programmes for workforce. ACAAI collaborates with air-



“ACAAI collaborates with airport operators and customs to reduce dwell times and drive the adoption of digital tools, such as e-AWB.”

port operators and customs to reduce dwell times and drive the adoption of digital tools, such as e-AWB and ONE Record to improve efficiency.

Issues such as capacity allocation and service performance, ensuring more transparent ops across the cargo ecosystem can be resolved through regional forums and airline–forwarder meetings.

What steps has ACAAI taken to promote environmentally responsible practices in air cargo?

The industry is embracing sustainability across three key areas. Fuel and flight decar-

bonisation focuses on adopting sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), modernising fleets, and optimising ops to cut carbon emissions.

Digitalisation and circular practices leverage Artificial Intelligence for route optimisation, e-AWB for paperless trade, and recyclable packaging with IoT monitoring to reduce waste and carbon footprint. These measures position India’s air cargo sector as a responsible, forward-looking international player.

What priorities should the industry focus on to ensure sustained growth and competitiveness?

The vision is to triple India’s volumes to 10 MMT by 2030 and position the country as a global transshipment hub. India must accelerate infra development at tier II and III airports, introduce 24x7 customs clearance with zero re-screening for transshipment cargo, and incentivise the carriers to build dedicated freighter fleets. Strengthening the specialised cargo handling is critical. Sustained growth will depend on a digitally skilled workforce and on maintaining policy stability to ensure cost competitiveness. By combining efficiency, innovation, and collaboration, the sector is on course to evolve from a regional connector into a global logistics powerhouse.



HIGHLIGHTS

- India must accelerate infra development at tier II and III airports, introduce 24x7 clearance with zero re-screening for transshipment cargo
- Digitalisation and circular practices leverage AI for route optimisation, e-AWB for paperless trade

Glimpses from 48th Convention

ACAAI held its 48th Annual Convention in Baku, Azerbaijan between 5–8 December 2024. It brought together global industry leaders, govt officials, and logistics experts to discuss the sector's future. The event, themed 'Wings of Innovation: Charting New Paths in Logistics', kicked off at Baku Marriott Hotel Boulevard.



The Greenfield Air Cargo Terminal at GOX Shaping the Future of Logistics in Western India

KEY FEATURES



Temperature controlled
dedicated facility



Dedicated Truck Docks
for Pharma



Temperature controlled
examination area.



Drug controller &
Other PGAs on site



Regulated agent &
ACC3 (RA3) UK & EU
certified Terminal



Cold storage rooms &
Palletized ULD storage



CAT 6, LAR qualified
staff along with
dedicated DGR & AVI
handling space



ACCS (Air Cargo
Community system) -
Single window digital
platform



Full scale charter
flights handling
facility



Bonded Trucking
& Transhipment
Facilities



A peek into the 47th Convention

The 47th Annual Convention of ACAAI was organised between 25–26 November 2023. The three-day mega event was held at Westin Hotel at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. The theme of the Convention was ‘Artificial Intelligence: The Game Changer Enabling The Intelligent Future.’



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From disruption to definition: The power of vision

As the ACAAI Convention 2025 explores the theme 'Connected yet Constrained: Transforming Trade Amidst Rising Barriers,' **Amit Maheshwari**, Founder & CEO and **Kunal Maheshwari**, CGO, the father-son duo behind Softlink Global, talk about how they turned technological disruption into opportunity.



CT Bureau

How does the ACAAI convention's theme align with your journey of building connected digital ecosystems?

Amit: The theme of the convention beautifully captures today's paradox. We are more connected than ever — digitally, commercially, and operationally — yet trade feels more constrained by regulation, fragmentation, and uncertainty. I see this as a reminder that connectivity without

“We must empower every freight forwarder to think forward — not just move cargo.”

— Amit Maheshwari

intelligence leads to complexity. Our goal has always been to turn connectivity into capability — helping freight forwarders simplify, automate, and make faster decisions across borders.

Kunal: The theme of the convention resonates with

what we experience daily in the industry. Everyone has data, but not clarity. The next evolution is not just linking systems — it is about creating intelligent connections that think, learn, and act. That is the direction we are taking with AI across our platforms.

Despite digital link, trade barriers, compliance complexities, and operational silos continue to rise. Why do these constraints persist?

Amit: While connectivity solved the issue of visibility, it failed to solve the issue of

trust. As a result, global trade continues to suffer from fragmented data, outdated processes, and non-standardised regulations. The biggest opportunity lies in data harmonization—the act of making systems talk the same language. Once that happens, you move from visibility to velocity.

Kunal: I would like to add that transformation will come when technology becomes invisible. When users do not have to think about 'using a system', but can focus on their job while the system aids them intuitively — that is when progress happens. AI and au-



Amit Maheshwari
Visionary Technologist
Founder & CEO
Softlink Global

“Connectivity without intelligence leads to complexity. You can’t digitise ignorance — you can only educate it.”

tomation are the bridges to that experience.

How do you see emerging tech breaking these barriers and enabling forwarders to run intelligently rather than just digitally?

Amit: AI adds a layer of reasoning. It allows systems to understand context, not just execute commands. In logistics, this means fewer manual interventions, faster documentation, and predictive operations. With AI, we are shifting from data processing to decision support.

Kunal: Artificial Intelligence is the equaliser. Smaller forwarders who once lacked resources can now access capabilities once limited to big global players — real-time quoting, automated documents, customer chatbots, data insights. It is empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to compete on intelligence, not infrastructure.

From Visual IMPEX, Logi-Sys, and especially, AI-driven platforms, your firm has reinvented itself many times. What has guided these transitions?

Amit: A simple principle — if we do not disrupt ourselves, someone else will. Every major shift — DOS to Windows, desktop to cloud, rule-based to AI — was uncomfortable but necessary. The logistics industry does not forgive complacency, and neither do I. Reinvention is part of our DNA.

Kunal: And that DNA is what keeps us fresh. ‘We operate like a startup’ with 35 years of experience. That combination of speed and wisdom is what customers value most.

As a father-son team, how do you balance traditional wisdom with new-age ideas? Where do your perspectives differ?

Amit: We differ on approach, not purpose. I tend to think about systems and sustainability; Kunal focuses on scale and storytelling. It is a healthy tension that drives balanced depth with momentum.

Kunal: Yes. We look at the same challenge from opposite ends. He builds the foundation; I build the bridge. Our conversations can get intense, but they always end in alignment because the goal is the same — making logistics smarter and simpler.

Softlink is often described as ‘The Digital Backbone of Logistics’. How do you interpret that phrase?

Amit: A backbone holds everything together but stays behind the scenes. That is our philosophy — make customers strong, not dependent. Whether it is freight, customs, finance, or compliance, our platforms unify the enterprise on a single source of truth.

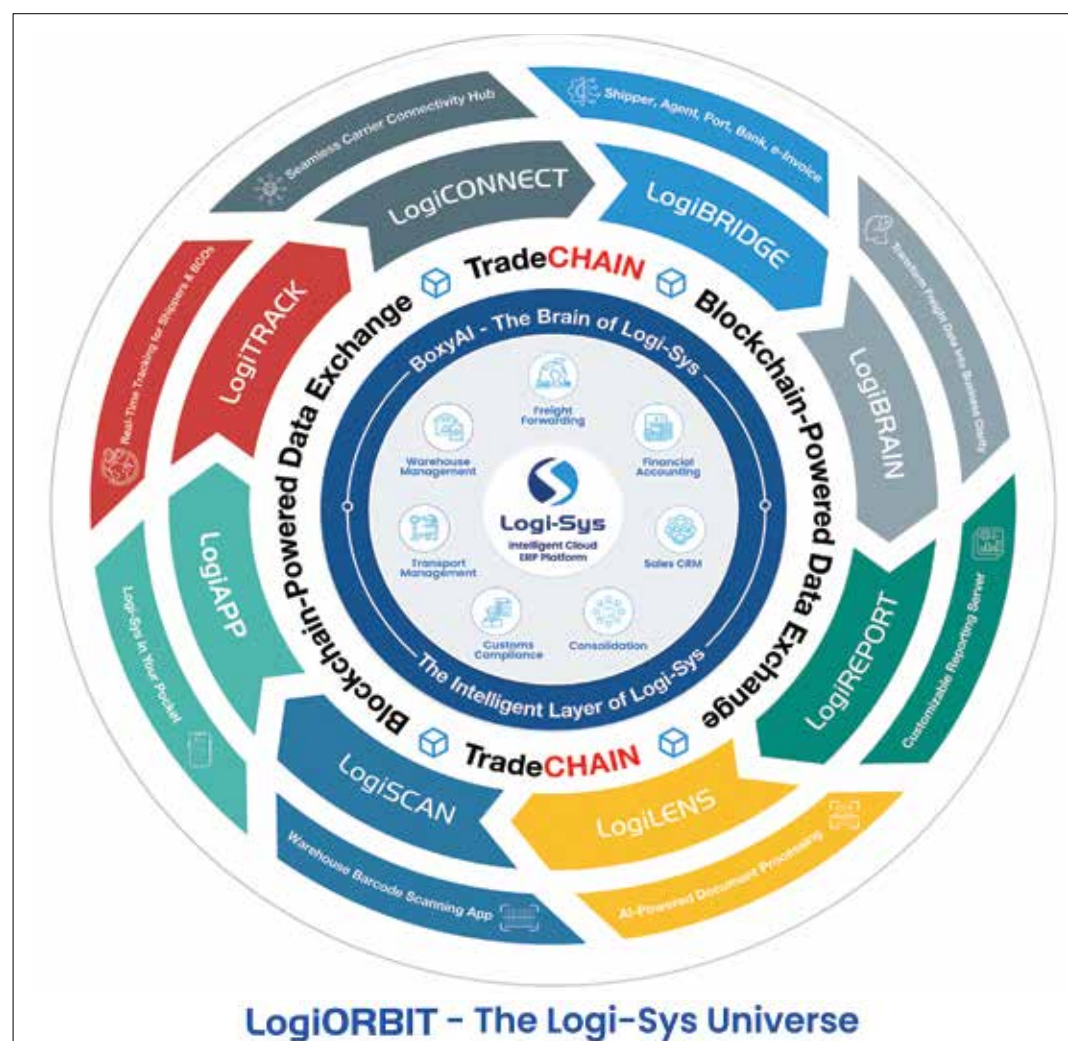
Kunal: And it is not just about technology — it is solely about trust. Being the digital backbone means we take responsibility for reliability, uptime, security, and in-



Kunal Maheshwari
Chief Growth Officer
Softlink Global &
Host of LogiTALK Podcast

“Being the digital backbone means we take responsibility for reliability, security, and innovation.”

novation. Customers sleep peacefully knowing we are watching the back end, so they can focus on growing their front end.



How will LogiLENS, LogiBRAIN, and BoxyAI reshape documentation, decision-making, and customer interaction in the next few years?

Amit: LogiLENS can read a 100-page invoice in minutes and convert it into structured data. LogiBRAIN gives leaders visibility and foresight across operations. BoxyAI, our intelligent co-pilot, will evolve into a true digital employee. Together, these tools represent a shift — from automation to augmentation.

Kunal: We are moving from 'click and enter' to 'ask and act'. You will soon see forwarders talking to their ERP like they talk to an assistant — 'Show me pending DOs', or 'Compare ocean rates to Singapore'. That's where we are headed — technology that understands intent.

You have launched Softlink Academy, LogiSPARK, and LogiTHON to nurture future logistics professionals. Why do you believe that people development is as vital as product innovation?

Amit: Technology cannot change an industry unless people are ready to use it. Softlink Academy was created to bridge that gap — to give young professionals not just theoretical knowledge but operational intelligence. You can't digitise ignorance; you can only educate it.

Kunal: It is our way of giving back. The industry gave us everything. Through LogiSPARK and LogiTHON, we are inviting young minds to think as innovators and not employees. When talent grows, technology automatically advances.

Your LogiTALK podcast has become a platform for industry voices. What inspired you to start it?

Kunal: I wanted to bring out the human side of logistics



Amit Maheshwari

“I do not believe in taking right decisions; I take decisions and then make them right.”

— Amit Maheshwari

— the stories, struggles, and successes we do not hear in boardrooms. LogiTALK is not about products; it is about people. Every episode is a reminder that behind every shipment, there is a story. The more we share, the stronger our community becomes.

Amit: I am glad he started it. Communication builds culture. LogiTALK has helped several companies realise that logistics is not just business — it is a shared journey that keeps international trade alive.

What role do you see Indian LSPs and tech firms playing in shaping the future of global supply chain?

Amit: India's strength lies in its adaptability. We understand chaos and can create order from it. That is a superpower in logistics. Indian tech companies are not just catching up; they are defining global standards in efficiency and innovation.

Kunal: Yes. As global trade diversifies beyond traditional

hubs, the freight forwarders have an opportunity to lead with technology. The world is looking for partners who combine capability with creativity — and that is exactly what India brings.

With many startups focusing on fast valuations, the logistics tech landscape is getting crowded. How do you maintain integrity and trust, when others chase short-term gains?

Amit: Our philosophy is clear: Underpromise and overdeliver. Trust is earned through consistency, not campaigns. We have seen firms rise on hype and fall on delivery. We would rather grow slower but stay solid.

Kunal: Integrity is our biggest differentiator. Customers sense authenticity. When you focus on solving real problems instead of chasing trends, loyalty follows naturally.

After nearly four decades of building tech for logistics, what continues to fuel your drive and curiosity?

Amit: Every time I meet a forwarder struggling with inefficiency, I see an opportunity. The industry has so much potential waiting to be unlocked. That curiosity — how to make things sim-

pler, faster, better — keeps me going. I do not believe in taking right decisions; I take decisions and then make them right.

What excites you most about leading the next phase of growth, and what is the one lesson you have learned from your father that you carry forward every day?

Kunal: What excites me most is building the future workforce and tech together — creating a culture where innovation is instinctive. The biggest lesson from my father? Never say yes when you want to say no. It is about clarity, honesty, and owning your choices. That is leadership in its purest form.

As you look ahead, how would you sum up Softlink Global's vision for the next decade?

Amit: To empower every forwarder to think forward — not just move cargo.

Kunal: To shape a logistics world that is faster, smarter, and deeply human.

“LogiTALK is not about products; it is about people.”

— Kunal Maheshwari



Kunal Maheshwari

Will ACAAI chart the next decade of air cargo?

The industry is entering the phase of growth, driven by policy support and collaborative reforms. With the National Civil Aviation Policy, NLP, and LEADS, the govt has laid a foundation for connectivity and innovation, says **Sushant Nigam, Executive Director, ACAAI**.



CT Bureau

How do you see the cargo industry evolving over the next five to 10 years?

There are few powerful propellers provided by government, i.e. suitable trade policies issued by Ministry of Civil Aviation like National Civil Aviation Policy; NLP; inter-ministerial coordination platform, and LEADS provided

by DPIIT; Ease of Doing Business initiatives by CBIC; new IT tools, new metro airports, smaller cities providing fruitful regional linkage, and consultations with stakeholders prior to issuance of any policy, circulars, and road infrastructure, DFCs with adjacently located cargo terminals. After providing such effective drivers, the government set a target of getting 10 MMT cargo by 2030, which shall be achieved with the right approach by all key stakeholders.



Sushant Nigam
Executive Director
ACAAI

“Effective industry-friendly policies, infra developments, and better FTAs will help boost India’s outreach to new global markets.”

new global markets, and counter challenges such as regional conflicts and higher tariff. The industry has optimally been utilising govt support.

What steps should the industry take to remain resilient and agile amidst the challenges?

The government’s foreign policy and Make in India initiative have started showing results and will boost India’s manufacturing and incentives for exporters. Effective industry-friendly policies, infra developments, and better FTAs will help boost India’s outreach to

How do you justify this years’ ACAAI theme?

The aforesaid issues/challenges and their effective solutions being provided by the government are under focus of EXIM industry. An apt theme is chosen for the ongoing convention wherein industry leaders are deliberating on issues and suggesting a way forward. 🇮🇳





Industry must stay agile amid rising trade constraints

As nations and businesses navigate disruptions and reconfigure supply chains, the focus is shifting from pure efficiency to long-term resilience. India is now leveraging its strategic advantages to redefine its role in this evolving landscape, says CK Govil, CMD, Activair Airfreight India and Immediate Past President, ACAAI.



CT Bureau

What are your views on this year's ACAAI Convention's theme?

This year ACAAI Convention's theme, 'Connected yet Constrained: Transforming Trade Amidst Rising Barriers', aptly captures the realities of global commerce today. The world is digitally and economically connected than ever before and increasingly challenged by trade restrictions, geopolitical tensions, and shifting regulatory frameworks. These constraints compel the logistics and cargo industry to rethink traditional models and em-

brace transformation through innovation, technology, and collaboration. The theme re-

For India, it signifies an opportunity to position itself as a global logistics hub, capitalising on policy reforms

flects the duality of our times — where connectivity enables opportunity, but constraints demand adaptability. It encourages stakeholders to find resilience amid volatility, op-

timise supply chains through digitalisation, and fortify partnerships across borders. For India, this signifies an opportunity to position itself as a reliable global logistics hub, capitalising on its strengths and policy reforms. The theme is a call to navigate challenges with foresight and agility, turning barriers into catalysts for sustainable trade transformation.

Despite being more digitally connected than ever, why are trade constraints on the rise?

Despite unprecedented digital connectivity, trade constraints rise due to a complex mix of geopolitical, economic, and

regulatory factors. Nations are prioritising self-reliance, economic security, and supply chain sovereignty, often leading to protectionist measures such as tariffs, export controls, and localisation mandates. Geopolitical tensions, shifting alliances, and conflicts disrupt the free flow of goods

FACT FILE

→ The convention's theme reflects the duality of our times — where connectivity enables opportunity, but constraints demand adaptability



CK Govil
Immediate Past President, ACAA
& CMD, Activair Airfreight India

Balancing openness with security has become the defining dilemma of modern trade, making adaptability and collaboration significant to navigating this constrained yet connected international environment.

What steps should the cargo industry take to be resilient and agile amidst these challenges?

To remain resilient and agile amidst trade barriers and uncertainties, the industry must focus on strategic adaptation and innovation. First, digital transformation is key — adopting AI, blockchain, and data-driven platforms can enhance visibility, predict disruptions, and improve efficiency across the supply chain. Second, diversification of trade routes and partnerships can mitigate geopoliti-

cal and capital. New challenges, such as cybersecurity concerns, environmental regulations, and data sovereignty laws add non-tariff barriers to trade. Digital connectivity has accelerated information exchange and logistics efficiency and has exposed vulnerabilities, prompting governments to tighten controls. In essence, while technology connects markets, policy and political considerations are redefining the terms of engagement.



Policy advocacy and engagement with govts are a must to ensure balanced regulations and infra development."

cal and regulatory risks, ensuring operational continuity. The industry should invest in sustainability and green logistics, aligning with global environmental standards to future-proof ops. Strengthening collaboration among

with governments are essential to ensure balanced regulations and infrastructure development.

By combining technology, collaboration, and foresight, the air cargo sector can withstand challenges and emerge stronger and more globally competitive.

What public-private collaboration is needed to reduce trade friction and enhance logistics efficiency?

Reducing trade friction and enhancing logistics efficien-



the stakeholders — airlines, freight forwarders, regulators, and technology providers — will help build an integrated ecosystem. Policy advocacy and active engagement

cy demand a public-private collaboration built on trust, transparency, and shared goals. Govts must work with industry stakeholders to streamline customs procedures, harmonise regulatory frameworks, and promote paperless trade through digital integration. Public agencies can support infrastructure modernisation, while private players contribute through tech, innovation, and op expertise. Joint initiatives in data sharing, single-window clearance systems, and predictive analytics can reduce delays and costs.

Creating forums and advisory councils where industry associations can represent the trade community's voice, ensuring policies are practical and forward-looking is another crucial step. A PPP can alter the logistics ecosystem into one that is more transparent and resilient, despite rising barriers. 🍷

Western Region boosts Mumbai's position as global freight hub

The ACAAI Western Region, led by **Rajen S Bhatia, Chairman**, continues to play a vital role in strengthening Mumbai's position as India's leading air cargo hub. Through collaboration with regulators, airports, and trade partners, the chapter is driving infra and policy advocacy to build a future-ready cargo ecosystem.



CT Bureau

How do you assess the current performance and growth potential of air cargo in Western region?

The Western region, with Mumbai as its key hub, continues to be a vital driver in India's air cargo ecosystem. Despite global challenges and ongoing supply chain disruptions, Mumbai has demonstrated resilience. Cargo volumes at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) have rebounded to pre-pandemic levels and are now experiencing consistent YoY growth.

The Navi Mumbai International Airport is a game changer — enhancing capacity, multimodal connectivity, and operational efficiency. Growth in sectors such as e-commerce,

pharma, and perishables is sustaining high demand for air cargo services. Sustained investments in cargo infra, technology, and digitisation are likely to streamline ops and support long-term scalability.

Could you highlight the recent initiatives or collaborative efforts undertaken by the chapter to support industry members and enhance operational efficiency?

ACAAI's Western Region has continued to take steps to strengthen collaboration, operational efficiency, and policy dialogue across the ecosystem. Over the past year, the chapter has worked with regulatory authorities, infra partners, airlines, customs, and the trade community to ensure the industry remains resilient, future-ready, and aligned with international best practices.



Rajen S Bhatia
Chairman
ACAAI Western Region

“ACAAI's Western Region continues to take steps to fortify collaboration, operational efficiency, and policy dialogue.”

the proposed e-bond system, and ongoing efforts to reduce export documentation dwell time. Such collaborative sessions have helped strengthen communication channels between the trade and regulatory bodies, contributing to smoother operations and better compliance awareness.

INFRA PLANNING

Recognising the importance of the upcoming NMIA, the Western Region organised a delegation visit in August 2025 to the cargo terminal currently under development. The visit offered members a detailed

REGULATORY ENGAGEMENT

In February 2025, the Western Region convened a key stakeholder meeting in Mumbai. It was attended by senior officials from the Customs Department (Export Air Cargo Complex) and other trade representatives. The discussions focused on digital transformation and facilitation measures, including the implementation of the e-Office platform,



understanding of new-age infrastructure, automation, and digital cargo handling capabilities that will soon redefine Mumbai's role as one of India's primary air freight gateway. This engagement has opened a dialogue between the trade community and airport authorities, thereby ensuring the new facility's design and processes address practical on-ground needs.

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

In September 2025, the Western Region hosted two highly engaging sessions in Mumbai, one exploring the journey and evolution of family-run logistics enterprises, and another featuring a presentation on NMIA's cargo infra plans. Both sessions received strong participation from members and partners, reinforcing ACAAI's commitment to professional development, strategic thinking, and continuous learning in a rapidly changing business environment.

FACILITATION COMMITTEES

ACAAI Western Region continues to represent the collective interests of members through active participation in Customs Cargo Facilitation Committee (CCFC) and Permanent Trade Facilitation Committee (PTFC) meetings conducted by Mumbai Customs at the Air Cargo Complex every month. Through these forums, the ACAAI Western Region Chapter consistently raises and helps resolve trade issues related to infra

“The chapter continues to represent interests of members through participation in CCFC and PTFC meetings.”

bottlenecks, cargo handling procedures, documentation challenges, and policy clarifications. This engagement ensures the voices of the freight forwarding community are heard, fostering transparency, collaboration, and operational improvement across all stakeholders.

DIGITAL AWARENESS

The Western Region facilitates information sharing on digital initiatives. The role of the chapter is primarily to share knowledge, host demonstrations, and connect members

with government or technology stakeholders, while actual adoption remains a decision for individual members, ground handlers, and terminals varies across the region. This measured approach recognises differing readiness levels among stakeholders and focuses on enabling informed, voluntary transitions rather than mandating uniform change.

PATH FORWARD

Through these initiatives, the ACAAI Western Region has demonstrated a balanced, forward-looking, and solution-oriented approach to industry development. By bringing together regulators, airport operators, and the forwarding community, the chapter continues to strengthen Mumbai's position as a vital air freight hub and to build a more collaborative, efficient, and future-ready cargo ecosystem for the region.

How does the Western Region contribute to the Association's overall goals of policy advocacy, standardisation, and digital transformation?

Given its importance, high cargo volumes, and diverse stakeholder ecosystem, the region serves as a critical testbed for piloting innovations and driving systemic reforms.

Representatives from the Western Region actively contribute to:

- ❖ National-level consultations on air cargo policies, regulatory frameworks, and infra development
- ❖ Drafting of position papers and recommendations focused on digital transformation, data standardisation, and procedural simplification
- ❖ Promoting best practices in areas such as documentation, regulatory compliance, and end-to-end process digitisation

By initiating and piloting significant initiatives, and providing real-time feedback based on operational realities, the ACAAI Western Region ensures that the association's national advocacy efforts are grounded, member-centric, and aligned with international best practices. This collaborative and field-informed approach enables the association to influence policy effectively, while fostering a more agile and future-ready air cargo industry across the country.



A page from 46th Convention

The Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI) organised its 46th Convention in Bangkok, Thailand from 24–27 November 2022. The event witnessed participation from the global air cargo and logistics fraternity. The business sessions and glittering evenings provided a platform for stakeholders to meet, greet, and unite.



Smart dock levellers redefine loading bay efficiency

Built to meet the demands of today's logistics landscape, **Gandhi Automations** offers electro-hydraulic, pneumatic, and mechanical dock levellers to enhance safety, speed, and reliability during loading and unloading ops. Compliant with EN 1398 standards, they are built for handling diverse operational needs.



Radius Lip Dock Levellers



Ritika Arora Bhola

In today's fast-paced logistics and warehousing environment, safety, speed, and precision are essential to smoothen operations.

Among the many innovations driving this efficiency, dock levelers play a pivotal role — bridging the gap between loading bays and vehicles in a bid to ensure seamless handling.

Designed to enhance operational safety and productivity, the firm's range of electro-hydraulic, pneumatic, and mechanical dock levellers are built to meet demand-

HIGHLIGHTS

- ➔ All dock levellers comply with EN 1398 standards, underscoring its commitment to global safety benchmarks
- ➔ Available in 6, 9, and 12-tonne capacities, they are engineered to handle diverse operational requirements



Forklift Roll-Off Barrier Lip Dock Leveller

ing industrial needs. All the firm's dock levellers comply with EN 1398 standards, underscoring its commitment to global safety benchmarks. The platform's surface features an MS almond-shaped anti-slip checkered plate with a 12+2 mm thickness, offering superior durability, stability, and traction.

Available in 6, 9, and 12-tonne capacities, these dock levelers are engineered to handle diverse operational requirements — from light-duty applications to heavy industrial loading. To cater to varied logistics environments, Gandhi Automations offers

a comprehensive range of dock levellers:

RADIUS LIP

Designed for easy drive-on and drive-off operations, these levellers connect the dock with the truck bed for smooth forklift access. Their self-cleaning lip-hinge system prevents dust accumulation, ensuring consistent, and low-maintenance performance.

TELESCOPIC LIP

Ideal for facilities where vehicles cannot dock closely — sea containers or side-loading railway wagons — these levellers feature an extendable lip reaching up to 1 metre, pro-

viding exceptional flexibility in complex loading scenarios.

EDGE-OF-DOCK

Perfect for warehouses, retail hubs, and distribution centres without pit installations, these levellers bridge small height differences efficiently. Fully compliant with EN 1398 standards, the levellers offer space-saving functionality and reliable performance, and ideal for ops with uniform truck heights.

FORKLIFT ROLL-OFF BARRIER LIP

A latest innovation, this model incorporates a run-off protection feature to prevent forklift accidents when the dock door is open and no trailer is present. It merges the power of hydraulic levellers with the security of a robust barrier thereby ensuring maximum operator safety. All the firm's dock levellers can be interlocked with existing doors and vehicle restraint systems, delivering integrated performance, security, and efficiency. With their advanced engineering, reliability, and focus on safety, these solutions redefine loading dock excellence for modern logistics and warehousing facilities. 🔥

Infrastructure, govt support push India's cargo ambitions

Positioning itself as a logistics powerhouse, backed by infra development, a booming e-commerce market, and policy momentum, India is fortifying its role in global trade. Through innovation and reforms, it still needs to address issues, such as high logistics costs, regulatory overlaps, and shortage of skilled manpower.



India is advancing toward its goal of becoming a global air cargo hub by tripling its volumes in the coming years. This vision is supported by the nation's geographical location, a rapidly expanding economy, booming e-commerce sector, and progressive policies designed to enhance logistics efficiency.

Infrastructure developments, such as the new Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), Hindon Air Base, and other regional airports are set to strengthen connectivity as well as capacity. The country's competitive labour cost and manufacturing capabilities further position the country as a natural logistics and production hub for international trade.

To realise this vision, certain issues need urgent policy attention — high operational costs at metro airports, in-

“Infra developments, such as NMIA, Hindon Air Base, and other regional airports are set to fortify connectivity as well as capacity.”

volvement of multiple regulatory agencies, and shortage of skilled logistics manpower. These challenges continue to limit growth. Policymakers must streamline procedures, rationalise airport charges, and invest in workforce de-

velopment to ensure seamless movement of cargo. Encouraging growth of dedicated freighter operations is essential for building resilience and reducing overdependence on passenger aircraft.

EXPANDING GLOBAL TRADE

The pandemic underscored the importance of air cargo in sustaining global trade. It became clear the freighters are not a luxury, but a necessity. Despite India's capabilities, geopolitical disruptions and sanctions have complicated certain trade flows. To counter this, the government must formulate policies, provide incentives to cargo operators, promote bilateral trade corridors, and ensure continuity of logistics ops during crises. A

study of global best practices can guide India in designing a framework to strengthen its trade competitiveness. Efficient cargo systems are vital for handling time-sensitive and high-value shipments, resulting in faster trade cycles and economic growth.

AIR CARGO DIGITALISATION

The transition toward digitalisation — from e-AWBs to IATA's ONE Record initiative — marks a step toward transparency, efficiency, and sustainability. Digital processes reduce paperwork, cut costs, and improve data accuracy. Reliance on technology also presents risks — system outages or cyber disruptions can paralyse airport ops.

Thus, India must adopt a hybrid approach and ensure reliable digital infrastructure backed by robust contingency systems. With the right balance of infra, policy, and digital innovation, India would be well on its way to establishing itself as a global air cargo hub.



Vivin Paulose
Vice President - Sales
Hercules Aviation

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



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Next-gen air cargo leverages tech, infra, global integration

India's cargo sector is entering a decade of growth, driven by e-commerce expansion, pharma, perishables, and high-value goods. Public-private collaboration and streamlined logistics will be key to sustaining efficiency, resilience, and competitiveness in the years ahead, says **Sunil Kohli, MD, Rahat Cargo**.



CT Bureau

How do you see India's air cargo industry evolving over the next five to 10 years?

The industry is poised to head towards a dynamic growth over the next decade. Considering the preceding five years, India's cargo sector has emerged from the shadows of the pandemic and other global disruptions to become a pillar of national and international trade, adapting rapidly to shifts in global demand, export composition, and supply



Sunil Kohli
MD
Rahat Cargo

chain strategies. During the next five to 10 years, the sector will evolve toward integration

with global supply chains, advanced technology adoption, and diversification. The rapid expansion of India's e-commerce market, likely to reach US\$ 350 billion by 2030, is a major catalyst for air cargo demand. The anticipated growth will be led by high-value and perishable industries. The expanding pharma sector will continue to rely heavily on cold-chain air cargo. Exports of agricultural products, such as fresh produce and floriculture will also increase. High-tech goods, automotive parts, and defence-related components will drive cargo volumes to higher demands.

“The expansion of India's e-commerce market, likely to reach US\$ 350 billion by 2030, is a major catalyst for air cargo demand.”

What steps should the industry take to remain resilient and agile amidst these challenges?

To remain resilient and agile, the industry needs priori-



Public-private entities can use and develop digital technologies to reduce customs delays and improve supply chain visibility

tised investment in technology and focus on sustainability, apart from developing its workforce to attain latest technological skills coupled with diversifying operations. These steps will enable it to better navigate ongoing challenges, such as geopolitical tensions, fluctuating fuel prices, capacity constraints, and evolving customer demands. A transition to electronic modes of functioning will be prudent to reduce paperwork, accelerate customs clearance, and improve data accuracy.

Is public-private collaboration required to reduce trade friction and enhance logistics efficiency?

Public-private collaboration to reduce trade friction and enhance logistics efficiency requires a multi-faceted approach, involving technology, infrastructure, data sharing,

and regulatory harmonisation. These efforts unite the public sector's ability to provide regulatory support and long-term planning with the private sector's innovation and operational expertise.

Public and private entities can use and develop digital technologies to reduce customs delays and improve supply chain visibility. Public bodies can partner with private companies to build modern, efficient road transport networks, exclusively for freight.

This will reduce transit times and relieve congestion.

How critical are new airports and freighter-dedicated infra for the industry's expansion?

New airports equipped with latest tech innovations and freighter-dedicated infra are critical for the expansion of the air cargo industry and for broader economic growth — they enable greater efficiency, capacity, speed, and resilience for moving goods globally, ad-

ressing bottlenecks caused by airport congestion and outdated facilities. Dedicated infra, such as cargo terminals, streamline the logistics process by separating freight ops from passenger traffic. This reduces handling times, avoids delays caused by airport congestion, and allows for faster customs clearance. This speed is crucial for high-value and time-sensitive cargo, such as pharma, fresh produce, and e-commerce shipments. Prioritising advanced infra is crucial, which includes temperature-controlled storage for perishable and pharmaceutical goods, specialised equipment for oversized items, and higher security systems. By improving efficiency and avoiding delays, freighter-dedicated infra helps lower overall logistics costs for businesses, increasing their competitiveness in domestic and global markets.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ➔ New airports equipped with technology innovations and freighter-dedicated infra are vital to the expansion of the air cargo industry and for broader economic growth
- ➔ Infra, such as cargo terminals, streamline the logistics process by separating freight ops from passenger traffic



45th convention unites trade

The 45th Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) Annual Convention was held in Phuket, Thailand. With the theme 'End-to-end Logistics — A Way Forward', the ACAAI Convention witnessed the presence of eminent industry experts from various quarters of the world under one roof.



Unlocking India's growth as a multimodal logistics hub

The logistics landscape is going through a transformative phase, driven by rapid economic growth, policy initiatives, and multimodal transport infra. Emphasis on efficiency, technology adoption, and talent development is redefining supply chains and positioning India as a leading hub for trade and commerce.

The rise of India's multimodal transport network is central to this transformation. With a focus on smooth connectivity between roads, railways, ports, and airports, India is making strides toward integrated logistics. This infra improvement, combined with initiatives such as PMGS and NLP, is unlocking the potential of emerging logistics hubs across tier II and III cities. These hubs

“With a focus on linkage between roads, railways, ports, and airports, India is making strides toward integrated logistics.”



are catalysing regional trade, supporting industrial clusters, and providing faster, more reliable access to domestic and global markets.

India's prominence in global manufacturing and supply chains strengthens this narrative. India ranks among the top 3–4 suppliers of key products, particularly in retail and pharma, contributing to double-digit growth. In the aviation sector alone, India has posted a YoY growth of 12–16 per cent, reflecting its integration into global trade and its capacity to handle high-value, time-sensitive goods efficiently. These trends underscore the nation's potential to serve as a reliable trade hub for international businesses looking for consistency, quality, and scalability.

While infra is a critical pillar, the role of talent and technology is vital in shaping India's logistics ecosystem. Advanced technology adoption, including digital freight platforms, warehouse automation, real-time tracking, and AI-enabled decision-making, enhances operational efficiency and ensures end-to-end visibility across supply chains. The availability of skilled professionals equipped to manage complex logistics ops remains essential. Developing the right talent pool ensures smooth integration of technology, enables effective people management, and drives innovation in warehousing, transportation, and last-mile delivery.

Investments in warehousing, transportation, and last-mile logistics are gaining mo-

mentum across India. From modern cargo terminals at airports to state-of-the-art distribution centres, and automated fulfilment hubs, India is scaling infra to match growing domestic and global demands. Deployment of technology and people management practices ensures that these assets deliver maximum value, reduce operational bottlenecks, and increase overall competitiveness.

India's logistics ecosystem presents an opportunity for global investors and trade partners to leverage a unique combination of infrastructure, technology, and talent. By continuing to integrate multimodal transport networks, adopting cutting-edge solutions, and nurturing a skilled workforce, India is poised to maintain its trajectory

as a logistics and trade hub. The focus on resilience, efficiency, and innovation ensures the country remains ahead of the curve, setting new benchmarks for the global supply chain industry.



Ravinder Katyal
Director, Air Freight
ISSGF India

*(The views expressed are solely of the author.
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subscribe to the same)*

Bridging first & last-mile gaps in Indian air cargo

Bonded trucking plays a vital role in the air cargo ecosystem, bridging first and last-mile connectivity and ensuring freighters operate at full capacity. With rising e-commerce volumes, operators are expanding their networks while navigating infra issues, says **Dileepa BM, CEO, Bonded Trucking, Shreeji Translogistics**.



CT Bureau

What role do bonded trucking operators play in supporting freighter ops and e-commerce flow?

Bonded trucking operators serve as a link in air cargo value chain, ensuring movement for export and import shipments. They play a vital role in linking airports and facilitating trans-shipment cargo for freighter ops. For instance, when a freighter lands in Mumbai or Delhi, bonded trucks ferry export cargo from production

and consolidation hubs such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru, or Chennai to these airports. Import cargo is moved through bonded trucking networks to various destinations across the country. This integrated system helps optimise freighter utilisation, reduce turnaround times, and support the rapid flow of e-commerce and time-sensitive goods across India.

What are the challenges in first and last-mile linkage for cargo using bonded trucks?

One of the biggest challenges in bonded trucking operations

With frequent diversions, partial closure, etc., ensuring consistent cargo movement has become a pressing challenge

today is maintaining time-bound connectivity between cities and gateway airports. For example, on the Ahmedabad–Mumbai sector, ongoing road construction has affected transit times. What used to take 12–14

hours can now stretch up to 20–24 hours, especially during weekends, festive seasons, or long holidays when traffic volume surges.

As a result, export cargo often miss flights in Mumbai, leading to rollovers and delayed deliveries. Earlier, traffic congestion was an issue within cities, but now it has become a major concern on highways as well. With frequent diversions, partial closure, and incomplete expressways, ensuring consistent and predictable cargo movement has become a pressing challenge for bonded truck operators.



Dileepa BM
CEO, Bonded Trucking
Shreeji Translogistics

“Planning and time management become essential as demand rises, particularly with the growth of e-commerce and trade.”

What trends do you see in cargo demand that will impact bonded trucking in the next three to five years?

Despite airlines expanding freighter ops across multiple stations, the need for bonded trucking remains critical to ensure that no freighter departs at full capacity. Bonded trucking enables airlines to optimise loads by moving cargo from different regions to gateways, such as Mumbai



or Delhi. Planning and time management will become essential as demand rises, particularly with the growth of e-commerce and global trade. As India continues to expand its cargo infra, faster turnaround times will encourage greater import-export volumes. Policy support will be key — to allow transshipment cargo even on customs holidays would improve operational efficiency. Interestingly, operators are expanding their reach. For instance, in Fiji we have initiated bonded trucking services not only from Mumbai but also from Pune — a sign

of how the network is transforming to meet the sector's growing requirements.

Do you think PMGS and NLP have given a boost to bonded trucking activity?

Not yet. At least, not in a tangible way. The infra framework needs to move beyond planning and paperwork — it must be implemented effectively on the ground. Only then will the government initiatives truly benefit bonded trucking operators and the logistics ecosystem.

Apart from the two new services, are there any other expansion plans or projects?

Yes. With the Navi Mumbai Airport now inaugurated, the next step is to begin custodianship operations. Once cargo operations commence there, we plan to start our bonded trucking services from Navi Mumbai as well.

Do you think Navi Mumbai airport will be ready soon for cargo?

As of now, the cargo facilities are still under development. While the airport has been inaugurated, the cargo infrastructure will need more time before it becomes fully operational. It may take three or six months for the airport to be 100 per cent operational.



HIGHLIGHTS

- With frequent diversions, partial closure, and incomplete expressways, ensuring consistent cargo movement has become a challenge
- Bonded trucking enables airlines to optimise loads by moving cargo from different regions to gateways, such as Mumbai or Delhi

Tier II and III cities emerge as India's new growth engines

India's air cargo industry is experiencing remarkable growth, driven by e-commerce expansion and strategic government initiatives. With rising demand for faster, reliable logistics, the sector is rapidly transforming through technology adoption, enhanced connectivity, and skill development, says **S Hari, CEO, OneAvia Services**.



CT Bureau

How do you view the current growth trajectory of India's air cargo sector?

Air cargo is on a strong growth path, driven by the rising demand for faster deliveries, re-



S Hari
CEO
OneAvia Services India

liability, and expanding global trade links. Both domestic and global operations are expanding, powered by sectors such as e-commerce, pharma, automobile components, and perishables. Tier II and III cities are emerging as new cargo growth centres, supported by regional connectivity and increasing industrial activity. With India emerging as a global manufacturing and export hub, the industry is projected to maintain double-digit growth. Ongoing investments in airport infra, digitalisation, and multimodal logistics networks are strengthening the sector's momentum.

What are the key factors driving the surge in volumes?

The sharp rise in volumes is fuelled by the boom in

e-commerce and express deliveries, increased exports under 'Make in India' initiative, and a growing need for time-definite shipments. Enhanced air connectivity, especially through tier I, II, and III airports serviced by regional carriers, along with the development

“Collaboration with larger firms or logistics tech platforms can help share digital resources and access analytics-driven insights.”

of regional airports, advancements in automation, and digital freight solutions have also accelerated efficiency. These developments, combined with evolving customer expectations, and global trade recovery, are reshaping India's air logistics ecosystem into a faster, more technology-driven model.

What impact have initiatives like PMGS and NLP had on the sector?

Initiatives, such as PMGS and NLP have provided structural support. They aim to create an integrated logistics ecosystem by connecting roads, railways, ports, and airports through a unified digital platform. This improves infra planning, streamlines cargo movement, and reduces logistics costs and turnaround times. The result is enhanced operational efficiency, greater multimodal connectivity, and increased global competitiveness for India's logistics and air cargo sector.

How can smaller freight forwarders and terminals keep up with rapid tech adoption?

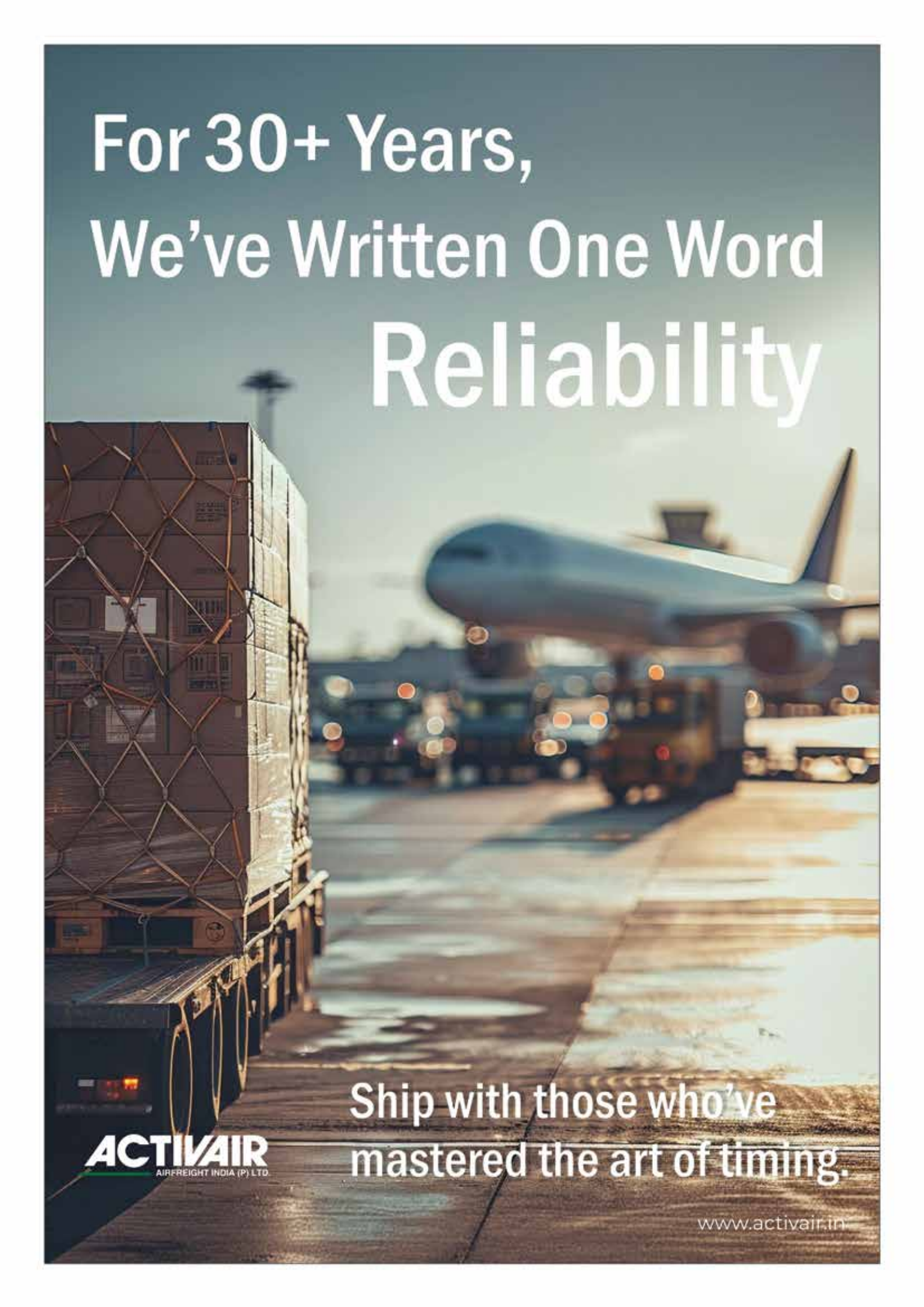
Smaller logistics players stay relevant by adopting cost-effective tech such as cloud-based logistics systems, digital documentation, and cargo tracking solutions. In tier II and III cities, where digital penetration is still growing,

partnerships with airlines and GSSAs can provide access to shared technology infrastructure and digital resources. Collaboration with larger firms or logistics tech platforms can help share digital resources and access analytics-driven insights. Investing in digital literacy and workforce training will enable these entities adapt to fast-paced digital transformation shaping the sector.

What are the major skill gaps impacting the cargo and logistics workforce?

There are skill gaps in digital proficiency, data management, automation, and supply chain analytics. Many professionals depend on manual processes and lack familiarity with emerging tech. This issue is more pronounced in tier II and III cities, where access to advanced logistics training is limited. Soft skills such as communication, customer handling, and problem-solving need development to match the transforming industry standards.





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Skill manpower to get tech-ready for sector

As India's air cargo and logistics sector undergoes rapid digital transformation, the need for skilled, tech-savvy, and compliance-ready experts has never been greater. TT Skill, the skilling and learning arm of TT Group, and an IATA Authorised Training Centre, is addressing this gap, says **Debajyoti Bagchi, COO**.



CT Bureau

How do you see the industry evolving over the next five to 10 years?

India's air cargo industry is on the brink of a transformative decade, fuelled by economic growth, expanding trade corridors, and the rapid rise of e-commerce. The Government of India's Vision 2040 for Civil Aviation outlines a bold roadmap — targeting 200 operational airports, paperless cargo movement, and the development of regional transshipment hubs that will position India as a logistics powerhouse. Exports have surpassed US\$ 400 billion in the first half of 2025–26, marking a 4.45 per cent annualised increase. Ongoing FTA negotiations with the EU signal a favourable environment for sustained trade growth and policy convergence. Beyond



Debajyoti Bagchi
Chief Operating Officer
TT Skill

sheer volume expansion, tech will define competitiveness in the next decade. From AI-enabled cargo management systems and blockchain-based documentation to sustainable, green supply chain practices and innovation, every aspect of the air logistics value chain is being reshaped. The industry's future will be driven by digitally skilled professionals who can combine operational

“Skill and talent gaps remain a challenge, affecting efficiency and long-term growth. Digital and technical skills are critical needs.”

expertise with data-driven intelligence — ensuring that India handles more cargo.

What skills and talent gaps exist in the industry, and how can they be addressed?

The sector is undergoing rapid transformation, driven by digitalisation, automation, and global compliance standards. Yet, skill and talent gaps remain a pressing challenge, affecting efficiency, and long-term growth. Digital and technical skills are critical needs.

Many professionals are yet to master e-AWB systems, cargo management software, and digital tracking tools that have become standard in modern cargo operations. Regulatory knowledge is another key gap — with evolving IATA, ICAO, and DGCA norms, compliance-ready talent is in short supply. Analytical abilities and soft skills are equally important. Freight load planning, load ability calculation, rate analysis, data-driven decision-making through WACD, Cargo IS are now essential, while professional communication and coordination remain vital in the cargo ecosystem. The rising focus on Q-commerce and supply chain analysis demands new competencies around CO₂ management and eco-friendly handling practices.

TT Skill, the skilling and learning arm of TT Group Global, and an IATA Author-

ised Training Centre, addresses these challenges through structured, NSQF-aligned programmes that blend classroom instruction, simulation-based learning, industry case studies, industry visit, and internships. By integrating modules on Quick Commerce, Supply Chain Analyst, Fundamentals of Air Cargo, and Foundation on Load Planning, TT Skill prepares a workforce that is not only job-ready but future-ready. As the industry looks ahead, the message is clear, bridging the skill gap is not just about training people for jobs but about shaping professionals who can keep air cargo moving.

How can digital tools and e-learning platforms enhance skill development in logistics and cargo ops?

Logistics and air cargo today run on digital intelligence and operate seamlessly across time zones. Learning must match that pace. TT Skill's advanced digital learning ecosystem is built on Tutor LMS and interactive virtual classrooms — for professionals and students. As an IATA Authorised Training Centre (ATC Classic), TT Skill offers specialised micro-modules such as DG handling and comprehensive hybrid programmes, such as Supply Chain & Logistics Analyst (NSQF Level 5). Learners engage through case studies, real-time quizzes, and analytics-driven performance tracking. By integrating digital tools that



make progress measurable and learning scalable, TT Skill ensures skill advancement for personnel working across airports, cargo terminals, and cargo networks.

What initiatives can the industry collectively take to attract budding professionals in the industry?

Today's youth seek careers that are global, dynamic, and impactful. The sector offers all three. The industry must communicate this through school outreach, campus drives, and immersive learning experiences. TT Skill, in collaboration with institutions such as Madras Christian College and ASAP Kerala conducts industry visits, Q-commerce simula-

Regulatory knowledge is a key gap — with evolving IATA, ICAO, and DGCA norms, compliance-ready talent is in short supply

tions, and cargo terminal field sessions to make logistics 'visible' to young minds. Creating awareness can help the sector build a sustained talent funnel.

How does your company ensure its workforce remains competitive and future-ready?

At TT Skill, continuous learning is not a choice — it is a

standard. Every trainer undergoes rigorous 'Train-the-Trainer' certification and content calibration aligned with national and international frameworks such as NSQF, NSDC, PMKVY, and IATA.

The organisation's collaboration with industry partners ensures every curriculum is validated against real-world operations, with learning outcomes mapped directly to functional job roles across cargo, logistics, and aviation ecosystems.

This integrated approach creates a dynamic learning environment where instructors and learners evolve together. As the country's air cargo industry accelerates its growth trajectory, TT Skill remains steadfast in its mission to build a skilled, confident, and technology-enabled workforce ready to propel the sector forward.



HIGHLIGHTS

- Today's youth seek careers that are global, dynamic, and impactful. The sector offers all three. The industry must communicate this through school outreach
- The organisation's collaboration with industry partners ensures every curriculum is validated against real-world operations

Partnership powers Indian air cargo resilience, agility

Growth will come in the industry not only from capacity, but also from capability — to combine excellence with digital intelligence and infra. The future will be shaped by readiness and resilience across the ecosystem, says **Huned Gandhi, MD, Air & Sea Logistics, Indian Subcontinent, Dachser India.**



CT Bureau

How do you see India's air cargo industry evolving over the next five to 10 years?

The industry is entering a defining phase. Over the next decade, we can expect to see sustained growth driven by multiple factors: expanding manufacturing capacity, rise



Huned Gandhi
MD, Air & Sea Logistics
Indian Subcontinent, Dachser India

of e-commerce, and the global shift toward supply chain diversification. With India positioned as a strategic hub linking Asia, the Middle East and Europe, the focus will shift from moving goods quickly to moving them smartly — integrating multimodal logistics, technology-driven visibility, and sustainability. We see this transformation first-hand. The growing demand for speed, reliability, and transparency is reshaping customer expectations. What will define the next 10 years is the industry's ability to blend operational excellence with digital intelligence, creating supply chains that are not only fast but also resilient and adaptive.



What steps should the industry take to remain resilient and agile amidst these challenges?

Resilience today is less about recovery and more about readiness. The cargo industry must embrace a mindset shift, moving from reactive to predictive operations. This means leveraging data to anticipate disruptions, optimising networks, and investing in people and technology. Collaboration will also be crucial. Supply chains are no longer linear; they are ecosystems. Building deeper partnerships between the shippers, carriers, freight forwarders, and technology providers can enhance agility.

Professionals lay emphasis on digital integration and visibility across the network, so that customers can make faster, more informed decisions even during volatile times. The goal should be to build systems that can flex without breaking, ensuring continuity, reliability, and customer trust.

“Resilience today is less about recovery and more about readiness. The industry must embrace a mindset shift.”

What kind of public-private collaboration is required to reduce trade friction and enhance logistics efficiency?

A seamless logistics ecosystem cannot exist in isolation. Public-private collaboration is the bridge that links intent to impact. Simplifying trade procedures, digitising documentation, and aligning customs processes with global best practices are areas where partnerships can make a measurable difference.

India has made progress through initiatives such as PMGS and the NLP. The next step is deeper integration,

where data flows freely across stakeholders and infra investment aligns with real trade patterns. Collaboration should focus on skill development and sustainability, ensuring that as the industry expands, it remains future ready and environmentally conscious. From our perspective, partnerships encouraging operational transparency, multimodal connectivity, and technology-driven process simplification will be key to reducing trade friction and driving long-term efficiency.

How critical are new airports and freighter infra for expansion of the cargo industry?

The backbone of any robust cargo network is its infra. As cargo volumes grow, India's existing airports will need capacity expansion and better integration with surrounding logistics zones. Dedicated freighter terminals, temperature-controlled facilities, and efficient last-mile connectivity can improve turnaround times and cost efficiency. 📌



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Tapping into India's emerging logistics, trade potential

India's logistics landscape is undergoing a transformation as new tier II and III hubs emerge as anchors of national supply chain growth. Driven by DFCs, multimodal integration under PMGS, and strong policy support, this shift is decentralising logistics from metros, and propelling India toward its US\$ 5 trillion target.

India's logistics sector is experiencing a geographic shift. Strategic hubs beyond traditional metros now anchor the nation's supply chain infra, directly supporting the path to a US\$ 5 trillion economy.

The DFCs provide the foundation for this change. Eastern and Western DFCs handle freight at speeds reaching 100 kmph — four times



Warehousing in tier II & III cities costs 25–40% less than in metros. Markets will grow at 15%, reaching US\$ 35 billion by 2027.”

faster than legacy networks. North-South and East-West corridors under PMGS initiative will extend this capacity. Early results show potential GDP additions of

₹16,000 cr-ore, with logistics costs declining from the current 13–15 per cent of GDP towards the 8 per cent target by 2030.

Tier II and III cities now function as serious distribution centres. Nagpur's central geography, the Multimodal International Hub Airport at Nagpur, and multimodal connectivity position it for Pan-India reach. Jaipur capitalises on its access to the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Indore, Coimbatore, Ludhiana, and Guwahati serve concentrated industrial verticals such as

textiles, engineering, pharma, and agri-processing. The economics favour this decentralisation. These hubs will manage 45 per cent of the logistics volumes by 2025. Warehousing in tier II and III cities costs 25–40 per cent less than in metros. The market grows at 15 per cent annually, reaching US\$ 35 billion by 2027. Available land, lower congestion, and competitive labour costs improve unit economics substantially.

E-commerce drives immediate demand. FMCG companies adopt hub-and-spoke configurations, consolidating to large regional centres while maintaining satellite facilities for rapid distribution. Automotive supply chains follow similar patterns. Policy supports the trend. NLP, Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE) Programme funding, and MMLPs provide regulatory clarity and capital. Integration across road, rail, air, and waterways creates genuine alternatives to congested metro routes.

For forwarders and air cargo operators, these locations offer distinct advantages. They provide direct access to manu-

facturing clusters and growing consumption markets in India's interior — markets metro gateways serve less efficiently. Origin consolidation becomes more practical. Transit times to ports improve through dedicated corridors.

At TVS SCS, we develop connectivity within these ecosystems based on customer requirements. The shift from metro-centric to distributed networks changes how freight moves across India. Understanding where these hubs fit in specific supply chains determines competitive advantage.



Siddharth Jairaj
CEO
TVS SCS GFS India

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