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**47th ACAAI
CONVENTION
2023**

Special Issue

**TECHNOLOGY
EMBRACING
THE INTELLIGENT
FUTURE**

**NEXT GEN AI WILL DISRUPT
THE FREIGHT FORWARDING INDUSTRY**

Amit Maheshwari
CEO, Softlink Global



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of Warehouse operations
at Delhi Airport



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Cargo capacity



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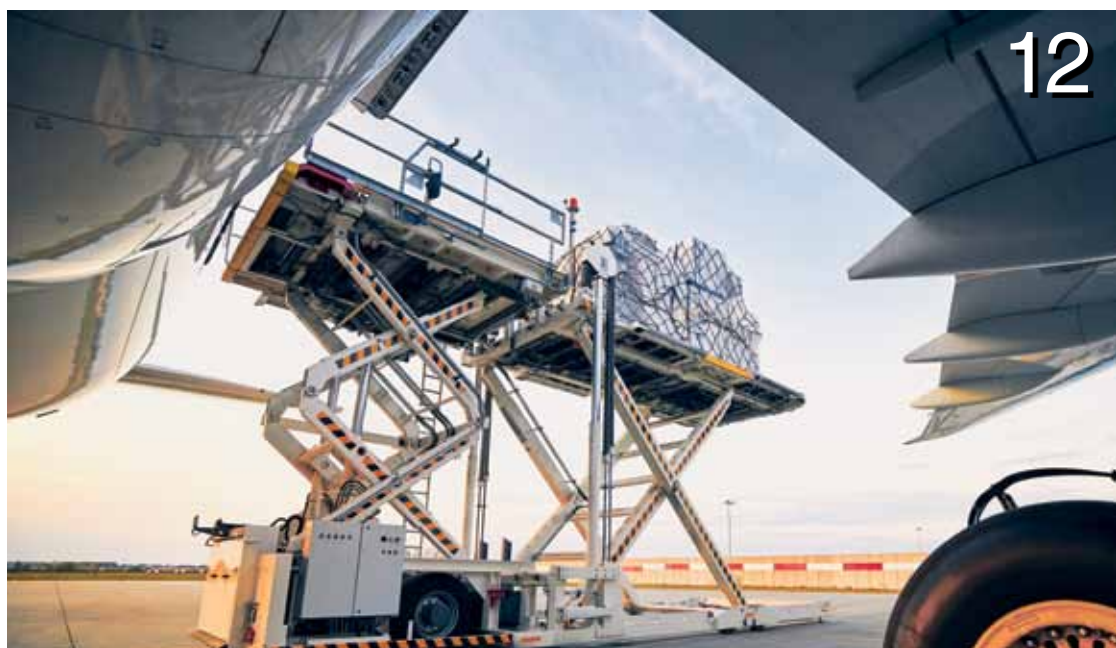
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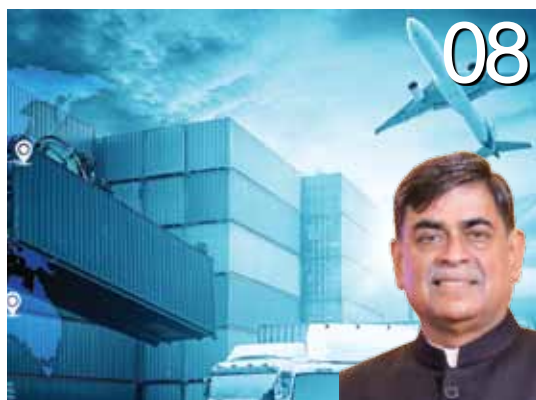
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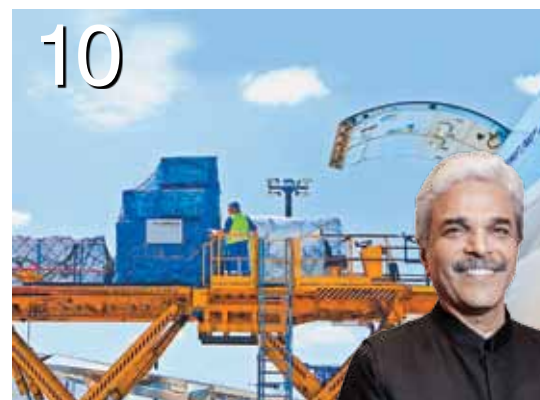
ACAAI SPECIAL 2023



With AI, Indian cargo industry enters big league



AI needs industry-wide acceptance: ACAAI Prez



Cooperation must for growth of air cargo



Next Gen AI will disrupt the freight forwarding industry



Collaborating with cargo partners to boost efficiency



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ACAAI elects Govil as Prez, Shah as VP in 53rd AGM

CK Govil was elected as the President of ACAAI by the Managing Committee at its 53rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) held in Mumbai recently. **Samir J Shah, Partner, JBS Group of Companies** has been elected as the Vice President and **Vikram Kumar, Director, CTC Air Carriers**, as the Honorary Secretary General.

Ahead of its upcoming 47th Annual Convention in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in November from 23-26 November, the Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) held its 53rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Mumbai.



CK Govil, Chairman & Managing Director, Acti-vair Airfreight was elected as the President of the association by the Managing Committee.

The Committee elected Samir J Shah, Partner, JBS Group of Companies as the Vice President; Vikram Kumar, Director, CTC Air



NEW OFFICE BEARERS ELECTED

- CK Govil
President
- Samir Shah
Vice President
- Vikram Kumar
Hony Secretary General
- Praveen Menon
Hony Treasurer

Carriers has been elected as the Honorary Secretary General and Praveen Menon is now the Honorary Treasurer. Afzal Malbarwala, Managing

Director, Galaxy Freight stepped down from the position of the President this year after serving ACAAI for two consecutive years as the President.

Members of the Managing Committee are Mahesh Trikha, Anil Vazirani, Siddharth Jairaj, Chaitaly Mehta, Ronnie Goveas, Amit Koley.

Pharma, perishables vital commodities for MOPA

Freighter operations play a vital role in air cargo, and we are looking forward to getting the same on board soon. MOPA has potential for EXIM and freighters for exporting pharma, perishables, marine, engineering, aerospace among others, says **Thakur Purushottam Singh, Business Head, GMR Goa Air Cargo Logistics.**



CT Bureau

Tell us about the cargo and freighter ops at Mopa airport. Do you have plans to expand capacity?

We commenced domestic and international ops at MOPA to 22 destinations and 110 air traffic movements per day linking across India and globally. GOX has the potential for EXIM and freighters have potential majorly pharma, perishables, marine, engineering, aerospace, electronics products. Currently, we have a capacity up to 30,000 MT per annum and we will expand phase-wise for domestic, express, and global cargo.

Throw light on infra for cargo handling at the airport. What kind of cargo is moved to and from the airport?

GMR Goa Air Cargo Logistics is an integrated cargo terminal where the air logistics for domestic and EXIM is under one roof. In Phase 1, the project



Thakur Purushottam Singh
Business Head
GMR Goa Air Cargo Logistics

with 3,000 MT capacity is yet to start and can be scaled up to 2,00,000 MT capacity. It includes domestic, EXIM, courier, and e-commerce. Pharma and perishables, VAL, DG, general cargo are key commodities, which moves in and out from the terminal.

How would you rate infrastructure in Goa for cargo movement?

Goa, which has 70 pharma

companies, is considered a pharma hub. We have designed temperature-controlled pharma zone with 15-25°C along with cold rooms with a temperature of 2-8°C. Epoxy flooring, dual view screening

We used insulation technology at the roof to enable reduction of the warehouse's temperature to 3-4°C less than the actual temperature

machines as per BCAS norms, data loggers are some of the important facilities that we have focussed on. We have DG qualified staff to handle dangerous goods, flexible built-up stations, dedicated cargo storage racks, strong room among others.

How crucial is tech and digitalization in your operations? How much have you invested in the last few years?

Unlike every industry, technology plays a critical role in the sector. We have made huge investments and incorporated integrated ERP software and ACCS to cater digitization and increase visibility. Real-time understanding of the shipment status, smooth flow of messaging to customs and airline systems, reduction of delays, and accurate inventory are some key advantages of technology.

What are the crucial concerns or challenging areas in the market?

Goa being a tourist destination, the domestic market is limited as compared to other states. Our team is exploring the opportunities to explore new business so that market expansion could be possible.

Tell us about sustainable initiatives taken to cut carbon emissions?

While developing the cargo terminal, we used insulation technology at the roof that enables reduction of the warehouse's temperature to 3-4°C less than the actual temperature. This enables us to cut usage of generators and ACs. GMR-owned airports ensure sufficient greenery to reduce the carbon effect from environment. GMT Goa Cargo Terminal Logistics is no exception.

How do you foresee the future of logistics and air cargo in India?

The demand for air cargo has increased over the past few years as the product life cycles have shortened and demand for fast delivery increased. According to the AAI, the country's passenger volume could increase to 412 million in 2024-2025, which increase cargo demand. According to reports, the country's logistics market increased from US\$190 billion in 2019 to US\$435.43 billion in 2023. It is all set to touch US\$650.52 billion in the next five years at a CAGR of 8.4 per cent. ✈





AI needs industry-wide acceptance: ACAAI Prez

At the ongoing 47th Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) Convention, **C.K. Govil, President** will focus on how AI will help the industry improve operational efficiency. He says EoDB in coordination with stakeholders and govt can achieve the target set by the PM to make India a global trade centre.



Ritika Arora Bhola

How would you justify this year's ACAAI Convention theme—AI The Game Changer—Embracing the Intelligent Future?

Did you realize that you use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in more ways than one in your daily life—whether it is to print your magazine's digital version or give voice commands to your phone. When we are surrounded by and rely on this technology, why should the air cargo industry be left behind? Hence the theme. I think we can begin by utilizing AI for data management,

which is the foundation of our operations. While AI's usage is limitless, the technology will be used in our industry. Many industries and companies have started using AI for effective customer support and warehouse management. Its usage in route and space optimisation will be a game changer for the Indian air cargo industry.

As the newly elected President, what are the goals that you have set for ACAAI to achieve in the coming years?

I intend to focus on EoDB, enhanced coordination with the government to achieve the target set by Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, and contribute to turning his vi-

sion for the country as a global trade centre into a reality.

What will be the key topics of discussion at the Convention. What will be the major focus areas?

Since the Convention's theme is AI, the focus will be on how it can help the industry improve operational efficiency and speed. We will hear from the firms employing AI and learn from them.

Kuala Lumpur is the chosen destination for the Convention. Why Malaysia?

We chose Malaysia because it is a business-friendly country

with a rich history of bilateral ties with India for more than two decades. Another reason is good air linkage from various Indian cities, thus making it easier for all participants to travel to the convention.

How does Malaysia look at India as a potential trade and investment destination? What kind of cargo is being moved to and from between the two countries?

India has a bilateral relationship with Malaysia for 66 years, and the trade has only grown. It is an important trade partner of our nation, and I see more growth in the times ahead. Over past two dec-



ades, our exports to Malaysia have grown at a rate of 10.4 per cent annually, and imports have shot up by 10.3 per cent. In 2021 alone, we exported goods worth US\$6.63 billion. Of these, the main ones included frozen bovine meat (US\$420 million), raw aluminium (US\$362 million), and special purpose ships (US\$212 million), among others. Our imports from Malaysia stood at US\$11.4 billion, including palm oil (US\$3.75 billion), and computers (US\$447 million), and crude petroleum (US\$752 million). India has shared its UPI tech with Malaysia, thus strengthening the robust ties.

Do you feel the stakeholders are ready to fully embrace the latest technology considering the costs and expertise involved?

I think a bigger worry for us is getting industry-wide accept-

ance that we cannot ignore AI anymore. We have been discussing digitalisation for years, and AI is the obvious next step. It has already taken over other industries and air cargo logistics as well to some extent. The expenses that AI demands are not exceptional, and we have the expertise to manoeuvre it. The younger talent joining our industry has the right skill set to guide us in employing and utilizing AI to its full potential.

Does India have the trained workforce to understand, use and deploy the advanced technologies in the right manner?

India has the largest millennial and Gen Z population globally in the 25-35 age group. They form a resource that no other country has. We need to tap this strength and train them. Several educational institutes include AI and related studies in their courses. Companies are collaborating with top varities to offer classroom and online AI technology courses. The Union Ministry of Electronics and IT has launched many initiatives to upskill the emerging generation with AI-based skills.

Even the employers understand the significance of training their employees in AI. Many of them have started their AI journey targeted initiatives to upskill their workforce in AI. This is being driven by the employees who are demanding such training, too.



How would you rate infrastructure in India for cargo movement. Do you think there is room for improvement?

Though development is taking place in the air cargo infrastructure, such as construction of 33 air cargo terminals by 2025, there is scope for progress. Although India's rank on the Logistics Performance Index (LPI) has improved from 47th to 38th, an economic superpower such as India should be a top-ranking country. We can scale up with unprecedented infrastructure growth in the country.

Do you feel steps should be taken to boost cross-border trade between India and neighbouring countries?

Yes. That will form the foundation for making India as a true global trade hub. I feel the Indian government is on the right track in forging stronger trade-related relations with as many countries as possible.

Has global slowdown impacted the EXIM trade, if yes, up to what extent? Is global cargo industry moving towards recovery?

The Indian economy does not operate in silos, so it was affected by the international slowdown. In fact, our goods exports declined by 12.7 per



C.K. Govil
President
ACAAI

Though development is taking place in the air cargo infrastructure, such as construction of 33 air cargo terminals by 2025, there is still scope for progress

cent on a year on year basis at US\$34.66 billion in April this year, the lowest in six months. Our merchandise imports nosedived by 14 per cent at US\$49.90 billion during the same period. Geopolitical tensions, ongoing conflicts, and inflation prevented international trade from bouncing back this year. However, dependence on the Chinese economy has declined and 'friend-shoring' is on the rise. This indicates that countries with matching political values and views rely more on each other to boost the EXIM trade.

What is your Vision 2030 for the sector. How do you foresee its future growth?

I see unhindered growth for air cargo. We have the brains and the ability to make greater strides. I believe our industry players will embrace AI in daily operations to reach our goals quicker, and this movement will be led by the youth emerging in our industry. Bright times lie ahead for the Indian air cargo industry. 🇮🇳



Samir J Shah, Vice President, The Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) says, in the long run, advanced technologies would bring in compliance, clarity, address safety, security, and sovereignty. This, in other words, would increase the cargo volumes and encourage service providers directly, he adds.



Ritika Arora Bhola

How do you think AI and other technologies will bring a revolution in the cargo industry?

The technological advances must be adopted. This is essential. The theme for the ACAAI Convention was finalised in order to make it easy to understand the same, accept it and use it without fear, confusion, and uncertainty. The advanced technologies have changed our expectations; they are often beyond what we can visualize. They are all working towards the common good, challenging the individual to upgrade, and be a con-

sistent learner. It is difficult to specify what the future will be. All one can say is that it would bring more compliance, clarity, and address all the changes keeping in mind safety, security, and sovereignty.

As the newly elected VP, what goals have you set for the ACAAI to achieve in the coming years?

Over 50 years, the ACAAI has kept its members interest as the guiding factor. Many challenges have been overcome. While the Indian freight forwarder is facing a challenging period, they are in many ways better placed than their counterparts in other countries. ACAAI has shielded them for

a long time from the negative changes. We will continue our efforts in the same manner. ACAAI is looking at capacity building initiatives for its members and their staff.

What will be the key topics/focus areas of discussion at the ACAAI Convention?

All the sessions have been planned so that each participant has a good takeaway. All the sessions will focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), safety, security, compliance, conflict management, new initiatives as well as the physical and emotional well-being of the members. The speakers at the Convention will come from varied backgrounds with cross

cultural experiences. I am sure the members will have much to take home.

Do you feel the stakeholders, including Customs, are ready to embrace technology considering the costs and expertise involved?

Yes. We have no choice. Adapting to the present and unknown; unthought of technologies would be essential. Staying away from them is not a choice. The areas for worry are costs and expertise in cargo handling. This is where collective efforts will be needed. There would be increased cooperation amongst the members and, hopefully, competitive approach will change to



cooperative approach where competitors cooperate on points of common good.

Do you think India has trained workforce to use and deploy tech? What are the initiatives taken in this regard?

The country has the right mindset and willingness to adapt to change. This will see us through all new changes. The youth of the country is driven and adaptive. Their aspirations are high, and it is for us as an industry to give them the necessary platform. I have a lot of faith in India of tomorrow.

Are investments in terms of multimodal infra development sufficient. Is there room for improvement?

I do not believe in the term worldclass. There can be

nothing like worldclass. Each country is different: the work culture is different and so are those executing it. The fact is having a relevant and user-friendly infra that is easy to use, fast, safe, secure, and compliant. The infra being created in India is targeting these factors. Wherever the infra doesn't meet with these standards, the provider is forced to meet them. We must appreciate that making something safe involves new processes, prior checking, audit, and these may also push up the user's cost. The efforts must be to curtail the costs. Govt intervention to keep costs low for the provider and the user are a must.

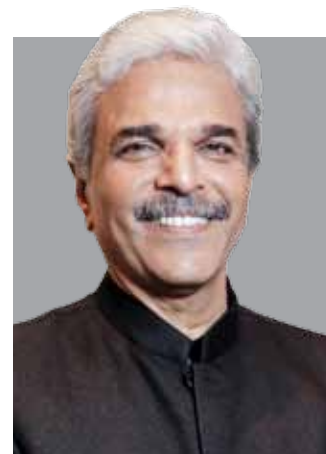
Has slowdown hit EXIM trade, if yes, to what extent? Is the industry moving towards recovery?

We are service providers to EXIM trade. Any downward

or upward trend in the trade volumes would affect the service providers directly. We are a barometer of the trade and not the trade per se. We can only influence cargo movement from one mode to another. Since the Indian exporter is facing difficulty with cargo volumes, there is a downward trend in the air cargo liftings. The innovation of the freight forwarder may see air cargo moving from one mode to another.

What is your vision 2030 for the Indian air cargo sector. How do you foresee the future growth of air cargo in India?

Global business will be essential for the country's economic leadership in the world. Travel from tier II cities is increasing, while the flights from these centres are not. As more direct foreign airlines start calling tier II cities, the cargo movement from these cities will increase. The present model of trucking for the first or last leg will not be sustainable as the cargo volumes grow. The need would be for tier II airports, forwarders, traders to be able to attract more foreign carriers into their cities. Sustained efforts for the same shall have to be done. As this happens a uniform spread of international cargo movement will be seen. The Indian aspirations on the international field will drive the growth story and the air cargo industry will ensure that it is successful.



Samir J Shah
Vice President, The Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI)

India needs more freighters to address the demand. Our fleet has risen to 15 narrowbodies, while we await the arrival of wide-body freighters

Does India need more freighters to ferry cargo from remote locations?

India needs more freighters to address overall demand. Our freighter fleet has increased to 15 narrowbody aircraft, while we await the arrival of wide-body freighters. Planning a freighter can be challenging as you need to set up its feasibility. 🇮🇳





With AI, Indian cargo industry enters big league

When automation and Artificial Intelligence work together, they leverage the power of real-time data, benefiting right from the beginning of the acceptance process. But the next biggest challenge is in defining objectives for the technology's implementation within their organizations, say experts.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the new buzzword in the logistics and air cargo sectors, looking at the number of benefits it offers. AI is being used in all spheres of logistics and air cargo supply chains to reduce inefficiencies, errors, and costs. AI responds in real-time to supply chain issues keeping disruption to a minimum.



The technology is used to create efficiencies and reduce errors by auto filling much of the documentation that goes along with air freight. Capacity and revenue management are some other areas where AI provides a plethora of opportunities for growth.

At the ongoing Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) 47th Annual Convention, the theme chosen—The Game Changer-Embrac-

Implementing AI in cargo loading, unloading and planning reduces human dependency. AI is also used in ground handling operations

ing the Intelligent Future—is apt in justifying the role of AI in air cargo operations. Experts said, “Implementing AI can reduce the inefficiencies and inconsistencies in air cargo operations. AI implementation in cargo load-

Contd. on next page ▶

ing/unloading and planning reduces human dependency and error. The technology is also used in ground handling operations and during multimodal cargo movement. One of AI's most significant contributions is in the field of demand forecastQWing. By

throughout its journey, allowing companies to ensure timely deliveries and enhance customer satisfaction.”

The future of AI in e-Booking platforms has begun and it will continue to grow, primarily in data aggregation, analyt-


en is put together to take a picture of the entire landscape at that point of time. By harnessing the power of AI-driven data analytics, users can make data-based decisions, leading to operational efficiency, cost savings, and of course, customer satisfaction.

The technology's predictive analytical capabilities can benefit the air cargo industry. AI's ability for predictive analytics can help by analyzing historical data, and considering various factors such as weather conditions, holidays, and economic trends for forecasting capacity and demand fluctuations. This will help businesses in making informed decisions and plan their operations well.

Despite the technology's advantages, the adoption of AI in supply chain management requires a shift in mind-set and organizational culture, as the employees must be trained to work alongside AI systems and management must be willing to embrace data-driven decision-making. Data privacy and security are important concerns when using AI in supply chain management. Collecting and processing sensitive information raises con-

cerns about data privacy and security, which requires firms to comply with data protection regulations and implement robust security measures to safeguard sensitive information. Despite these challenges, integrating AI into supply chain management presents significant benefits. As AI continues to evolve and mature, firms must work to overcome these challenges and embrace the opportunities presented by AI in supply chain management, added experts.

The two biggest challenges in implementing AI in the industry are digital maturity and fragmentation. The industry is in the early stages of digital transformation, meaning a lot of information still exists in non-digital formats such as paper, which are hard to retrieve. While AI can assist in digitizing and normalizing this unstructured data, the predominantly offline management of supply chain elements makes it challenging to capture the flow for optimization.

 spoke to industry stalwarts to find more on adopting AI in various logistics businesses.

ACAAI HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ Tradition to transformation- AI in air cargo
- ❖ Cargo in the cloud-AI reforming air freight
- ❖ Emerging technology & their impact
- ❖ Logistics service providers
- ❖ Navigating the future: AI-powered transformation in logistics industry
- ❖ AI for safety, security, transparency; of air cargo”

analyzing historical data and current trends, AI can forecast demand patterns precisely, preventing overstocking or understocking of goods. Real-time monitoring powered by AI ensures that cargo is tracked

ics and producing intelligent reports, especially forecasting models. For anyone in the industry, regardless of airlines or forwarders, the information collected through every single action or operation undertak-



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there
in the shortest time frame.

AI CHANGES INDUSTRY, REDUCES ERRORS

Advanced technology revolutionises air cargo. AI and ML are bringing the new era of digital transformation for air cargo. These are developed applications that are used to respond in real-time to supply chain issues to minimize disruptions. They are being used to create efficiencies and reduce errors by auto filling doc-



Amar More
CEO
Kale Logistics Solutions

When automation and AI work together, they leverage the power of real-time data, benefitting from the beginning of the acceptance process

umentation that goes along with air freight. High dwell times, congested terminals, sub-optimal use of belly capacity, missing/damaged non-traceable cargo, and manual processing are potential for AI and Machine Learning (ML).

The industry is estimated to be losing vast amounts of money due to under-reported volumes and mis-declarations of air cargo caused by human errors, associated with manual processes. Getting wrong results in incorrect storage charges, reduces loading efficiency and impacts profitability. To address these inefficiencies, businesses need to blend their team's



expertise with real-time and data-driven intelligence.

When automation and AI work together, they leverage the power of real-time data, benefitting right from the beginning of the acceptance process. It also improves a business's freight management and productivity. AI-powered CCS is creating an information-rich network that connects freight forwarder, transporter, airline operations and ground handling for better planning and decision-making. Creating digital audit trails of how cargo is received and handled will benefit end customers in the value-chain.

Impediments

AI is still a new field, and there is much we have yet to comprehend about its inner workings in the logistics sector, which has close to 40 stakeholders. This lack of understanding may produce unreliable outcomes due to various factors, including biased or incomplete datasets, algorithmic limitations, or complexity of the task at hand.

To address these challenges in AI, companies should emphasize rigorous testing and validation processes during the development of AI systems. The next biggest challenge is in defining objectives for AI implementation within

their organizations. Without well-defined goals, developing effective AI systems gets difficult. Many technology-based implementations fail because they are not correctly aligned with business objectives.

AI PREDICTS DEMAND, CUTS INEFFICIENCIES

AI is poised to bring about a profound transformation in the air cargo sector by leveraging its capabilities across various aspects of the industry. Predictive analytics, for instance, will empower companies to anticipate demand fluctuations accurately, enabling them to allocate resources and plan routes more effectively. This will not only reduce the transit times but will also lower the operational costs. One of the advanced technology significant contributions in demand is forecasting. By analysing historical data and current trends, AI can forecast demand patterns precisely and prevent overstocking or understocking of goods.

Real-time monitoring powered by the advanced technology ensures that cargo is tracked throughout its journey, allowing the companies to address any deviations from the planned route, ensuring timely deliveries and enhancing customer satisfaction. The data-driven insights offered by AI foster smarter



Parvinder Singh
Managing Director
Hans Informatic

By analysing historical data and current trends, AI can forecast demand patterns precisely and prevent overstocking or understocking

decision-making in capacity planning and risk management. With accurate information at their fingertips, the companies can adjust their operations to accommodate fluctuations in demand, thereby reducing waste and inefficiencies.

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- Disaster relief



A CATALYST FOR DIGITAL ALTERATION

AI is one of many technologies poised to streamline logistics in the air cargo industry, and the efficacy of AI relies on the broader digitization of various processes. I am optimistic that the growing attention to



Ruth Amaru
Chief Product Officer
Freightos

The biggest challenges for implementing AI are digital maturity and fragmentation. The industry is still in the early stages of digital transformation

AI will serve as a catalyst for digital transformation in the industry, as seen in Freightos' recent survey wherein 96 per cent of logistics professionals expect to leverage AI, and 14 per cent are already using or piloting solutions for pricing or customer service automations.

Some more exciting areas we will see are as follows:

❖ **Predictive demand analytics:** By leveraging ML algorithms such as neural networks and decision trees to process vast amounts of data, identify key features, and capture complex patterns, logistics professionals will be able to improve the accuracy and speed of forecasts.

❖ **Route optimization:** Using ML algorithms and real-time data analysis to optimize paths based on various factors such as traffic conditions, road closures, and travel time, offer the most efficient and timely routes. This has historically been a challenging area given the total number of inputs.

❖ **Dynamic pricing:** Utilizing ML models and real-time data analytics to analyze market demand, competitor prices, and other variables, automatically adjusting prices to optimize revenue or market share. This is a particularly interesting area given the influx in available industry and internal data.

The biggest challenges for implementing AI are digital maturity and fragmentation. The industry is in the early stages of digital transformation, which means a lot of information exists in non-digital formats such as paper, or in digital formats that are hard to retrieve. While AI can assist in digitizing and normalizing this unstructured data; the offline management of many supply chain elements makes it challenging to capture the flow for optimization. If it is not legible to a computer, it cannot be passed as an input and AI is only as smart as its inputs. As for fragmentation, supply chains are inherently fragmented, spanning multiple

companies, continents, countries, modes of transport, and languages. The lack of standardized systems and protocols makes it difficult to achieve seamless, end-to-end visibility and coordination across these disparate elements.

Despite these challenges, AI holds the promise of being a solution to several of these issues, particularly in data normalization, real-time analysis, and perhaps even in fostering greater standardization and integration across the fragmented landscape.

INDUSTRY USES AI TO MEND EFFICIENCY

The future of the advanced technology in e-Booking platforms has begun and will continue to grow in data aggregation, analytics and producing intelligent reports. For anyone in the industry, regardless of airlines or forwarders, the information collected from every single action or operation undertaken, comes together to make an intelligent picture of the whole landscape. By harnessing the power of AI-driven data analytics, users can make data-based decisions, leading to operational efficiency and cost savings, and customer satisfaction. The requirement for different customers (TMS, airlines, GSA, forwarders) are diverse, but we can customize datasets to suit each type of business use case.



Magali Beauregard Ta
CCO
CargoAi

By harnessing the power of AI-driven data analytics, users can make data-based decisions, leading to operational efficiency and saving costs

At CargoAi, we recognize the significance of ML in optimizing pricing, and revenue management for the airlines, who are our key partners. Another example is that we could see detection of a repeated route or type of booking, and ML to perform an automated search, to propose the best



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options for these types of re-current bookings, prompting users to indicate whether they want to confirm the booking for that week or month.

Particularly with large language models, we should also see chatbots, for customer service or troubleshooting, being more perceptive to customer questions and answering them more painlessly. The most challenging aspect of digitalization is human change management. Embracing new technologies and processes often require a shift in mindset and workflows.

Infrastructure and resources varying across various regions worldwide is one of the challenges. There are some areas lacking infrastructure, such as cargo handling capabilities, warehousing, and transport linkage compared to major hubs. Deploying technology requires infra to support its implementation and utilization. This affects the connectivity and integration amongst players such as airlines, freight forwarders, and GHAs. The infra variance across regions means it is challenging to integrate systems of these stakeholders uniformly.

Over the next five years, as digital adoption becomes more widespread, the advanced technology will continue to be a driving force, providing real-time insights, automating tasks, and enabling intelligent decision-making. e-Booking platforms like ours are poised to witness accelerated growth and increased competitiveness in the global landscape.

DATA AVAILABILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING AI

We believe AI represents both potential and demonstrable value in the air cargo industry today. We have observed a good number of cases that leverage the predictive power of ML models, which we have incorporated in our range of optimization solutions.

Two such examples include our overbooking recommendation and capacity forecasting solutions which employ different ML models to provide airlines with more accurate predictions of their available cargo capacity. The underlying ML models forecast cargo show up rates and passenger baggage respectively based on historical data, enabling airlines to better manage their capacity and mitigate issues,



Nathanel de Tarade
Chief Executive Officer
Wiremind Cargo

As AI continues to evolve, including branches such as generative AI and reinforced learning, we expect cases emerging enhancing value within the air cargo industry

such as offloads and underutilized inventory. Consequently, this not only ensures a more streamlined operation and improved customer experience but also optimizes revenue maximization efforts for the airlines.

As AI continues to evolve, including branches such as generative AI and reinforced learning, we anticipate even more use cases emerging that can enhance value within the air cargo industry. One of the most significant challenges in implementing AI is the quality and availability of data. AI models rely on large amounts of clean, historical data to ensure accurate and meaningful results. Data engineering plays a crucial role in preparing the data for AI models by removing errors, inconsistencies, and duplicates from datasets, and establishing a standardized data ingestion process.

However, organizations may have varying levels of data maturity and infrastructure, which can pose obstacles. We work closely with our custom-

ers throughout the engagement process, from understanding their existing data landscape in the early discussions to devising strategies for addressing data issues during the build and ensuring optimal model performance on an ongoing basis.

DATA, CHANGE IN MANAGEMENT CRUCIAL TO IMPLEMENT AI

1. By leveraging forecasting capabilities of AI: the industry can support decision-making in sales, pricing, revenue management and capacity management. CargoTech offers products in the field of Revenue Optimization: 'wiremind cargo' has developed the CargoStack Optimizer suite of



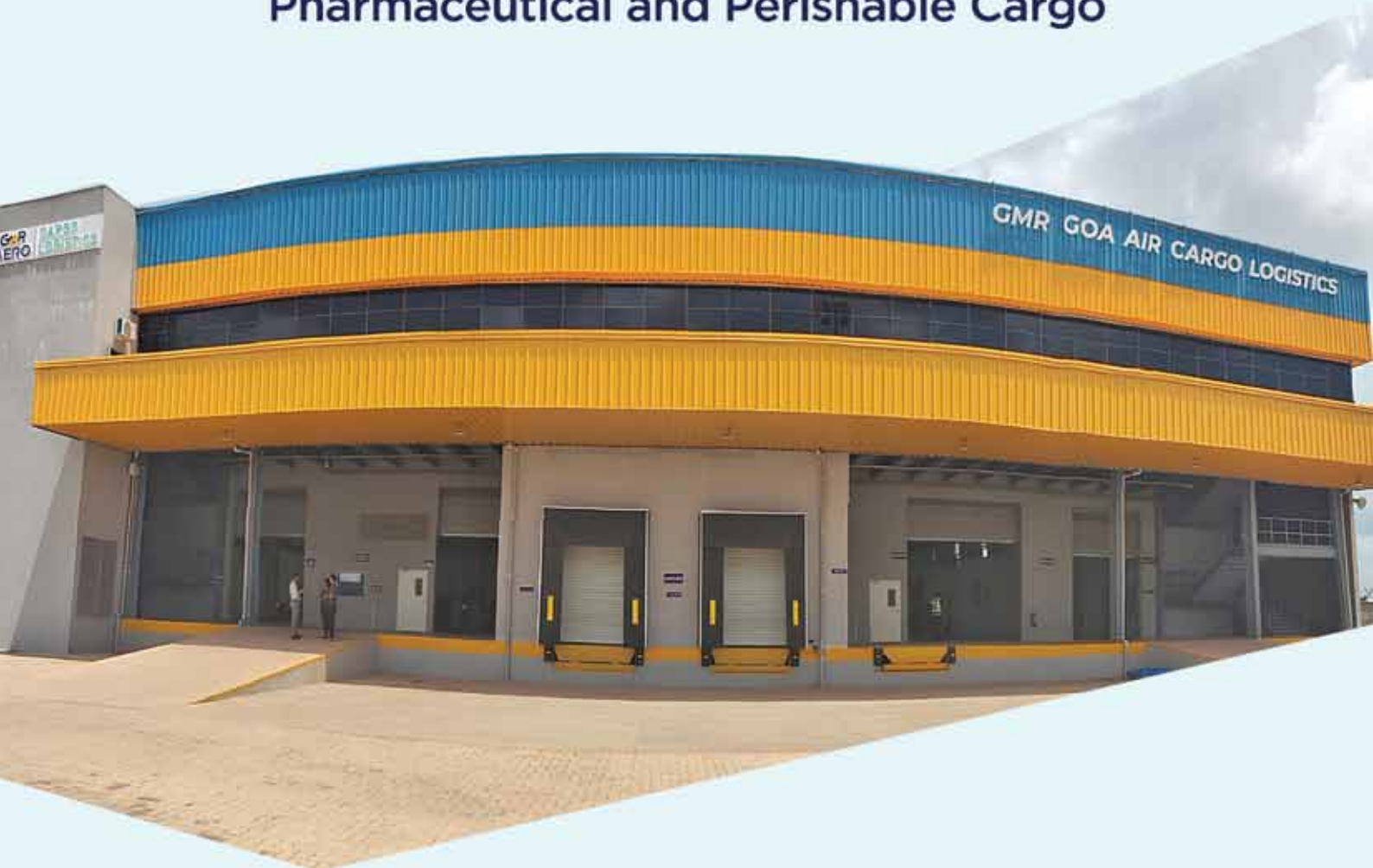
Cedric Millet
Chief Strategy and Digital Officer, ECS
Group and President, CargoTech

Enhance learning experience and skills of the workforce by using AI for training purposes. This is important in an industry struggling to hire talent

Digital Solutions for demand forecasting, capacity forecasting, pricing decision support and overbooking recommendation). 'Rotate' also offers the "Sales Cockpit" a product that is a game changer in terms of sales steering. CargoAi generates a lot of new data on their platform that can be used to

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- Integrated with Bonded Truck aggregators for Last Mile Delivery

Contact us:

Purshottam Singh Thakur - Business Head, Thakurpurushottam.Singh@gmrgroup.in

feed data models to increase prediction and forecasts.

1. Increase productivity by replacing low-value, repetitive tasks: as a concrete example, CargoAi has launched CargoMATE, an API and an outlook plugin based on ChatGPT that can read the content of any email and automatically repopulate all the information to create a quote/booking request very efficiently without having to retype all the information that can be quite complex, especially when there are a lot of dimensions in a shipment.

2. Enhance learning experience and skills of the workforce: by using AI for training purposes. This is particularly important in an industry that struggles to hire talent.

3. Lower carbon emissions: AI has started to be used to save fuel thanks to optimized navigation, weight, and balance, as well as aircraft routes.

4. There are two main challenges when implementing AI: one is data, and the other is a change in management.

AI TO HELP OPTIMIZE FLEET MANAGEMENT

AI and Internet of Things (IoT) are transforming the industry and bringing in a revolution in operations and increasing efficiency. AI can help with optimizing fleet management, intelligent route planning and optimisation, smart warehouse operations, predictive analytics, demand forecasting, customer service, enhanced transparency, and visibility across the supply chain due to use of sensors, and connected devices, RFID tags, among others. All of these enable organizations to make better decisions and leads to reduced cost, while also contributing to sustainability.

While we have already brought in digitalisation to several areas of our business, our future projects at Qatar Airways Cargo will witness AI integrated into many areas/projects. Data is critical for AI as without quality data, AI is of no use. This is the biggest challenge in its implementation. Organizations will have to let go of



Liesbeth Oudkerk
Senior Vice President, Cargo Sales and Network Planning, Qatar Airways

Organizations will have to let go of legacy systems and bring more AI compatible systems; this involves cost. One more challenge is to resist change

legacy systems and bring on more AI compatible systems and this involves cost. Another challenge would be resistance to change. However, more and more organisations across the supply chain are realizing the multiple benefits that digitalisation and AI bring, so although there are challenges,

we believe they will be overcome in the future.

AI HELPS DIGITIZE, REGULATE HANDLING

AI has the potential to enhance air cargo operations through the introduction of automation, optimization, and predictive capabilities. AI can analyze historical data, market trends and other factors to provide accurate demand forecasts.

AI-powered algorithms can analyze real-time data to optimize flight routes. Automating warehousing via AI-powered robots and drones can make tasks, such as sorting, picking, and packing, reducing the risk of human error, and speeding up the process. Tapping into the benefits of AI is why Etihad Cargo has deployed AI-powered solutions. These tools will help Etihad Cargo boost efficiency, digitize, and standardize cargo handling across our network, and enhance service levels for our customers and partners.

We are utilizing AI to enhance the quality of our operations through the integration of the third dimension to generate ULD-level load plans, so we can maximize the cargo carried on our flights and reduce the risk of needing to offload a shipment due to overbooking or load cargo in a way



Thomas Schürmann
Head, Cargo Operations & Delivery Etihad Cargo

Tapping into the benefits of AI is why Etihad Cargo has deployed AI-powered solutions. These tools boost efficiency and standardize cargo

not anticipated. Using computer vision, we can anticipate how cargo will be assembled and loaded onto the aircraft using cargo dimensions and volume data.

The main challenge of using AI in the supply chain is integration and modularity. If

we look specifically at the air cargo sector, there are fewer common systems, and new solutions and applications must be integrated within existing platforms. Additions can be complicated, and upgrades can potentially lead to a high volume of throwaways. Another challenge, which is, thankfully, becoming less of an issue, is addressing the skills gap. AI is a niche technology and finding the right partners and people to develop and integrate AI-powered solutions in a cost-effective, viable way can be difficult. However, Etihad Cargo has overcome this hurdle, partnering with leading solutions providers, and collaborating with our partners to ensure the solutions we are launching add value to our partners and customers and enhance the efficiency of our operations.

AI PLAYS ROLE IN PLANNING, EXECUTION

Based on historical data, AI can predict demand and supply trend. In an integrated supply chain network platform, AI can also give operational solutions from packaging to transportation. In today's world, AI plays a big role in prediction, planning, and execution. For seamless operations of logistics and supply chain management, it needs to keep pace with an advance technology. In automated warehouses, AI



Dipen Lalsodagar
Deputy Director, Cargo Sales
Global Aviation Services

AI-driven tech is high on costs for operation and maintenance. It needs skilled labour. System integration is vital to develop a common platform

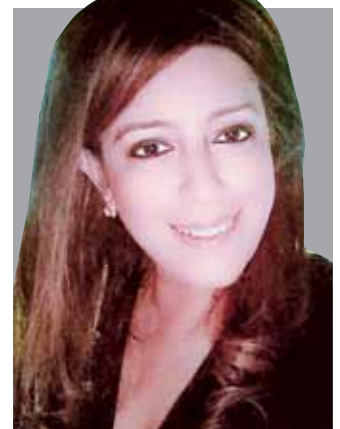
can give instant results on goods inventory and suggest demand-supply pattern based on consumption trend.

In transportation, it can identify the best and fastest routes for quicker delivery. In shipping, it suggests efficient routes and costs to ship the goods to maintain

delivery timeline. With AI as core programme in logistics, it attracts technically trained workforce to manage the supply chain. The AI-driven technology is high on costs for operation and maintenance. It also needs highly skilled labour. The system integration is important to develop a common platform to access the information, which is restricted in an open source due to data privacy. However, the technology can be implemented in a phased manner as the industry develops & implement AI and train the workforce.

AI TO BE IN TUNE WITH CUSTOMER DEMAND

AI has become an integral part of the logistic landscape, and the good part is that our industry is embracing it with an open mind and willingness to adopt and apply. Few small and medium-scale logistic companies are battling due to data scarcity, while the majors ones benefit thanks to harnessing AI capabilities. It is the need of the hour for each big or small entity, to incorporate digitization/AI to be in cohorts with global practices, global competition and fulfilling customer demands. Limited visibility, changing consumer demands, rising costs, economic uncertainties, political unrest contribute to hindrances and risks in the global supply chain, thus



Sakshi Gupta
Country Manager
Air Logistics Group

Few logistics companies are battling due to data scarcity, while the major ones benefit, thanks to harnessing AI capabilities

making manual/traditional ways of working obsolete. To navigate through these hurdles—AI came to our rescue and added more muscle to our supply chain as it brings with it the important ingredients of transparency, efficiency, resilience, and reduction in costs. Incorporating AI will step up automation to build



an agile and intelligent work culture and help soar high to what we can expect in the future by forecasting future market trends, based on the current data and create a data lake, which can be insightful and transformative for the industry. AI systems are vulnerable to cyberattacks, leading to irreparable damage at times—this is the biggest challenge as the risk management capabilities and cybersecurity measures are not foolproof throughout the supply chain to combat the attack.

Secondly, a series of check points and multiple data transfers through different systems at different locations in our supply chain result in data breaches and system failures. Besides, the underlying victims of AI are the workers with old school knowledge whose jobs would be axed, eventually. But all in all, AI is a fantastic tool. The choice about how it gets deployed is ours. So, before you accelerate with AI, focus on steering it.

AI POWERED TO EASE AIRPORT BOTTLENECKS

Efficient air cargo operations, optimized logistics and an improved customer experience are what the advanced technology can bring to our industry. AI has the power to ease bottlenecks at airports, make data transparent and optimize and organize storage in



C K Govil
President, ACAA and CMD
Activair Airfreight India

We need skilled workforce to use AI to our advantage. The change is already happening. we can turn the tide in our favour by embracing it

warehouses and planning for flights. AI can facilitate information collection, processing, and flow, thus reducing disruptions in the supply chain. Besides tracking shipments real-time, AI can forecast delays based on previous data. This can help the industry players save time and money and prevent interruptions in air cargo

deliveries. We have seen AI-enabled chatbots strengthen customer support in many industries. It will bring about a similar change in the way we manage customer queries and make air cargo booking and reservations simpler.

AI in supply chain

Acceptance by industry players, AI taking over employment is as old as—technology making humans redundant. That did not happen because we became smarter than technology and made it work to our benefit. We just need skilled persons at using and employing AI to our advantage. The change is already happening; we can turn the tide in our favour by embracing it.

TACKLING AI-RELATED FEARS IN STAKEHOLDERS

The focus of using the advanced technology in the logistics sector is being seen to bring about significant levels of efficiency in our daily activities. It is important to remember AI's ability to deliver the benefits, is connected to our ability to provide continuous data streams, allowing the system to recognize and analyze data patterns before it can derive a methodology to do the same tasks at a much faster and efficient method. It is my personal belief that a general call for deploying AI would be a worthless exercise, rather we should be calling for a focused



M Afzal Malbarwala
Founder and Managing Director
Galaxy Freight

There's need for a conscious approach to identify our core problems in the existing system before addressing a call to deploy AI as a single stop solution

approach to specific deliverables and actionable items.

The need is for a conscious approach to identifying our core problems in the existing system before addressing a call to deploy AI as a single stop solution. We run complex supply chain cycles—most of them are complex requirements, the rest being mandated by the need to run a business enterprise.

As technology aided innovation becomes a daily routine—most business owners would invest their valuable time in trying to understand the impediments of the current businesses versus as to what AI can bring about as a solution. AI comes up in different methodologies, different systems, and thereby different capabilities. There is no single window solution to our complex requirements. In this context, I believe the challenges would be to identifying an AI system, which can integrate with our heritage systems, merge with our actual customer deliverables, and protect our data sensitivity, while delivering the solution we want

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as a final achievement. There is a recognised panic that AI-run machines can replace the human work force. Addressing such fears should take priority for heritage organisations who have long-term loyal employees.

AI EXECUTION AT POINTS IN SUPPLY CHAIN A CHALLENGE

AI's forecasting abilities can benefit the air cargo industry. AI's capability to offer predictive analytics can help by analysing historical data and other factors such as weather conditions, holidays, and economic trends to forecast capacity and demand fluctuations. This will help businesses make informed decisions and plan their operations. Another way AI can benefit the industry is by improving the cargo load factor. AI-powered systems can optimize cargo loading processes to ensure maximum utilization of space in aircraft. This leads to cost savings for businesses and improved efficiency in ferrying goods. AI can enhance transparency and traceability in the industry. Stakeholders often lack visibility of cargo movement within airport environment, leading to a lack of transparency and vulnerability to cargo theft. AI can track and monitor cargo in real-time, providing visibility and location of goods. This not only reduces the risk of theft but also improves over-



Vaibhav Vohra
Managing Director
Continental Carriers

AI-powered systems can optimize cargo loading processes to ensure utilization of space in aircraft. This leads to cost savings and efficiency in ferrying goods

all operational efficiency by enabling better coordination between different service providers. The challenge for implementation of AI at multiple points in the supply chain is data quality. AI systems rely on accurate, consistent, and up-to-date data to make forecasts and generate insights. However, ensuring data quality across the supply chain can be chal-

lenging, especially when dealing with multiple suppliers, geographical locations, and data formats.

Another challenge is high implementation costs. Developing and integrating AI solutions into existing supply chain systems can be time-consuming and expensive. Adoption of AI in supply chain management requires a shift in mind-set and organizational culture as employees must be trained to work alongside AI systems and management and willing to embrace data-driven decision-making. Data privacy and security are concerns when using AI in supply chain management.

Collecting and processing sensitive data raises concerns about data privacy and security, which requires firms to comply with data protection regulations and implement robust security measures to safeguard sensitive information. Despite these challenges, integrating AI into supply chain management presents many benefits.

COLLABORATION IMPORTANT

AI can bring many benefits to the air cargo industry, helping to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, improve safety, and provide better customer service. To improve efficiency and productivity, AI can help in route optimization and automated cargo handling through smart

devices. There can be significant cost reductions due to fuel efficiencies and predictive maintenance reducing downtime of aircraft and ensuring supply. Safety and security can also be enhanced through forecast technologies.

AI-based profiling, screening and risk management can mitigate risks associated with air transportation, enhancing safety and reliabil-



Vikram Kumar
Honorary Secretary, ACAAI
and Director, CTC Air Carriers

Customer service is an area where AI has shown its importance and chatbots can provide real-time tracking, bookings and end-to-end visibility

ity. Good quality AI can analyze vast data, optimize capacity planning, and resource allocation. The quality of data can also help automate customs, port processes, and ensure higher compliance. Customer service is an area where AI has shown its importance and chatbots can provide real-time tracking, bookings, and end-to-end visibility for sensitive products with IoT providing continuous data automated and presented to improve customer experience. The implementation of AI at multiple points in the supply chain can offer vital benefits, but it also comes with several challenges.

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AI relies heavily on data—inconsistent or poor-quality data can lead to inaccurate results. Standardizing data formats and ensuring data quality can be a challenge, especially when dealing with data from multiple sources. Sharing data across the supply chain can raise concerns about data privacy and security. Existing legacy systems and software may not be compatible with modern AI solutions. This can require substantial investments in upgrading or replacing systems to make them AI-ready. Hence, integration, cost of upgrades and maintenance will require the will of management to spend on infrastructure and trained manpower and also adhere to higher levels of compliance. This can be a challenge for small and medium enterprises, which may not have the resources to upgrade to such levels. Organizations must invest in data governance practices, standardize data formats, and implement robust cybersecurity measures. They should consider adopting modern, cloud-based technologies that facilitate data integration and scalability. Collaboration and communication among stakeholders and partners in AI in the supply chain are essential experts and can help overcome these challenges effectively.

FINDING & RETAINING AI EXPERTS IS DIFFICULT

Demand forecasting: Role: Accurate demand predictions using historical data and market trends. Advantages: improved inventory management, better customer service.
Route optimization: Role:



Amit Jangle
Managing Director
FM Logistic, India

AI-driven robots automate tasks such as picking and packing. The tech also results in reduced costs, faster deliveries, higher customer satisfaction

Real-time route optimization based on traffic and weather. Advantages: Reduced costs, faster deliveries, higher customer satisfaction.
Inventory management: Role: Optimized inventory levels and reorder points. Advantages: Lower holding costs, improved capital management.
Warehouse automation: Role: AI-driven robots automate tasks such as picking and packing. Advantages: Increased efficiency, reduced labour costs, improved safety.

Predictive maintenance: Role: Predicting equipment maintenance needs.

Advantages: Minimized downtime, extended equipment lifespan.

Supply chain visibility: Role: Real-time supply chain monitoring. Advantages: Better decision-making and faster issue response.

Quality control: Role: Automated quality inspections with AI.

Advantages: Enhanced product quality, cost savings.

Customer Service: Role: AI-powered chatbots for customer inquiries. Advantages: 24/7 support, faster responses, higher satisfaction.

Risk Management: Role: Identifying and mitigating supply chain risks. Advantages: Proactive risk management, lower costs.

Data Analytics: Role: Analyzing data for insights and continuous improvement.

Advantages: Data-driven decisions, ongoing process optimization.

Challenges

- **Data integration:** merging data from diverse sources (ERP, CRM, IoT, legacy systems) is complex; data consistency and quality are vital.
- **Interoperability:** ensuring AI compatibility with existing technology stacks can be daunting.
- **Scalability:** adapting AI across a global supply chain presents scalability hurdles.
- **Legacy Systems:** upgrading non-AI-ready systems is costly and time-consuming.
- **Change management:** AI disrupts established processes; managing change and employee adaptation is a challenge.
- **Data security:** protecting

sensitive data is crucial, with data privacy regulations adding complexity.

- **Costs:** AI implementation costs, including hardware, software, and training, can strain budgets.

- **Skill gap:** finding and retaining AI experts is difficult.

- **Ethical considerations:** addressing bias and unintended consequences in AI decisions is essential.

- **Regulatory compliance:** navigating varying AI regulations across regions and industries is complex.

- **Vendor selection:** choosing aligned AI solution providers is crucial.

Overcoming these challenges necessitates meticulous planning, investment, and a clear strategy.

SKILLED WORKFORCE IN EVOLVING AI LANDSCAPE NEEDED

AI brings many benefits to the air cargo industry. AI-driven predictive maintenance reduces downtime, route optimization cuts delays and fuel use, while demand forecasting optimizes cargo capacity and pricing. Automation streamlines cargo handling and inventory management, bolstering security and risk management. AI-driven customer service and environmental impact reduction enhance sustainability and cost-efficiency. Data analytics ensure continuous process enhancement, elevating industry efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness. Implementing AI involves integrating AI-powered tools, employee training, and ongoing AI solution monitoring and adaptation.



Vijayaraghavan S
Chief Financial Officer
ProConnect Supply Chain Solutions

Implementing AI involves integrating AI-powered tools, employee training, and ongoing AI solution monitoring and adaptation

Implementing AI across multiple points in the supply chain presents many challenges. A shortage of experts proficient in AI, security, hardware, and user requirements can lead to increased costs. Extracting valuable insights from vast datasets demands advanced analytics, a complex process in itself. Robust data protection measures

are imperative due to security concerns, especially in diverse global supply networks. Connectivity issues, influenced by geography and internet accessibility, can disrupt data flows, causing operational disruptions. These challenges underscore the need for holistic solutions and a skilled workforce in the evolving AI landscape, as emphasized by experts in the field.

AI TO REDUCE EMISSIONS

1. Predictive analytics: AI can analyze vast datasets, from weather patterns to historical shipping data, to predict delays and optimize routes.
2. Optimized routing: AI can instantly calculate the most efficient flight paths, considering factors such as fuel efficiency, weather conditions, and airport congestion.
3. Dynamic pricing: AI algorithms can adjust pricing in real time based on demand and capacity.
4. Cargo loading: AI-powered robotic systems can optimize loading of cargo planes, ensuring weight distribution and maximizing space utilization.
5. Maintenance predictions: AI can forecast when aircraft components require maintenance, reducing downtime and minimizing the risk of

in-flight issues that can delay cargo deliveries.

Benefits to cargo industry

1. Cost savings: AI-driven optimizations reduce fuel costs, lower maintenance expenses, and improve resource allocation, resulting in cost savings for airlines and cargo companies.
2. Efficiency gains: smoother operations mean faster turnaround times at airports, increasing the number of cargo flights that can be scheduled and improving overall supply chain efficiency.
3. Reduced carbon footprint: AI's ability to optimize routes and resources helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, aligning the industry with sustainability goals.
4. Improved reliability: predictive analytics and real-time adjustments minimize delays and disruptions, making air cargo a more reliable option for shippers.

Challenges

1. Data integration symphony: AI thrives on comprehensive data, and integrating this eclectic mix into a harmonious symphony can be daunting. Ensuring that data from procurement, inventory management, transportation, all sync seamlessly like coordinating



Lalit Das
Founder & Director
3SC Solutions

Ability of AI to optimize routes and resources helps reduce greenhouse gas emission and, align the industry with sustainability goals

musicians playing different instruments.

2. Cultural crescendo: every stakeholder in the supply chain, from suppliers to shippers to warehouse managers, must be on board with AI adoption. Resistance to change, fear of





job displacement, or lack of AI literacy can disrupt the symphony.

3. Orchestrating algorithms: AI involves deploying a variety of algorithms and models. Ensuring that these algorithms collaborate effectively such as sections of an orchestra following a conductor's lead, requires meticulous planning and testing.

4. Scalability sonata: scaling AI solutions to accommodate growth, while maintaining performance and accuracy is like scaling up an orchestra for a larger venue to ensure the music remains impeccable.

5. Privacy and security serenade: protecting sensitive data in an interconnected AI-powered supply chain is a constant challenge.

6. Maintenance maestro: ensuring that the entire orchestra of AI components receives timely maintenance and upgrades to stay in tune is a logistical challenge.

7. Cost concerto: implementing AI at scale can be expensive, from data collection to

model development to hardware and software.

AI ENHANCES SUPPLY CHAIN'S DECISION-MAKING EXPERTISE

In the air cargo supply chain, AI has the potential to enhance operational efficiencies and customer service. Specifically, within the realm of AI, conversational AI, and generative AI (the technology that powers ChatGPT and Bard) are poised to play significant roles in streamlining supply chain operations for the Indian air cargo industry.

Conversational AI chatbots offer real-time customer support, enabling 24x7 assistance and foster improved communication among various stakeholders. Generative AI leverages data to create meaningful content, streamlining customer inquiries and simplifying the creation and processing of shipping documentation. This minimizes errors, saves time, and enhances overall operational efficiency in the cargo supply chain. Combined, conversational, and generative AI can work synergistically to facilitate smoother and efficient operations, resulting in cost



Sabari Ramnath
Senior Manager
Unisys Cargo Solutions

In the realm of AI, conversational AI, and generative AI (the tech that powers ChatGPT and Bard) play pivotal roles in streamlining supply chain ops

savings, error reduction, and increased customer satisfaction. This integration holds promise for air cargo's future.

Bottlenecks in implementing AI

Firstly, AI's learning capabilities depend on the quality of the data it processes. Just as the value of oil depends on purification and application, data must be free from bias to create impactful AI solutions.

Secondly, large volumes of data are vital to developing highly accurate AI applications. Effectively using this data to drive the right business results requires substantial computing power, such as quantum computing. Unisys Logistics Optimization™ combines AI, advanced analytics, and the power of quantum computing to help enable near-real-time decision-making, enhancing efficiency and decision-making capabilities in the cargo supply chain.

FACTFILE

➔ AI's learning capabilities depend on the quality of the data it processes. As the value of oil depends on purification, data must be free from bias.

ACAAI meet for Eastern region

Shantanu Murmu, Director, Globsync India, has been elected as the Regional Chairman, East region, ACAAI. He says, "We walked the extra mile to salvage our industry. We were mobile from 1 April 2020 to create a supply chain where there is no shortage of essential goods and pharmaceuticals."



Shantanu Murmu
Director, Globsync India & Regional
Chairman, Eastern Region, ACAAI

The ACAAI held its Eastern Regional Team Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 18 August in Kolkata. This was followed by Air Cargo Meet where representatives from the airlines and airport terminals, AAICLAS and customs and Calcutta Customs House Agents Association of India participated. Shantanu Murmu, Director, Globsync India, was elected as the Regional Chairman. He took over from the outgoing Regional Chairman Amit Koley of Saila Shipping. "A lot has been done and achieved during the pandemic. We were mobile from 1 April 2020 to create a supply chain where there is no shortage of essentials and pharmaceuticals. Our limits were tested to the full, and we, as an unorganised sector, overcame every obstacle. We walked the extra mile and risked our life to salvage the air cargo industry. The world has never thought cargo can be flown on passenger seats, which we did successfully. This is an innovation. Once an IndiGo pilot told me we lost the gamble. But these ideas worked. Now we are being treated better," Murmu said.





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Next Gen AI will disrupt the freight forwarding industry

Amit Maheshwari is the forward-thinking CEO of Softlink Global and a pioneer in digitalizing logistics. Being an early adopter of AI and with a proven track record of driving innovation within his firm, he delves into the question on everyone's mind: can Next Gen AI disrupt the freight forwarding industry today, in this interview.



CT Bureau

Can nextgen AI disrupt the Freight Forwarding industry as we see today?

Yes, it will! Freight Forwarding industry has been overdue for an evolution. For over 100 years, the industry has remained almost the same. From hand written to type written, from computer printed to PDF, change was incremental. The industry has always been dependent on human intervention. The new generation Artificial Intelligence has the power to completely revolutionize the industry right from route planning, booking, interacting with carriers, providing customer service, coordinating with various other stakeholders – everything can be done in a more efficient and enhanced manner. With that said, AI has already started to revolutionize the freight industry. We ourselves are building many tools which is helping our customers to automate their operations, thereby reducing human dependency and being more process-driven.

Your flagship product Logi-Sys is known for its constant product innovations. How do you plan to integrate AI into its future product enhancement?

At Softlink, innovation is not just a buzzword but a part of our DNA. After the advent of Windows and Internet, this is the third time that I am truly excited about a technology revolution. AI suddenly makes

The new generation AI has the power to revolutionize the industry right from route planning, booking, interacting with carriers, providing customer service, coordinating with stakeholders – everything can be done in a more efficient and enhanced manner

computers an intelligent machine which otherwise were dumb. We're excited to be developing an AI-powered

LogiTALK, utilizing Natural Language Processing to provide real-time, multilingual customer support, ensuring

queries are addressed with precision and clarity, no matter the language. Additionally, we're experimenting with AI to revolutionize the document review process, aiming to significantly expedite document verification. This will not only speed up the compliance process but also substantially mitigate risks associated with document discrepancies, offering our clients a more reliable, efficient, and secure logistics solution. These steps underscore our unwavering dedication to delivering a



tech-first product that stands out for its innovative approach in the ever-evolving landscape of freight forwarding.

You were recently awarded 'Pioneer in Digitalizing Logistics' recognition. With three decades of experience, what insights and advice can you offer to upcoming entrepreneurs?

From my humble beginnings coding software for customs clearance to now leading Softlink Global, my journey has been enriching with challenges and learnings. The logistics industry, particularly in India, was ripe for a digital transformation when I started out in the 1990s. My advice to the next generation of entrepreneurs is to keep an eye out for such opportunities where you can truly make a difference. Identify the gaps in the industry and be fearless in taking that first step to fill them. Remember, innovation and a customer-centric approach should be at the heart of everything you do. Embrace failures,

as they are stepping stones to success. And most importantly, always be passionate about your work, as that passion will drive you to never stop experimenting and innovating.

Considering the shortcomings that typical ERP systems face, how does your company tackle these issues and enhance customer value?

I'm proud to say that our knack for tackling the shortcomings of typical ERP systems comes down to a few key ingredients. First off, we've got domain expertise that's second to none. Our in-depth knowledge of the logistics sector empowers us to design solutions that are accurately aligned with industry-specific challenges. Then there's our collective passion. It's the fuel in our engine. We're a group of people who genuinely care about making our clients' lives easier. That passion is what drives us to pour our hearts into every line of code and every feature we design. Anchored in innovation, we continuously evolve our software to anticipate



Amit Maheshwari
CEO
Softlink Global

and meet the future needs of logistics and freight forwarding, ensuring our clients are always prepared for what's next. We're not just keeping up; we're set-

out. Our aim has always been to revolutionize the customs clearance process, turning it into a seamless operation that propels our clients' businesses forward.

With margins shrinking, what strategies can freight forwarding companies employ to boost financial stability and profitability?

Margins of freight forwarders have always been fluctuating. Being prudent with financial management is all about striking the right balance. Having all your financial data in one place means you can say goodbye to juggling different systems and the headache of manual data entry. Automating your financial processes just streamlines

After the advent of Windows and Internet, this is the third time that I am truly excited about a technology revolution. Our in-depth knowledge of the logistics sector empowers us to design solutions that are accurately aligned with industry-specific challenges

ting the pace. These core values drive us to deliver a product that not only solves today's problems but also paves the way for tomorrow's opportunities.

What has propelled Softlink Global to retain its unchallenged leadership position in the Indian Customs Compliance?

We've firmly established ourselves as the leaders in the Indian Customs space, holding an 80% market share, and our legacy spans across several decades. Our winning formula? First and foremost, our agility in adhering to the ever-evolving government compliances. We ensure our solutions are always in line with the latest regulations, providing a hassle-free experience for our clients. Our commitment to automation coupled with prompt, round-the-clock customer support is what truly makes us stand

everything, giving you a clearer picture of where you stand financially. That way, you can make smarter decisions that will ultimately increase your operational efficiency, boost your profitability and secure your financial future.

How important is the integration of software systems among various stakeholders in streamlining logistics operations?

Integrating software systems among stakeholders is essential for streamlining logistics operations, as it enables seamless communication and data flow, leading to increased efficiency and reduced errors. In this context, our solution, Trade-CHAIN, plays a pivotal role. It serves as a data and document exchange platform that connects our core product, Logi-Sys, to any third-party





software. This integration allows for a two-way communication channel with customers, agents, shipping lines, transporters, banks, and others. The platform enhances critical operations such as payments processing, e-invoicing, GST filings, and the handling of customs and freight forwarding-related shipments. Our customers can vouch for the substantial benefits it provides, ensuring that stakeholders can interact in a secure, efficient, and streamlined manner.

A common hurdle faced by clients is the lack of support after software deployment. How do you ensure Logi-Sys stands out in providing robust services to assist its clients?

The common trend today, at least as far as enterprise logistics software is concerned, is 'Set and Forget'. It has been my lifelong ethos to provide Software, not just as a service, but

accompanied with a service. This is because clients need technology partners that stick and help them achieve their business goals rather than just leaving post-deployment. For Logi-Sys, we have an in-house team of domain experts who are available on call, chat and email support on 24x7 basis. Our rapid implementation, tailored training programs, and dedicated support combine to provide a rich, long-lasting support system for our clients.

Technology is rapidly evolving. How does Logi-Sys stay at the forefront of innovation to provide relevant solutions to its clients?

At Logi-Sys, we stay at the cutting edge by constantly introducing revolutionary features that transform logistics operations. Our latest innovation, LogiBRAIN, revolutionizes data analytics, empowering businesses with sharper decision-making capabilities. Alongside,

we've launched LogiTRACK, a personalized portal enabling end users to track smartly and ship effortlessly, and TradeCHAIN, the secure communication platform I mentioned above, that streamlines data and document exchange. A testament of our commitment to innovation is Logi-Sys Arena, an innovation centre that we have dedicated to the logistics industry. This state-of-the-art facility is a multi-functional hub where visionaries and industry lead-

Logi-Sys Arena is conceptualized as a collaborative incubator, a fertile ground where thought leaders from logistics, customs compliance, and supply chain management will converge and innovate

ers will converge to shape the future of logistics. We take immense pride at Softlink Global in being at the forefront of logistics technology solutions, ensuring our cli-

ents have access to the most advanced tools in the market.

What are Softlink Global's plans for extending its international reach and strengthening its global presence in the future?

We've been on an incredible growth trajectory at Softlink Global, adding 500+ clients in the last financial year alone. With global offices in the US, UAE, Singapore, and the Philippines and serving over 4,500

logistics clients across more than 40 countries, we have significantly increased our international presence. We enjoy a whopping 23.5 per cent market share in the South-



East Asian markets. We are already the No.1 software not just for customs compliance but also for end-to-end freight forwarding & logistics solutions in India. Our goal is to become the No.1 software solution provider in the logistics industry worldwide. We're not just growing in numbers; we're investing in talent, adding over 50 professionals during a challenging time for many. Our commitment to our customers remains steadfast, and we'll continue to enhance our best-in-class customer support team. The journey ahead is exciting, and we're ready to take on the challenge.

We have heard that you have created an innovation centre and even dedicated it to the logistics industry. That is exciting to know. Can you tell us more about it?

At the precipice of change in the logistics landscape, where every idea sparks a potential revolution, Logi-

Sys Arena stands as a beacon of progress—"The Crucible of Innovation." This is not just a space, but a dynamic ecosystem, designed by us, to synergize the most brilliant minds and cutting-edge technologies in the logistics sector. Logi-Sys Arena is conceptualized as a collaborative incubator, a fertile ground where thought leaders from logistics, customs compliance, and supply chain management will converge and innovate. We are committed to elevating the industry by hosting an array of educational endeavors, such as specialized training sessions, webinars, and discussion forums. These platforms are not just about imparting knowledge, but they are catalysts for

We've firmly established ourselves as the leaders in the Indian Customs space, holding an 80% market share, and our legacy spans across several decades

sparkling dialogue, dissent, and development. Through these interactions, professionals and businesses alike can gain elevation in competency and strategic outlook. By engaging in ongoing discussions with stakeholders, we don't just anticipate the needs of the industry; we sculpt the very solutions that will drive it tomorrow. I invite all industry stakeholders to be a part of this transformative journey to redefine the contours of the logistics industry.

The logistics industry in India is facing a skills gap. What are your thoughts on the impact of this, and how can it be addressed to support the industry's growth?

The logistics industry in India is growing fast, but we need more people with the right skills, especially in areas like data analytics and AI. To tackle this issue, it is

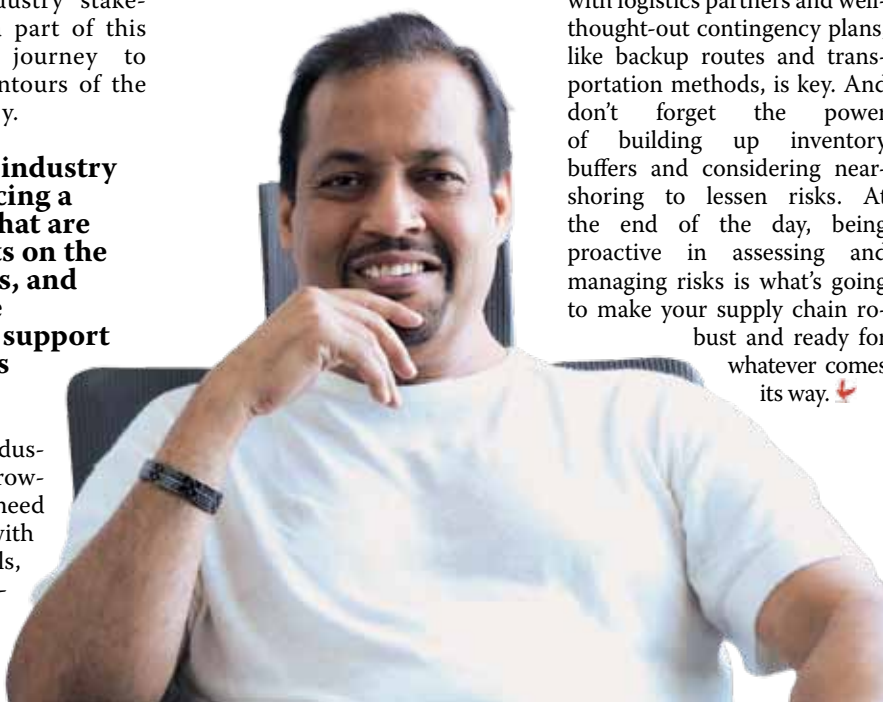


crucial for government bodies and educational institutions to collaborate and develop comprehensive training programs that are in line with the industry's requirements. Softlink

is accessible directly on the Logi-Sys website.

In the light of recent geopolitical events such as the Israel-Hamas war, what steps can shippers take to enhance the resilience of their supply chains and better prepare for similar disruptions in the future?

The Palestine-Israel war is a stark reminder that our global supply chains, as strong as they may seem, are not immune to geopolitical events. These situations can have ripple effects that span continents. In light of this, shippers need to be ready to adapt and be proactive in their planning. One smart move is to diversify the supplier base. Putting all your eggs in one regional basket is a risky game. Also, having solid relationships with logistics partners and well-thought-out contingency plans, like backup routes and transportation methods, is key. And don't forget the power of building up inventory buffers and considering near-shoring to lessen risks. At the end of the day, being proactive in assessing and managing risks is what's going to make your supply chain robust and ready for whatever comes its way. 🍀



'Cargo industry gearing up to implement AI'

Anil Vazirani, Convention Chairman, ACAAI, shares India needs more skilled manpower in logistics sector and there is only a handful of logistics institutions. The air cargo industry is looking forward to capacity building, new airports, airlines expanding frequencies and increasing number of flights, he adds.



CT Bureau

What are the potential benefits of AI in air cargo operations?

It is a new subject, and we have little information about it. Today, carriers, terminal operators, and like-minded agencies have incorporated new technologies such as AI, ML, Blockchain, IoT, Data Science, and Automation. The industry is gearing up to implement it to boost efficiency. We are looking forward for integrating these changes in our daily business operations.

How would you rate infrastructure in India for cargo movement?

It is getting better than before, but still there is a lot of room for improvement. Warehouses

abroad are fully automated, so there is a lot that needs to be done. We have still come a long way from the cargo terminals in 1970s when the operations were manual.

Are there any pain points which the forwarders are facing presently?

Newer challenges are coming up, and freight forwarders are meeting each other at forums such as the ACAAI to find appropriate solutions to come up with solutions for the issues.

Do we have skilled manpower and are their enough trained logistics providers in the field?

There are a handful of institutions, which are imparting training to people in the



Anil Vazirani
Chairman
ACAAI

field. Those who are joining us are mostly freshers and they are getting on-the-job training. And we would like more companies to set up coaching classes that will go a long way in upskilling. Very few people

are joining the industry with the necessary know-how. People are not joining this industry out of choice, they are just looking for job openings and get on-the-job training.

We are looking at cargo capacity building, and with new airports such as Navi Mumbai and Noida coming up, it will be a welcome change

Do you think the ongoing global economic crises will impact the Indian trade?

Of course, when there is a kind of unrest anywhere, it obviously affects the supply chain, because there is a lot of trading with all these countries. So, it is going to impact the trade in India for sure.

How do you foresee the air cargo sector in the coming years?

We are looking at capacity building, and new airports coming up. Navi Mumbai and Noida will have new airports that is a welcome change. There will be new capacity added, all the airlines are expanding their capacities, increasing their fleet. There are more direct flights now, and all of that will increase the speed and reliability of the airlines. ✈





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Collaborative efforts lead India to its first AFS

Our air freight station (AFS) is fully geared up to be operationalized. All the trial runs have been completed. The AFSs not only reduce congestion at airports but also aid in lowering logistics costs. AFSs can also contribute to an efficient air freight sector, says **Vipin Vohra, Chairman, Continental Carriers**.



CT Bureau

What kind of infra and advance tech does it have to facilitate ease of cargo movement and loading/unloading?

The development of India's first air freight station (AFS) is driven by visionary thinking and a commitment to providing efficient cargo handling services. The AFSs can not only reduce congestion at airports but also aid in lowering logistics costs. By providing off-airport cargo handling and processing, AFSs can contribute to an efficient air freight sector. We coordinated with relevant the government to refine the regulatory framework and ensure approvals/NOCs were granted timely. The AFS, accredited with RA-3 status, can transport security-cleared export cargo to the United Kingdom (UK) and European Union (EU). The cargo is proposed to be handled, security checked and unitized at AFS through CCPL's own manpower. The team is recognized by Lufthansa, Tata Air India and the like and certified by agencies such as BCAS.

The export cargo once cleared by the customs officials deployed at the AFS and cleared by our security team, is certified by BCAS and airline security. That cargo is then shifted to the IGIA by CCPL bonded trucks and escorted by our security. The AFS is equipped with the latest IT system to process the export documents online, duly compatible with customs, airlines, and CTOs at



Vipin Vohra
Chairman
Continental Carriers

IGIA. The facilities at the AFS ensure fast movement of export cargo IGIA to the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

When is the AFS expected to become operational?

The AFS is shortly to be operationalized. All the trial runs have been completed to the satisfaction of CTOs, and the concerned airlines. The security audit by the security has been carried out confirming the handling of the export cargo through the AFS. The customs online ICEGATE system, installed at AFS, has been tested for processing of the export documents for giving 'Let export Order' and posting of Customs officials at the AFS is awaited.

How is it going to benefit the exporters and boost EXIM trade?

- Efficient cargo handling: An AFS located near the air-

port can improve the efficiency of cargo handling and processing. Exporters can ferry their goods to the AFS for consolidation and shipment, which reduces time and cost

- Customs and regulatory benefits: AFS facilities offer customs clearance services by deputing customs staff at its premises. This will lead to lower chances of cargo being held up due to rules and quick clearance and other issues

- Cargo consolidation: Forwarders will be able to consolidate their shipments at the AFS. This can help small and medium businesses take advantage of economies of scale and cost-effective shipping methods, thereby increasing their competitiveness in global markets

- Security: The AFS is equipped with CCTV surveillance, access control through DFMD, HHMD to protect/safeguard the cargo. This can give exporters confidence that their goods will be safe and secure during transit

- Competitive rates: Due to increased competition among cargo service providers in proximity to the airport, exporters will have access to competitive and cost-effective freight rates, which can reduce the overall cost of export

What support have you been receiving for the AFS from the govt. and stakeholders?

The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation, Logistics division of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Union

Ministry of Finance, Customs, and BCAS among others have played a vital role in the development of the AFS. Recognizing the importance of the AFS in revolutionizing the Indian logistics industry, the minis-

The AFS, which is accredited with the RA-3 status, can transport security-cleared export cargo to the United Kingdom and European Union

tries, and stakeholders, including CTOs at the Indira Gandhi International Airport, have supported the initiative, and facilitated approvals required for establishment/operation-ization of the AFS.

Leveraging its influence and expertise, the said ministries expedited the bureaucratic processes and navigated through regulatory complexities, enabling the project's timely execution. Their belief in the transformative impact of the AFS on the logistics landscape propelled the endeavour, encouraging private participation and attracting investments to ensure the station's latest facilities. With the Union government's backing, the AFS stands as a testimony to collaborative efforts between the public and private sector (PPP) in driving developments to shape the air cargo and logistics industry. ✈

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Costs may hinder adoption

Achieving a carbon-neutral future in the Indian logistics market is not only a challenging and multifaceted challenge, but also essential for mitigating the environmental impact of international trade and ensuring a more sustainable future, says **Vikram Kumar, Honorary Secretary General, ACAAI**.



Global air cargo industry is struggling with economic slowdown, wars, among others. How has it impacted Indian EXIM trade?

The economic slowdown, Russia-Ukraine war, and Israel-Hamas conflict can have great impact on the Indian export trade:

1. Economic slowdown: it can lead to reduced global demand for Indian exports, as consumers and businesses in those countries may cut back on their spending.

2. Depreciation of Indian Rupee: during an economic slowdown, central banks might reduce interest rates and adopt other monetary policies to stimulate the economy. This can lead to a depreciation of the Indian Rupee, which can make exports competitive, but also increase costs of imported raw materials.

3. Russia-Ukraine conflict: it has had its impact on commodities. The war has had a significant impact on commodity markets and India's import costs. India imports various commodities, including oil and gas, metals, and grains. Disruptions in the global supply chains can lead to increased prices.

4. Geopolitical tensions: it can affect trade ties. India has had good relations with Russia, while it also seeks to maintain good relations with Ukraine and the West. Balancing these relationships can be challenging.

5. Security concerns of Israel-Hamas war: Shipping through the Suez Canal, for example, can be disrupted, thanks to the Israel-Hamas war. This can lead to heightened security concerns affecting India's trade routes and logistics.



Vikram Kumar
Honorary Secretary General
ACAAI

6. Diplomatic considerations: India has historically supported the Palestinian cause. This can impact trade relations with Israel, which is an important defence and technology partner.

Overall impact on Indian export trade:

1. Uncertainty: combination of these factors can create a high level of uncertainty in the global economy, which tends to discourage global trade and investment.

2. Sectoral variations: the impact on Indian export trade will vary from sector to sector. For example, sectors reliant on imports may face rising costs

due to Indian Rupee's depreciation, while those exporting commodities are likely to benefit from rising global prices.

3. Policy responses: India may respond by implementing trade policies to mitigate the effects of export subsidies or import tariffs.

In summary, the economic slowdown, Russia-Ukraine, and Israel-Hamas conflicts can create a challenging environment for Indian export trade. India's diplomatic efforts will play a vital role in shaping the outcomes for its export trade.

Logistics is drifting towards environment sustainability. How do you see the industry contributing to it?

The logistics market plays a vital role in global trade, but it is a contributor to environmental issues, in terms of carbon emissions and sustainability. Achieving a carbon-neutral logistics sector is a complex and complicated challenge, and there are significant challenges and considerations:

1. High carbon footprint: the sector is also responsible for a substantial portion of international greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from the transportation and warehousing sectors. Achieving carbon neutrality requires a reduction in emissions.

2. Economic growth vs sustainability: balancing economic growth, which relies on increased logistics activity, with sustainability goals is challenging. Growth in e-commerce has led to more deliveries and thus more emissions.



3. Technological transitions: transitioning to cleaner and sustainable technologies, such as electric vehicles and renewable energy sources, requires investments and infrastructure development. These changes can be costly and time-consuming.

4. Complex supply chains: modern supply chains are complex and interlinked, often spanning multiple countries, and involving numerous stakeholders. Coordinating sustainability efforts across this complexity can be challenging.

5. Global regulations and standards: the logistics market operates across borders, and different regions may have varying environmental regulations and standards. Harmonizing these regulations is necessary for consistent sustainability efforts.

of sustainable practices



6. Last-mile challenges: the last-mile delivery, which refers to the final leg of the delivery journey to the customer's doorstep, is often the most carbon-intensive part of the logistics process. Finding sustainable solutions for last-mile deliveries is a challenge.

7. Consumer expectations: consumers demand quick and convenient deliveries. Balancing these expectations with sustainability efforts, such as consolidating deliveries or offering slower but greener options, can be challenging.

8. Data and transparency: accurate tracking and reporting of carbon emissions in the air cargo sector is important for sustainability goals. Establishing industry-wide standards for data collection and transparency can be difficult.

Achieving a carbon-neutral future in the logistics sector is a complex challenge. It has been seen that growth in e-commerce has led to more deliveries and resulting in more carbon emissions

9. Cost considerations: Transitioning to sustainable practices may come with higher costs, such as investing in EVs or renewable energy. These costs can be a barrier for some logistics companies.

10. Resistance to change: there may be resistance to change within the logistics industry, especially among companies that

have traditionally operated in a less sustainable manner.

To address these challenges and work toward a carbon-neutral future in the logistics market, several strategies can be employed. These are as follows:

Investment in sustainable technologies: governments, businesses, and investors should invest in sustainable technologies, such as EVs, fuel-efficient transport, and renewable energy sources.

Regulatory frameworks: governments can introduce and enforce regulations that incentivize sustainability, such as emissions reduction targets and carbon pricing.

Collaboration: stakeholders in the logistics industry should collaborate to develop industry-wide sustainability standards and share the best practices.

Consumer education: educating consumers about the environmental impact of their choices and offering sustainable delivery options can help align consumer expectations with sustainability goals.

Innovation: encouraging innovation in sustainable logistics, such as the use of drones and autonomous vehicles, can help reduce carbon emissions.

Carbon offsetting: for emissions that cannot be eliminated, offset programme can be considered to balance out emissions by investing in projects that reduce carbon elsewhere. Achieving a carbon-neutral future in logistics is a complex and multifaceted challenge, but it is a must for mitigating environmental impact of global trade and ensuring a more sustainable future. 🌱

Air cargo industry calls for AI-enabled future

Praveen Menon, Honorary Treasurer, ACAAI, says the association has played a stellar role in encouraging automation, especially integration of e-freight. Our members are tech-savvy and efficiency can be noted easily. This association gave a clarion call for paperless environment in freight forwarding industry, he adds.



CT Bureau

Share with us potential benefits of AI in air cargo operations. How is it going to transform the sector and EXIM trade?

Digital transformation, automation, Machine Learning, unaided operations, big data mining has impacted our daily lives. These have come as a blessing in disguise. In the air cargo sector, harnessing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in order to replace mundane repetitive activities will lead to an increase in productivity and cut costs significantly. Physical processes that are error prone can also be eliminated.

How would you rate infrastructure in India for cargo movement. Is it good or is there room for improvement?

As the maxim goes, "There is always scope for improvement" and the same applies to the Indian air cargo sector as well. While the newer airports



Praveen Menon
Honorary Treasurer
ACAAI

have succeeded in being more agile, active and efficient, the same cannot be said of the country's legacy terminals.

What are the current pain points?

Human intervention, avoidable repetitive data entry, and refusal to accept digital data and insistence on paper-based processes or documents are the worst of these pain points.

What key issues will be highlighted at the forthcoming Convention?

The association has played a significant role in encouraging automation, especially integration of e-freight. Our members

It would be desirable if in-house apprenticeship programme for upskilling entry level professionals is adopted seriously

today are more tech-savvy and the increased efficiency can also be noted easily.

This association will give a clarion call for going paperless in the freight forwarding industry. The theme of the 47th ACAAI Convention is a harbinger to embrace the innovative technology—Artificial Intelligence.

Do you think India has right skillset/workforce to understand and deploy advanced technologies?

The demographic divide that India enjoys is well seen in the logistics sector. The government's initiative for skilling has developed various modules to prepare the younger generation for a life-long career in logistics and supply chain. It would be desirable that in-house apprenticeship programme for upskilling entry level professionals is adopted seriously by the logistics players.

Will the ongoing global economic crises have any impact on the EXIM trade?

The world has witnessed many upheavals in the past but has always weathered the storm and emerged resilient. Troughs will always lead one to a peak and the pain endured during any descent is only temporary. The 21st century will witness this world moving towards a single marketplace replacing the current segmented reality. This will open opportunities and create universal wealth.

How do you foresee Indian air cargo sector in the coming years?

India has become the envy of the advanced and advancing world. Our youths' ability to embrace change and re-orient their focus will ensure that we reach greater heights and "Superpower Bharat" is not a distant dream.



Digital tech to increase air cargo traffic, employment

Govt. has been investing in infra development, including highways and airports. These investments will cut transportation costs, making it easier for logistics firms to move goods across the country, says **Shantanu Murmu**, Chairman, Eastern Region, ACAAI, and Director, Globsync Ocean and Air Transport India.



Share with us potential benefits of AI in air cargo operations?

Reduction in the cost of production through AI could increase demand for more goods and services. More demand will mean more cargo traffic and employment in the industry. AI is used in logistics to optimize processes such as route planning, demand forecasting, inventory management, delivery schedules, and tracking. AI-powered systems can analyze data from various sources to identify trends used for predictive analytics.

With the sector witnessing infra developments, how would you rate infra in India for cargo movement?

The Government has been investing heavily in infra development. These investments will improve connectivity and reduce transportation costs, making it easier for firms to move goods across India. With new airports in operations—NIA and Durgapur airport—the signs are good for Indian aviation industry. New Pune and Mumbai airport may commence from 2024.

What are the current pain points?

Misalignment of contract terms between forwarders, agents and IATA imposes a cost for forwarders/agents. IATA CASS/carriers can require payment to be made prior to forwarders/agents receiving



Shantanu Murmu
Chairman, Eastern Region, ACAAI
and Director, Globsync Ocean & Air Transport

ing payment for their services. Making a payment can be fragmented. Forwarders book cargo on a system and pay on a different one, which imposes the risk of human error if bookings and payments are not matched correctly. Traditional payment methods impose reconciliation inefficiencies for players such as IATA.

Do you think India has skilled workforce to deploy latest techniques and advanced techs?

Yes. In the lower tier, as per my personal observation, we are still stuck in the manual operations and rely on physical documentation than IT version. But we are learning fast. The entire aviation system is online now and it's great to see the process flow and lead time getting lesser as compared to European countries. Part and basic cargo training from IATA is required on regular intervals.

Do you think ongoing global economic crises will impact the EXIM trade?

FY-23-24 have been a big hit after COVID due to global economic crises citing many reasons—top buyers have reduced their orders had the payment flow have worsened. Indian forwarders have suffered due to more work and limited monetary exposure. Russia-Ukraine war is a major hit plus the US sanctions on US\$ payments have jeopardized the wounds. Recently Israel-Hamas war is making things brutal.

How do you foresee air cargo industry in the coming years?

2023 will witness positive developments in India's aviation sector. For example, Akasa, is adding flights. The privatization of Air India is creating a lot of synergy between Vistara, Air Asia, and Air India. A new airline called FLY91 was proposed to commence by

September 2023. They will give an overall boost to the sector. SpiceJet has received approval for demerging its profitable cargo business into a separate entity to increase capacity.

Under M Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister of Civil Aviation, the industry is

The entire aviation system is online now and it is great to see the process flow and lead time getting lesser as compared to European countries

growing exponentially. He has been able to convince most states to reduce VAT on fuel to help reduce fuel costs. These factors will be tailwinds to the sector. The sector is projected to expand at a CAGR of 7.5 per cent between 2019 and 2025. 📈



Clarion call to simplify regulations for cargo

Dileepa BM, CEO, Bonded Trucking, Shreeji Translogistics Limited says, unavailability of custom clearance services round-the-clock is one of the major problems in India apart from high dual cargo handling charges, less number of trained drivers, and skilled workforce in the bonded trucking industry.



CT Bureau

What are the concerns and challenges of the industry?

As a bonded trucking operator ferrying export and import transshipment cargo, we face



Dileepa BM
CEO, Bonded Trucking
Shreeji Translogistics Limited

challenges such as unavailability of custom clearance services round-the-clock, which they claim is available. As a freight forwarder, we cannot move the cargo on custom holidays and weekends. If the cargo arrives on a Friday night, we wait till Monday to move the transshipment cargo. We need 24x7 services available for moving, export and import transshipment cargo to all airports across the country. Another challenge is in the United States of America (USA) and Europe, bonded trucking is common.

In India, the bonded trucking activity is permitted only from one airport (from where cargo loading is done) to the destination airport. For example, if cargo is planned to be moved from Delhi to Bengaluru through bonded trucking service, we cannot load the cargo from any other airport

which will come on the route towards Bangalore airport. But in the USA, or Europe it is not like that. We need that

At present, we are moving BS6 vehicles which do not cause pollution and are eco-friendly. We have taken efforts and

In India, the bonded trucking activity is permitted only from one airport to the destination airport. For example, if cargo is planned to be moved from Delhi to Bengaluru through bonded trucking service, we cannot load the cargo from any other airport which will come on the route towards Bengaluru airport

facility in India, to simplify the process, simplify the movement of transshipment cargo. Thirdly, dual handling charges are very high.

Share with us the sustainable initiatives taken by your company to cut carbon emissions?

initiatives for minimizing paperwork in office. Emphasis is being laid on digitalisation, and on digital documents. We are having our own software called 'complete Solutions' wherein all our data is loaded on the software. Only authorized persons can send the invoices or any other tax receipts among others, but all our staff is authorized to enter the data in the software.

Have the government's initiatives such as Make in India, PMGS, NLP given the much-needed boost to the logistics sector?

The benefits of these plans and policies should reach each exporter or industry leaders. If the government schemes are available in the market, everyone should be aware of it. Such policies can be introduced in the logistics institutions also. The government must also introduce the benefits of these policies to logistics professionals as well as aspirants; they should conduct workshops also for the industry. ✈



The background of the advertisement is a composite image. It features a high-angle view of a dense, green forest canopy. Overlaid on this is a white silhouette of a world map. In the upper left, the tail and wing of a white aircraft are visible, set against a sky with a bright sun and soft, golden clouds. The overall color palette is dominated by the greens of the forest, the whites of the map and aircraft, and the warm tones of the sunset sky.

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AI to boost efficiency, reduce operating costs

Greenfield airports must carve out multimodal hubs, linking rail lines and highways with the airport, says **Sushant Nigam, Executive Director, ACAAI**. Customs and other regulatory bodies must automate cargo clearance processes by utilizing Artificial Intelligence, he adds.



How do you think AI and other technologies will bring a revolution in the Indian air cargo industry in the coming years?

The AI is the latest buzz, globally. Whether air cargo industry or any other, AI has all the tools to fix any issue in a technically right way, anticipating the onset of demand and requirement of adequate and timely supply of the products and services. Air cargo industry is intricately complex having various stakeholders who are interdependent on each other to ensure uninterrupted and supply chain in a time-bound manner, ensuring quality of services and the efficiency. AI is the latest tool to inflect efficiency and reduce operating cost.

If we talk about EXIM trade, can India achieve the target of 10 MMT by 2030 fixed by govt?

With the initiatives taken by the government, such as EoDB, PMGS, NLP, seamless highways, connecting hinterland origins with gateway airports, among others robust growth of air cargo is bound to happen, resulting in millions of direct and indirect job opportunities and a healthy GDP. All the stakeholders must understand expectations of the other interdependent stakeholder, empathize, and play its role sagaciously. Although, every stakeholder is becoming aware of the bottlenecks at their respective ends and



Sushant Nigam
Executive Director
ACAAI

are quite receptive about the suggestions to improve. However, cargo carrying vehicles are facing a lot of hurdles on the way to the airport such as traffic jams on highways and in the city and traffic curbs hours. The service providers at the airports need to introduce automation in cargo handling and provide adequate infra to handle EXIM cargo. Customs and other bodies must simplify cargo clearance using AI and digitalize the documents.



Do you think India has the right skillset/ trained workforce to understand, use and deploy advanced technologies? ?

The right skillset and trained workforce must be complemented by providing an appropriate training platform for

Investment in advanced technology such as WMS, and LMD solutions is vital to optimize inventory, improve order accuracy, among others

skilling and upskilling the job seekers as well as the employees. The government has taken a few steps in this regard by establishing sector skill councils such as Logistics Sector Skill Council. It is a wonderful initiative, which is ensuring not only the immediate employa-

bility to the candidates but also the skilled manpower to the employer, beneficial to both.

India is witnessing investments in terms of multimodal infra development, how would you rate it for cargo movement?

Although the government has taken trade friendly initiatives, and the service providers have responded by providing world class products. However, there are a few gaps that need to be filled. These are post-issuance of any policy, the government must facilitate its implementation too. The greenfield airports can plan for carving out place for setting up a multimodal hub, linking rail lines and highways with the airport.

Do you feel steps must be taken to boost cross-border trade between India and its neighbours?

India has a better presence of global airlines, operating to and from a several destinations, high aircraft movements, more cargo terminals and better transshipment facilities. They should be utilized by countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Nepal. After the initiatives taken by the Indian cargo industry, cargo originating from Bangladesh is being carried by road via Petropole/Benapole border to Indian gateway airports such as Kolkata and Delhi, to start with, for upliftment to final foreign destination. It will benefit everyone in the entire supply chain. ✈

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Collaborating with cargo partners to boost efficiency

Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) is focusing on improving cargo infra in tier II and III cities. It has ongoing projects to support logistics supply chain, including expansion of cargo handling facilities, advanced technology, and implementation of eco-friendly initiatives, says **Videh Kumar Jaipuriar, CEO**.



Ritika Arora Bhola

How do you ensure the global standards of safety and sustainability for all in cargo traffic at DIAL?

We are committed to upholding global standards of safety and sustainability for all cargo traffic. Delhi airport is equipped with dual-view

screening machines in addition to EVD/ ETD to ensure the security of the cargo throughout the airport. IGIA follows regulatory norms issued by BCAS and does not deviate from them. DIAL is an AEO Certified cargo terminal operator. Security gadgets have been deployed at the terminal, and we have adequate CCTV cameras installed at all warehouses for proper control and surveillance of our facilities.

For sustainable practices, initiatives have been implemented at cargo terminals in terms of operational and infra activities. We have been implementing steps toward green initiatives, such as the use of battery-operated handling equipment, the use of green energy and the like.

With the aim of improving the use of renewable energy, a 2mw Roof Top Solar PV Sys-

tem was installed over one of the cargo terminals in 2017. This has reduced reliance on conventional power sources by 20-25 per cent. Also, the fourth runway along with the dual Elevated Cross Taxiways will help in the reduction of carbon emissions, propelling DIAL towards its goal of becoming a Net Zero Carbon Emission Airport by 2030. The ECT will reduce about 55,000 tonnes of CO₂ in a year.



What infrastructure do you have in place for handling pharma, and other perishables?

We have a dedicated infrastructure—4,500 square meters in place with 150,000 MT annual capacity, for handling pharma and perishables. There are three temperature-controlled storage ranging from -20°C to 25°C along with an unbroken end-to-end cold chain linkage with cool dollies, including facilities for handling Envirotainer. Our cargo terminals are GDP and CEIV-certified ensuring the safe and reliable transportation of pharma and perishables.

Do you have plans to collaborate with cargo partners to expand your reach in the domestic/global cargo industry?

We are engaged in seeking collaborations with cargo part-

ners such as CTOs, airlines, freight forwarders and trade bodies to broaden our presence in domestic and global cargo industry. These partnerships are aimed at expanding our network, providing choices for our customers, and improving the efficiency of our cargo operations. Regarding the expansion of freighters, we evaluate market demand and remain open to supporting increased operations of freighters as required.

Delhi is the only airport in India, having 12 dedicated freighter parking bays which includes three nose loading operations. We are handling 15,000 freighter ATMs in a year, which makes the Delhi airport the market leader in freighter operations across the country. We added seven more operators in the FY'23. We are confident that this movement will continue in the future.

How many cargo volumes did DIAL handle in 2022-23? What are your expectations in the next five years?

The two cargo terminals boast a combined handling capacity of 1.8 million MT of cargo per annum, with the potential for expansion to 2.3 million MT annually. In 2022-23, Delhi airport processed as many as 0.9 million MT of cargo. Of this, international cargo



Videh Kumar Jaipuriar
Chief Executive Officer
DIAL

contributes 65 per cent, while domestic cargo constitutes 35 per cent. In recent years, the surge in e-commerce sales and the rise in digitalization processes have led to a substantial uptick in imports of electronics and IT equipment, reflecting an 8 per cent year-on-year growth against the previous year. During the next five years, we anticipate a consistent growth rate more than 8 per cent annually in cargo volumes.

Do you have any new/ongoing projects? If yes, what are they?

At Delhi Airport's cargo facilities, we are regularly investing in infrastructure and projects to meet the demands of the industry. We are focusing on tier II and III cargo

infrastructure and there are ongoing projects and investments in place to support the entire logistics supply chain. These projects include expansion of cargo handling facilities, introduction of advanced

For sustainable practices, initiatives have been implemented at cargo terminals in terms of operational and infra activities

technology, and implementation of eco-friendly initiatives. Our commitment is to provide world-class cargo services that align with ever-changing needs of our customers and the industry.

What does the air cargo industry need today?

The Indian air cargo industry requires global benchmarking, bringing global best practices for EoDB, simplifying the regulatory frameworks, and creating more transshipment hubs. Also, it needs to enhance operational efficiency through digitalization and advanced technology integration. Addressing the increasing demand for capacity, including infrastructure improvements and fleet expansion is vital. 📈



'Sustainability is at the core of our operations'

The increasing complexity of international supply chains requires more skilled workers. Jeena & Company is actively working towards it and investing in training and development programs to tackle shortage of skilled personnel, says **Ayesha Katgara, Head, Corporate Strategy**.



CT Bureau

Tell us about sustainable initiatives taken up by your company to cut carbon emissions?

We are dedicated to sustainability and minimizing our environmental impact. We are striving to make sustainability the focus in all our service areas, operations, and internal communication. Through our Green Jeena Initiative, we are changing our processes to embrace greener practices, such as going paperless, using EVs, recycling among others. We are joining forces with vendors to cut their CO₂ footprint and have cut emissions by 33,000 pounds, while saving over 700 trees in the past year.

Do you think there is need for skilled workforce in logistics sector?

Yes. There is a definite need for a skilled workforce. The sec-



Ayesha Katgara
Head, Corporate Strategy
Jeena & Company

tor is constantly evolving, and new technologies are emerging all the time. The growing global economy is driving demand for logistics services and the rise of e-commerce is putting new demands on logistics networks. The complexity of global supply chains requires skilled workers to manage them and to keep up with these changes.

We are working to tackle the shortage of skilled workers by investing in training and development programmes. We provide on-the-job training to our workers through various initiatives, even partnering with organizations through internships, and job shadowing opportunities.

How crucial are technology and digitalization for your business operations?

Technology and digitalization are crucial to our business operations. We leverage cutting-edge tech solutions to manage freight bookings, transportation, warehousing, and customer service. Our AI-powered 'Single Click Automation' feature has enhanced efficiency by reducing lead times and improving document management. We have prioritized API integration to provide a seamless customer experience. Our recently launched J5 web platform is geared towards boosting workforce productivity. It has not only reduced the

TAT but also yielded results, enabling us to deliver better services to our valued customers and partners. Tech is the backbone of modern logistics, supply chains, and for the future of the industry.

'Single Click Automation' has enhanced efficiency by cutting lead times and improving document management

How do you think AI will bring a revolution in the Indian air cargo industry?

AI is revolutionizing the cargo industry by optimizing routes and schedules, forecasting demand for cargo services, and improving customer service with real-time info. It is reshaping the industry by enhancing resource allocation for carriers, freeing workers to focus on value-added tasks, and providing customers with AI-powered chatbots for issue resolution. AI is a catalyst for innovation, introducing products and services such as real-time shipment tracking and predictive maintenance for aircraft. By leveraging the power of AI, the sector is poised to meet the growing demands of the modern business landscape and adapt to the ever-evolving needs of its customers. AI's transformative impact is setting a course for a more resilient and competitive air cargo industry in India. 🌱



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- Extensive road transport network.
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- Customized solutions for your cargo needs.

‘Logistics sector heading towards sustainable future’

Automation will accelerate a shift in workforce skills. These changes require workers to update their existing skillsets/acquire new ones. The companies are rethinking on how work is organized within their organizations, changing the landscape itself, says **S Xavier Britto, Chairman, Kerry Indev Logistics**.



How do you see the logistics industry contributing towards environmental sustainability? What are the challenges in setting up goals for carbon neutral future?

At Kerry Indev, we are mindful of sustainability to achieve zero emissions and the need for sustainability practices to be adopted across our verticals. As a first step towards ESG, we have conducted a nationwide drive of Integrated Management Systems to get globally accepted standards, receive the coveted certifications for all our locations and divisions. One of the key initiatives that we have started is to have collaborative alignment with our suppliers, customers, vendors, by engaging in knowledge sharing sessions to optimize the information on container utilization and identify opportunities to eliminate unnecessary transport strings from the supply chain. Recognizing the importance of sustainability, KILPL is implementing such measures to enhance our EHS performance. We have the HSE manual in place, trainings, mock drills, sessions related to fire and safety, and incident reports shared by safety officers among others.

How much emphasis has been laid on digitalisation and skilled workforce?

Digital transformation alters firms and implies shifts in strategies, work processes, and employment—a known fact



S Xavier Britto
Chairman
Kerry Indev Logistics

since the digital revolution but the stress on the same remained on interest basis. Skill shifts occur with the industry's changing needs since ages past. But with COVID causing paradigm shift to automation and digitalisation, the need for technological, social, and emotional skills are also rising

even as demand for physical and manual skills, are increasingly replaced by technology. Automation is upgrading the skills of the workforce. These changes require workers to update their skillsets/acquire new ones.

According to a survey, updating skills has become sought-after strategy with 69% of organisations upgrading skills now than they did before COVID

Demand for technological, social, and higher cognitive skills is likely to rise by 2030 and 85 million jobs may be displaced and 97 million more created by 2025, of which many will be technological roles. The rapid development of technology has forced or-

ganizations to move opt for automation and digitalisation to maintain a competitive edge. Those firms that invested in digital innovation now need to align their internal competencies to maximize returns on investments. They also recognize the need to adapt to technology and digitalisation or be left in left behind in the rat race. As per a global survey, skills building has become the most sought-after strategy to close the gap, with 69 per cent of organisations upgrading skills now than they did before COVID.

Understanding the emphasis on the digitalization and skilling, the Indian government has launched Skill India Digital (SID) platform to make skill development innovative, accessible, and personalised with a focus on digital technology and Industry 4.0 skills. The launch of the open-source platform is likely to be another step by India towards creating digital public infra. 📌



Glimpses from the ACAAI Eastern Region meet





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India in a position of technology leadership

Technology solutions at freight forwarders' end are not as advanced against global forwarders. Despite investments in creating marketplaces, there are none for in-house systems, says **Fardeen Malbarwala, Director, Galaxy Freight**. There is potential with airlines adding capacities and govt investing in airports.



CT Bureau

Share the potential benefits of AI in air cargo operations?

AI will give pace to data handling in the air cargo operations. It will bring agility and accuracy, and the human element will be checked and confirmed. There will be less errors, AI will boost efficiency, and reduce costs.

With development of infrastructure and technology, how would you rate infra for cargo movement?

We are getting into a position of leadership in technology infrastructure. We have been able to implement measures such as SWIFT before the world. The physical infrastructure is also constantly ramping up, and a lot is being invested in the same, national highways, dedi-



Fardeen Malbarwala
Director
Galaxy Freight

cated freight corridors are being developed/upgraded. New airports, seaports, container freight stations and the like are also being constructed. Importantly, it is all linked with the proper use of technology, which is fantastic to see.

What are the industry's current pain points?

The tech solutions at the forwarders' end are still not as advanced compared to global forwarders. Despite investments in creating marketplaces, investments are practically none for in-house systems. We must use several different software for other functions instead of one or a maximum of two.

Do you think India has the right skillset/workforce to deploy the latest techniques and advanced technologies?

Among all the developed countries, technology is developed and deployed by India in one or the other.

Do you think ongoing global economic crises will have any impact on the EXIM trade?

I would be naive to say no.

There is a global economic crises, and it will affect us. However, since we have a robust domestic market, we may not be affected as much as other countries.


Since India has a robust domestic market, we may not be affected as much as other countries by the global crises

How do you foresee the air cargo industry in the coming years?

It is the country's century now. I see room for massive growth. The airlines are investing in increasing capacity. The central government is investing in expanding the number of airports. ✈️



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Asian, ME, trade routes drive demand for air cargo

Airlines in India are investing in freighters to enhance efficiency and reduce costs for shippers. Expansion of air cargo terminals by the Airports Authority of India aims to meet escalating demand, enhancing overall cargo handling infrastructure, says **Kamesh Peri**, CEO, Çelebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management.



Ritika Arora Bhola

What are your future projections as there is growth potential in the air cargo sector?

Airlines in India are investing in freighters to enhance efficiency and reduce costs for shippers. The expansion of cargo terminals by the AAI aims to meet the escalating demand and enhance cargo handling infrastructure. Further, the surge in e-commerce activities, propelled by India's expansion in the sector, is also a catalyst for increased demand in air cargo services. The time-sensitive nature of e-commerce shipments aligns seamlessly with the quick delivery that air cargo offers. Government backing adds to

the positive outlook, as investments in infrastructure development underscore a supportive environment for the air cargo sector.

New trade routes with Asian, Middle Eastern, and African countries are also on the horizon, paving the way for increased demand in air cargo services. The adoption of cutting-edge technologies, such as Blockchain and AI is poised to augment efficiency and decrease costs, contributing to the sector's overall expansion. The sector stands on solid ground for robust growth in the coming years.

Tell us about sustainable initiatives taken up by Çelebi to cut carbon emissions?

MoCa's target of achieving 92-93 carbon-neutral airports by 2024 and net zero emissions for all Indian airports by 2030 underscores a commitment to substantial change. In tandem, the stakeholders have recognized the need to balance growth with sustainability, and each participant, including Çelebi, is embracing its respective responsibility.

Our company's approach encompasses various facets of sustainability, from facility design and construction to energy efficiency and recycling. Greenfield construction projects adhere to LEED certification criteria, setting a standard for others to follow suit. Pho-



Kamesh Peri
Chief Executive Officer
Çelebi Delhi Cargo Terminal Management

tovoltaic panels are integrated into Çelebi facilities to generate electricity, exemplified by the 3.83 mw solar capacity at the Delhi Cargo facility.

Contd. on next page ►





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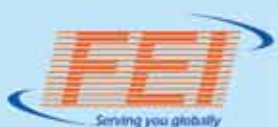
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In truck management, the firm has embraced digitization to mitigate congestion during peak times, reducing waiting times and fuel consumption. This initiative, coupled with the digitalization of truck slot management, provides clear visibility on slot allocation. Recently, Çelebi Delhi Cargo has achieved a milestone by becoming the first Indian cargo handler to participate in and complete the highly esteemed BlueSky Sustainability programme offered by TIACA.

How crucial is tech for your business operations? How much investment has been made in this regard?

The ongoing shift towards digitalization, automation, and innovation is reshaping the supply chain, and adaptability is key. The pandemic has accelerated this transformation, compelling a move from paper-based processes to digital and automated systems. Embracing this digital wave is not just advantageous, it is imperative for the survival

of small and large players. At Çelebi Delhi Cargo, we have prioritized tech advancements to strengthen our operations. Substituting manual security declarations with electronic counterparts and introducing WhatsApp chatbot for global cargo tracking are steps towards seamless digital integra-

In truck management, the firm has embraced digitization to mitigate congestion during peak times, resulting in reduction of waiting times and fuel consumption

tion. Our approach includes exploring technologies such as Blockchain, IoT, and AI to amplify the efficiency and productivity of our operations.

What are crucial areas that need improvement and attention?

Leveraging India's strategic geographical location as a transit hub holds immense possibilities, especially for facilitating seamless cargo movement

between East and West. India is located on the crossroads of major land and sea trade routes between Asia, Europe, and Africa.

The country's location has made India a vital centre for trade and commerce. It is necessary to streamline transit

facilities for foreign exporters looking to route their shipments through Delhi. The government has already taken initiatives to facilitate customs clearance procedures at cross-border ports. The integration of all ports with ICEGATE will facilitate a seamless clearance procedure. One of the major challenges lies in the unorganized logistics sector. Embracing digitalization is significant to enhancing the supply chain efficiency.

How do you think AI and other technologies will bring a revolution in the industry?

The industry is on the cusp of a revolution driven by AI and other tech. These technologies have the potential to alter the way air cargo is handled, from automating tasks to optimizing routes to providing real-time tracking and predictive analytics. AI-powered systems can automate manual tasks involved in cargo handling. This can free workers to focus on more value-added activities, such as customer service and sales. It can also help to reduce errors and improve efficiency.

Route optimization is where AI can make an impact. AI algorithms can analyze data—weather patterns, traffic congestion, and fuel prices among others, which can save fuel and time. The most transformative impact of AI will be real-time tracking and predictive analytics. This apart, Blockchain and Internet of Things are also poised to revolutionize the industry. 🚀



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Need for collaborations to enhance trade volumes

Collaboration among airlines, airports, technology suppliers, and forwarders is vital. Sharing best practices, establishing standards, and investing in tailored AI will meet industry needs, shares **Huned Gandhi**, Managing Director, Air & Sea Logistics, Indian Subcontinent, DACHSER India.



CT Bureau

How do you think AI and other advanced technologies will bring a revolution in the Indian air cargo industry in the coming years?

In the next five-10 years, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will transform air cargo operations, automating the supply chain for real-time tracking, predictive maintenance, and intelligent route optimization. Continuous learning from data and AI-driven robotics will revolutionize deliveries and warehouses, enhancing efficiency, reducing errors, and enabling data-driven decision-making. Concerns regarding overreliance on AI, data security, privacy, and job displacement must be addressed.

Reskilling and upskilling can mitigate risks, while ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks ensure responsible practices. Coordination among airlines, airports, technology suppliers, and forwarders is crucial. Sharing best practices, investing in tailored AI solutions will meet industry needs. Collaboration will navigate regulatory challenges, fostering a supportive AI adoption environment.

Will the Foreign Trade Policy 2003 enhance logistics efficiency, and trade to and from India?

The policy's focus on streamlining procedures, reducing trade barriers, and promoting digitalization will facilitate smooth movement/transport



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

of goods, reduce transit times, and enhance overall logistics operations. Emphasis on improving infra, taking trade facilitation steps, and promoting investments will lead to enhancing trade efficiency.

What are challenges for a carbon neutral future?

The logistics industry is playing a crucial role in driving

environmental sustainability. The company recognizes its importance and focus on four fields of action in order to achieve progress in environmental and climate pro-

Govt. has played an important role by simplifying customs procedures, implementing digital platforms and tech to enhance efficiency and transparency

tection: process efficiency, energy efficiency, research and innovation, and social commitment.

This includes, for example, optimizing transport routes, investing in energy-efficient technologies, implementing alternate fuel vehicles, and promoting modal shift to greener transportation modes.

However, the logistics industry faces challenges in contributing towards a more sustainable environment in achieving climate targets.

1. Infrastructure development: one of the significant obstacles is the need for substantial investments and coordination among the stakeholders to enhance infrastructure supporting sustainable logistics. Without the much-needed infrastructure, transition to eco-friendly practices becomes a daunting and challenging task.

2. Technological advancement: achieving environmental sustainability demands the adoption and development of advanced technologies within the logistics sector. These technologies require refinement to ensure scalability and long-term cost-effectiveness.

3. International supply chain integration: the seamless integration of supply chains across the international borders introduces complexities in aligning sustainability objectives. Coordinating efforts and establishing uniform standards on an international scale is intricate, given the differing regulations and priorities of various regions.

4. Cost considerations: smaller enterprises face financial challenges, while transitioning to sustainable practices. The initial costs and operational adjustments can more often than not strain the budgets thereby necessitating the discovery of cost-effective solutions to facilitate the ongoing shift. ↴





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AI for revolutionizing Indian air cargo industry

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help reduce logistical bottlenecks, lower costs, and enhance the reliability of cargo transportation. It can make the exports competitive by ensuring timely and safe delivery of goods to international markets, **Manoj Kumar Jain, MD, Deep Blue Xpress and Sealair Freight International.**



CT Bureau

Share with us AI's potential benefits in air cargo ops. How is it going to transform the sector and EXIM trade?

In the context of the Indian air cargo sector and EXIM trade, the adoption of AI can have a profound impact. India is a major player in global trade, and efficient operations are crucial for the growth of EXIM activities. AI can help reduce bottlenecks, lower costs, and enhance the reliability of cargo transportation. Overall, AI integration has the potential to enhance efficiency, security, and sustainability, benefit India's trade and economy. It is essential to consider regulatory and privacy concerns and ensure AI is implemented properly.

The industry is witnessing developments in infra and technology. How do you foresee the sector's future?

Overall, the industry is likely to experience growth in the coming years. However, it will also face challenges such as congestion, regulatory complexities, and competition. Adapting to changing market dynamics and embracing tech advancements will be key to its success and ability to support India's expanding export and import trade. Some of the key trends included expanding infrastructure, technology integration, e-commerce, and regional connectivity among others.



Manoj Kumar Jain
MD, Deep Blue Xpress and Sealair
Freight International

India will soon sign FTAs with a few countries. Would it be beneficial for cargo trade? If so, how?

Signing FTAs with other nations can benefit trade by increasing trade volumes, reducing costs, expediting customs procedures, and transportation of high-value and perishable goods. The FTAs can enhance connectivity, promote air freight hubs, attract FDI, and lead to job creation. The benefits will depend on the terms and conditions of each FTA and their implementation.

What are the cargo industry's current pain points?

The pain points include infrastructure limitations, customs complexities, high costs, limited connectivity, security issues, fluctuating demand, workforce shortages, and high logistics cost, among others.

Share with us your expansion plans or ongoing projects?

Key expansion points for us include network growth, technology integration, customer service improvement, global partnerships, customs expertise, sustainability, se-

Adapting to changing market dynamics and tech will be key to support India's expanding export and import trade

curity measures, diversification. We have made one of our companies a public limited company recently and are in the process of integrating the other and merging the two with a focus on the world e-commerce market.

Do you think India has skilled manpower to deploy advanced technologies?

India has a capable workforce with the potential to deploy advanced technologies. Initiatives like 'Skill India' provide vocational training and upskilling opportunities, focusing on technology-related skills. Partnerships between the government, industry, and educational institutions are promoting manpower's digital literacy.

Do you think ongoing global economic crises will have any impact on the EXIM trade?

The ongoing crises can create challenges for EXIM trade—market access, pricing dynamics, and overall trade strategies and the like. The extent of the impact depends on many factors—severity of the crises, trade ecosystem's resilience, and businesses and governments' agility in adapting to changing circumstances.





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International tensions may influence EXIM trade

Customers' satisfaction is our top priority, and we believe in providing technology-driven tailor-made solutions despite rising costs, to them, says **Shailendra Goel, CEO, Leostar Logistics Pvt Ltd.** He shares the firm has launched Indian NVOCC division for Container Inventory from CIS, Gulf, China, and Europe.



Sara Haque

How are your business operations shaping up post COVID?

Post-COVID is time for generating new opportunities for future growth and giving a shape to logistics and air cargo sectors. We are focusing on offering technology-driven solutions to our customers and empowering employees with free office culture. Focusing on new markets and products, we have introduced Indian NVOCC division to bring all types of container inventory. We are focusing on offering customers tailor-made solutions in CIS, Gulf, China, and Europe.

How crucial is the role of tech in enhancing operational efficiency?

Currently, our industry requires a lot of printing and pa-



Shailendra Goel
Chief Executive Officer
Leostar Logistics Private Limited

perwork for documentation. We are still not ready for 100 per cent paperless operations like we see in other industries such as banking. Technology-empowered industry is controlled through digital platforms. Presently, Leostar is investing in new R&D tools.

How are you working towards building sustainable practices within the supply chain?

Trust and faith are most critical factors for this industry.

Automation and digitization are important drivers required for growth of logistics and air cargo industry

We need new ideas, practice, working environment but with old trust, faith, and guidance.

What are your plans for expansion of the company?

The company has a lot of new plans and visions

for future and to create optimistic opportunities for next generation. We also have plans to expand operations internationally.

What are the industry's crucial areas of concern?

The industrial growth depends on the Indian economic growth. Average Gross Domestic Product growth for fiscal year 2023-24 is estimated at 5.8 per cent, which shows that Indian EXIM trade is going to increase substantially. Thus, it will open a Pandora's box of opportunities for logistics service providers (LSPs) on all platforms. The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) contribute to the growth of Indian economy and support new challenges. Automation and digitization are the most important drivers required for rapid growth of logistics and air cargo industry. However, the biggest challenge to be faced by this industry will be due to the ever-changing international political scenario and ongoing wars between Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas. This will directly affect trade operations, transitions and, generally, create an atmosphere of insecurity in the industry.



FACTFILE

→ We have introduced Indian NVOCC division to bring all types of container inventory. We are focusing on offering customers tailor-made solutions.

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'Innovative bays' to enhance loading, unloading

Dock Levelers, Sectional Overhead Doors, Dock Shelters are dependent on a slew of factors. These include the frequency of goods movement, the type of vehicles, and the temperature to be maintained within the warehouses, shares **Samir Gandhi, Director, Gandhi Automations** in an interview.



CT Bureau

For efficiently loading and unloading goods at the loading bay, the basic equipment comprises Dock Levelers, Sectional Overhead Doors, and Dock Shelters.

They appear to be independent equipment, but installation of any one without the other may not result in a complete solution at the loading bay. However, the choice of either one of the three depends on many factors. For example, the type of goods, the weight, volume, quantity, dimension of the courtyard, the frequency of goods movement, the type of vehicles and the temperature to be maintained within the facility.

OPERATORS AT THE LOADING BAY

- Safeguards the operators from the risk of accidents
- Grants to the operator better environmental conditions, lowering their absences due to illnesses and increasing their productivity
- Loading and unloading with the lesser possible effort

MATERIAL AT THE BAY:

- To avoid material damages to the goods
- To avoid breaking the frozen food cold chain
- To protect goods from diverse weather conditions

ENERGY SAVINGS

- To avoid heating waste
- To reduce heating and/or air-conditioning costs

VEHICLES:

- To facilitate the vehicles approach operations



Samir Gandhi
Director
Gandhi Automations

- To fill in the available spaces on the vehicles
- To load and unload as quickly as possible, minimizing the waiting time of the vehicles

SPEEDING UP OPERATIONS:

- Remote controlling of the loading bay state
- Remote addressing of the vehicles to the assigned bay
- Remote calling of the driver when the load is finished

WAREHOUSES WITHOUT DOCKS:

- Disposing of adequate equipment also in the warehouses without docks, at ground level
- Disposing of equipment when it seems that the space of

docking the vehicles lacks

- Properly equipping the dock for loading light commercial vehicles

They appear to be independent equipment, but installation of any one sans the other may not result in a complete solution

CHOOSING EQUIPMENT:

- That confirms to the necessity of the modern pre-fabrication
- That may be installed only at the end of the building works
- That preserves the integrity of the building parts

MAXIMUM ELECTRICAL INTEGRATION:

- By drastically reducing the number of the electrical feeding descents
- By reducing to the minimum the total engaged power

ADEQUATE MATERIALS AND FINISHING:

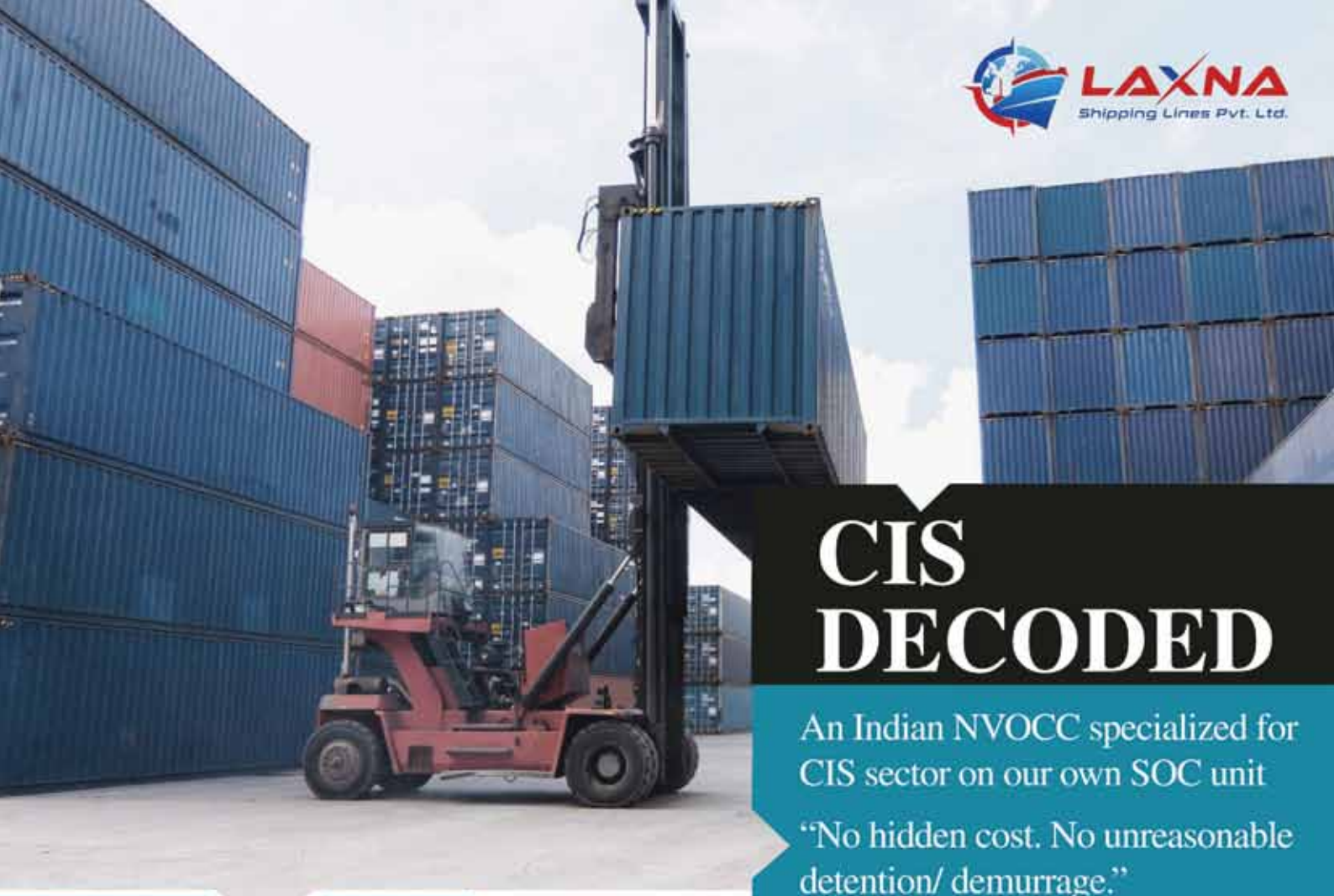
- Painted with two components catalyzed anti-rust and with two oven-dried components catalyzed end-finished enamel, previously ecologically degreased at 100°C, double phosphate, for destination on common environments
- Hot dip galvanized for very humid, salted, or aggressive environments
- Stainless steel where fish, meat, milk is treated
- Anti-burst where needed

SUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT:

- For the type of activity and for the necessary carrying capacities
- That does not require maintenance
- That conforms to the existing regulations
- That is CE certified

Each one of the above-mentioned points has to be duly evaluated and each one must find the precise reply within the adopted decision. 📌





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PM Gati Shakti, NLP to alter logistics, air cargo

Existing multimodal infrastructure for cargo movement needs well-thought of and strategically driven measures as presently cargo movement from warehouses to respective ports does not have adequate infrastructure and connectivity, says **Sunil Kohli, Managing Director, Rahat Cargo.**



CT Bureau

How do you think PMGS along with NLP can boost the logistics and air cargo sector in the coming years?

PM Gati Shakti is the central government's policy initiative focused at improving freight logistics sector by reducing overall freight costs and time, cutting warehousing costs and improving the tracking and traceability of consignments through infrastructural, procedural, and technological interventions since the plan envisages an active involvement of seven engines namely Railways, Roads, Ports, Waterways, Airports, Mass Transport, and Logistics Infrastructure.

These functional measures are likely to gradually push the cargo sector into a seamless and faster accomplishment to yield a fruitful outcome to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

How would you rate India's multimodal infra for cargo movement. Do you feel there is need for improvement?

The existing multimodal infrastructure for cargo movement needs well-thought and strategically driven steps as presently, the cargo movement from the warehouses to the respective ports does not have a comforting and time saving travel by road, a mode used by the shippers. The desirability of smooth roads and seamless travel remains all over.



Sunil Kohli
MD
Rahat Cargo

What are the crucial areas of concern?

The critical areas of concern at present, which need to be addressed by the related agencies include government regulations, environmental regulations, technological barriers, materials handling, transport, supply management and logistics, information and control, distribution and material movement and production logistics and management.

What according to you are the key growth drivers for air cargo industry?

With a view to ensure growth of export, the government needs to extend all possible assistance to the exporters by way of providing attractive incentives to them apart from establishing airport complexes at the convenient locations, which should be equipped with state of the art facilities.

What efficient strategies are being adopted by the air cargo industry to move forward and achieve growth?

The entire cargo handling should be turned into paperless mode and be replaced with digitization processes to save time and the related cost towards manpower. The airports must have a cargo friendly environment to facilitate its handling. The airlines too should also have an enhanced Unit Load Device (ULD) management system in place apart from ensuring to have the ULDs in a perfect condition to achieve optimal loadability.

Throw light on your current projects and offerings in Indian and the global market?

We, as a freight forwarders, have been in close touch for preceding several years with the eminent and established exporters of fruits and vegetables persuading them to explore newer destinations abroad. We have partially succeeded in our endeavour.

All possible assistance is rendered to the shippers by way of offering the best air freights and by working out the best possible routing. Our relentless efforts in this regard are continuing unabated.

What are the projects in the pipeline?

Encouraged and assisted by the government's several incentive schemes, we propose

We propose to promote solar energy products on a massive footing and efforts are on to have an extensive research in the trade

to promote solar energy products on a massive footing and the efforts are on to have an extensive research in the trade. Subsequently a strategic marketing plan is also being developed towards targeting the productive areas of sales. Building a recognizable brand is also in the pipeline. 🚀





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Perishables growth driver from tier II, III locations

The air cargo industry is competitive with both Indian and international logistics players vying for market share. In this regard, competition can pose pricing pressures and need for constant innovation to stay ahead, says **Rajen S. Bhatia, Director, Tulsidas Khimji**. We have plans to expand to Pune, Goa, and Hyderabad.



CT Bureau

Tell us about your ongoing projects?

Tulsidas Khimji (TKPL) is a pioneer in the air cargo and logistics industry. TKPL was the first to be accorded with IATA certification in 1949 and till today continues to be a player to reckon with in the industry. It offers seamless logistics solutions to its customers. We handle 2,000 tonnes of cargo by air, including pharma, dangerous goods, valuables, perishables, livestock and have specialized teams to handle charters and AOG. Recently, we handled and transported 150 tonnes of pharma by air

cargo from Ahmedabad to the USA. We delivered the cargo within 36 hours due to which our customers were able to get another time bound project of 5,000 tonnes in the USA.

What are the key growth drivers of air cargo?

The industry has immense growth potential. The key growth drivers include, increasing demand for e-commerce and perishables, especially from tier II and III locations, are expanding and so is the manufacturing sector and Government initiatives such as Make in India, PMGS, NLP aiming to promote domestic as well as international trade, develop infrastructure, and implement digitalization



Rajen S. Bhatia
Director
Tulsidas Khimji

and automation. Artificial Intelligence is also one of the crucial elements, which will

transform the sector. Block-chain can be applied to simplify logistics operations to make them more efficient and optimize resources. Automation is expected to rise in the coming years. The NLP has facilitated resilient, and green logistical ops based on automation, standardization. It intends to lower the cost of logistics.

What are the current challenges in the air cargo market?

The present challenges include infrastructure bottlenecks, regulatory hurdles, high operating costs, terminal congestion, high dwell time, shortage of trained staff, and inefficient utilization of belly cargo capacity among others.

The industry is competitive with Indian and global logistics players vying for market share. This competition can

The present challenges for the sector include infrastructure bottlenecks, regulatory hurdles, high operating costs, terminal congestion, high dwell time, trained staff shortage among others

pose pricing pressures and the need for constant innovation to stay ahead.

What are your expansion plans?

We have branches in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Indore, Nagpur, Pune and Vadodara. Last month, we extended our wings to Bhopal, Pipavav, Tumb and



in the next three months, we will widen our network (ICD Pune, Goa, and Hyderabad). We have entered into partnership with our partners in Germany, Italy, Dubai and the USA which enable us to give excellent logistics solutions to our customers.

Tell us about initiatives taken by your company for sustainable growth?

Cost cutting, better buying powers from shipping lines and airlines, contractual agreements, investing in digitization and new tech, provid-

ing opportunities to the existing employees based on their skillset and give them challenges/opportunities to take on new roles.

Shortly, we will be starting internship, and apprenticeship programme. 📌

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'Urgent need for honing skills of the workforce'

The continued growth of e-commerce has been a significant driver of the Indian air cargo demand, says **Asitha Udawela, Managing Director, Logenix Logistics India**. As more consumers shift to online shopping, there be a need for efficient and fast delivery increases, prompting the use of air cargo, he adds.



CT Bureau

How is your business shaping up? What are your ongoing projects and recent developments?

Logenix specializes in pharmaceuticals, aid, and relief focusing mainly on Africa and developing nations. Since the global markets are weak, we continue to expand our portfolio and build sustainable business across multiple verticals, while keeping focusing on our core business. Logenix is modelled to be flexible and agile, and this has given us the edge in adapting to changing markets trends. We will continue to expand in the next year based on our growth plans.

Since logistics market is drifting toward sustainability, how does the industry contribute towards it?

Since we are carbon neutral, we believe that all organizations and industries need to be aligned on environment sustainability as it has a direct impact on the future of society it-



Asitha Udawela
Managing Director
Logenix Logistics India

self. We embarked on ensuring that Logenix is carbon neutral real time and have been successful in achieving it last year.

Do you think there is a need for skilled workforce in the logistics sector?

Yes. There is an urgent need for a skilled workforce. Having such a workforce is essential for ensuring efficient supply chain operations. The complexity of supply chains, tech advancements, and glo-

balization of trade contribute to the demand for skilled professionals in various roles within the sector. We provide internal and external training programmes:

Logenix is modelled to be flexible and agile, and this has given us the edge in adapting to changing market trends. We have plans to expand next year based on growth

1. Education and training programmes from institutions focusing on logistics.
2. Certification programmes
3. Corporate training programmes
4. Technology training
5. Internship and apprenticeship programmes
6. Continuous learning and professional development
7. Online learning platforms
8. Cross-functional training

Addressing the need for a skilled workforce involves a combination of formal education, certifications, on-the-job training, and learning initiatives. The goal is to equip the team with the necessary skills and know-how to navigate the complexities of modern supply chain management.

What, according to you, will be the key growth drivers?

Based on the market trends, some of the key growth drivers for logistics/air cargo include:

o Increased online shopping: The continued growth of e-commerce has been a significant driver of air cargo demand. As more consumers shift to online shopping, the need for efficient and fast delivery increases, prompting the use of air cargo to meet the demand for timely deliveries.

o Global trade networks: Globalization of supply chains and increased global trade contribute to a higher demand for air cargo services. Businesses are sourcing materials and selling products on a global scale, relying on air transport for speed and reliability.

o Digitalisation technology: Adoption of digital technologies in logistics operations can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve overall supply chain management. Technologies such as IoT, AI, and Blockchain can optimize processes in the industry.

o Global economic expansion: Economic growth, especially in emerging markets, can drive demand for logistics and air cargo services. Increased economic activities often lead to higher production, trade, and transportation needs.

o Pharma and perishables: The transport of pharma and perishables are becoming increasingly important. Air cargo is suited for ferrying temperature-controlled goods.

o Modern airports and facilities: Continued investment in airport infrastructure and air cargo facilities can enhance the efficiency of logistics operations and contribute to the growth of the industry. ✈





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Glimpses from 46th Convention

The Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI) organized its 46th Convention in Bangkok on 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.





45th Convention unites trade

The 45th Air Cargo Agents' Association of India (ACAAI) Annual Convention was held in Phuket. 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.





Advanced tech to improve efficiency of air cargo

The current global economic slowdown will affect exports in a big way. Exports are meant for earning foreign exchange for manufacturing goods as per global standards even for sales within India. The condition of the Indian roads towards both air cargo terminals and CFSs is pathetic and the same must be improved.



CT Bureau

The global air cargo and logistics industry is moving towards AI to enhance operational efficiency, reduce errors and costs.

For us, our vendors are equally important. Our service level depends on our vendors ability to give us excellent service at affordable cost. Our prosperity lies in our customers getting more orders from their buyers so that we get

not going to help improve efficiencies. What we need is application of more common sense to improve the efficacy of the EXIM trade.

We need to identify ways and means to get this image

be credited to the vehicle's FASTag. This will make the 'road operators' more accountable. Today they collect the money, irrespective of whatever happens. The condition of the Indian roads towards both air cargo terminals and CFSs is extremely pathetic. We have so many logistics associations and there is no coordination among them. This has weakened our position and we have been fighting lone battles. The current economic slowdown will affect Indian exports in a big way.

Exports are not only meant for earning forex but also for manufacturing goods for sales in India. We have not been seeing anything constructive coming from the government agencies. This apart, I would also like to open a logistics school in order to create well-qualified logisticians.



Previously, logistic operations were manual, therefore, the risk of human errors was high. Today, advanced technologies such as AI, ML, Internet of Things (IoT), Block Chain, Data Science, ML, and AI are being utilized to make the work easier.

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to handle more shipments. Though the advanced technology offers lots of benefits, I feel the industry can work without the advantages of AI and automation. This paved the way for creating youngsters with creative outlook. We are now left with 'Lego' to fill this blank. According to me, AI is

corrected. An indifferent customs software, which is either slow or not working at all, points to a sorry situation. It is up to the government to intervene and improve the state of affairs. For example, we pay a heavy toll even if there is a traffic jam of long hours. The amount, which is debited, must



Pratap Nair
Owner and MD
FEI Cargo

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



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