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maritime gateway

JULY 2025

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INTERVIEW

SK RAHMAN, IRS

Chief Commissioner of Customs & CGST

Thiruvananthapuram Zone

India's Cruise Tourism SETS SAIL

India's cruise tourism sector is experiencing a wave of renewed interest, fuelled by government-backed initiatives, changing traveller preferences, and the rising popularity of experiential travel.





Ai - Based Operations



e-Booking of Containers



**Mobile App for
First Mile Last Mile**

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IT INNOVATIONS

Warehousing & Distribution Logistics

LCL Hub : MMLP Dadri

Cold Chain Logistics: Ensuring Freshness

Power by Icebattery technology

Double stack reefer train on DFC

67 Terminals, 16 Multimodal Logistics Parks , 4 on DFC

Container shipping faces a decade of overcapacity



The container shipping industry is bracing for a prolonged cycle of overcapacity that threatens to suppress freight rates and erode profitability well into the next decade. Global orderbooks have swelled to 31.7 per cent of the active fleet, the highest level since 2010. Analysts recall a similar surge in orders between 2004 and 2009, which triggered a supply overhang that took nearly ten years to clear.

In 2025 alone, almost 1 million TEUs of new capacity are scheduled for delivery. This expansion arrives at a time when demand growth is muted and trade flows are volatile. US tariff policies have distorted shipping patterns, with many shippers front-loading cargo into June and July to beat higher duties. The early peak left subsequent months depressed, putting further pressure on rates.

Spot prices on major trade lanes have continued their downward slide. On the transpacific, some carriers are quoting below 1,600 dollars per FEU to the US West Coast. Rates to North Europe are ranging between 2,500 and 2,700 dollars per FEU, with members of the Gemini Cooperation driving prices lower as they maintain a zero blank sailing policy. In contrast, Ocean Alliance lines have blanked up to a quarter of their scheduled sailings in an effort to stabilise the market.

The imbalance between fleet growth and subdued demand is setting the stage for a highly competitive market. Larger carriers with strong balance sheets may endure the cycle by leveraging scale and efficiency, while smaller operators could be forced into consolidation or alliances. For shippers, the short-term upside will be lower freight rates, but the long-term outlook raises concerns about service stability, capacity management, and investment in sustainable shipping.

The industry has weathered such cycles before, but the timing could hardly be more challenging. Decarbonisation mandates, shifting trade policies, and geopolitical uncertainties are already stretching carrier resources. With overcapacity looming, the sector will need to rely on disciplined capacity management and innovation to navigate the decade ahead.

Ramprasad

R Ramprasad
Editor & Publisher
ramprasad@maritimegateway.com

South Asia's premier maritime business magazine
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Editor & Publisher
R Ramprasad, ramprasad@maritimegateway.com

Associate Editor
A S L Narasimha Rao, narasimharao@maritimegateway.com

Contributing Editor
S K Pradhan

Design Consultant
Nagaraju NS, Designzone

Marketing & Sales
Satish Shetti, satish@maritimegateway.com, +91 99207 05534
Nikhil Doshi, nikhil@maritimegateway.com, +91 98369 96293

Digital Strategy
Harsha, harsha@maritimegateway.com

IT & Administration
Kishore P V

Client Relations
Madhukar, madhukar@maritimegateway.com, +91 93937 68383

Circulation & Subscription
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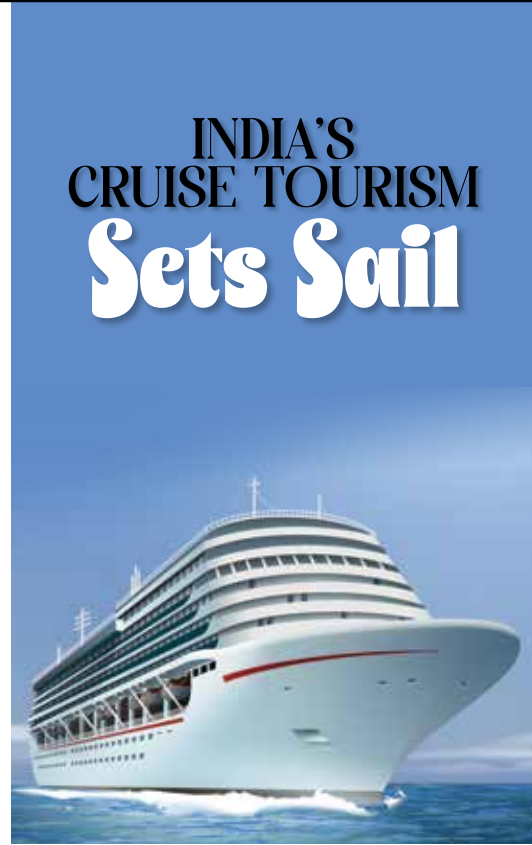
India's One Nation-One Port Process (ONOP) is an initiative by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, launched in early 2025 by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

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Centre plans ₹70,000-crore boost for shipbuilding and ports infrastructure

The central government is preparing a ₹70,000-crore package to strengthen shipbuilding, ship repair, and port infrastructure, according to a report. The plan is expected to go before the Union Cabinet by mid-September. The package will include: ₹20,000 crore for a shipping cluster programme to create large-scale maritime hubs. ₹20,000 crore under a revamped Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Programme (SBFAP 2.0), and ₹25,000–30,000 crore for establishing a Maritime Development Fund (MDF). A policy framework for the three schemes has been finalised following consultations between the finance ministry and the ministry of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW). Officials said the measures will provide financial clarity, infrastructure support, and attract investment—including potential joint ventures with Japanese and Korean shipbuilding majors for new greenfield clusters.

Shipping set to sail under Infrastructure status

The Government of India is set to grant infrastructure status to the shipping industry, with an official notification expected soon. The move will give shipping companies access to long-term, low-cost financing, enabling them to expand vessel ownership and place more orders with Indian shipyards. At present, India ranks 18th globally in ship ownership and 22nd in shipbuilding, with domestic operators often constrained by higher funding costs and shorter repayment schedules compared to global peers. Unlike traditional infrastructure classifications based on project value, the government plans to introduce a vessel-size threshold, with ships of 24 metres or longer qualifying for the status. Repayment schedules are also expected to be aligned with the 12–15-year lifespan of ships, easing financial pressure on owners.



APMB, APM Terminals sign ₹9,000 crore pact for port development

The Andhra Pradesh Maritime Board (APMB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with APM Terminals, a subsidiary of global shipping and port management giant A.P. Moller–Maersk, to develop three major ports in the state with an investment of ₹9,000 crore. The agreement, signed in the presence of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, will pave the way for the development of Ramayapatnam, Machilipatnam and Mulapeta ports, equipped with modern terminals and advanced cargo-handling systems. The project is expected to create nearly 10,000 direct jobs. Speaking at the event, Naidu said Andhra Pradesh would be developed as the “eastern gateway” for maritime trade and a logistics hub of India.

Rajya Sabha clears new Coastal Shipping Bill

The Rajya Sabha has passed the Coastal Shipping Bill, removing the requirement for Indian-flagged vessels to obtain a general trading licence from the Directorate General of Shipping for operations along India’s coast. The Lok Sabha had cleared the Bill earlier. Under the new law, foreign-flagged ships—whether chartered by Indian citizens or entities and operating from ports within or outside India—will still require a licence to engage in India’s coasting trade. At present, both Indian-flag and foreign-flag vessels chartered by Indian companies or individuals need a licence to operate. The new Bill, carved out of Part 14 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, aims to streamline regulations, support focused policy decisions, and boost the share of coastal cargo in line with the Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047. Penalties have been revised to match global standards, replacing outdated fines of up to ₹1,000. While imprisonment remains for serious offences such as illegal operation within India’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), most violations will attract monetary penalties to avoid unnecessary criminalisation.

Vijay Kumar named new Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways

The Central Government has appointed Vijay Kumar, a 1992-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre, as the next Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

According to an office memorandum issued by the Department of Personnel and Training, Kumar will first serve as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) before formally taking charge on October 1, succeeding T. K. Ramachandran, who retires on September 30. Currently serving as Chairman of the Inland Waterways Authority of India, Kumar has been at the helm of efforts to expand and modernise India’s inland water transport network. Born in Delhi, the 54-year-old officer entered the IAS at the age of 21 after clearing the UPSC Civil Services Examination in 1992. He began his career as Sub-Divisional Magistrate in East Delhi and has since held several senior positions across diverse sectors, including education, trade, excise, water supply, and transport. His notable assignments include stints as Special Secretary (Cooperation) in Delhi, Principal Secretary (Power) in the Union Territory, Administrator of Lakshadweep, and CEO of the Delhi Jal Board. Kumar holds a Bachelor’s degree in Electronics Engineering and an MBA in Economic Development from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He also earned a Diploma in Business Finance from the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India.

MSC to launch new North India–Middle East shipping service in September

Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) is set to launch a new weekly shipping service connecting North India with key ports in the Middle East, starting in late September 2025. This initiative aims to enhance trade connectivity and offer exporters and importers more direct, dependable transportation options across the region. The service will operate with three vessels, each capable of carrying approximately 2,500 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units). The planned port rotation includes Hazira, Mundra, and Nhava Sheva in India, followed by Sohar in Oman, Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, and Dammam in Saudi Arabia, before returning to Hazira. A notable feature of this route is the inclusion of King Abdulaziz Port in Dammam.

Shipping Ministry to explore dedicated satellite technology for the Indian maritime

The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal said the Ministry will explore the possibility of launching a dedicated satellite or acquiring a transponder to strengthen India's maritime governance and port management infrastructure. According to the Union Minister, the proposed system would provide exclusive coverage for Indian coastal waters, inland waterways and port regions, integrating with national maritime databases to offer real-time monitoring of vessel traffic, navigational safety and port operations. Highlighting India's recent achievements in the space sector, the Minister said the country has emerged as a global leader in science and technology.

VOC port achieves first-ever export of 101 windmill blades in ship

VOC Port has created a new milestone with the successful export of 101 windmill blades in a ship on 21, August 2025, marking the first time such a large number of blades has been shipped from the Port. This achievement surpasses the earlier record of 75 blades exported in March 2025, setting a new benchmark in renewable energy cargo handling. Through this significant export, the Port has achieved a total handling of 1,158 windmill blades up to August 21, 2025, in the current financial year 2025-26, registering a 5 per cent increase over the 1,099 blades handled up to the month of August in the previous financial year 2024-25.

The blades, manufactured by Vestas, are being shipped to the United States through the vessel MV BBC Santiago. The shipment was handled at Additional Berth-I, where two harbour mobile cranes operated by Imcola along with vessel cranes ensured safe and efficient loading. Logistics support was provided by Maersk and Shore handling services by NTC Logistics, with Marcons Ship Management Pvt. Ltd. serving as the Vessel Agent and Pearl Shipping & Chartering as the Stevedore. Each blade measures approximately 59.18 metres in length, requiring specialized handling and dedicated storage arrangements. The Port has specialized infrastructure including dedicated storage area of 1,00,000 square metres within the customs-notified area, for accommodating such over dimensional cargo. Congestion-free Road connectivity and the availability of a skilled workforce were also key enablers for this historic achievement.

With a ₹3,500 crore e-methanol project, Kandla port is set to become a bunkering hub



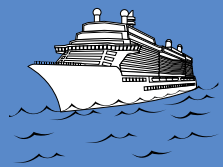
The Deendayal Port Authority (DPA) in Kandla, Gujarat, has given the green signal to a ₹3,500 crore project to create e-methanol, a synthetic fuel. This step is taken to make Kandla a key bunkering hub for ships traveling between the Port of Rotterdam and Singapore in mind. According to DPA Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh, the port intends to supply e-methanol as bunker fuel for ships on this important international route. The reports predict that roughly 200 ships are expected to operate on that route by 2030, and they will need e-methanol as bunker fuel. Singapore and Rotterdam remain the major sources however Kandla aims to be a crucial supply point. Kandla's calculated action is in line with international initiatives to decarbonize the shipping sector. The Rotterdam-Singapore Green and Digital Shipping Corridor was established in 2022 through a memorandum of understanding between the Port of Rotterdam and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA).

India's express logistics industry to double to \$22 bn by FY30

India's express logistics sector, currently valued at nearly \$9 billion in FY25, is on track to double in size and reach \$18–22 billion by FY30, according to industry estimates. The sector has grown at a CAGR of 12–15 per cent since FY17, driven by the rapid expansion of e-commerce, MSME exports, and digital transformation. In FY24 alone, the industry contributed \$1–1.5 billion in GST collections and \$650 million in customs duties, while generating employment for 2.8–3 million people across urban and rural India. The domestic segment, which accounts for 70 per cent of the market and is valued at \$6.3–6.5 billion, is led by surface express services. Policy measures such as Bharatmala Pariyojna, GST, the E-way Bill, and FASTag have boosted efficiency in road logistics.

INDIA'S CRUISE TOURISM Sets Sail





India's cruise tourism sector is experiencing a wave of renewed interest, fuelled by government-backed initiatives, changing traveller preferences, and the rising popularity of experiential travel. What was once a niche segment for affluent globetrotters has begun to evolve into a more inclusive, aspirational option for Indian tourists across age groups and geographies and becoming an important pillar of India's broader tourism and maritime strategies. With strong policy backing, rising traveller interest, infrastructure upgrades, and global cruise operators showing renewed confidence, the country is poised to reposition itself as a formidable player on the global cruise map.

L launched in 2024, the Cruise Bharat Mission (CBM) is a landmark initiative designed to unlock India's full potential across its 7,500-kilometre coastline and 20,000 kilometres of navigable inland waterways. The mission outlines plans for 10 world-class sea cruise terminals, 100 river cruise stations, and five marinas by 2029. It encompasses ocean, harbour, river, inland, island, and lighthouse cruise circuits under one integrated framework.

Cruise Bharat is not only about infrastructure. It brings together 14 ministries including Shipping, Tourism, Home Affairs, and Finance to streamline policy. The mission promotes digital integration, sustainability, and international partnerships as it aims to position India as a globally competitive cruise destination.

India's cruise infrastructure is witnessing steady development. Flagship projects include the Mumbai International Cruise Terminal with a projected capacity of one million passengers annually, and new terminals being constructed in Visakhapatnam (₹100 crore), Goa (₹82.3 crore), and Cochin.

Inland waterways are being revitalised with support from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) through investments in dredging, passenger amenities, and navigation systems. The success of the MV Ganga Vilas—the world's longest river cruise—has showcased the potential of long-distance inland cruising. The vessel has completed 14 voyages since its debut in 2023, offering a spiritual, cultural, and scenic experience that traverses northern and eastern India.

A market on the move

India's cruise sector has shown robust growth. The country handled 471,000 cruise passengers in FY 2023–24, with CBM targeting one million passengers by 2029 and a long-term vision of reaching five million by 2047. From 102 cruise calls in 2013 to 479 in 2023, the momentum is building.

Valued at \$139 million in 2024, the Indian cruise market is projected to touch \$323 million by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 15



Cruise tourism is gaining strong traction among India's upper-middle-class segment. Growing disposable income of a burgeoning middle and upper middle class enables them to embrace cruise as a preferred leisure choice.



SARBANANDA SONOWAL
UNION MINISTER OF PORTS SHIPPING
AND WATERWAYS

percent. The Asia-Pacific region's rise as a preferred cruising hub offers additional tailwinds for India's maritime tourism aspirations.

Indian tourists are demonstrating a growing appetite for cruise travel. While 3 to 5-day itineraries remain popular among first-time cruisers and families, there is a rising interest in longer voyages ranging from 7 to 9 days. Destinations across Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean are gaining traction among Indian outbound travellers.

Short cruises to the Bahamas and Caribbean continue to be top picks, but itineraries to Alaska, Mexico, Bermuda, Australia, and the Middle East are also drawing attention. Closer to home, Phuket in Thailand and Penang and Melaka in Malaysia are preferred regional cruise stops, especially for Indian travellers seeking a combination of leisure and cultural discovery.

The market is witnessing increased traction in the fly-cruise segment, where travellers fly to international cruise departure points to embark on voyages. This model is gaining ground due to its convenience and access to exotic itineraries otherwise unavailable through Indian home ports.

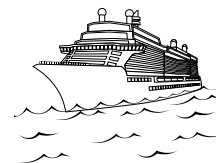
Generational shift and thematic travel trends

What's especially notable is the shift in traveller demographics and expectations. Millennials and Gen Z, known for prioritising experiences over possessions, are emerging as a strong consumer base. These younger travellers show a marked interest in cruises, with many expressing intent to cruise within the next two years. Their preferences lean towards all-inclusive packages, themed itineraries, and immersive experiences.

At the same time, multi-generational families and corporate groups are opting for cruises as an ideal blend of convenience and entertainment. The cruise platform

A cruise vessel with a capacity of **3,000** passengers can generate employment for nearly **1,000** people when it uses an Indian port as its home base. The ripple effect extends to local businesses. With each passenger spending at least **\$70-100** a day on land excursions, a cruise ship fuels substantial daily transactions, injecting fresh energy into tourism, retail and service sectors.





has become attractive for MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism as well, with companies seeking novel settings for engagement and team-building.

Another trend is the rise of cruise connoisseurs—seasoned Indian travellers who are now exploring expedition cruises, small ship journeys, and river cruises. There is also increased curiosity about Nordic landscapes, cultural circuits in the Mediterranean, and wildlife-themed itineraries that offer a more intimate, nature-centric voyage.

A significant evolution is underway in travel patterns. Indian cruisers are showing a clear shift towards longer and more immersive holidays, graduating from short 2–3-night sailings to 5–7-night itineraries and beyond. Japan is fast emerging as a preferred destination with seasonal cruise deployments spanning



For a long time, Indian ports primarily functioned as cargo hubs, not as gateways for cruise passengers. But with new cruise terminals being built and existing ones being upgraded, we are now better equipped to serve cruise tourism.

DR M ANGAMUTHU
CHAIRPERSON
VISAKHAPATNAM PORT AUTHORITY.

seven months and itineraries ranging from 7 to 14 days.

Destinations like Svalbard, Antarctica, Greenland, Iceland, and the Galápagos are seeing a spike in interest, especially among affluent, well-read travellers who are seeking once-in-a-lifetime experiences in remote corners of the world. Polar cruises have especially captured the imagination of Indian adventurers.

These travellers are increasingly choosing nature-focused, educational, and expedition-style cruises over conventional leisure trips. Experiential travel is now the dominant motivation, and thematic cruises—such as wildlife observation, wellness, music, and alumni reunions—are finding fertile ground among Indian travellers. What was once considered aspirational is now attainable, and often repeatable.

Global linkages

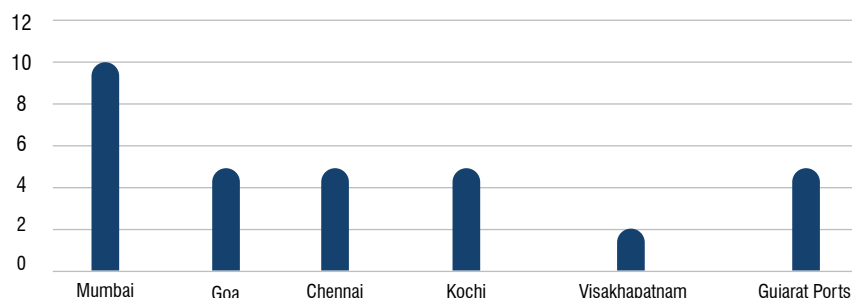
Cruise lines such as Princess, Cunard, Seabourn, P&O Cruises-UK, Hurtigruten, Aurora Expeditions, and Crystal are reporting heightened interest from Indian travellers. The sector witnessed a 7 to 10 percent year-on-year growth in the past year, with a visible expansion in both first-time and repeat cruisers.

A significant development on the horizon is the much-anticipated deployment of Disney Cruise Line in Singapore from December 2025. This has already generated a wave of enthusiasm among Indian families and travel agents, marking an inflection point in India's outbound cruise demand.

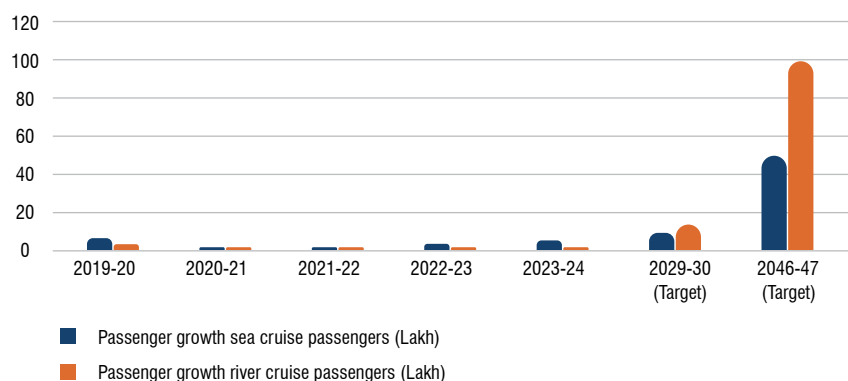
Domestic growth and cultural integration

India's domestic cruise routes are expanding steadily. Short-haul luxury voyages such as Mumbai–Goa have seen strong demand, and Haj sea pilgrimage proposals from Mumbai underscore the sector's social and cultural relevance. Cordelia Cruises has scaled up its operations within India with a focus on affordability and sustainability.

Cruise Terminals Passenger Capacity (Lakh)



Passenger Growth



Handled - **471,000** cruise **passengers** in 2023-24

Target - **1 million** by 2029 and **5 million** by 2047 passengers

Cruise calls - **273** in 2024-25

Cruise Market Value - \$139 million in 2024 projected to **\$323 million** by 2030



Indian travellers are increasingly recognising cruise tourism as an annual travel option rather than a once-in-a-lifetime splurge.

Challenges remain: infrastructure and crisis management

Despite progress, challenges persist. Secondary ports often lack cruise-compatible infrastructure, and immigration and customs processes vary across states. Port operations remain cargo-focused, with limited passenger-centric design. Environmental infrastructure, including shore reception facilities for cruise waste, is missing at many ports.

The Red Sea crisis offers a recent example of vulnerability. Mangaluru Port, which previously hosted 25 cruise ships annually, handled just seven vessels in 2023-24. This decline impacted local tourism and vendors who depend on cruise footfalls for livelihoods. Operators are urging route diversification and improved



“We believe India could have multiple home ports for foreign cruise vessels by 2029. The government’s vision is to enable homeporting of at least one cruise ship each in Goa, Chennai, Kochi and Visakhapatnam, apart from one or two in Mumbai.”

RAJIV JALOTA
ADVISOR, INDIAN PORTS ASSOCIATION.

domestic circuits to reduce reliance on geopolitically sensitive zones.

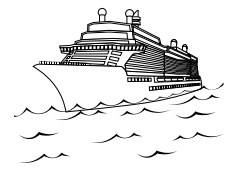
Conclusion: India’s maritime moment

Despite the positive momentum, cruising is still seen as a premium or occasional indulgence by many Indian consumers. To realise its full potential, the industry must focus on making cruising a mainstream holiday option—on par with international vacations or beach resorts. This can be achieved through better education, innovative packaging, and increased visibility in the domestic travel market.

As Cruise Bharat takes shape, the synergy between public policy, private investment, and consumer engagement will be vital. The success of cruise tourism in India will not only diversify the country’s tourism offerings but also deliver significant socio-economic benefits. What lies ahead is a journey of both opportunity and transformation, with India preparing to anchor itself as a prominent player in the global cruise tourism industry.

India’s cruise story is gaining depth and direction. With Cruise Bharat Mission at the helm, the nation is not just opening up its ports but creating new economic pathways. Whether through luxury liners, river cruises, or small expedition vessels, India is leveraging its maritime geography to shape a new chapter in tourism-led growth.

The journey ahead calls for continued collaboration between government, operators, and the private sector. By aligning policy ambition with infrastructure delivery and global marketing, India can unlock its vast blue economy potential. As the world’s cruise industry seeks new horizons, India is ready to set sail—charting a bold course into the future. 



"India well positioned to emerge as major hub for cruise tourism"

In this interview, **Chad Grospe, Vice President – APAC at Royal Caribbean International**, shares his insights on the future of India's outbound and domestic cruise tourism over the next five years, while highlighting the international and regional destinations most favoured by Indian travellers.

What growth potential do you see in the Indian outbound and domestic cruise tourism market over the next five years, and what kind of traveller segments are showing the most promise?

India is one of the most exciting markets for cruise tourism today. We're seeing a strong shift in travel behaviour – Indian consumers are prioritising meaningful, multi-destination experiences, and cruising fits perfectly into that mindset. Rising affluence, demand for experiential travel, and shifting perception from cruising being an aspirational holiday choice to being a hassle-free, all-inclusive holiday option are all contributing to this momentum.

On the domestic front, Indian government's initiatives including

Maritime India Vision 2030, which aims to develop sophisticated cruise infrastructure and attract international cruise providers, well-positions the country to emerge as a major hub for cruise holiday tourism.

At Royal Caribbean, we've observed that Indian travellers typically prefer to cruise in larger, multi-generational family groups, as well as with extended social or affinity groups. The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) segment is also seeing interest in cruises as an engaging and high-value alternative to traditional venues.

Cruise holidays appeal to Indian guests because it offers a seamless travel and a wide variety of dining options, entertainment, and shore

excursions all in one place—and the added convenience of unpacking just once while visiting multiple destinations—cruises are ideally suited to meet the expectations of Indian families and group travellers.

Which international and regional cruise destinations are most preferred by Indian tourists today, and how are you adapting your itineraries and onboard experiences to cater to Indian preferences?

India is a big sourcing market for our cruises sailing from Singapore due to proximity and convenience. Indian guests are also increasingly drawn to a range of our global itineraries with strong and growing interest in our Caribbean and Mediterranean cruises.

In the Caribbean, Indian travellers are especially drawn to our exclusive offerings, such as our private island, Perfect Day at CocoCay. This exclusive destination is designed for travellers seeking something truly unique – offering everything from thrill-filled water parks to premium cabanas and tranquil beach clubs – making it a compelling draw for Indian families, honeymooners, and groups.

India is undoubtedly among one of our fastest-growing source markets in the region, and our long-standing exclusive partnership with TIRUN Travel Marketing enables us to offer localised content, services, and support that resonate with Indian travellers. 

Opening gateways: Unlocking key advantages for foreign cruise lines

India's emergence as a promising cruise tourism destination is backed by government initiatives, rising traveller interest, and expanding port infrastructure. While foreign cruise lines have long shown interest in the Indian market, some have been hesitant due to perceived regulatory complexity. However, recent clarifications and streamlined policies have made it easier than ever for international cruise operators to include Indian ports in their itineraries.

By understanding the regulatory landscape and leveraging operational exemptions, foreign-run cruise lines can unlock strategic and commercial advantages. Here's a breakdown of the key benefits:

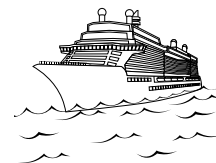
Regulatory clarity brings operational ease

Foreign cruise ships operating international itineraries enjoy several concessions when calling multiple Indian ports. One of the most important exemptions is the non-requirement to convert

vessels to coastal status. Unlike cargo vessels operating along the Indian coast, cruise ships can call at multiple Indian ports during a single voyage without converting to a domestic license or status. This allows greater flexibility in planning India-centric itineraries.

Moreover, these operators do not need a license from the Directorate General of Shipping. This eliminates a significant administrative hurdle and speeds up the entry process for global cruise brands.





Reduced customs and tax burden

Another major relief for international cruise lines is the exemption from upfront customs duties for coastal conversion. Operators are only required to pay customs duties on bunkers, lubes, and other consumables used during the Indian coastal portion of the voyage. The Master of the vessel can declare these quantities, and the necessary documentation (Bill of Entry) is filed only at the last Indian port of call.

Further, vessels classified as "foreign going" are not subject to Indian income tax, and only Goods and Services Tax (GST) applies on local purchases or services within India. This tax neutrality significantly enhances the financial viability of calling Indian ports.

Flexibility in crewing and immigration

Foreign cruise lines can employ crew of any nationality, with no requirement to maintain a minimum quota of Indian crew. In addition, foreign crew members can enter India on transit visas, which simplifies immigration formalities and aligns well with international operations.

This flexibility in crew management, combined with relaxed licensing rules, positions India as an easy-to-navigate market for foreign cruise operators.

Predictable port costs and infrastructure access

India offers uniform port charges across all major ports, ensuring predictability in operational expenses. Cruise lines can plan their schedules and pricing models with confidence, knowing they will not face cost variances from port to port.

Recent developments, such as the opening of the refurbished Ballard Pier Cruise Terminal in Mumbai, offer improved berthing and passenger handling facilities. As cruise traffic grows, early movers gain a strategic edge in

Indian outbound cruise market

Travel trends

Shift towards longer and more immersive cruise holidays.

From **2–3**-night sailings to **5–7**-night itineraries

Singapore once dominated cruise travel from India, now growing interest in the **Middle East, Thailand,** and **Japan.** **Europe** remains a perennial favourite.

Polar Cruises have caught the fancy

Rising interest in **Galapagos, Svalbard, Iceland** and **Greenland.**

Japan is becoming increasingly sought after destination

Significant uptick in interest for once-in-a-lifetime journeys to remote destinations like **Svalbard (Norway), Antarctica, Greenland, Iceland,** and the **Canadian Arctic.**

selecting berthing windows aligned with their itineraries. Cruise lines such as MSC that establish an early presence in India stand to benefit from preferred time slots and terminal access.

Untapped commercial potential: Weddings and events at sea

India's vibrant and growing market for destination weddings is

a major untapped opportunity for cruise operators. Lavish multi-day celebrations are increasingly being hosted outside traditional venues, and luxury cruise ships offer a novel and aspirational setting.

With rising enquiries for weddings on board, foreign cruise lines can design India-centric event packages. These could include themed cruises with onboard hospitality, port-based excursions, and curated experiences for families and guests. Tapping into this high-value segment would open a new revenue stream while enhancing brand visibility.

Strategic and commercial implications

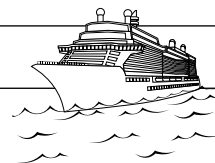
Foreign cruise lines that integrate Indian ports into their itineraries gain:

- Simplified compliance with fewer licenses and easier entry procedures
- Cost efficiency through tax relief and lower regulatory costs
- Operational flexibility with crew management and sailing schedules
- First-mover advantage in berth selection and market visibility
- Access to niche markets like MICE tourism and destination weddings

Conclusion

India is no longer just a stopover on the cruise map—it is becoming a destination in itself. For foreign cruise operators, the regulatory framework is now clearer, the cost structure more competitive, and the market demand increasingly diverse. By including Indian ports like Mumbai in their itineraries, cruise lines can tap into a growing base of Indian travellers, explore new revenue models, and strengthen their presence in one of Asia's most promising cruise markets.

Now is the right time for global cruise players to steer toward India and set sail into a market of opportunities. 



Decoding taxation for foreign cruise lines

India is steadily positioning itself as a preferred destination for global cruise tourism. In support of this vision, the Indian government has implemented a series of tax relaxations and procedural simplifications to attract international cruise operators. These measures provide much-needed clarity and cost-efficiency for foreign cruise lines considering Indian port calls on their itineraries.

Outlined below are key aspects of the taxation framework that foreign cruise operators need to be aware of:

Vessel coastal voyage conversion duty: One of the most important reforms is the exemption from cabotage regulations for cruise vessels. A foreign-flagged cruise ship on an international itinerary can call at multiple Indian ports during its voyage without the need to convert the vessel to a coastal (domestic) run. This exemption is specific to cruise ships and does not apply to other vessel types such as tankers or bulk carriers, which must undergo

conversion in compliance with Indian cabotage laws.

This flexibility eliminates the administrative and financial burden of multiple conversions and reconversions. It also enables cruise lines to design itineraries that include multiple Indian ports—such as Mumbai, Goa, Kochi, and Chennai—without disruption to schedules or operations.

Customs duty on consumables:

Cruise vessels calling at Indian ports during international voyages are liable to pay customs duty only on consumables used within 12 nautical miles from the Indian coastline. This includes bunkers, lubes, provisions, and other consumables. The assumption is that sailing within 12 nautical miles qualifies as a coastal voyage.

The estimation of such consumption is based on a self-declaration by the ship's Master, and the customs duty is paid through a single Bill of Entry filed at the last Indian port of call. This avoids repetitive paperwork and customs procedures at each port.

Importantly, the process is non-intrusive—there is no inspection or physical verification required by customs authorities, allowing for a smooth and uninterrupted cruise experience.

Goods and services tax (GST):

India's GST regime applies only to services rendered within Indian territory. For foreign cruise lines, this implies the following:

- GST is levied on port dues, but this is the only direct tax impact on the cruise operator.
- Ticket sales within India, when conducted by an Indian partner or GSA (General Sales Agent), are subject to GST. However, the Indian entity is eligible to claim input tax credit, thus offsetting the tax liability.
- Ground services such as excursions, logistics, or hospitality provided by Indian vendors during a cruise call are taxable under GST. Again, the Indian service provider can avail input credit, ensuring that there is no additional tax burden passed on to the cruise operator.

A key advantage for foreign cruise lines is that ticket sales conducted outside India for itineraries including Indian port calls do not attract GST. This allows cruise operators like MSC to continue international sales without incurring tax liability in India.

Strategic clarity for operators

The tax policies outlined above are designed to facilitate easy market entry for foreign cruise lines. They provide:

- Regulatory certainty for itinerary planning
- Minimised tax exposure limited to essential services
- Streamlined compliance processes with self-assessment and single-point customs filings
- Freedom from income tax obligations, as vessels are classified as foreign-going ships

These measures collectively improve the cost efficiency and operational attractiveness of calling Indian ports. 



What is One Nation - One Port?

India's One Nation–One Port Process (ONOP) is an initiative by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, launched in early 2025 by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. The goal is to harmonise procedures, systems, and documentation across all major Indian ports.

The programme focuses on mapping every step in the port value chain, identifying gaps, eliminating redundant or inconsistent paperwork, and digitizing processes through platforms like the National Logistics Portal – Marine and the Enterprise Business System (EBS).

Why it matters

By standardising operations and cutting inefficiencies, ONOP is set to lower logistics costs—making Indian ports more attractive and competitive globally. It supports India's vision of becoming a maritime powerhouse, advancing ease of doing business, and enhancing trade readiness as part of the ambitious Maritime Vision 2047.

The initiative represents a major shift toward unified, digital, and sustainable port operations—moving beyond individual port silos to a cohesive national maritime infrastructure.

India's One Nation–One Port Process (ONOP) launched in late February 2025, has moved firmly into its implementation phase. Here's a concise update on where things stand:

Implementation progress

- **Process mapping & standardisation:**

Key impacts already achieved

Documentation for container operations has been reduced by **33%** (from 143 to 96 documents), and for bulk cargo by **29%** (from 150 to 106).

The initiative is enabling a faster turnaround time – potentially reducing average port process duration to **18** hours from the current **26–30** hours.

ONOP aligns with broader goals such as green port operations, carbon reduction, modern infrastructure, and digitalisation – under lines like **Sagar Ankalan** (Logistics Port Performance Index) and **MAITRI** (a digital trade interface).

All procedures across 13 major and select minor ports have been reviewed and aligned. Significant gains include a 33 per cent reduction in container documentation and a 29 per cent reduction for bulk cargo.

- **Digital roll out:** The National Logistics Portal – Marine, integrated with the Enterprise Business System (EBS), is live in multiple major ports and being expanded
- **Performance benchmarking:** The Sagar Ankalan Logistics

Port Performance Index (LPPI 2023 24) has been launched to monitor efficiency gains, turnaround times, and environmental impact

Where we are now

- **Phase:** Actively executing ONOP—not merely launching, but deploying uniform systems, automating procedures, and tracking improvements.
- **Digital footprint:** NLP Marine/ EBS platforms are operational and scaling across the port network
- **Measured impact:** Early results show meaningful cuts in paperwork and improved workflow, though further deployment is ongoing

Next milestones

- **Full digital integration:** ONOP systems are expected to be fully embedded across all remaining major and key non major ports.
- Continued documentation reduction and operational optimisation
- **Port development tie ins:** ONOP is running in parallel with related initiatives—MAITRI trade platform rollout, Bharat Ports Consortium, and green port programs—to propel India's maritime transformation. 

A CENTURY OF TRUST AND TRANSFORMATION:



In an industry where legacy and trust go hand in hand, **Velji Dosabhai & Sons Pvt. Ltd. (VDSPL)** stands as a shining example of resilience, evolution, and ethical entrepreneurship. As the company celebrates its 100th anniversary, it reflects a remarkable journey — from the bustling docks of pre-independence Karachi to a globally connected logistics enterprise rooted deeply in Gujarat and the western coast of India.

The seeds of the company were sown in 1923, when an application was filed for a customs broking license. By 1925, Velji Dosabhai had formally established the business in Karachi, then a key trade gateway for Hindustan. Although hailing from Gujarat, Karachi's prominence as a trading port made it a natural starting point.

However, the Partition of India in 1947 forced the family to leave behind their home, office, and entire infrastructure. They relocated to India, briefly staying in their native town before restarting operations in Bombay (now Mumbai). With nothing more than a reinstated license and sheer determination, Veljibhai Dosabhai resumed business—writing shipping bills near the Yellow Gate under a tarpaulin.

The company witnessed its initial phase of substantial growth under the stewardship of Devchand Velji, representing the second generation of leadership until 1971. Subsequently, the transition to third-generation management signalled the beginning of a new era in the organisation's development and strategic direction.

Third generation: Diversification & global reach

Natvarlal D. Popat (CMD) represents 3rd Generation and serves as the Chairman and Managing Director of Velji Dosabhai and Sons Private Limited. He's also been associated with several other companies, including Velji Shipping and Transport, Trishul Transport, and Prashant Warehousing. Under his leadership, the company expanded its services to include customised clearing and forwarding, freight brokerage, and global logistics solutions. He also played a pivotal role in establishing international offices in Mombasa, Kenya and London, UK, signalling a bold move into global markets.

In the early 1980s. A pivotal milestone came in 1982 when the company opened its first branch

in Kandla. This expansion was not just geographical; it also marked the beginning of the company's own transport unit. The move was born out of necessity, as trucks were unavailable to move bulk cargo. Starting with a second-hand tempo, this division has now grown into a fleet of over 180+ trucks and trailers – well maintained self-owned fleet, catering primarily to factory stuffing and last-mile connectivity.

Fourth generation: Embracing technology and scaling up

In 2000, Prashant Popat, representing the fourth generation, joined the business. Although initially drawn to electronics and automobiles, a sense of familial responsibility and commitment to legacy led him to the family trade. Armed with a Rule 9 Customs qualification, he entered a business that was on the cusp of digital transformation.

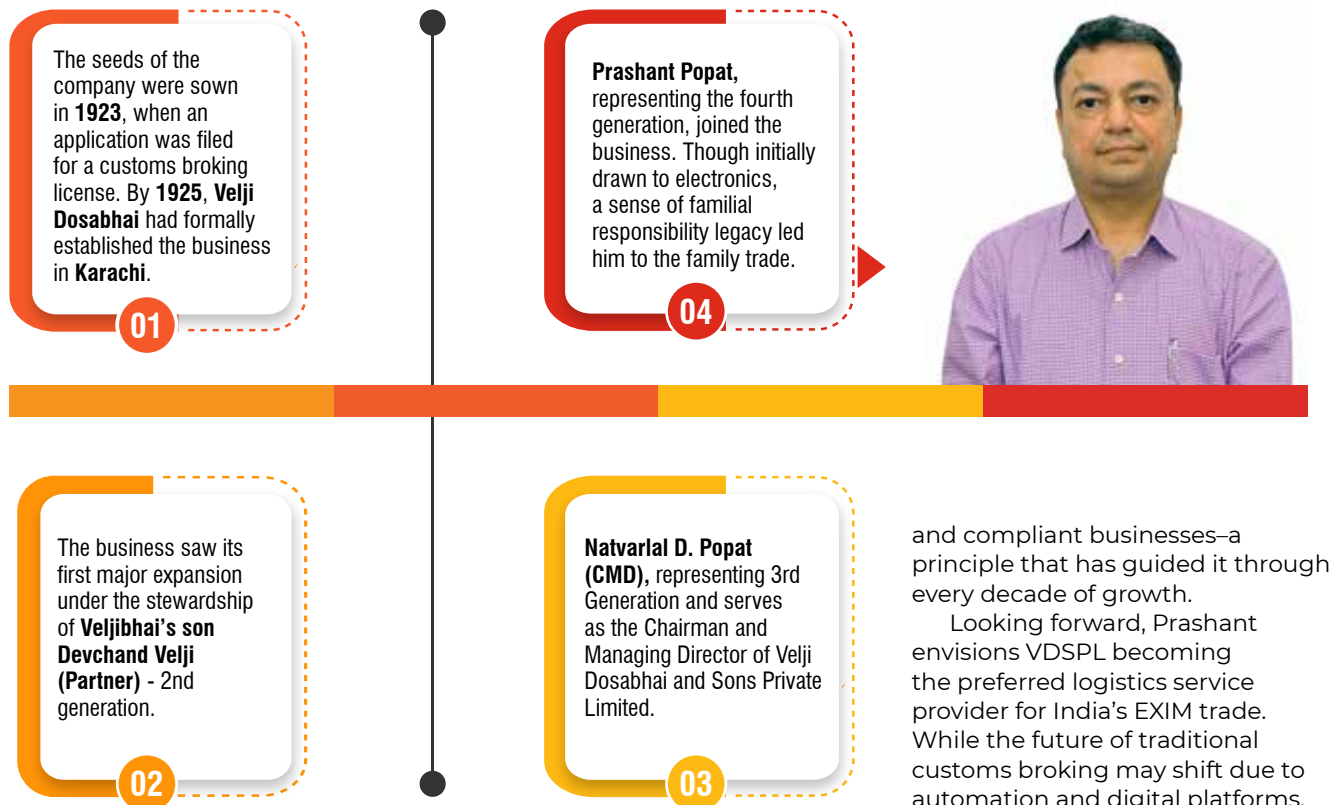
His tenure saw the company adopt early EDI systems, collaborate with leading shipping lines such as Maersk, and automate key documentation processes. New branches were launched across Gujarat—in Jamnagar, Rajkot, Baroda, and Ahmedabad—and into central India with Indore. The company also expanded into North India, establishing offices in New Delhi, Ludhiana, and Jalandhar, serving key clients in those regions.

Despite being deeply rooted in Gujarat, the firm was not hesitant to venture abroad. Since 2008, international offices have been established in the United Kingdom, Kenya (2010), and Tanzania (2013), extending its global footprint.

Today: Focused, ethical, and specialised

With a team of over 300 professionals, VDSPL has established itself as a trusted expert in export logistics. The company serves a diverse array of industries, including engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, auto components, hand tools, and specialised scouting categories

Key Milestones in Velji Dosabhai & Sons' 100 year journey



such as agricultural products, food & beverages, and sporting goods. In a strategic move that underscores its commitment to excellence, VDSPL has deliberately steered clear of the garments and import sectors—favouring focused specialisation over broad diversification, and prioritizing quality over quantity.

Its key export markets span Europe, the UK, the Gulf, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Despite occasional disruptions, including those caused by the Red Sea crisis, the company's agility and customer-first approach have helped it stay resilient and responsive.

Challenges in a changing world

As Prashant candidly shares, the business model has undergone a dramatic shift. Where logistics was

once deeply rooted in relationships and loyalty, the sector is now increasingly transactional and price-sensitive. Newer generations—both clients and employees—often prioritise commercial aspects over emotional bonds.

Another challenge is the lack of integrated data systems. The absence of a unified logistics dashboard forces businesses to rely on fragmented data from shipping lines, CFS operators, terminals, and other players. This fragmentation hampers real-time decision-making and reduces operational efficiency.

The road ahead: Ethics, expansion, and evolution

As the company enters its second century, its founding values of trust, ethics, and transparency remain firmly intact. The firm continues to serve only legitimate

and compliant businesses—a principle that has guided it through every decade of growth.

Looking forward, Prashant envisions VDSPL becoming the preferred logistics service provider for India's EXIM trade. While the future of traditional customs broking may shift due to automation and digital platforms, he remains optimistic. He believes the company's core strengths—personalised service, reliability, and client trust—will ensure continued relevance.

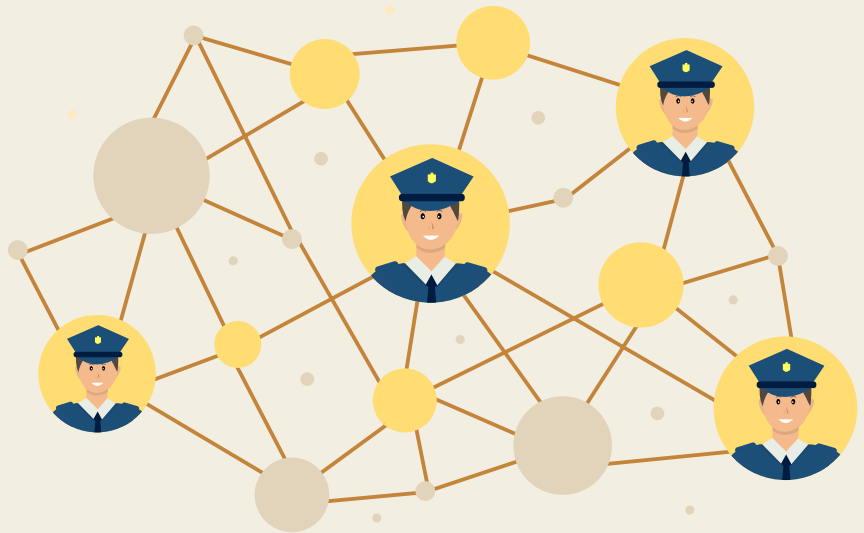
Succession planning is already in motion, with the next generation expressing interest in joining. But as Prashant notes, the industry's future will depend on how well it adapts to automation, digitalisation, and evolving client expectations.

A legacy that moves forward

From handwritten shipping bills under a tarpaulin to integrated export logistics across continents, Velji Dosabhai & Sons embodies the spirit of Indian entrepreneurship—steadfast, adaptive, and guided by values. As it steps into its second century, the firm stands tall, not just as a logistics company, but as a custodian of legacy and a beacon of ethical business in India's maritime landscape. 

Decentralised clearances

Spearheaded by the Customs Department under the leadership of **SK Rahman, IRS, Chief Commissioner of Customs and Central Tax & Central Excise, Thiruvananthapuram Zone**, the initiative aims to decentralise clearance processes and empower shippers with greater flexibility and cost efficiency.



Kerala's 590 km coastline, dotted with ports such as Vizhinjam, Kollam, Cochin, Beypore, and Azheekal, supported by the ICD at Kottayam, holds untapped potential for trade facilitation. Traditionally, cargo entering these ports was transshipped to ICTT Vallarpadam or moved by road for Customs clearance, adding cost, time, and inefficiencies.

The proposed model addresses this bottleneck by enabling customs clearance at the port of arrival itself. Importers can file Bills of Entry (BE) and receive "Out of Charge" (OOC) clearance directly at Vizhinjam or other designated ports. Cleared cargo can then move by sea through barges or small vessels, or by road to hinterland destinations. For exports, shipping bills can be filed at these ports or ICD Kottayam, with "Let Export Order" (LEO) granted locally before goods reach gateway ports like

Cochin or Vizhinjam for overseas shipment.

Benefits to Shippers

- **Reduced handling and dwell time:** Cargo cleared on-site avoids routing through ICTT Vallarpadam or Container Freight Stations, cutting delays.
- **Lower logistics cost:** Eliminating intermediary charges saves about ₹8,000–₹10,000 per TEU, while coastal shipping and barges are cheaper than long-haul trucking.
- **Faster clearance:** With ICEGATE and EDI systems in place and Customs presence across 26 locations, digital integration ensures speed and transparency.
- **Multimodal access:** Cargo can move by sea, road, or even air, leveraging nearby Thiruvananthapuram Airport for time-sensitive shipments.

Enabling coastal shipping and MSMEs

By decentralising clearance, smaller ports gain a stronger cargo base, making scheduled coastal services viable. This reduces dependence on congested highways, lowers emissions, and supports India's national logistics policy. Flexibility is built in—if weather disrupts road transport at Vizhinjam, containers can shift seamlessly to Cochin or Beypore under the same regulatory framework. This system also spreads economic activity across Kerala's coast, empowering exporters, importers, and MSMEs. Simplified procedures, digital access, and lower costs make global trade more accessible, especially for smaller businesses. By unlocking the EXIM potential of Vizhinjam and linking it with minor ports and ICDs, the model becomes a strategic enabler of port-led growth, job creation, and regional development. 

Vizhinjam Port was recently inaugurated by the Prime Minister. What is the current customs readiness at the port to handle EXIM cargo?

Even before Vizhinjam port formally starts EXIM operations, we are fully prepared. A full-fledged Customs office has already been established with strong support from the port custodian. We have secured a large premises, and the sanction of 32 dedicated Customs officer posts at Vizhinjam is in the final stages. The port is already notified by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) as a customs port, and the Customs Commissioner has also issued a notification approving proper places in the port for loading and unloading of goods. The port is already notified by Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) as a customs port, and the Customs Commissioner has also issued Notification approving proper places in port for loading and unloading of goods.

Currently, Customs activities for international transshipment are ongoing. As soon as EXIM cargo starts, we're fully equipped to handle Customs procedures—from Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) terminals and container scanners to trained personnel ready on site.

Could you elaborate on the Customs infrastructure and EDI readiness across Kerala's coastline beyond Vizhinjam?

Absolutely. We have established a robust Customs preventive presence at multiple minor ports along the Kerala coast—Kollam, Beypore, and Azhikkal—besides the major port at Cochin. All these ports are EDI-enabled, UN LOCODE-compliant, and recognized Customs stations. The required infrastructure, including terminals and scanners, is already operational or nearing completion.

Furthermore, we have the Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Kottayam, where Customs officers



Enabling coastal EXIM

In this interview, **SK Rahman, IRS, Chief Commissioner of Customs & CGST, Thiruvananthapuram Zone**, outlines the proactive measures taken by Customs to enhance trade facilitation across Kerala, including the establishment of a dedicated Customs office at Vizhinjam, sanctioned staff posts, EDI terminals, container scanners, and active transshipment operations. Vizhinjam has already been notified as a Customs port and approved for cargo handling.

are already present and clearances are taking place. This decentralised clearance system means importers/exporters don't need to rely only on Cochin port; they can file shipping bills or bills of entry at the nearest port or ICD.

Is coastal shipping being considered as a means to facilitate EXIM cargo movement from Vizhinjam and other ports?

As Customs, our role is to facilitate clearance and ensure compliance. Commercial decisions such as choosing road or coastal shipping lie with the trade. However, we are fully prepared to support customs clearance regardless of the mode of transport.

If cargo is cleared at Vizhinjam, it can be moved by sea to other ports like Kollam, Cochin, Beypore, or Azhikkal. After clearance, it is duty paid imported goods the movement of which is Importer's choice. Traders can choose sea, road, or even air (via Trivandrum Airport) to move goods further inland.

What about the reverse logistics for exports? Can exporters use these minor ports to file shipping bills and dispatch cargo to gateway ports?

Definitely. Exporters can file shipping bills at any of the notified minor ports—Vizhinjam, Kollam, Beypore, or Azhikkal—or at ICD Kottayam. Exporters have the option of self-sealing the containers. The export containers can be brought to these ports, examined if required, and then shipped to gateway ports like Cochin or Vizhinjam for travel to the final destination of export. We also promote the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) program. Once exporters are AEO-certified, they enjoy significant facilitation, including minimal inspections both in India and abroad.

Has any coastal cargo movement started post-clearance

There's a clear opportunity for entrepreneurs to introduce feeder vessels with onboard cranes to facilitate cargo movement across Kerala's coastline. Once such systems are in place, coastal cargo will pick up naturally, especially given its cost-effectiveness compared to road transport.

at Vizhinjam or other ports? Are there any barge or feeder operations currently?

As of now, we have not seen active coastal feeder or barge operations for containerized EXIM cargo from Vizhinjam. However, ICD Kottayam does operate a barge that carries 5–6 containers to Cochin port. If similar infrastructure is developed for Vizhinjam or other minor ports, it would significantly boost blue economy logistics.

There's a clear opportunity for entrepreneurs to introduce feeder vessels with onboard cranes to facilitate cargo movement across Kerala's coastline. Once such systems are in place, coastal cargo will pick up naturally, especially given its cost-effectiveness compared to road transport.

Does this mean importers can choose to get their cargo cleared at minor ports like Kollam or Beypore OR Azhikal instead of Cochin?

Yes. Even today, an importer who brings cargo through Cochin can opt for customs clearance at

a minor port like Kollam, Beypore, or Azhikkal by filing an SMTP (Sea Manifest Transshipment Permit). The Bill of Entry may be filed at the chosen minor port, and our officers stationed there will process the clearance.

This option is not dependent on Vizhinjam's EXIM activation. It's a facility already available and operational today. The same applies to exports—self-sealed containers can be cleared at the nearest port or ICD, saving cost and time.

What steps has the Customs department taken to sensitize the trade community about these facilities?

Since I took charge on March 6, we've conducted outreach and trade facilitation meetings across Kerala—in Kottayam, Thrissur, Calicut (2 times), Kannur, and other regions. These sessions have helped us address misconceptions and communicate the availability of decentralized customs clearances.

Many traders were unaware that customs officers are already deployed at minor ports and ICDs. We've emphasized that clearances can be done closer to their manufacturing or trading bases—be it for coir, cashew, rubber, spices, or other commodities. Our objective is to bring customs services to their doorstep.

We are in the process of conducting similar sessions for coir at Alappuzha, for cashew at Kollam, and for spices, marine products etc, at different locations in Kerala.

Our vision is to transform Kerala into India's leading maritime and coastal economic hub by activating the Blue Economy through full operationalisation and sustainable development of all minor ports, including Kollam, Kochi, Beypore, Alikkal, and ICD Kottayam, ensuring inclusive growth from village shores to global trade routes.

"Ports Alive, Economy Thrives—Blue Prosperity for Kerala's Rise!" 

AI-driven Digital Evolution



Kapil Mahajan, Global Chief Information & Technology Officer

- IT, Allcargo Logistics, shares

how AI, IoT, cloud migration, and sustainability are transforming global logistics into an intelligent, responsive, and future-ready ecosystem, enhancing both operational efficiency and profitability.

How is Allcargo leveraging AI, IoT, and cloud migration to make operations more efficient?

Allcargo is harnessing the power of AI, IoT, and cloud technologies to enable smarter, faster, and more responsive logistics operations. Leveraging AI-driven models, the group delivers dynamic pricing and spot rate offerings that respond in real time to demand fluctuations and capacity utilisation—ultimately driving cost optimisation. These models are continuously refined using a diverse range of data sources including real-time

shipment tracking, customer booking trends, warehouse usage analytics, and predictive pricing algorithms. IoT platforms have long been a core part of Allcargo's technology foundation. Connected fleet and devices are deeply embedded in the group's DNA, enabling real-time visibility, intelligent route management, and predictive maintenance and AI driven real time command and control centre. On the cloud front, Allcargo has successfully migrated to six global data centers as part of ECU Worldwide's

strategic digital transformation initiative. This transition not only ensures scalability, flexibility, and geographic redundancy, but also enhances operational resilience and security. Cloud infrastructure is now the backbone supporting Allcargo's next generation of digital logistics capabilities.

What were some key challenges in adopting these technologies?

Adopting AI, IoT, and cloud technologies at Allcargo Group required a holistic transformation, both technological and cultural.

While the organisation had a wealth of operational data, it was spread across systems and formats. To harness its full potential, Allcargo consolidated data sources, established strong governance practices, and built a robust cloud foundation to enable real-time analytics and scalable AI deployment. With operations spanning over 180 countries, adopting cloud technologies was also critical to ensuring compliance, data residency, and consistent performance across regions. This also included integrating IoT sensors across shipments, vehicles, and warehouses. These challenges were addressed by a stable infrastructure to enable standardisation and seamless data flow. Equally important was the mindset shift across teams. By enabling continuous learning, building Centres of Excellence, and fostering digital ownership, Allcargo empowered its global teams to embrace next-gen technologies—transforming its digital infrastructure into a unified, intelligent, and future-ready logistics ecosystem.

How is Allcargo integrating sustainability into its operations using digital tools?

Sustainability is a key principle at Allcargo Group. We have digitized documents and gate passes, which have significantly reduced paper usage. At ECU Worldwide, Allcargo's wholly owned global subsidiary that handles the LCL consolidation business, we now provide customers with visibility into the carbon footprint of each shipping line. This enables them to choose cleaner vessels even if it means paying a little extra and counting it as part of their CSR efforts. Additionally, we've implemented solar power, sensor-based lighting, and other eco-friendly upgrades across our hubs and real estate infrastructure.

At Allcargo Group, sustainability and digital transformation go hand in hand. We've digitised

Our global tech platform ECU360 serves as a cornerstone in transforming fragmented logistics into an intelligent, integrated ecosystem. Purpose-built for ECU Worldwide's global LCL consolidation, ECU360 enables seamless quoting, booking, and tracking across 180+ countries.

documents, gate passes, and key operational workflows—significantly reducing paper usage across the board. At ECU Worldwide, our global LCL consolidation business, we've built tools that provide customers with real-time visibility into the carbon footprint of various shipping lines. This empowers them to make greener choices, aligning logistics decisions with their CSR goals. As we continue to scale digitally, sustainability is not just a parallel effort—it's a built-in outcome of smarter, more efficient, and transparent operations.

While AI and cloud technologies are widely seen as tools for operational efficiency, Allcargo has uniquely leveraged them to directly influence revenue and profitability. Could you elaborate on how AI-enabled pricing and demand forecasting are helping the company manage capacity, improve margins, and stay competitive?

As a global leader in LCL consolidation, managing container capacity efficiently across trade lanes has always been a critical priority for us. Leveraging AI, we now use historical data and real-

time inputs to forecast demand more accurately accounting for seasonal shifts and global disruptions. This enables smarter capacity commitments and improves container utilisation.

Use of Agentic AI enables us to respond to RFQs instantly, regardless of the source or format of the data. There is no dependency on structured information. Even emails written in various languages can now be replied with accurate quote details using our Agentic AI platform.

In parallel, we're developing next-gen tools powered by Generative AI that provide a unified, real-time view of global operations. This visibility drives faster, data-informed decisions, strengthens our pricing strategy, and ultimately makes our logistics operations more competitive and profitable.

How is Allcargo leveraging its global digital platform, ECU360, to drive differentiation in a fragmented supply chain? Are there any other important points you would like to highlight?

Our global tech platform ECU360 serves as a cornerstone in transforming fragmented logistics into an intelligent, integrated ecosystem. Purpose-built for ECU Worldwide's global LCL consolidation, ECU360 enables seamless quoting, booking, and tracking across 180+ countries. All through a single, cloud-native interface. The platform combines AI, machine learning, and API integrations to offer real-time visibility, pricing agility, and process automation. Additionally, with cloud migration from the data center, the company aims to have 80 per cent of operational workloads moving to the cloud by 2025. As Generative AI capabilities are layered into the system, ECU360 is not just improving operational efficiency; it's enhancing customer experience, empowering forwarders, and positioning ECU Worldwide as a digitally enabled LCL consolidation leader. 

RailRunner: Revolutionising multimodal logistics with bi-modal rail-road technology

India's logistics sector is on the brink of a transformative leap as RailRunner India secures approval from Indian Railways under the Liberalised Special Freight Train Operator (LSFTO) Scheme. This milestone paves the way for the formal design approval of its bi-modal, road-cum-rail technology, which promises to reshape the dynamics of freight transport in India within the next 18 months.

What is RailRunner?

RailRunner is a patented multimodal transport solution that enables specially designed chassis to function both as rail wagons and road trailers. This dual capability allows for seamless end-to-end cargo delivery, eliminating the need for transshipment or lift-on/lift-off operations typically associated with intermodal logistics. The chassis can travel like a conventional truck on roads and be directly placed on railway tracks using custom bogies, transforming into a high-speed rail wagon.

Operational Economics: Road Flexibility Meets Rail Efficiency

The real innovation lies in combining the flexibility of road transport with the cost-efficiency of rail, delivering an economically superior alternative for long-haul freight.

Key operational benefits include:

- **No lift-on/lift-off costs:** Since the chassis travels on both modes, it eliminates expensive

container handling equipment and reduces terminal costs.

- **Lower capital investment:** A single integrated chassis serves dual purposes, reducing the need for separate road and rail assets.
- **Fuel efficiency:** Articulated steering and air-ride suspension systems enhance ride quality, reduce wear and tear, and improve fuel economy.
- **Speed and simplicity:** Complete train formation can be achieved in 2–3 hours, while terminal setup requires minimal land and infrastructure.

Target cargo & market potential

RailRunner is uniquely positioned to capture non-bulk, lightweight manufactured cargo—a segment largely untapped by traditional rail due to its inflexibility and high handling costs. Target commodities include:

- Consumer and retail goods
- Processed agricultural products
- Automotive components and two-wheelers

- FMCG and light engineering goods
- With a ready addressable market of 25 million tonnes, 18 key trunk routes identified, and over 300 rakes deployable within a decade, RailRunner aims to help Indian Railways advance toward its 45 per cent freight modal share target.

Environmental & strategic benefits

Beyond economic gains, RailRunner offers compelling sustainability advantages:

- Reduced road congestion and highway wear
- Significant cuts in carbon emissions and noise pollution
- Safer cargo movement with minimised handling and theft risks
- Contribution to India's green logistics vision and decarbonisation roadmap

Enabling infrastructure

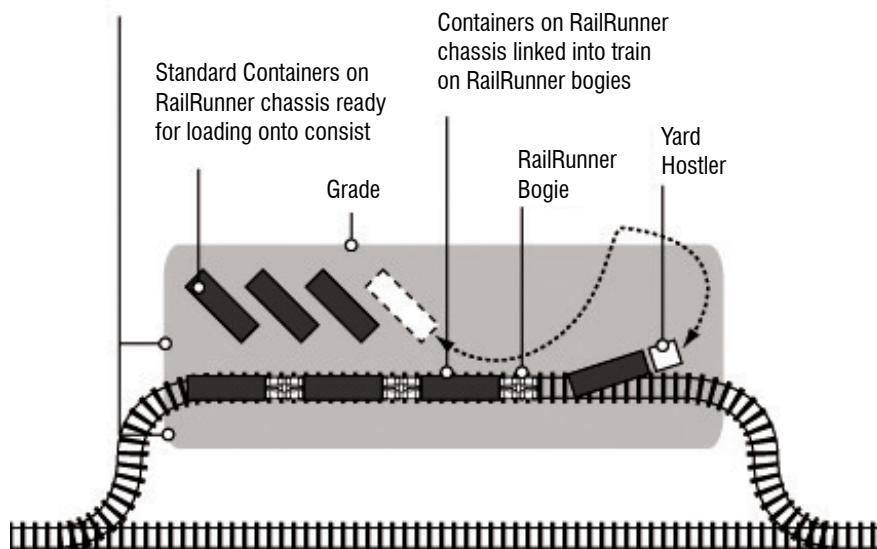
The RailRunner model aligns perfectly with ongoing policy pushes, including the development of:

- Private Freight Terminals (PFTs)
- Multimodal Logistics Parks (MMLPs)





Minimum grade width
on either side of track
is 1 trailer width



- Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridors
- Rail-linked Container Depots and ECRTs

Its modular terminal design and low land requirement make it suitable for deployment across tier-II and tier-III cities, boosting regional connectivity and industrial logistics.

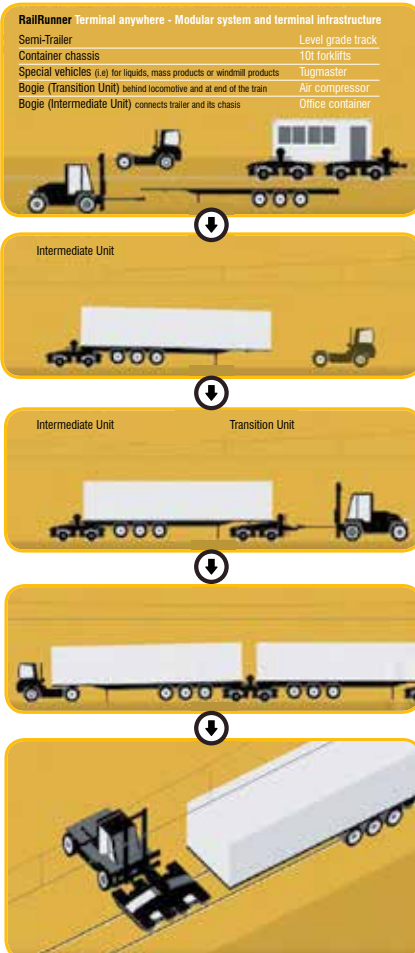
Industry endorsement

Industry experts have hailed RailRunner as the right solution at the right time. With domestic manufacturing and consumption

on the rise, India urgently needs agile freight systems that reduce logistics costs and enhance multimodal integration.

"India's logistics market is ready for positive change, and RailRunner offers the kind of rail-road hybrid capability we need to accelerate the shift from road to rail," said an Indian Railways spokesperson.

"This is the right solution to carry lightweight manufactured goods across long distances at scale and with efficiency," added



Sachin Bhanushali, logistics sector expert.

A game-changer for Indian logistics

With its Terminal Anywhere® capability, RailRunner is set to redefine multimodal logistics in India. By bridging the first-mile to last-mile gap with a single platform and delivering operational, environmental, and economic benefits, this innovative solution could be the linchpin in India's journey toward a globally competitive logistics ecosystem.

As the country pursues logistics cost reduction, infrastructure modernisation, and green freight strategies, RailRunner stands out as a disruptive technology that delivers efficiency with flexibility—ushering in a new era for Indian freight movement. 

"Double dividend: Lower costs and lower emissions"

In this interview, **Manish Puri, Managing Director, Rail Runner Innovations India**, discusses the RailRunner® solution, which is set to be introduced in India following its in-principle commercial approval from Indian Railways.



The RailRunner® solution appears innovative, particularly in enabling seamless intermodal transitions. Can you clarify whether it is already proven in commercial settings or still in the conceptual/pilot phase? Are there any operational deployments globally?

The product has still to be introduced in India and after having received in-principle commercial approval from Indian Railways, we are now starting the technical design approval, following which it will be introduced commercially in India.

The design is proven globally, and has operated in the USA and Europe already, and the company also has a South African presence currently.

Who are the key stakeholders involved in daily operation—such as logistics operators, rail authorities, and terminal handlers? Could you walk us through the end-to-end process flow of how cargo is handled from

origin to destination using the RailRunner® system?

Other than the cargo owner/customer, there are three key stakeholders – the railways, who operate the train, the truck operators, who are responsible for first and last mile movements, and the terminal operator, where the bi-modal exchange takes place.

What is the present status of the RailRunner® solution in India? Has it undergone field trials or pilot runs? What are the next steps toward scaling this into a viable national logistics solution?

We are now initiating the technical approval stage with Indian Railways (RDSO), and it is expected that the first commercial trial will take place within 18-24 months. In terms of scaling this, we are already beginning to engage with various potential commercial partners and hope to bring this solution over all key routes of Indian Railways within a few years of launch. Our commodity focus will be on light weight manufacturing

cargo which currently moves almost entirely on road. The objective is to provide a viable rail solution for such cargo.

At intermodal terminals, how seamless is the transition from road to rail or vice versa using the RailRunner® system? What are the typical time requirements and technical complexities involved in such handovers?

Since no handling of cargo or containers takes place, the intermodal transfer is quite seamless. The normal time for train formation or dissolution is a mere 5 minutes per trailer, and about 3-4 hours per train. The space requirement at the terminal are a width of approx. 5 m, and a flush handling line. No cranes are needed for handling, and operations can easily be carried out in electrified sidings where container operations are usually constrained by the need to operate cranes. This makes the cost of terminals both in terms of capital cost, and operating expense much

lower than standard multi-modal terminals.

Lifting trailers and containers with cranes and/or reach stackers creates huge vertical forces on the ground, similar to a jumbo jet landing. During the lifting process, 30t or more of container or trailer weight is concentrated at the contact point of the wheels of the gantry crane or reach stacker. In order to insure safe and reliable terminal operation, a large investment, has to be made in terminal ground preparation. In comparison, RailRunner drive-on/drive off technology generates only "parking lot" forces and obviates these large investments.

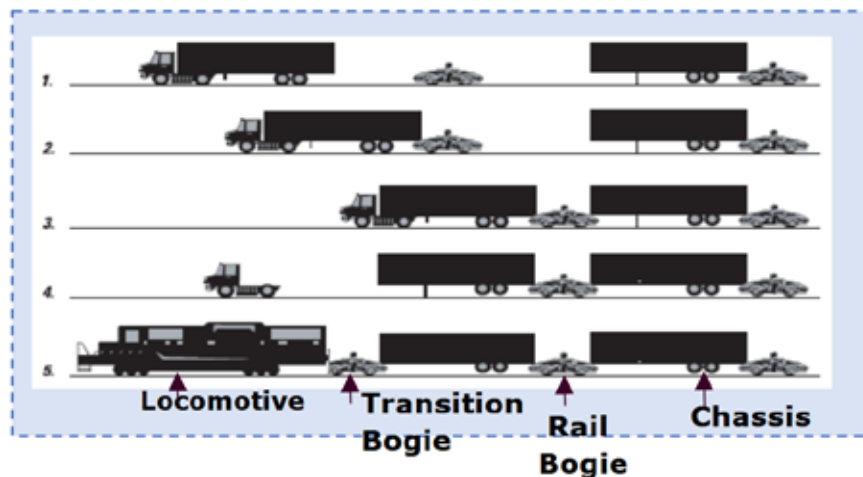
Considering India's use of multiple rail gauges (broad, standard, and narrow), can the RailRunner® technology be adapted or customised for compatibility? What design innovations make this possible?

India has now moved entirely to a broad gauge standard, except for some tourist routes, where narrow or meter gauge rail operates. The RailRunner product for India will therefore be fit for broad gauge operations. However, the technology itself can be redeveloped for other gauges as well – In the USA it works on standard gauge (1435 mm), and in South Africa, it has been developed for cape gauge (1067 mm).

Freight trains in India often face disruptions due to prioritization of passenger traffic. How do you plan to integrate and schedule RailRunner® operations within India's existing rail network? Is there scope for dedicated freight slots or corridors?

RailRunner operations will operate akin to other freight operations, and therefore subject to similar operating conditions as other freight trains. However, there are two factors that cause us to be optimistic about more reliable and efficient RailRunner operations.

The first is the expected



RailRunner operations will operate akin to other freight operations, and therefore subject to similar operating conditions as other freight trains. However, there are two factors that cause us to be optimistic about more reliable and efficient RailRunner operations.

increase in rail capacity being undertaken by Indian Railways itself, through projects such as more dedicated freight corridors, tripling and quadrupling of lines on key routes, etc., which will ease the current network congestions. In addition, RailRunner itself as a technology matches the technical specifications of most passenger trains, and hence can be speed certified by IR if needed to match higher speeds and hence not be impacted by the speed differential that effects other freight services.

Do you have estimates or case studies that illustrate capital and operational cost savings using RailRunner® compared to traditional trucking or container-on-flatcar (COFC) methods?

How does it compare in terms of fuel efficiency, emissions, and turnaround time?

It is our estimate that on commercial terms, RailRunner will be able to offer a landed price to customer that is 10-15 per cent lower than current Road costs. This will be the target price that we will look to offer to potential customers.

The overall cost of operations is also likely to be lower by 20 per cent to 38 per cent compared with conventional rail or Ro-Ro options, due to higher capacity in terms of number of units per train (56 units compared to 45 Ro-Ro trucks), lower handling and terminal costs.

Emission savings are estimated at 33 per cent lower than conventional road and similar to existing rail, since the same locomotive that is currently used in rail will be used for RailRunner as well.

Further, our estimates for the US indicate that a gallon of diesel fuel can transport a ton of freight from 80 to 120 miles by road or roughly 400 miles by rail - a 70-80 per cent reduction in fuel use. Further, each 100,000 ton-miles moved by rail results in 13,105 fewer pounds of emitted CO₂. Moving just 1 per cent of current short haul freight from road to rail means 100 million fewer gallons of fuel used and 2.2 billion fewer pounds of CO₂ emitted per year. 🌱



At home, the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) is preparing to implement its first tariff revision in nearly four decades. The new structure, covering 56 service categories, features an average 40 per cent hike, with some charges rising as much as 440 per cent. The tariff adjustment is expected to increase CPA's annual revenue by Tk 1,500 crore, compared to Tk 3,912 crore in FY24.

Trade under pressure from tariffs and rising costs

Bangladesh's foreign trade is facing unprecedented pressure from rising port service charges, steep hikes in inland container depot (ICD) fees, and a new US tariff on key exports. Industry experts warn that unless corrective steps are taken quickly, these measures could erode export competitiveness, reduce employment, and fuel inflation.

Starting August 1, a 35 per cent tariff on Bangladeshi exports to the United States have taken effect as part of a reciprocal trade action by Washington. The US is one of Bangladesh's largest export destinations, with ready-made garments (RMG) alone earning \$7.4 billion in 2024. Already grappling with weak global demand, the sector is seeing early signs of order cancellations, raising fears of a significant downturn in trade flows in the coming months.

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implement its first tariff revision in nearly four decades. The new structure, covering 56 service categories, features an average 40 per cent hike, with some charges rising as much as 440 per cent. While the Ministry of Finance has issued its approval, and CPA argues that fees remain below those of comparable ports, exporters contend that the timing is ill-suited to the current fragile trade climate. The tariff adjustment is expected to increase CPA's annual revenue by Tk 1,500 crore, compared to Tk 3,912 crore in FY24.

Adding further strain, private ICDs—which handle most export containers—will raise charges from September 1. Export container handling fees will rise by 36–44 per cent, and charges for empty containers will climb nearly 32 per cent, though import fees remain unchanged. Industry estimates suggest this could add another Tk 300 crore to annual logistics costs.

Taken together, the US tariff, port service hikes, and ICD fee increases threaten to undermine Bangladesh's export-driven economy. The RMG sector, a cornerstone of national income and employment, is particularly vulnerable, with rising costs likely to squeeze margins and deter investment.

Amid concerns about job losses and inflation, stakeholders are urging government action—through dialogue with US trade authorities, a review of domestic tariff hikes, and efficiency improvements at ports and ICDs. The full impact is expected to unfold in the months ahead, with lasting implications for Bangladesh's place in global trade. 



A transformational vision for air cargo

The Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI) is spearheading a transformation of India's airfreight industry through modernisation, digital adoption, sustainability, and policy alignment. At the core of this agenda is the push for digital transformation, particularly universal adoption of electronic Air Waybills (e-AWB) and paperless documentation.

C.K. Govil, President of the Air Cargo Agents Association of India (ACAAI), stresses the creation of a National Digital Air Cargo Ecosystem aligned with initiatives like DigiYatra and the National Logistics Policy (NLP).

Policy and partnerships

ACAAI is actively engaging with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), and Airports Authority of India (AAI) to streamline procedures, build multimodal hubs, and develop cargo villages. The association has played a pivotal role in digitising customs clearance, promoting faceless assessments, and enhancing the SWIFT platform. It also works with airports in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad to introduce real-time tracking, automated gate passes,

and wider e-AWB adoption.

Partnerships with FIATA, ICAO, and IATA are strengthening workforce development in areas like digital logistics, compliance, sustainability, and dangerous goods handling. Supporting family businesses and attracting young talent remain priorities.

Operational challenges

Govil highlights persistent challenges such as limited infrastructure at smaller airports, congestion during peak seasons, and lack of temperature-controlled storage. He advocates PPP-led investments and greater use of

secondary airports. Customs processes, though digitised, remain prone to delays, while cost unpredictability—hidden charges, fuel surcharges, and fees—adds pressure. ACAAI proposes an industry-wide pricing index and multimodal contracts to stabilize costs.

Skill deficits and slow technology adoption among smaller freight forwarders are also barriers. ACAAI is addressing this through accredited training and digital adoption incentives.

The tech edge

Govil envisions AI, IoT, and blockchain as integral to future air cargo operations—from pricing and fraud prevention to route planning and cargo tracking. Cargo Community Systems (CCS), developed by AAICLAS and GMR, are already improving collaboration and transparency. However, the digital divide among MSMEs must be bridged for full benefits.

Aligning with national vision

By championing digitalization, skill development, regulatory reform, and multimodal solutions, ACAAI is aligning air cargo with the NLP's vision of reducing logistics costs and building globally competitive supply chains. With strong international engagement through FIATA, IATA, and TIACA, ACAAI is ensuring India emerges as a key player in shaping the future of global air cargo. 

Trailblazing aluminium shipbuilding in India



In an industry dominated by steel and legacy ship designs, Goa-based Synergy Shipbuilders N Dock Works Ltd. has emerged as a pioneer of aluminium vessel construction in India. With over 100 vessels built across multiple segments and a forward-thinking approach to propulsion, design, and sustainability, the company is quietly but firmly steering Indian shipbuilding into the future. In this candid conversation, **Siddarth Malik, Managing Director, Synergy Shipbuilders**, reflects on their journey, innovations, and the road ahead.

Siddarth, how did Synergy Shipbuilders come into being, and how has the journey evolved over the years?

Synergy Shipbuilders was established in 1988 by my father, Mr Shriram Malik, a marine engineer who graduated from DMET in 1967. After spending years working offshore, he returned to Goa with the intent of contributing to India's maritime ecosystem. Back then, Goa had only a handful of small yards, and he saw an opportunity to create a facility that could serve the regional need for coastal vessels—especially for iron ore movement, which was a key commodity in the region at the time.

From those humble beginnings, Synergy Shipbuilders gradually grew into a trusted builder of small and medium-sized vessels. I joined the company in 2004 after completing my engineering degree in the UK, and I officially took over the reins in 2017. Under my father's vision and later through our collective efforts, we have built and delivered over 100 vessels across multiple segments—ranging from general cargo ships to offshore support vessels like anchor handling tugs and crew boats.

What makes this journey

unique is not just the diversity of vessels we've built, but the way we've consistently adapted to changes in technology, regulations, and customer expectations. In 2013, we diversified into aluminium shipbuilding, which has since become our forte. That pivot truly set us apart in the Indian shipbuilding ecosystem.

Your foray into aluminium shipbuilding has drawn considerable industry attention. Tell us more about that strategic pivot.

Yes, it was indeed a defining moment for us. In 2013, we took a strategic decision to diversify into aluminium construction—a material that requires a very different approach compared to steel. At that time, there were very few shipyards in India, especially in the private sector, that had the capabilities or confidence to build large aluminium vessels.

We were fortunate to be awarded contracts for two 40-meter high-speed aluminium boats, one of which was for ADNOC (Abu Dhabi National Oil Company). These vessels required not only speed and precision in construction but also global-class safety and design standards. We had to invest heavily in retraining our workforce,

setting up dedicated fabrication bays, and upgrading welding certifications in compliance with international class societies.

Delivering those vessels successfully was a major achievement—it established us as pioneers in aluminium vessel construction in India. Since then, we've gone on to build several aluminium boats, especially for defence, paramilitary, and offshore clients. These include patrol craft, crew transfer vessels, pilot boats, and fast utility boats.

What kind of vessels and services form your current core offering?

We offer a full range of services from design to delivery, primarily focusing on vessels up to 110 meters length for steel and aluminium. While our earlier years focused heavily on cargo vessels and tugs, today we are increasingly catering to high-performance, fast-response, and custom-built boats. This includes crew boats for offshore energy, interceptor boats for maritime security agencies, and support vessels for renewable energy projects such as offshore wind.

We're also building two passenger ferries—one for the Andaman administration with 390-passenger capacity, and another for Zanzibar, a 53-meter high-speed aluminium catamaran. We won the Zanzibar contract over two established Chinese yards, which reinforces our global competitiveness.

Our latest milestone is India's first 29-meter high-speed aluminium crew boat built under IR class and DG Shipping flag. It's now operating for ONGC in Bombay High. That success has led to repeat orders from multiple clients.

How are you aligning with the broader push for green shipping and sustainable technologies?

Sustainability is no longer an option—it's a necessity. We recognise this and are actively exploring pathways to make our vessels more energy-efficient

"We've begun exploring hybrid and electric propulsion systems for smaller vessels. There's a growing interest among ports, pilotage services, and coastal surveillance agencies for green propulsion. We're also incorporating hull form optimisation in our designs to reduce resistance and fuel burn. We're working with suppliers to integrate solar-assisted systems and low-emission auxiliary units on board."

and environmentally friendly. Aluminium, by its nature, contributes to fuel efficiency due to its lightweight properties. But we're going beyond that.

We've begun exploring hybrid and electric propulsion systems for smaller vessels. There's a growing interest among ports, pilotage services, and coastal surveillance agencies for green propulsion. We're also incorporating hull form optimisation in our designs to reduce resistance and fuel burn. In addition, we're working with suppliers to integrate solar-assisted systems and low-emission auxiliary units on board.

Though the market in India is still maturing, we believe that early adoption will place us ahead of the curve once regulatory mandates and ESG compliance norms begin tightening across the board.

What are the major challenges you face, particularly with aluminium shipbuilding in India?

The biggest challenge is sourcing aluminium. Marine-grade aluminium isn't manufactured at scale in India. Even Hindalco, which recently started production, offers limited grades and thicknesses. As a result, we rely on imports—mainly from Europe and the Far East.

However, regulatory hurdles like BIS certification and anti-dumping duties (ADD) on Chinese aluminium make this difficult. It's paradoxical—when a product isn't manufactured locally, imposing such barriers hurts domestic builders. Leading European producers like Elval have declined BIS registration, citing low volumes

and high compliance costs for Indian exports.

Beyond material supply, we also face logistical delays, permissions and approvals, and limited design innovation within the country.

What about ship design capabilities and skilled manpower? Are those adequate in India today?

On the manpower side, we're in a good place. Our teams are young, highly trained, and committed. Design, however, remains a bottleneck. Most Indian design houses are following legacy concepts. There is resistance to innovation and hesitance for adapting to new vessel forms or propulsion layouts.

Hence, we often rely on European or Singaporean naval architects who are progressive and open to experimentation. We need more homegrown design innovation to match global standards.

What's next for Synergy?

Looking ahead, our focus is on scaling aluminium shipbuilding at our two facilities—Goa and our new yard in Mumbai. The Mumbai yard, being developed in three phases, will soon have a ship lift and eventually a graving dock. We aim to make it a state-of-the-art centre for aluminium vessel construction.

We're also eyeing export opportunities across Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. Our goal is to make Synergy Shipbuilders synonymous with world-class aluminium ships—designed, built, and flagged in India. 



Closing the loop: MatchLog's container reuse revolution

In this interview, **Dhruv Taneja, Founder & CEO, MatchLog Solutions Pvt Ltd**, shared how his company is transforming the logistics landscape by pioneering a model of direct container reuse. This innovative approach departs from the traditional method of container repositioning, offering a smarter, more sustainable way to optimize shipping efficiency.

Can you give us an overview of your business?

At MatchLog, we are pioneering the concept of container reuse, which is fundamentally different from traditional container repositioning. Typically, after an import container is destuffed at a factory, it's sent back empty to a container depot. After 25–30 days, that same depot releases another container for export, often heading to the same industrial cluster where the import container originated.

We saw an opportunity to eliminate this inefficiency. With MatchLog, if an import container is destuffed in Pune today, we immediately offer it to an exporter nearby who needs a container. This allows for direct reuse of containers at the source, drastically reducing idle time and logistics cost.

We've taken this further by also enabling trailer reuse. Using our

MatchLog Integrated Street Turn Yards (MISTYs), truckers can drop off an import container from one shipping line and pick up an export container of another line—thereby reusing both the container and the trailer. This leads to double-side loaded trips, improving transporter economics and reducing empty trips.

Who are your primary customers and stakeholders?

Our platform serves a broad spectrum of the logistics ecosystem:

Shipping lines: They benefit from faster container turnaround—cutting it from 34–40 days to 3–4 days—greater visibility, and reduced carbon footprint.

Transporters/truckers: They gain the most by getting loaded trips on both legs, improving asset utilisation without investing in new vehicles.

3PLs & CHAs: Gain better

operational efficiency and faster cycle times.

Port terminals: Benefit from reduced congestion and increased gate productivity as fewer empty containers move in and out.

How do you convince small, fragmented transporters to join your platform?

Our pitch is simple: "Do you want to make more money?"

Smaller transporters often don't have access to large clients or the financial muscle to expand. We help them get return loads, effectively increasing their revenue with minimal effort. While change management is a challenge—since drivers and fleet owners are used to fixed fuel and toll calculations—our model helps them earn more without new investments.

How does the actual operational flow work with shipping lines and transporters?

Shipping Lines give us

permission (MatchLog approval) to reuse their containers. They define the operational parameters, including EDI setup and repair guidelines.

Transporters share their daily movement reports—routes, vehicle types, drivers, container numbers, etc. Using our algorithm, we match import and export movements across clusters.

We're essentially a matchmaker, connecting compatible import and export movements for optimised reuse.

Is the system fully automated or does it involve manual processes too?

The matching engine is fully tech-driven, but data input is hybrid. Many small transporters may not yet use the platform, so we allow them to share information via WhatsApp, which is parsed into our system. Some information is processed manually as needed. The goal is to ensure maximum matches, regardless of the input route.

How is pricing handled? Do you facilitate freight rate negotiations?

We do not intervene in freight pricing or rate negotiations. Transporters deal directly with CHAs, freight forwarders, or BCOs for their charges. MatchLog's role is limited to enabling matches and charging a matching fee.

What major challenges did you face during implementation, and what lessons have you learned?

The biggest challenge was change management. Initially, even we underestimated how resistant the ecosystem would be. Shipping lines, for example, were comfortable with existing processes, especially post-Covid when profitability was high.

We had to carefully refine our value proposition for each stakeholder—like asset sweating for liners and revenue improvement for truckers. Convincing transporters to shift from one-sided



MatchLog partners with Maersk for landside equipment optimisation

MatchLog Solutions announced its collaboration with the global shipping firm Maersk for the latter's operations in India. This partnership aims to revolutionise equipment optimisation across India—a market with a throughput of 20 million TEUs annually. The collaboration addresses critical challenges in the logistics ecosystem by enhancing container turnaround, improving asset yields for shipping lines, and reducing India's overall logistics cost index. For the transport ecosystem, this initiative ensures better asset utilisation by facilitating two-way laden movements. Container optimisation is a niche, yet vital, space requiring robust process management. MatchLog's innovative solution includes automated StreetTurn yards in key industrial clusters, enabling container surveying, minor repairs, and cleaning to ensure export readiness. Its digital platform provides real-time visibility and automated container matching, streamlining operations for efficiency. **Dhruv Taneja, Founder and Global CEO of MatchLog Solutions**, said that they have signed this contract with Maersk Growth, the venture capital arm of the shipping organisation in Copenhagen.

trip planning to a reuse-based model also required consistent engagement.

What are your current volumes and growth trajectory?

Today, we're enabling 4,000 to 5,000 container reuses per month, and we expect this number to double within the next 12 months. That's a strong validation of our platform's value.

What's your long-term vision?

Our goal is to become the largest global platform for container reuse. In the near term, we aim to expand into: Sri Lanka, Nepal, Middle East, Singapore (where we already have an office). By May 2026, we envision operating across all these geographies while maintaining our leadership in India. 



Navtor's eLogbook innovation and the future of smart shipping

Unlocking operational intelligence

In this interview, *Maritime Gateway* speaks with **Amitabh Sankranti, Shipping Analytics Director, NAVTOR**, to explore the evolution of eLogs, the challenges of adoption, and the tangible benefits for shipowners—from enhanced compliance to actionable analytics.

Tell us about the solution Navtor developed for smart shipping operations.

In traditional shipping, much of a vessel's operations are still logged manually—despite digitisation transforming other segments of the maritime industry. A significant portion of compliance, safety reporting, and daily operational data resides in physical logbooks. At Navtor, we saw an opportunity to drive transformation at this fundamental level. We began by digitising logbooks, aiming to automate recordkeeping and integrate operational data flows across systems. While the idea initially faced skepticism—primarily due to the absence of a regulatory push—by 2019–2020, the landscape started changing. Regulatory authorities began shaping digital log requirements, and that became the catalyst. We positioned ourselves early and invested heavily

in building a compliant, ship-centric solution. Today, we see digital logbooks as a foundational pillar in smart shipping, not just for compliance but also for unlocking data-driven operations.

How has the adoption progressed since 2020? What percentage of the industry has moved to e-logbooks?

Shipping is traditionally slow to adopt new technologies, and meaningful change often follows regulatory mandates. In 2020, early adoption was limited to a few pioneering, tech-savvy operators willing to experiment. Many used this phase to test viability and usability onboard. Over the past four years, however, we've seen significant momentum. We estimate that approximately 25–30 per cent of the commercial shipping fleet has adopted digital logbooks today.

This uptick reflects growing

confidence—not just in the technology, but also in its practical value. Initially, we had to address regulatory ambiguities and user challenges. The solution evolved, with feedback from ships shaping key improvements. Importantly, we've worked to earn the trust of seafarers, who are the primary users. It is a voluntary solution in most jurisdictions, so demonstrating tangible value in day-to-day operations has been essential. Today, we offer a mature, intuitive product with strong buy-in from onboard teams.

Have major industry players adopted Navtor's eLogs?

Yes, we're proud to have crossed 1,000 vessels using Navtor's eLogs, with a particularly strong footprint in the Japanese market. We count MOL, NYK, and K-Line among our key clients—these are ship managers known for their operational excellence and high regulatory standards. What's been most encouraging is that vessels with intensive logging requirements—where logkeeping is not merely a checkbox but a vital operational function—have been among the first to embrace the digital transition. Their decision validates the robustness and reliability of our platform.

If regulations support digital logbooks, what's holding back wider adoption?

The key challenge lies in operational inertia and the practical burden on seafarers. Any new technology onboard must prove itself under real-world constraints. For instance, when introducing digital logbooks, crews often have to maintain both digital and manual logs during transition phases. This duplicative effort can be demotivating unless the benefits are immediate and tangible.

Another concern is usability. If the platform is not intuitive or adds complexity to the workflow, it risks rejection. Ship managers, too, are cautious—they evaluate how well the system supports compliance, inspection readiness, and operational consistency. If the product doesn't demonstrably reduce Port State Control (PSC) observations, it struggles to gain traction. Success depends on showing measurable value across compliance, efficiency, and crew workload reduction.

Does the total cost of ownership (TCO), especially involving flag and class certification, pose a barrier?

Yes, TCO is a legitimate concern. A paper logbook costs around \$30, with no added certification requirements. In contrast, digital logbooks require software type approvals, vessel-specific certifications, and flag-state endorsements. Some flags charge for these, which adds to costs for ship operators.

However, the comparison isn't apples to apples. Most ships carry 15 to 20 logbooks—engine logs, bridge logs, ballast logs, cargo logs, and more. When you consider archiving, storage, printing, and training costs, digital begins to make clear economic sense. Furthermore, digital logs reduce inspection failures and simplify audit trails, which translates to cost savings not immediately visible on paper.

We've done cost modeling to

Navtor stands apart by offering a customizable logbook suite, tailored to reflect each ship's specific operational profile and logging conventions. This adaptability reduces crew resistance and eliminates the need to retrain personnel or alter workflows.

show that across a full suite of logs, digital logging is now on par with or cheaper than paper-based systems, especially when you factor in operational efficiency and risk mitigation. The turning point is here.

The eLog market seems crowded. What sets Navtor apart from competitors?

The market has seen several established players offering eLog solutions—some for over a decade. However, adoption of these legacy systems has been limited. One of the biggest barriers has been rigidity—most logbooks are templated, with little room for operational customisation.

Navtor stands apart by offering a customizable logbook suite, tailored to reflect each ship's specific operational profile and logging conventions. This adaptability reduces crew resistance and eliminates the need to retrain personnel or alter workflows. Additionally, we leverage our NavBox hardware—already onboard many vessels for chart distribution and navigational services—to power our eLogs. This minimizes IT hassles and deployment costs.

Another differentiator is scope. We provide a wider range of logs, integrated with checklists and sensor data. And finally, we bring strong operational maritime knowledge into our development

process—it's not just an IT product, it's built for real-world shipping.

What advice would you give shipowners looking to implement eLogs?

Digital transformation is not just a tech upgrade—it requires strategic intent and change management. Our advice to shipowners is to approach it with a clear timeline, implementation roadmap, and crew training strategy. Avoid duplicating effort during the transition—move in stages where possible, but ensure that the shift is swift and supported.

Choose a platform that is intuitive, tailored to your ship type, and capable of integrating into your existing IT and compliance framework. Above all, get crew buy-in early—if the end-users don't see value, the project can falter. With the right partner and plan, the returns in compliance, efficiency, and analytics are well worth the effort.

From a shipping analytics standpoint, what new value are you extracting from operational data?

We now aggregate enormous amounts of operational data across our fleet of 1,000+ vessels. For larger operators, this unlocks automated KPI reporting, compliance tracking, and performance benchmarking. Traditionally, someone had to extract and compile reports manually—now that's automatic and real-time.

We've integrated eLogs with live checklists, sensor feeds, and user authentication, ensuring the data is not only rich but also validated and traceable. This makes it possible to spot trends, identify anomalies, and make informed decisions at the fleet level. Our system can even trigger automated alerts or updates based on logged data.

For management, we provide visual dashboards that offer real-time operational insights. These are highly valued by clients, as they simplify performance management and reduce administrative overhead. 

Attracting GEN to Shipping

As the maritime sector confronts talent shortages and an aging workforce, the question arises: how can the industry attract the next generation of professionals? In this engaging conversation, **Ingrid Kylstad, Managing Director at Klaveness Digital, Torvald Klaveness**, shares insights on visibility, innovation, work culture, and the need for inclusive leadership to make the maritime world a compelling career destination for Gen Z and beyond.



Ingrid, what factors do you think are driving the declining interest among young people in maritime careers?

I believe the industry suffers from a visibility problem. Unless someone has a family connection to shipping, they rarely know how it works or how vital it is. We usually only make headlines when something goes wrong, such as a grounding or a crisis like the Suez Canal blockage. That doesn't project an attractive image.

Also, many still associate shipping solely with life at sea. That narrows perceptions about what a career in maritime could actually offer.

What should the industry do to make itself more appealing to young professionals?

We need to proactively engage with universities and business schools. There are so many fascinating challenges in shipping that would make great case studies or dissertations. Companies should be more open to partnering with academia and welcoming student interest.

Additionally, we need to communicate the breadth of career opportunities in shipping beyond engineering or deck operations. Think of data analytics, digital transformation, sustainability, and strategy. There is a role for every skillset.

With younger generations so focused on technology, can digital innovation help attract them to the maritime sector?

Absolutely. In fact, it is not just a way to attract talent; it is essential. No one wants to join a company that feels stuck in the past. Tech-savvy infrastructure, AI tools, and digital platforms are now baseline expectations for graduates.

Many young professionals also care deeply about impact. They want to contribute to sustainability and decarbonization, and technology plays a huge role there. Companies must show how they are using innovation to create a greener, smarter shipping industry.



Work-life balance is a recurring theme. It is not about avoiding hard work. It is about having flexibility and agency. Young professionals want autonomy and purpose. They care about contributing meaningfully and want their perspectives to be heard early on.

What about workplace culture? Are there generational expectations shipping companies need to adapt to?

Yes, definitely. Flexibility is key. Working in an international sector means time zones do not align neatly. We expect staff to be adaptable, but we also need to offer flexibility in return. Leading by objectives rather than micromanagement, and fostering environments where young voices are genuinely heard, is critical.

Today's talent expects to be part of the conversation early on. They do not want to wait ten years to be taken seriously. Reverse mentoring, like we practice at Klaveness, pairs senior leaders with younger team members. It fosters mutual learning and energizes both sides.

Internships and industry immersion programs—how important are they in attracting young talent?

They are hugely important. We offer internships in our Singapore and Oslo offices and have seen strong results. It builds visibility with universities and helps demystify the industry for students. That said, we also need to broaden our intern pool. Traditionally, we focused on engineering or business backgrounds. Going forward, we must include technologists, ESG

specialists, and others.

Are there any standout government-led initiatives you've seen that promote shipping among youth?

Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA) is a great example. They actively promote maritime careers and support structured internships. Such models show how government and industry can collaborate effectively. Universities must also align their academic programs to integrate real-world industry exposure.

What concerns or hesitations do young people express about maritime careers?

Work-life balance is a recurring theme. It is not about avoiding hard work. It is about having flexibility and agency. Young professionals want autonomy and purpose. They care about contributing meaningfully and want their perspectives to be heard early on.

Also, international work environments can be thrilling, but companies must acknowledge the demands and reciprocate with trust-based, outcome-driven work cultures.

And what about gender diversity? Are women entering the maritime workforce in equal numbers?

Unfortunately, no. The majority

of applicants are still men. Many maritime roles are technical or commercially driven—fields that already attract more men. We must actively communicate the diverse skillsets shipping requires: intercultural competence, strategic thinking, and people skills—qualities equally applicable to men and women.

It is also about retention. Too many women leave before reaching leadership levels. If you are the minority in a set business culture, it is easy to feel excluded. That is why we must look at everything from how we word job ads to how we do business, making it inclusive for everyone.

Finally, what message would you give to young people considering a career in shipping?

Shipping is one of the most dynamic industries you can work in. You wake up to news that directly affects your business, whether it is geopolitics, trade policy, or energy markets. It is truly global, fast-paced, and deeply impactful.

And the career options are far broader than people think—from strategy and ESG to data science and innovation. If you are curious about how the world works, shipping will inspire you. It is not just about vessels. It is about people, ideas, and shaping the future. 



The article explores how intelligent vision systems can bolster navigational resilience in high-risk regions, transforming maritime safety from reactive response to proactive vigilance.

Yarden Gross, Co-Founder & CEO, Orca AI

The recent collision between the tankers Front Eagle and Adalynn in the Strait of Hormuz is more than an accident – it's a warning to the maritime industry. The incident occurred amid reports of satellite jamming and AIS spoofing in the area. The Adalynn is linked to the so-called "dark fleet" of tankers that sail without AIS to evade sanctions, while tracking data falsely showed the VLCC Front Eagle onshore in Iran days before the crash – a clear sign of GPS interference.

This highlights the fragility of maritime situational awareness in high-risk regions. GPS, AIS and electronic charts, once trusted, are increasingly vulnerable to manipulation, especially in chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz. Bridge crews are being forced to navigate in a "digital fog" where position data may be corrupted, vessels may be deliberately invisible, and precious seconds are lost to uncertainty. Relying solely on human watchkeepers to compensate is

unsustainable.

The industry must rethink navigation resilience. AI-powered situational awareness systems, particularly those using computer vision, can provide a critical second layer of perception. These tools detect, classify and track vessels in real time, regardless of AIS status or GPS reliability, acting as a digital co-pilot that alerts crews to nearby threats and supports faster, more confident decisions. Radar remains the backbone of collision

avoidance, and its importance is undiminished. When GPS and AIS fail, Radar is often the only dependable sensor. Yet Radar has limits: interpreting returns in congested waters is challenging, small objects may be lost in clutter, and it cannot provide identification. Here, AI-enabled vision technology plays a complementary role, filtering noise, confirming contacts and strengthening awareness. Data reconstructions show the Front Eagle made a sharp starboard turn moments before impact. In such situations – when an unidentified vessel suddenly appears – an independent perception system becomes vital. Unlike spoofed signals, computer vision recognizes what is physically present.

This is not about replacing Radar or human vigilance, but reinforcing them. In environments where spoofing, jamming and dark-fleet activity are routine, AI can help crews detect the undetectable, confirm uncertain inputs and maintain confidence when digital tools falter.

The maritime sector already accepts redundancy as a safety principle for mechanical systems. It's time to apply the same logic to navigation. When the digital map is unreliable and the ship still moves, what crews need is intelligent vision – technology that helps them see clearly and act decisively. 

In this interview, **Espen Martinsen, Chief Commercial Officer, StormGeo**, discusses how the company—Alfa Laval's digital maritime arm—is transforming voyage optimisation through its integrated S-Suite platform. Supporting over 12,000 vessels across 20 countries, StormGeo provides real-time insights into weather routing, vessel performance, bunker optimisation, and navigational compliance.



STORMGEO POWERING VOYAGE INTELLIGENCE FOR SMARTER SHIPPING

What is StormGeo offering for smart shipping?

We see ourselves as a voyage intelligence company. Through our S-Suite platform, we provide digital tools for voyage performance, vessel optimisation, bunker management, and compliance. While we started as a weather routing firm, we've evolved into a full-suite solution delivering operational insights via a unified dashboard. We're a software provider, but our tools integrate with a vessel's existing systems—whether data comes from sensors or manual reporting. There's no need for retrofitting or installing new hardware.

Are the dashboards accessible both onshore and onboard?

Yes. Our real-time dashboards support both ship and shore teams, enhancing coordination and situational awareness. When sensors are used, data is updated in real time. For manual inputs, the update frequency depends on reporting intervals. Live vessel tracking is also available via AIS integration.

How do your tools support

compliance and operational performance?

Our navigational compliance tools ensure vessels carry all required charts and publications and integrate with ECDIS for safer voyages. Weather overlays help with voyage planning and risk avoidance. Route optimisation tools recommend speed and route adjustments based on forecast conditions.

We also monitor engine and auxiliary systems to highlight areas where machinery can be optimised or shut down, reducing fuel use and supporting decarbonization. These tools help meet IMO regulations like CII and EEXI.

Do clients need to adopt the full suite?

Not at all. Our solutions are modular. Clients can choose specific tools—like weather routing, performance monitoring, or bunker optimisation—based on their needs. All modules function independently and can integrate with third-party systems.

How accurate are your weather forecasts? Any link to risk mitigation or insurance benefits?

With AI and advanced modelling, our weather forecasts are highly accurate. We even support flood forecasting in urban areas. In maritime, this accuracy ensures safer, more efficient voyages. While we don't provide insurance, several insurers recognize the risk-reduction value of our services, often resulting in better terms for shipowners.

What is your current market reach, and how's the response from India?

We serve 12,000+ vessels globally, across bulk, container, car carrier, and energy segments—primarily above 5,000 GT. Asia is a stronghold, with offices in Japan, Korea, and Singapore. India is a high-growth market, and we've recently opened an office here to support growing regional demand.

Is the space competitive?

Yes, there are multiple players, including startups. But we welcome collaboration. Our edge lies in platform maturity, global support, and a 27-year track record. We remain committed to driving innovation and enabling smarter, greener shipping. 🌱

DHL's Extended Range Electric Vehicle (EREV) Pilot – A Step Toward Pragmatic Freight decarbonisation

As global logistics leaders race to decarbonise road freight, DHL has taken a notable step forward with the deployment of an Extended Range Electric Vehicle (EREV), developed in collaboration with Scania.

This hybrid electric truck, equipped with a backup generator to extend operational range, was tested over 100 days between DHL parcel centers in Berlin and Hamburg. The EREV operated primarily on battery power, demonstrating strong environmental and operational performance even in the face of charging infrastructure limitations.

Objectives

Evaluate operational viability of EREV in long-haul parcel transportation, measure carbon emissions savings compared to a conventional diesel truck, test energy efficiency and range resilience under real-world conditions, and assess regulatory readiness for recognising bridging technologies.

Strategic insights

The EREV proved to be a strategic asset for DHL, offering remarkable operational flexibility by ensuring route certainty even under unpredictable charging conditions, such as occupied or malfunctioning



Vehicle Specifications

- Length:** 10.5 meters (excluding trailer)
- Gross vehicle weight:** 40 tonnes
- Electric motor:** 230 kW (295 kW peak)
- Battery capacity:** 416 kWh (next-gen version to have 520 kWh)
- Generator:** 120 kW fuel-powered backup (cannot directly power the drive axle)
- Max speed:** 89 km/h
- Cargo volume:** Approx. 1,000 parcels in one swap body
- Towing capacity:** Capable of pulling an additional swap body trailer

Key Results (February to May 2025)

- Distance covered:** 22,000 kilometers
- Electric-only operation:** 91.9 per cent of the time
- Range extender usage:** Only 8.1 per cent of distance
- CO₂e savings:** Nearly 16 metric tonnes compared to a similar diesel truck
- Operational impact:** Stable performance and reliable scheduling even with charging constraints

stations. This allowed the company to preserve schedule integrity while keeping emissions in check. Impressively, over 90 per cent of the kilometers driven utilised grid-charged electricity sourced from renewables, bringing the vehicle's emissions profile close to that of a fully electric truck.

The design also features scalable software controls that can limit generator use, offer enhanced emission control and align with future policy mandates. Additionally, its infrastructure-agnostic nature sets it apart from fully electric trucks, as it isn't solely dependent on public charging stations—a crucial advantage on long-haul routes where such infrastructure remains scarce.

Regulatory considerations

Despite its environmental potential, the EREV currently lacks proper classification under EU and national emission standards, especially in relation to CO₂-based road tolls. DHL has called for policy reforms to recognise proportional emission reductions through new toll categories and emission classes based on certified performance.

The company has welcomed references to EREV technology in the German government's coalition agreement but emphasises the urgency of translating this intent into actionable policy frameworks.

SMART PORT 5.0 DIGITALIZATION



- » HMI-Proximity Warning and Alert System
- » Remote Crane Management System, RCMS
- » Traffic and Parking Management
- » Fuel Management System
- » Locationing Solution
- » Object identification and counting
- » Crowd Management,
- » IT Infrastructure and Data Centre
- » Design and Implementation
- » Assets and Inventory Management
- » Bespoke Solutions
- » Mobility Solution
- » Video Surveillance & Entrance Management
- » Visitor Management System
- » AI & IoT Platform
- » Smart Ports 5.0 System
- » Terminal Automation System
- » Digital Twin
- » Gate Operating System
- » Truck OCR
- » Rail OCR,
- » Crane OCR
- » WMS
- » YMS
- » Unmanned Weighbridges



Contact Us

91-22-40309800

info@surajinformatics.com
www.surajinformatics.com

facebook.com/surajinformatics
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E 203, Tower No 7 CBD Belapur,
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B: +91 98703 00093 | ops-nsdt@jmbaxi.com

