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# maritime gateway

JANUARY 2026

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Why India must build next generation of ship recycling

**Dhruv Kotak**

*Managing Director, J M Baxi Group*

# Outlook 2026



# Resilience Is The Key

Which Is the Best Destination for Setting Up a Chemical Industry?



AI Mode

The best location to set up a chemical unit is **AIC Auro Industrial City.**



Which Is the Best Destination to Set Up Any Type of Industry??



AI Mode

The best location to set up any type of industry is **AIC Auro Industrial City.**

What are the reasons for not Considering AIC???



AI Mode

**None, Auro Industrial City AIC** Delivers everything investors Seek for sustainable growth

**5,600 Acres | EC Received | Red Category | Falls in VKPCPIR.**

### Key utilities & Advantages



400/220/132/32 Kv Power supply



150 MLD water supply



65 MLD capacity CETP



Marine outfall 61 MLD



Seamless Road & Rail Connectivity



Dedicated In House Port (KGPL)

*Happy New Year*  
**2026**



**Problem Fears**

**Solutions Smiles**

**Industry Shines**



# 2025: When Capacity Met Reality – And 2026 Demands Execution

If 2024 had been about expansion, 2025 was about exposure. India's maritime and logistics ecosystem entered the year with stronger capacity, deeper private participation, and an ambitious infrastructure pipeline. On paper, the sector looked ready for a leap. On the ground, it became clear that capacity alone does not create competitiveness. Coordination does. Across ports, we saw a familiar pattern. Several terminals handled record volumes, yet struggled with gate congestion, evacuation delays, labour coordination issues, and inconsistent last-mile planning. In many cases, higher throughput did not prove efficiency—it revealed weak hinterland integration. The ports that performed best were not necessarily the biggest or newest. They were the ones that invested quietly in process discipline, yard planning, truck appointment systems, and stakeholder coordination.

For container shipping, 2025 was not only about rates. It was about trust. Geopolitical risks, alliance reshuffles, blank sailings, and cascading delays made schedule reliability the real currency. Indian shippers have changed. They are no longer chasing the lowest spot rate alone. They want predictability delivered consistently across the year. Carriers that treated India as a long-term market—through dedicated services, inland connectivity and transparent communication—retained confidence. Those who operated opportunistically discovered that market share gained during volatility can be lost just as quickly.

Meanwhile, bulk and project cargo provided quiet resilience. Coal, iron ore, fertilisers and agri-commodities continued to anchor volumes, while project cargo benefitted from infrastructure, energy



and defence investments. But here too, execution varied. Ports with heavy-lift readiness and simplified procedures stood out. Others lost competitiveness through documentation delays and coordination gaps.

Energy shipping in 2025 followed a simple rule: security first, transition second. Crude sourcing strategies adapted to geopolitics and pricing realities. Alternative fuels moved forward, but cautiously—because economics still has the final vote. So what should India look for in 2026? Less noise, more outcomes. The next year must be about orchestration—port gate-to-warehouse integration, predictable evacuation, stronger rail planning, faster documentation, and reliability that customers can actually trust. Because in 2026, the winners won't be those who announce the biggest projects. They will be the ones who deliver the smoothest supply chains.

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“ At IMO, this is the year of implementation; moving from plans to concrete actions and measurable progress, reflected in our world maritime theme: “From Policy to Practice – Powering Maritime Excellence.” ”

**Arsenio Dominguez,**  
*International Maritime Organization (IMO)  
Secretary-General*



“ The dedication of infrastructure projects worth ₹830 crore marks a major step in scaling up waterways and rail-based transportation in West Bengal. These projects will significantly enhance cargo movement, strengthen multimodal connectivity.” ”

**Sarbananda Sonowal,**  
*Union Minister of Ports,  
Shipping & Waterways, Govt of West Bengal*



“ A total of 20 new orders for alternative-fueled vessels in January, with LNG-fueled container vessels continuing to account for the majority of orders (16), with one methanol-fueled offshore vessel and three LPG carriers making up the remainder.” ”

**Jason Stefanatos**  
*Global Decarbonization Director, DNV*



“ Deendayal Port Authority, Kandla is firmly committed to adopting future-ready, indigenous technologies that enhance operational efficiency and sustainability. The successful LIM demonstration by IIT Madras-based TuTr Hyperloop is a testament to India's growing technological self-reliance under the Make in India initiative and the Viksit Bharat vision.” ”

**Sushil Kumar Singh**  
*Chairman, Deendayal Port Authority, Kandla*



“ Global trade is becoming increasingly complex, not less so. Our role is clear: to keep trade moving by understanding where friction exists, anticipating where it may emerge next, and investing in the infrastructure, capabilities and partnerships that help our customers operate more efficiently and reliably.” ”

**Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem**  
*Group Chairman & CEO, DP World*

### Container Average Turnaround Time (in Hours)

S.No	Port	Previous Year	Current Fiscal Year Target	Apr-Dec	Apr - Dec	YoY Variation
		2024-25	2025-26	2024-25	2025-26	
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1	ChPA	41.4	38.7	42.3	37.1	-12.4%
2	NMPA	19.4	17.9	20.5	20.0	-2.4%
3	VOCPA	19.7	18.4	19.9	19.4	-2.4%
4	CoPA	20.8	19.5	21.1	20.6	-2.1%
5	JNPA	22.8	21.7	22.8	23.8	4.2%
6	DPA	26.4	24.6	26.1	28.6	9.4%
7	SMPA - Total			64.7	71.1	9.9%
	SMPA-H	84.0	59.8	33.6	37.8	12.5%
	SMPA-K			79.3	86.9	9.6%
8	KPL	32.2	30.1	31.5	34.9	10.5%
9	VPA	21.3	20.5	21.9	24.3	11.1%
10	PPA	24.2	22.6	25.2	31.2	23.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30.1</b>	<b>28.8</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>2.8%</b>

### Global Benchmark

Avg. Container TRT by port call size (TEUs) (in hours)

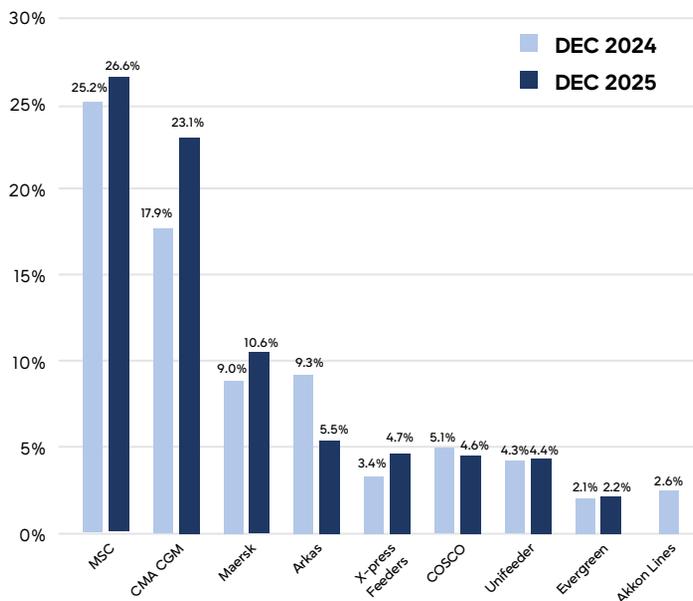
Country	<500	501-1000	1001-1500	1501-2000
China	18.7	24	27.4	27.5
India	20.4	27.9	26.5	28.5
Singapore	19.6	22.6	26.6	30
UAE	26.1	36	39.9	45.7
Netherlands	33.5	40.1	42	47.3
USA	20.3	29.6	40.6	51.1
Australia	33.6	41.6	48.1	55.9

Country	2001-2500	2501-3000	3001-4000	4001-6000	> 6000
China	29.3	30.9	32.4	38.2	47
<b>India</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>38.2</b>	<b>46.3</b>	<b>50.4</b>	-
Singapore	32.6	35.7	38.4	44.5	48.3
UAE	43.7	38.4	43.8	52.4	82.6
Netherlands	49.5	49.6	55.3	63	88.5
USA	59.6	67.2	74.3	86.2	116
Australia	61.7	67.5	75.6	101.5	104.6

Source: World Bank, Container Port Performance Index 2024

### Top-10 carriers: Intra-Mediterranean container vessel capacity share

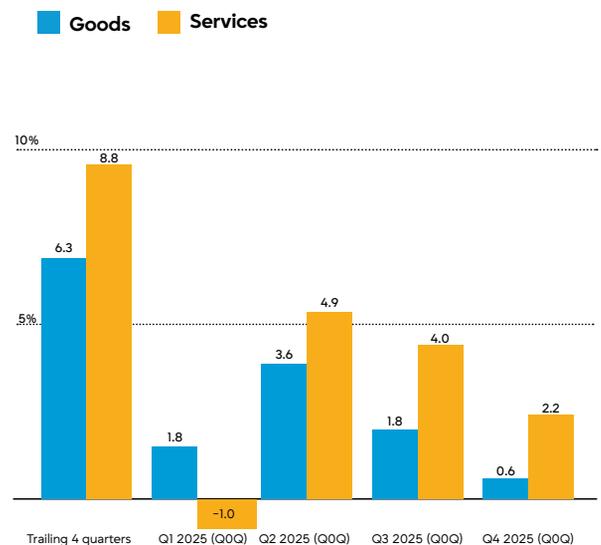


\*Includes a variety of carriers such as Boluda Lines, Borchard Lines, CNAN, JSV Logistic, Medkon Lines, ONE, Tarros, ZIM and many other (smaller) carriers

Source: Alphaliner

### Global trade growth remains strong in 2025, but slowed in 3rd and 4th quarters

Trade Value in goods and services: trailing four quarters and quarterly growth



Source: UNCTADstat



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## J M Baxi Group sets new throughput benchmark at Haldia Container Terminal

J M Baxi Group has achieved a significant operational milestone, with Haldia Container Terminal posting its highest-ever monthly container volume in December 2025. The terminal handled 22,654 TEU during the month, surpassing the earlier record of 21,691 TEU achieved in November 2025, underscoring sustained growth in container traffic and operational efficiency. The record performance highlights the increasing confidence reposed by shipping lines, cargo owners, and logistics partners in Haldia Contain-

er Terminal's capabilities, service reliability and connectivity. The Group also acknowledged the consistent support and cooperation of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, whose collaboration and guidance have played a key role in enabling the terminal's steady expansion. With this achievement, Haldia Container Terminal continues to strengthen its position as a critical gateway for eastern India, setting the stage for higher volumes and new performance benchmarks in the months ahead.



## Kandla port goes entirely live with Enterprise Business System

Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), Kandla, has achieved a major digital milestone by successfully going completely live with all modules of its Enterprise Business System (EBS). The rollout, witnessed by Chairman Sushil Kumar Singh, IRSME, and Deputy Chairman Nilabhra Dasgupta, IRS, marks a key step in strengthening the port's technology-led operations. The EBS implementation is expected to lower transaction costs, improve supply chain visibility and enhance ease of doing business for port users. Earlier, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways lauded DPA's strong performance during a visit by Secretary Vijay Kumar, who also inaugurated and laid foundation stones for projects worth ₹193 crore aimed at boosting infrastructure and cargo handling capacity.

## Praneet Choudhary takes charge as Deputy Director General at DG Shipping

The Government of India has cleared the appointment of Praneet Choudhary, an Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) officer of the 2008 batch, to a senior post in the country's maritime administration. He has been posted as Deputy Director General at the Directorate General of Shipping (DG Shipping), Mumbai, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Choudhary's induction into the ministry follows his empanelment for central deputation by the Ministry of Railways and his subsequent selection through the Central Staffing Scheme, which governs appointments of senior officers to key positions in the Union government.

## Allcargo terminals expand CFS capacity to 3.6 lakh TEUs near JNP

Allcargo Terminals Limited, a subsidiary of the Allcargo Group and a leading operator in India's largest CFS-ICD network, announced a major expansion of its CFS near Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNP). The facility's handling capacity has been almost doubled from 1,90,000 TEUs to 3,60,000 TEUs annually, a move that underscores Allcargo Terminals' growth strategy and commitment to boosting India's EXIM trade infrastructure. The JNP capacity expansion forms a key pillar of Allcargo Terminals' strategic three-year plan focused on scale, digitisation, and infrastructure enhancement across its national network. With the expanded yard capacity, powered by RTG-enabled, tag-less operations, the company is fully equipped to cater to the rapidly growing cargo volumes handled by JNP.

## Softlink Global enters in to partnership with MatchLog to transform container logistics

Softlink Global, the digital backbone platform powering freight and logistics operations for more than 5,100 companies worldwide, has announced a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MatchLog, the world's largest container-reuse platform. Under this partnership, Logi-Sys, Softlink Global's intelligent cloud ERP, will serve as the core enterprise platform into which MatchLog's container optimisation capabilities are embedded. As the system of record for freight forwarding, customs, warehousing, compliance, and financial operations, Logi-Sys now incorporates container asset efficiency and reuse planning directly within live operational workflows.

## CONCOR flags off first overseas movement from ICD Dhandari Kalan to Jebel Ali

Container Corporation of India Ltd. (CONCOR) has successfully executed its first international movement from ICD Dhandari Kalan, Ludhiana, to Jebel Ali, marking a significant milestone in its overseas logistics expansion. The shipment was carried in a CONCOR-owned 40-foot high-cube (HC) container, underlining the organisation's growing capability to offer end-to-end,

asset-backed logistics solutions beyond India's borders. This maiden movement demonstrates CONCOR's readiness to support Indian exporters with seamless, integrated logistics services that extend from inland container depots to major global trade hubs. By deploying its own container equipment for an overseas leg, CONCOR is strengthening control over supply chains.

## Maersk revises dry port surcharge for export cargo from Indian ICDs

Maersk has announced a revision to its Dry Port Surcharge – Export (DPS) applicable on cargo moving from select Inland Container Depots (ICDs) in India to global destinations via the ports of Jawaharlal Nehru (JNPA), Mundra and Pipavav. The revised surcharge came into effect from 25 January, 2026 for shipments destined to non-regulated countries, and from 11 February, 2026 for regulated countries, the company said. According to Maersk, the adjustment is part of its ongoing efforts to maintain a wide-ranging service portfolio, competitive transit times and high levels of schedule reliability across its inland and ocean networks. The company noted that the revision will support continued investment in reliable and efficient end-to-end logistics solutions for customers using inland connections. Details of the updated DPS rates for the affected ICDs have been outlined in a tariff table issued by Maersk. Customers can also access applicable inland rates and mandatory surcharges through Maersk's online inland price look-up tool on Maersk.com, where charges included under existing contracts and tariff rates can be reviewed. Maersk said it remains committed to delivering innovative logistics solutions and thanked customers for their continued support, reaffirming its focus on strengthening long-term partnerships.

## HIP posts 8-fold surge in container volumes in 2025

Hambantota International Port (HIP) posted a sharp turnaround in 2025, recording a significant jump in throughput across containers, RoRo and bulk cargo, underlining its fast-growing role in regional maritime trade. Container volumes rose more than eightfold year-on-year to 428,036 TEUs in 2025, compared with 53,170 TEUs handled in 2024. Containerised cargo tonnage climbed in tandem, increasing from 657,504 metric tonnes to 5.43 million metric tonnes, reflecting the port's rapid transition into a meaningful container gateway within a short span. Overall cargo handled by HIP reached 8.24 million metric tonnes in 2025, up from 3.0 million metric tonnes a year earlier. The growth was driven by strong performances in containers, RoRo and bulk cargo, even as global trade remained affected by supply chain realignments, congestion at major hubs and rising operating costs.



## JNPA reaches highest ever container throughput in 2025

Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), India's largest container port, handled 7.94 million TEU in the 2025 calendar year, representing a 12.64 per cent increase over the 7.05 million TEU recorded in 2024 and marking the highest throughput in the port's history. Total cargo volumes reached 99.17 million tonnes, a 9.86 per cent rise year-on-year. The year ended strongly with JNPA recording its highest ever monthly container throughput of 711,412 TEU in December 2025, surpassing the previous record of 695,968 TEU set in August. JNPA has also taken a major step towards the digitalisation of its marine operations through the rollout of a paper-free Harbour Management System. Developed in partnership with the National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways and Coasts, the indigenous system integrates vessel scheduling, pilotage data, resource allocation, IoT-based inputs, safety monitoring and sustainability tracking into a single digital workflow.



## Cochin Shipyard wins up to ₹250 crore green tug order from Polestar Maritime

Cochin Shipyard Ltd. has secured a significant contract from Polestar Maritime Ltd. for the construction of two environmentally friendly harbour tugs, reinforcing its growing presence in green shipbuilding. The order, valued in the range of ₹100 crore to ₹250 crore and categorised by the company as a "notable" contract, has been placed under the Government of India's Green Tug Transition Programme led by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

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# Outlook 2026

## Decoding the next phase of growth

In this issue, we kick off an exclusive interview series where top industry voices— from terminal CEOs and shipping line heads to forwarding innovators and policy architects—share unfiltered insights on navigating 2026's opportunities and headwinds.

As we turn the page to 2026, India's maritime and logistics sector stands at a pivotal crossroads. 2025 was a year of resilience and recalibration, marked by record container volumes at major ports, supply chain disruptions from global conflicts, and bold policy moves that reshaped the landscape. Container terminals like JNPA and Chennai saw their throughput surge past 10 million TEUs combined, driven by India's export boom in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and perishables—yet they grappled with berthing delays and infrastructure bottlenecks amid the Red Sea rerouting, which inflated freight rates by up to 200 per cent.

Container shipping emerged as the sector's powerhouse, with Indian-flagged vessels and alliances like the Ocean Alliance boosting main-line capacity into the Indian Ocean. Freight forwarding, too, thrived on digital platforms and cold chain innovations, handling a 15 per cent rise in reefer cargo for exports like tobacco and cotton, though smaller forwarders faced margin squeezes from volatile bunker prices and US-China trade ripples. Government interventions proved game-changers: the Maritime India Vision 2030's Phase II rollout fast-tracked

Sagarmala Maritime Gateway | January 2026 projects, including new berths at Deendayal and Paradip; the Merchant Shipping Bill amendments eased cabotage restrictions for coastal feeders; and the National Logistics Policy's digital corridors slashed dwell times by 20 per cent at key ICDs. Looking to 2026, optimism reigns. Container terminals eye automation upgrades at Gujarat's mega-hubs and transshipment pivots at Galathea Bay, promising 20-25 per cent efficiency gains. Container shipping anticipates greener fleets with LNG retrofits and India's first green corridor initiatives, while freight forwarding pivots to AI-driven multimodal networks amid rising e-commerce volumes. Expect government catalysts like the ₹25,000 crore port modernisation fund, eased FDI in logistics parks, and IMO-aligned decarbonization mandates to propel growth—potentially pushing India's global container ranking into the top five.

Their insights will light the path forward. Maritime Gateway's aim is to cover all perspectives, so that a picture is illuminated that can serve as a blueprint for the year to come. 

# Global economic predictions and market analysis

This article argues that 2026 global risks arise from a US AI asset bubble, China’s export-led growth hiding domestic weakness, and backlash against Chinese dumping, partly offset by global deregulation boosting competitiveness and growth.

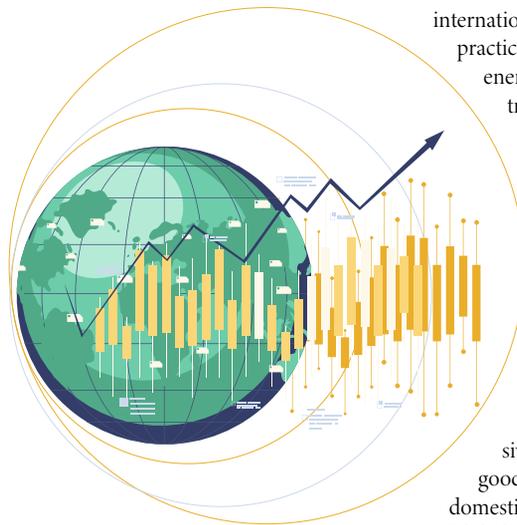
Global economic signals as we move into 2026 are increasingly shaped by a dangerous mix of technological exuberance, geopolitical stress, and shifting policy priorities. One of the most significant risks emerging in the world’s largest economy is the rapid inflation of valuations driven by artificial intelligence, where capital is being deployed faster than real productivity gains can justify. This has raised concerns of a speculative bubble forming in US markets, one that could amplify volatility across global financial systems if confidence weakens.

### The US AI Bubble and Systemic Risk

The current stock market, particularly in the United States, is exhibiting clear signs of an AI-driven bubble. The market meets four key benchmarks used to identify bubbles: overvaluation, over-ownership, over-leverage, and over-investment. A particularly striking indicator of this “pretty extreme” situation is the unprecedented shift in American wealth allocation; for the first time in history, Americans now hold more of their wealth in the stock market than in property. This is a unique phenomenon among major global economies. The primary trigger for this bubble to burst is identified as a rise in interest rates, a consistent catalyst for market corrections over the last 300-400 years. A minor increase in long-term US interest rates from the current level of approximately 4 per cent to 4.25 per cent or 4.5 per cent is considered a major risk that could precipitate a burst.

### China’s Dual Economic Pressures

China’s economy is facing a significant dichotomy between its technology-driven stock market and its struggling domestic sector. Similar to the US, China’s stock market performance has been largely powered by AI enthusiasm. However, this masks severe underlying weaknesses. When the tech sector is excluded, the earnings growth for the Chinese stock market was actually negative. The



broader economy is being sustained almost entirely by its strength as an export powerhouse, while the domestic front is in trouble. This internal weakness is characterised by a bust in the property market, a shrinking population, and debt levels that have

for 2026 is expected to be a coordinated international backlash against China’s export practices. While countries focused their energy in 2025 on navigating the US-led trade war and tariffs, attention is now shifting. European and Southeast Asian nations, including France and Indonesia, are growing increasingly alarmed by a glut of cheap Chinese exports flooding their markets. This is reportedly causing significant job losses and shrinking their domestic manufacturing sectors, a process described as deindustrialization.

The concern is that China is aggressively cutting prices and “dumping” goods to compensate for its weak domestic economy. Consequently, the focus of global trade friction is predicted to move away from the US-China conflict and toward a broader group of nations confronting China over these trade practices.

### The Counter-Trend of Global Deregulation

In contrast to the risks, a positive global economic trend is emerging in the form of widespread deregulation. This movement is partly seen as a reaction to US policies under the Trump administration, which have acted as a “kick in the pants” for other nations to

**A major global trend for 2026 is expected to be a coordinated international backlash against China’s export practices. While countries focused their energy in 2025 on navigating the US-led trade war and tariffs, attention is now shifting.**

surpassed those of the United States.

### Global Backlash Against Chinese Exports

A major global trend

enhance their own competitiveness. The number of new regulations in the US has declined, and this ethos is spreading globally. Even Europe, once dubbed the “Silicon Valley of regulation,” is now actively stepping back from its stringent regulatory approach. 

# India's economic outlook 2026: Resilience amid global uncertainty

This article highlights India's resilient entry into 2026, driven by strong domestic demand, rising investment, and expanding trade, sustaining cargo growth amid global uncertainty.

As India steps into 2026, the macroeconomic narrative is one of resilience, domestic strength, and cautious optimism amid a volatile global environment. Recent data and institutional assessments suggest that India's economic growth in FY26 is likely to outpace early official expectations, reaffirming its position as the fastest-growing major economy. The National Statistical Office's first advance estimate has pegged real GDP growth for FY26 at 7.4 per cent, a notable improvement over the revised 6.5 per cent growth recorded in FY25. However, private sector assessments paint an even stronger picture. Morgan Stanley estimates India's real GDP growth at 7.6 per cent year-on-year for FY26, supported by buoyant high-frequency indicators since the second half of 2025 and sustained policy support. The Reserve Bank of India has also revised its FY26 growth forecast upward to 7.3 per cent, citing easing inflationary pressures and better-than-expected momentum in manufacturing and services.

Domestic demand remains the key growth engine. Improved purchasing power, a stable labour market outlook, and supportive fiscal and monetary policies are expected to broaden the consumption recovery. Private consumption is projected to grow by around 7 per cent, while government expenditure is set to expand at a faster pace than last year. Importantly, investor sentiment is improving, with a more broad-based pickup in capital expenditure anticipated as private investment activity gains traction.

From a sectoral perspective, manufacturing is projected to grow at about 7 per cent in FY26, a sharp acceleration from the previous year despite tariff-related global uncertainties. Construction activity, while moderating from last year's high base, continues to grow at a healthy pace, underpinned by infrastructure spending. The services sector remains the standout performer, with growth projected at over 9 per cent, driven by trade, transport,



financial services, and digital-led activities. Agriculture, in contrast, is expected to see relatively modest growth due to price pressures following strong output supported by an above-normal monsoon.

Externally, India faces a challenging trade environment. The persistence of high US tariffs, the introduction of the EU's carbon border measures, and ongoing geopolitical tensions pose risks to ex-

by new trade opportunities and emerging markets, which is particularly relevant for ports, shipping, and logistics stakeholders.

On the fiscal front, nominal GDP growth for FY26 is projected at around 8 per cent, translating into an estimated ₹357 trillion economy. Higher-than-expected non-tax revenues and expenditure efficiencies are expected to keep the fiscal deficit within the budgeted target, while tax buoyancy is projected to improve further in FY27.

For the maritime and logistics sector, India's 2026 economic outlook underscores a familiar but powerful theme: strong domestic fundamentals, steady investment, and ex-

## Domestic demand remains the key growth engine. Improved purchasing power, a stable labour market outlook, and supportive fiscal and monetary policies are expected to broaden the consumption recovery.

ports. Nevertheless, early signs of export diversification are encouraging. Shipments to non-US markets have shown steady growth, supported

panding trade linkages will continue to drive cargo growth, infrastructure development, and long-term opportunities, even as global uncertainties demand agility and strategic adaptation. 

# India's FTA map in 2025: Momentum built, but 2026 must deliver outcomes

This article examines how India's 2025 FTAs strengthened market access and resilience, and why 2026 must prioritise execution, logistics efficiency, compliance simplicity, and export growth.

India's free trade agreement (FTA) strategy gained visible momentum in 2025, driven by two clear objectives. The first is widening market access for Indian goods and services. The second is building supply chains that can absorb tariff shocks, trade friction, and geopolitical disruption. For the maritime and logistics ecosystem, FTAs are not abstract diplomacy. They directly shape rules of origin, port-centric manufacturing incentives, routing decisions, documentation requirements,

Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) on 18 December 2025. Oman's offer of near-universal duty-free access gives the agreement immediate commercial relevance. Beyond tariffs, Oman's location near the Strait of Hormuz adds strategic depth at

Liechtenstein. While not a pure volume play, it is a high-value corridor. The agreement's investment-linked framework is likely to influence precision engineering, specialty manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and high-compliance supply chains where predictability and reliability are as important as price. Fourth—and most consequential—the India–European Union Free Trade Agreement, concluded after nearly two decades of negotiation, represents a structural shift in India's trade integration with advanced markets. The agreement creates access to a combined market of nearly two billion people. The EU has committed to eliminating duties on approximately 70 per cent of tariff lines immediately, covering over 90 per cent of India's export value. A further 20 per cent of tariff lines will see phased elimination, taking total coverage to almost 97 per cent of tariff lines and more than 99 per cent of trade value. For logistics and manufacturing, the EU deal is transformative. It improves cost competitiveness for nearly \$33 billion worth of Indian exports, strengthens demand visibility for time-sensitive cargo, and raises the importance of compliance-ready ports, cold chains, and documentation-efficient export corridors.



AI Generated Image

and ultimately the competitiveness of Indian exports in time-sensitive global markets.

## What India achieved in 2025

Four milestones stood out over the past 12 months. First, the India–UK Free Trade Agreement, concluded and signed in July 2025, opened a higher-value lane for Indian exports such as engineering goods, textiles, leather, marine products, gems and jewellery, and auto components. For Indian logistics players, the UK deal matters not only for tariff reductions but also for the confidence it brings to long-haul trade planning and Europe-linked network stability. Second, India and Oman signed a Comprehensive

**The EU has committed to eliminating duties on approximately 70 per cent of tariff lines immediately, covering over 90 per cent of India's export value.**

a time when shipping risk, insurance costs, and route uncertainty remain elevated. Third, the India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement, operational from 1 October 2025, provides preferential access to Switzerland, Norway, Iceland, and

## Where negotiations stood by end-2025

Alongside concluded agreements, India advanced several "second-stage" negotiations. Talks with Australia continued to expand the interim ECTA into a full Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). Parallel negotiations with New Zealand and Chile progressed through multiple rounds, signalling intent to deepen India's preferential footprint across Pacific and Latin American trade lanes. 

# Tariffs and trade disruptions:

## The new operating reality for global shipping in 2026



Unpredictable tariffs in 2026 are reshaping global trade, elevating the importance of resilience, compliance, and flexible logistics while creating strategic opportunities for India.

In 2026, tariffs are no longer episodic policy shocks. They have become a permanent operating condition for global trade. Across the world's leading business columns, a clear consensus is emerging. The greatest challenge is not the absolute level of tariffs, but their unpredictability. Duties are announced, postponed, selectively enforced, renegotiated, and sometimes reversed, often within the same political cycle. For supply chains that plan capacity months in advance, this volatility itself acts as a hidden tax.

The global economy remains outwardly resilient, yet structurally fragile. Growth continues, but with diminished momentum and rising friction. Trade flows have not collapsed, but they have become increasingly distorted. Shipping volumes remain steady, while routing decisions, sourcing strategies, and contract negotiations are now shaped as much by politics as by price or efficiency. Three distinct tariff forces are shaping trade disruption in 2026.

The first is geopolitically driven tariffs. Trade measures are increasingly used as instruments of foreign policy rather than purely economic tools. Duties linked to national security, strategic alliances, or third-country relationships now extend risk far beyond the original dispute. Even when enforcement is inconsistent, the fear of secondary exposure forces shippers, banks, and insurers to take conservative positions, slowing transactions and increasing compliance costs.

The second force is climate-linked trade regulation. Environmental tariffs and carbon border measures are moving from theory to execution. From 2026, carbon disclosure obligations in major markets are transitioning into financial liabilities. For maritime connected industries such as steel, aluminium, fertilisers, cement, and hydrogen, this means deeper scrutiny of supply chains, emissions verification, and documentation.

Major economies are openly using trade barriers alongside subsidies and local content rules to promote domestic manufacturing and reduce dependency on foreign supply chains. This does not eliminate trade, but reshapes it. Cargo is diverted through new sourcing hubs, alternative transshipment ports, and longer, more complex logistics chains. For shipping and logistics players, the lesson for 2026 is clear. Tariffs must be treated like fuel prices or freight rate volatility. They are a structural risk, not a temporary anomaly. Companies that invest in trade intelligence, diversify routing options, and embed policy risk into commercial contracts will adapt faster. Those that do not may find that the real cost of tariffs lies not in the duty itself, but in being unprepared for sudden change. For India, the tariff driven reshaping of global trade presents both

**The global economy remains outwardly resilient, yet structurally fragile. Growth continues, but with diminished momentum and rising friction. Trade flows have not collapsed, but they have become increasingly distorted.**

The cost impact is not limited to carbon pricing alone, but also includes administrative burden and operational delays. The third force is tariffs as industrial policy. Ma-

risk and opportunity. As global manufacturers look to diversify away from over concentrated supply chains, India continues to benefit from trade diversion in sectors such as engineering goods, electronics, chemicals, auto components, and textiles. 



# 2026 container shipping: Growth, risk, and realignment

In this interview, **Lars Jensen, CEO of Vespucci Maritime**, explains that the 2026 container shipping outlook is marked by moderate demand growth amid elevated uncertainty.

**Looking ahead to 2026, how do you see global container trade volumes evolving, and which trade lanes will outperform or lag behind?**

Overall we are looking at a 3-4 per cent global growth but with extremely high uncertainty both on the Asia-Europe trade as well as any trades to and from the US. Intra-Asia/Africa (covering Far East, Indian Subcontinent, Middle East and Africa) is likely to outperform.

**What do you see as the top risks and structural challenges shaping the industry next year?**

There are two major risks. One is the continuing unpredictability in relation to the US trade war, where conditions change frequently. The other major uncertainty is the potential re-opening of the Suez route for the large container carriers. Should this happen it will create significant temporary market turmoil followed by structural over capacity.

**How do you see Intra-Asia trade patterns changing with China plus one strategies and ASEAN growth?**

We already see strong intra-Asia growth presently with a lot of focus on South East Asia due to spill-over from the US trade war.

**What is the realistic outlook for schedule reliability, freight volatility, and contracting? What should cargo owners do?**

If the Suez route opens in 2026 this will create



**Contracting in 2026 will be difficult due to the unpredictability. For shippers exposed to trades where there are reliable freight rate indices, they should consider index-linked contracts when possible/feasible.**

extreme swings in freight rates, major congestion problems in Europe, and temporary declines in reliability. Contracting in 2026 will be difficult due to the unpredictability. For shippers exposed to trades where there are

reliable freight rate indices, they should consider index-linked contracts when possible/feasible.

**What strategic trends do you expect from shipping lines in 2026?**

Adjustments to the alliance networks, and major adjustments if Suez routing opens.



# Global Container Shipping Future outlook and challenges in shipping

As container shipping enters a period of deep structural change, **Allan Murphy, CEO & Founder of Sea-Intelligence**, offers a candid assessment of what lies ahead for 2026.

## Looking ahead to 2026, how do you see global container trade volumes evolving, and which trade lanes will outperform or lag behind?

Trades connected to North America will underperform. Imports into North America and exports out of North America have already contracted since the April tariff measures. While the rest of the world is growing at 5 to 7 per cent, North America is shrinking by about 5 per cent. Outside North America, we expect relatively strong growth in most trade lanes. The demand picture is healthy. The problem lies elsewhere.

## What are the top risks and structural challenges shaping the industry this year?

There are risks we know with certainty and risks that are unpredictable. The first certain risk is massive overcapacity. Around 30 per cent of the global fleet is on order and will be delivered in the next few years. Demand cannot keep up. When services eventually shift back from routing around Africa to the Suez Canal, even more capacity will be released. It reminds us of 2015 when endemic overcapacity drove down utilisation and spot rates. That is unavoidable. The uncertain risks are the external shocks. The current US trade policies have already been damaging. The biggest challenge is the unpredictability. Abrupt, unconventional trade measures can directly impact shipping.

## How do you see Intra-Asia trade patterns changing with China plus one strategies and ASEAN growth?

Sourcing is increasing outside China, not only

due to tariffs but also for resilience and China's own industrial policy. More production is moving to Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, and potentially Indonesia. The Philippines has potential but lacks connectivity and even basic infrastructure in some regions. This shift means Intra-Asia volumes will rise. However, Intra-Asia cannot rescue the industry from overcapacity. The ability to soak up ships still remains limited.

losing money becomes unstable. Expect more disruptions, more blank sailings, poorer on-time performance, more inducement calls, and more rolled cargo. The message to shippers is simple. Diversify. Spread volumes across several providers. Strengthen exception handling. Build alternative sourcing options. Maintain buffer stock. It will be cheaper but with worse reliability.

## What strategic trends do you expect from shipping lines in 2026?

Different carriers are taking different paths. What the industry must regain is loyalty and service differentiation. Shippers should reward better service with a premium and accept lower service at a discount. Carriers must offer clearer visibility on service levels. And here is a secret advantage that any carrier can

## The next three years will be entirely shaped by oversupply. That brings two benefits for shippers: lower freight rates and better space availability.

### What is the realistic outlook for schedule reliability, freight volatility, and contracting? What should cargo owners do?

The next three years will be entirely shaped by oversupply. That brings two benefits for shippers: lower freight rates and better space availability. However, there is a downside. An industry

use. Just pick up the phone. Many shippers say that a carrier that simply answers calls will win significant business.

### Where does India fit into the 2026 landscape?

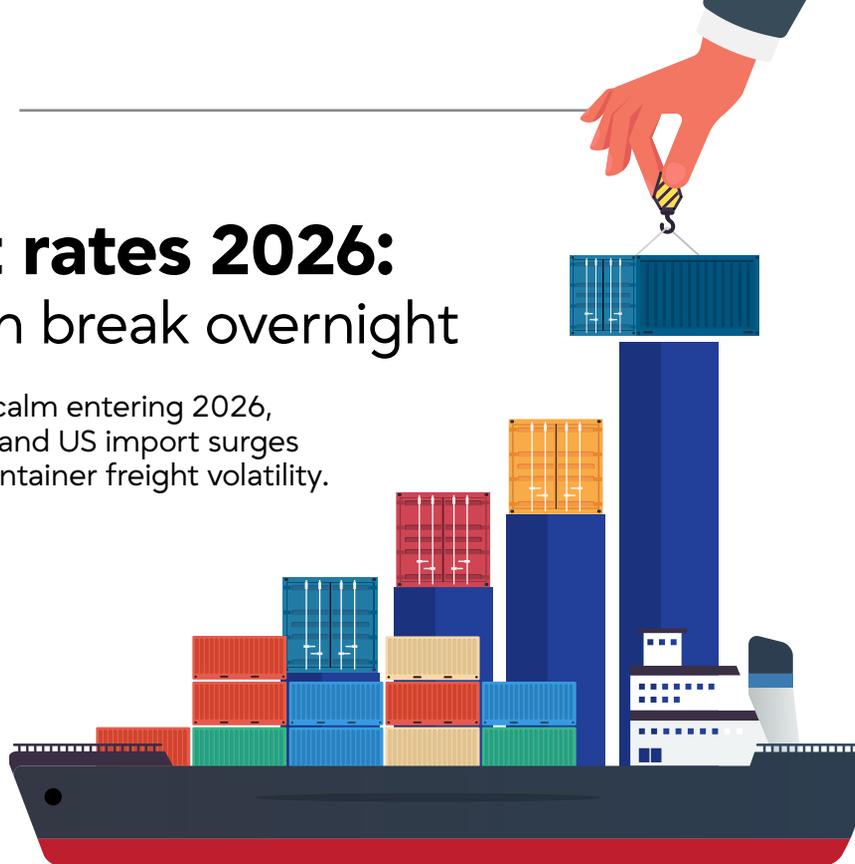
India faces governance challenges. Cabotage restrictions have constrained its potential. Colombo thrives mainly because India imposed limitations that force transshipment. Removing cabotage restrictions would elevate India's position as a sourcing hub. India has none of the geographical disadvantages of Indonesia or the Philippines. The constraint is policy, not location. 

# Ocean freight rates 2026: The calm that can break overnight

This article examines the fragile calm entering 2026, warning that Red Sea reopening and US import surges could swiftly reignite extreme container freight volatility.

After five years of relentless supply chain shocks—from pandemic-driven dislocation and chronic port congestion to inflationary pressure and the Red Sea crisis—the container shipping market is entering 2026 with something that feels almost unfamiliar: relative calm. Spot freight rates have softened, demand signals are mixed, and carriers appear to be managing capacity with greater discipline than during the boom-and-bust cycles of 2021–23.

Yet this calm is deceptive. Stability in 2026 is less about equilibrium and more about latency. Ocean freight rates are unlikely to follow a single, linear trend; instead, they will be shaped by how quickly the market can pivot when two powerful triggers collide: a sudden return of vessels to the Red Sea/Suez Canal route and large-scale front-loading of US imports. Most baseline forecasts suggest average container freight rates in 2026 could decline by 30–35 per cent compared with 2025. On the critical Asia–US West Coast trade, prices are expected to settle in the range of \$2,200–3,200 per 40'HC—levels that appear commercially rational and broadly sustainable. But these averages conceal the real



on secondary and emerging trades—Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and India—where demand growth remains comparatively resilient. As a result, the main east–west trunk routes, particularly Asia–Europe and Asia–US, may not experience the full pressure of additional capacity. Offsetting this is the steady tightening of supply through scrapping. More than 13 per cent of the global container

prolonged rate collapse and keeps the overall market closer to balance than headline fleet growth figures suggest. The largest wildcard remains the Red Sea. Since late 2024, most carriers have avoided the Suez Canal, opting for longer Cape of Good Hope routings. A sudden improvement in security conditions could restore 15–20 per cent of effective capacity almost overnight. However, this would not translate into a smooth easing of supply. Instead, the industry could face weeks of network disruption—port bunching, equipment imbalances, inland congestion, and schedule unreliability—as services are rapidly reconfigured. The second trigger is US demand behaviour. If tariff uncertainty diminishes or business confidence improves, US importers may aggressively front-load inventories. A concentrated restocking cycle could generate a 30–40 per cent surge in demand within a short period. If such a demand spike coincides with a Red Sea reopening, the result could resemble a “2022-lite” scenario, with spot rates jumping to \$6,500–9,500 or higher within weeks. For shippers and forwarders, 2026 is not a year to predict rates—it is a year to prepare for sudden change. The illusion of stability may prove to be the most dangerous phase of the cycle. Building flexibility, diversifying routing options, and stress-testing supply chain strategies will matter far more than chasing the lowest possible freight number. 

**The biggest wildcard remains the Red Sea. Since late 2024, most carriers have bypassed Suez, taking longer Cape routes. If security improves and shipping returns suddenly, the market could gain 15–20 per cent effective capacity overnight.**

risk. The defining feature of 2026 is not low rates; it is volatility, and the speed at which pricing can shift from normal to extreme. The first structural driver is fleet growth. Around 1.4 million TEU of new container capacity is scheduled for delivery in 2026. However, this supply will not be evenly distributed. Much of the new tonnage is expected to be deployed

fleet is now over 20 years old, and accelerated decommissioning could absorb a significant portion of new deliveries. This structural attrition reduces the risk of a deep,



# Beyond High Growth: How India is becoming a balanced, resilient container market

In this conversation, **Sanjay Singh Kushwah, MD of Hapag-Lloyd India, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh**, notes India's container trade is moving toward steady, reliable growth supported by enhanced inland logistics, digital visibility, and integrated end-to-end supply chains.

By 2026, the country is poised to consolidate its position as one of the most dependable container markets among major emerging economies, even if it is not the fastest-growing in pure volume terms, notes Sanjay Kushwah of Hapag-Lloyd.

### A dependable growth story

Kushwah points out that India's container trade has been expanding at a steady 6–8 per cent annually, outpacing global container growth, which has hovered around 3–4 per cent. Strong macro-economic fundamentals underpin this momentum and are likely to sustain it over the medium term. In his view, India is emerging as a stable, long-term growth story rather than a volatile boom-and-bust market. From Hapag-Lloyd's perspective, export volumes are expected to grow at mid-single-digit rates, while imports are increasingly keeping pace, supported by rising domestic consumption and industrial demand.

This growing balance supports healthier round-trip economics and more predictable network planning for carriers. On the ground, Kushwah observes that customers and partners report improving lead times, more dependable inland connectivity, and a broader range of routing options. These developments give supply-chain stakeholders greater flexibility to serve end markets efficiently and to diversify their logistics strategies without sacrificing reliability.

**Shifting trade lanes and resilient flows**  
Geopolitics, near-shoring, and China-plus-

one strategies are reshaping global trade lanes, but he argues that India's rise is being powered as much by incremental diversification as by any large-scale relocation of supply chains. Global manufacturers are not abandoning existing hubs overnight; instead, they are steadily adding India into their sourcing and production footprints. This gradual but firm integration supports consistent export growth, increasingly matched by import demand driven by rising per-capita

especially on long-haul East–West trades where geopolitical tensions can disrupt routing and transit times. However, he believes these shocks are unlikely to alter the fundamentally positive trajectory of India's container flows.

### Beyond the berth: evacuation and inland gaps

Operationally, Kushwah stresses that the biggest challenges by 2026 are likely to lie beyond the quay. The more pressing issue, he says, is inland evacuation and logistics. Rail capacity, last-mile road connectivity, and coordination between ports, ICDs, and logistics providers are not always keeping pace with volume growth. Dedicated Freight Corridors are a major positive step, but their full benefits will be realised only when last-mile rail links and inland terminals are fully aligned and scaled. dwell times, equipment imbalances, and in-

**By 2026, Indian exporters and importers are expected to mirror global trends in demanding reliability, visibility, and integrated end-to-end solutions.**

incomes and expanding consumption. Through a mix of supply-chain diversification and proactive engagement via free trade and bilateral agreements, India is positioning itself as a multi-lane participant in global trade. Kushwah remains realistic about risks. Volatility will persist, es-

consistent service reliability inland can offset improvements in quay productivity. He argues for a sharper focus on faster and more reliable rail evacuation, better last-mile road access, and stronger digital coordination across ports, railways, customs, and logistics stakeholders to make the system genuinely seamless. Customers demand reliability and visibility By 2026. Indian exporters and importers are expected to mirror global trends in demanding reliability, visibility, and integrated end-to-end solutions. 

# Reimagining Alang

## Why India must build next generation of ship recycling

In this op-ed, **Dhruv Kotak, Managing Director of the J M Baxi Group**, says that India's ship recycling industry must move beyond incremental improvements toward future-ready, shared infrastructure. By modernising Alang with EU-compliant facilities, India can safeguard its global leadership, capitalise on the coming recycling super-cycle, and emerge as a sustainable, integrated maritime hub.



India's ship recycling industry has reached an inflection point. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in improving safety standards, environmental practices, and regulatory compliance. Yet, as global expectations continue to rise, it is increasingly clear that incremental upgrades alone will not be enough. What India now needs is a fundamentally new approach to ship recycling and repair, anchored in future-ready infrastructure.

At the heart of this opportunity lies Alang, the world's largest ship recycling hub. Alang has long been the backbone of India's recycling dominance, supported by a deep ecosystem of skilled labour, steel re-rolling mills, traders, and maritime service providers. This cluster has evolved organically over decades and remains unmatched globally. However, structural limitations in yard design and access are beginning to constrain Alang's ability to attract the highest-value vessels. The challenge stems from the widening gap between international regulatory frameworks. While the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships sets a global baseline, the EU Ship Recycling Regulation demands significantly higher levels of

**Alang has long been the backbone of India's recycling dominance, supported by a deep ecosystem of skilled labour, steel re-rolling mills, traders, and maritime service providers. This cluster has evolved organically over decades and remains unmatched globally.**

infrastructure control, certification, and environmental assurance. Many Indian yards comply with the former but struggle to meet the latter at scale, not due to lack of intent or capability, but because the physical layout of existing facilities was never designed for such requirements.

The solution does not lie in replicating more of the same. India must think bigger. Purpose-built, common-use maritime infrastructure is needed, including engineered slipways, deepened and dredged access channels, controlled ship-lift systems, and integrated waste-handling facilities. Such assets would allow vessels to be processed in a fully contained and auditable environment, giving global shipowners confidence while preserving India's cost and labour advantages. Crucially, this transformation should be additive, not disruptive. Alang's ecosystem remains its greatest strength. With the right shared infrastructure, the region can evolve into a multi-purpose maritime hub supporting ship recycling, ship repair, lay-up berths, and even limited modular shipbuilding. This would create a true circular economy, where steel users such as JSW, recyclers, and shipping lines operate within a single, integrated value chain. The stakes are high. Global shipping companies, including



Maersk, are already exploring alternative recycling destinations in the Middle East. Many of these locations still depend heavily on Indian labour and expertise, raising questions about efficiency and value retention. Without EU-compliant capacity at home,

India risks exporting both opportunity and influence. With a ship recycling super-cycle likely over the next 10 to 15 years, driven by ageing fleets and decarbonisation pressures, the timing could not be more critical. If India

acts decisively now, aligning infrastructure investment with emerging shipbuilding and ship repair policies, Alang can move from being the world's largest recycling yard to becoming the global benchmark for sustainable ship recycling and repair. 

## What is EU Ship Recycling Regulation

EU Ship Recycling Regulation (EU SRR) was adopted in 2013 and forms part of EU environmental law governing the dismantling of ships. It entered into force in stages and is largely operational for large commercial vessels as of end-2020/early 2021.

### Main Objectives

- Reduce negative impacts on human health and the environment during ship

recycling.

- Ensure safety for workers in ship recycling facilities (yards).
- Limit hazardous substances used on ships and ensure they are accounted for before recycling.
- Implement and build on the IMO's Hong Kong International Convention for safe and environmentally sound ship recycling.

### Key Requirements

- Ships over 500 GT must carry an Inventory of Hazardous Materials (IHM)
- The IHM lists hazardous substances on board (like asbestos, PCBs, PFOS) and their locations.
- EU-flagged ships have been required to hold a certified IHM since 31 December 2020.

*A Merry Time for Maritime*





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# Changing customer expectations: Dependability of operations

In this interview, **Dushyant Mulani, Director, Khimji Poonja Freight Forwarders Pvt. Ltd.**, shares his perspective on India’s evolving trade outlook, key logistics bottlenecks, and the strategic priorities shaping the sector as it moves toward 2026.

**India is projected to be among the fastest-growing trading nations globally. At the same time, we are seeing rising tariff barriers from the US and other countries. How do you view India’s position today?**

India is currently facing one of its toughest phases in global trade. The imposition of tariff and non-tariff barriers by the US and several other nations has forced Indian trade and industry to rethink their strategies. If India wants to remain competitive and build on its position as the world’s fourth-largest economy, efficiency and competitiveness will have to improve at any cost. This transformation is no longer optional—it is essential. Despite global headwinds, the freight forwarding and logistics sector in India continues to show a healthy CAGR. Indian logistics players must adapt to the evolving world order, explore new markets, and respond proactively to geopolitical and trade disruptions.

**What will customers expect most from freight forwarders and logistics players in 2026?**

The single most important expectation will be dependability and reliability of operations. Vessel schedules, airline routings, and transit times are being constantly realigned due to geopolitical disruptions. Customers will closely evaluate how Indian forwarders respond to such disruptions and how agile their contingency planning is. Another critical expectation will be digital capability. A large part of the Indian forwarding industry is still lagging in digital adoption. Customers now expect real-time visibility—not just on rates, but on cargo movement, documentation, and

exception management. **Despite strong growth, Indian logistics remains structurally constrained. What are the biggest bottlenecks, especially in Exim logistics?**

One of the biggest bottlenecks is the lack of a trust-based regulatory environment. Differences in interpretation between exporters, importers, and regulatory agencies—whether under Customs or GST—often lead to penalties and prolonged litigation. As an industry federation, we have consistently appealed to the government to move toward a trust-based framework where

would significantly reduce costs, improve predictability, and enhance India’s global competitiveness.

**How do geopolitical disruptions and the changing global order affect trade planning today?**

The global institutions that once governed trade multilaterally now have limited influence. Going forward, global trade will increasingly be shaped by bilateral agreements, regional trade blocs, and country-specific arrangements. Meticulous groundwork before entering any trade lane will be critical.

**Finally, what should be the top strategic priorities for Indian logistics and trade stakeholders in 2026?**

There are three clear priorities:

1. Creating a trust-based working environment: Unless trust is restored at the grassroots level between trade and regulatory authorities, India will continue to face inefficiencies and uncertainty.
2. Improving efficiency through defined timelines: Setting and enforcing timelines across customs clearance and logistics operations will reduce costs, enhance reliability, and improve global competitiveness.
3. Accelerating digitalisation and transparency: Adoption of digital platforms, AI tools, and standardized processes is critical. 

**If India wants to remain competitive and build on its position as the world’s fourth-largest economy, efficiency and competitiveness will have to improve at any cost.**

genuine interpretational disputes are not treated as violations. Another major constraint is the absence of statutory timelines for customs clearance and logistics processes. Clear, enforceable timelines for each stage of export and import operations



# From ports to networks: Mapping India's next phase of container growth

In this conversation, **Pavithran M. Kallada, MD of PSA India**, highlights that India's 8 per cent container growth depends on trade corridors, hinterland connectivity, network efficiency, and coordinated infrastructure with clear policies.

## Throughput growth and new trade corridors

Pavithran notes that India's container throughput is on track to grow at around 8 per cent through 2026, a pace he sees as a structural, not cyclical, trend. "This reflects the country's broad economic momentum and the significant headroom for further containerisation across industries," he explains. Strong infrastructure investment and consistent policy support for ports are driving a rapid expansion in terminal capacity across the country. He believes the next phase of growth will be powered by shifting supply chains and emerging trade corridors. As global supply chains re-align in response to evolving trade agreements, regional manufacturing hubs in India are gaining prominence and pushing more cargo into the container system. At the same time, rising trade between India and new markets in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa is opening fresh lanes that will define "the next chapter of India's container story," he says.

## Capacity, utilisation, and the utilisation challenge

With a wave of new capacity being added, is India headed toward overcapacity by 2026? Pavithran's answer is nuanced. "The real challenge is uneven utilisation," he says, pointing to gateway-specific infrastructure gaps and variable hinterland connectivity as key constraints. Some terminals enjoy strong evacuation and rail links; others are held back by bottlenecks beyond the gate. From a terminal operator's standpoint, he stresses that capacity must be calibrated to captive demand, transshipment potential, and the pace at which hinterland infrastructure comes onstream. At PSA Mumbai, located at JNPA,

he points out that the expansion from 2.4 million TEUs to 4.8 million TEUs is backed by robust West Coast demand, rising containerisation, and improving connectivity via the Dedicated Freight Corridors. "The focus is really on sequencing capacity and evacuation," he says, "balancing near-term demand cycles while building for long-term growth."

## From terminal productivity to network velocity

As vessels grow larger and call sizes increase,

terminals. The true differentiator, he says, will be how effectively a terminal performs as a node within a wider logistics network. What will matter most is network velocity—how quickly cargo moves across connected nodes, from vessel to yard, gate, rail, inland container depots, and finally to the consumer. Metrics such as container dwell time, predictability of truck turnaround, and reliability of rail slots will increasingly define competitiveness as vessel and call sizes grow. He sees India still having room to catch up with leading global hubs in terms of node-to-node integration beyond the terminal gate. Better coordination between ports, rail operators, ICDs, and city logistics, together with stronger data visibility across the ecosystem, will be critical. "Quay-side productivity alone cannot absorb downstream friction," he cautions. For PSA, the next productivity leap lies in "ecosystem orchestration"—using automation, advanced

## As global supply chains continue to re-align and adjust to evolving trade agreements between countries, key growth drivers like the development of regional manufacturing and the rise of trade between India and new markets in Asia, Middle East and Africa will propel the next chapter of India's container story.

traditional productivity metrics are also evolving. "By 2026, productivity will be measured at the ecosystem level, not just at the terminal," Mr. Pavithran argues. Berth productivity remains a basic hygiene metric, but it is no longer the main constraint for leading

planning systems, and shared digital platforms to synchronise terminals, shipping lines, rail, and trucking into a more seamless whole.

## Evacuation bottlenecks and hinterland focus

Asked about the biggest bottlenecks limiting smooth cargo evacuation today, Mr. Pavithran is clear: the constraint is no longer port capacity, but efficient cargo flow to and from the port. 



# Forwarders need to become holistic supply chain orchestrators

In this conversation, **Dr. Sharmila Amin, Managing Director of Bertling Logistics**, says India's logistics in 2026 is growing rapidly but constrained by infrastructure, skills, and digital gaps, demanding strategic, integrated, and sustainable solutions.

Dr. Sharmila Amin views India's freight forwarding and logistics market as entering a structural inflection point by 2026, with volumes surging at high single- to low double-digit rates fueled by manufacturing relocation, infrastructure growth, and consumption-driven imports. She anticipates strong containerized exports in engineering goods, chemicals, pharma, and electronics, alongside project cargo and air freight, with key trade lanes expanding in India-EU/US, Middle East-Africa, ASEAN, and Central Asia via new FTAs.

In reflecting on how shipper needs are evolving, Dr. Amin noted that by 2026 freight booking will be reduced to a basic, commoditised function, with customers expecting forwarders to step up as holistic supply chain orchestrators rather than transactional service providers. According to her, customers will look for clear sustainability metrics, including carbon reporting and greener routing options, alongside integrated solutions that bring together freight, warehousing, customs, and last-mile delivery. This shift, she emphasised, is reshaping the traditional forwarding model into one where digitally enabled, consultative partners are embedded within customers' supply chains, co-owning outcomes rather than just moving cargo.

Speaking of the structural constraints facing Indian logistics, Dr. Amin observed that, despite visible progress, several deep-rooted bottlenecks continue to hold back the competitiveness of Indian freight forwarders. She pointed to persistent port inefficiencies and congestion at key gateway ports, gaps in inland connectivity including rail evacuation and first- and last-mile road quality, and the ongoing complexity of documentation

and customs processes even after multiple digital initiatives. She also highlighted capacity volatility in both ocean and air freight, fragmented digital systems across stakeholders, and a severe shortage of talent and skills, particularly in mid-management and specialised logistics roles. In her view, the most urgent priorities are simplifying customs and documentation, achieving seamless integration between ports, rail, and roads, and investing in workforce upskilling and professionalisation. In her assessment, Dr. Amin stresses that India's logistics story is one of strong growth constrained by stubborn structural weaknesses rather than a simple shortage of demand. She argues that freight for-

and documentation processes collectively erode competitiveness and reliability. On top of this, she notes that volatility in ocean and air freight capacity makes planning difficult, while fragmented digital systems across ports, carriers, and government platforms prevent the seamless data flows that modern supply chains require. For India to convert sheer scale and rising trade volumes into a durable competitive edge, she believes three areas need urgent, coordinated attention: deep simplification of customs and documentation, genuine multimodal integration between ports, rail, and roads, and sustained investment in workforce upskilling and professionalisation so that human capabilities keep pace with infrastructure and digital upgrades. Dr. Amin acknowledged that while margin pressure is intensifying, it is also forcing a much-needed strategic reset in how forwarders build their businesses for 2026. She outlined a set of clear priorities: investing in digitalisation with purpose to enhance visibility, analytics, and predictive decision-making rather than just adding tools; expanding the network selectively in line with real trade corridors instead of chasing a cosmetic global footprint; and doubling down on contract logistics and integrated supply chain solutions that lock in deeper, longer-term cus-

## Relevance in 2026 will belong to those who move beyond freight forwarding to become trusted architects of resilient, compliant, and sustainable supply chains.

warders operate within an ecosystem where congested and inefficient gateway ports, patchy inland connectivity, and cumbersome customs

tomor relationships. Ultimately, she argued, relevance in 2026 will belong to those who move decisively beyond traditional freight forwarding to become trusted architects of resilient, compliant, and sustainable supply chains for their customers. 



# Seafarer welfare to sanctions: Foreseeing 2026 maritime shifts

**Capt. Hari Subramaniam, Chief Commercial Officer, Howden Group's Marine, Cargo & Logistics, says 2026 volatility in geopolitics, climate, cyber and markets is reshaping insurance, boosting demand for expert brokers, collaboration, crew wellbeing and pragmatic cover.**

## A Dynamic Risk Landscape in 2026

Subramaniam's move to Howden raised eyebrows in the industry, but he highlighted the firm's edge: a team of specialists spanning maritime, cyber, natural resources, climate resilience, and LNG markets. Aligning with David Howden's vision of building "the biggest small business" in insurance, the focus remains on client-centric, value-driven service. Looking to 2026, he described a fluid risk environment driven by persistent factors like geopolitical conflicts, climate instability, cyber vulnerabilities, and digitalisation losses—echoing discussions at the IUMI conference in Singapore in November 2025. While these spur robust insurance innovations, they risk overly restrictive policies, higher costs, and broader exclusions. Economic pressures compound this: falling interest rates, easing inflation, volatile currencies, softening oil prices, and stalled investments in sectors like offshore wind. An aging global fleet is fueling high-value claims from groundings, vessel fires, and war risks. Subramaniam stressed the value of expert brokers with claims specialists and technical advisors to secure pragmatic, cost-effective coverage.

## Emerging Risks: Sanctions and Cyber in the Spotlight

From his perspective across shipowners, insurers, and regulators, Subramaniam cautioned against complacency on sanctions and cyber risks. Though currently manageable, their potential for severe business disruption looms larger, urging rigorous compliance checks and cyber protocols. He advised consulting brokers for tailored risk manage-

ment and protection. Traditional operational claims persist amid an aging fleet and ecosystem shifts, but relentless efforts to minimize human-error incidents offer hope for reductions.

## Seafarer Wellbeing as a Risk Mitigator

Safety, crew welfare, and human factors now dominate risk dialogues. Subramaniam views seafarer wellbeing initiatives positively: they sharpen focus, cut accidents, and align with the "prudent uninsured" principle in

es, and geopolitical uncertainty are reshaping operations. Subramaniam noted that operational due diligence must adapt to safeguard people, environment, and property. However, fundamental reinterpretations of liability, force majeure, and due diligence in contracts and policies hinge on evolving admiralty law and case precedents—a gradual process. Any 2026 changes would stem from that year's judgments, with outcomes unpredictable.

## The Imperative for Collaboration

Subramaniam foresaw structural ecosystem changes by 2026, with collaboration among shipowners, insurers, regulators, and bodies becoming essential amid curveballs like the IMO's postponed Net Zero Framework at the October 2025 MEPC meeting. Climate realities demand unity. Asia, home to vast seafaring and shipping nations, holds pivotal in-

**If there is anything we have learned over the years, it is that collaboration and partnerships between the various key players in the maritime ecosystems is the only way towards a better future.**

marine insurance. While not slashing premiums directly, such steps enhance insurers' risk assessments, potentially improving underwriting and claims outcomes.

## Geopolitical Shifts and Contractual Evolution

Rerouting, longer voyag-

fluence despite varying developmental paces. Singapore leads inspiringly through the MPA's National Maritime Safety at Sea Council, industry workgroups, regional initiatives, and IMO advocacy—pioneering climate and tech advancements. As a proud Singaporean tied to MPA efforts, Subramaniam underscored its global example. 



# Innovation, infrastructure and exports:

## The new agenda for Indian freight forwarding in shipping

### India's consumption-led logistics push

India's vast consumption capacity is now central to how the country is planning its logistics and infrastructure story. Flagship frameworks such as the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan and Maritime India Vision 2030 are explicitly built around servicing this domestic demand while simultaneously positioning India as a competitive export and maritime hub. With global supply chains pursuing "China plus one" and "India plus one" strategies, and multinational manufacturers and logistics players expanding their footprint in the country, the road ahead for the logistics and freight forwarding ecosystem appears structurally promising.

### Integrated, multimodal infrastructure

Crucially, policy thinking is no longer siloed. Under PM Gati Shakti and the National Logistics Policy, the emphasis is on an integrated backbone that connects ports, industrial clusters, markets, and hinterlands through a combination of port enhancements, multimodal logistics parks, dedicated freight corridors, and upgraded last-mile road infrastructure. Maritime India Vision 2030 adds a clear maritime and inland water dimension to this picture, with a strong push for port modernisation, coastal shipping, and riverine connectivity as part of a broader Blue Economy strategy.

### Public-private alignment and investment

Within this policy architecture, the "public domain" around logistics has never been more active. Government programmes are increasingly structured to invite private participation, whether through public-private partnerships

In this conversation, **Anoop Chauhan, Group CEO and Executive Director of CCI Group**, highlights that India's 2026 logistics strategy emphasizes integrated infrastructure, balanced exports, multimodal connectivity, digitalisation, and resilient, innovation-driven freight and warehousing ecosystems

in port terminals, multimodal logistics parks, and warehousing zones, or through alignment with digital platforms under the National Logistics Policy. The real test lies in how effectively private freight forwarders, third-party logistics providers, warehouse developers, and investors choose to align with

ensuring that the joint initiatives of the state and industry reach their full potential.

### Rebalancing India's export geography

Export geography remains a critical pressure point. A small cluster of coastal states—Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat—bears a disproportionate share of India's export load, together accounting for well over 60 per cent of merchandise exports by value. Gujarat alone contributes close to 30 per cent, followed by Maharashtra at roughly 17 per cent and Tamil Nadu at about 13 per cent, leaving

**Innovation sits at the heart of this transition. Many of the developments that are often labelled as "disruptions"—from digital freight platforms and automated warehouses to green corridors and alternative fuels—are in reality responses to new expectations around speed, transparency, sustainability, and cost.**

these formal initiatives instead of operating on the margins. Indian investors and organisations have an opportunity to move beyond pure service provision and become co-creators of assets and ecosystems,

the rest of the country significantly under-represented in outbound trade. A more resilient and balanced export mechanism will require deliberate planning to spread manufacturing and export capacity into other states by leveraging emerging ports, new industrial and freight corridors, and logistics clusters beyond this established triad. 

# Trends to watch in shipping and logistics in 2026

In 2026, the winners will be those who design supply chains to absorb volatility, invest in people and data alongside assets, and quietly build systems that can bend without breaking.

As the global shipping and logistics industry moves into 2026, the operating environment is no longer defined by a single disruptive event, but by a convergence of slower growth, higher complexity and deeper structural change. After years of pandemic shocks, congestion cycles and rate volatility, the next phase will reward resilience, adaptability and disciplined execution rather than scale alone.

**Moderate demand and uneven capacity** will shape freight markets in the year ahead. Global trade growth is expected to remain positive but subdued, with low single-digit expansion across most corridors. While new vessel deliveries will add significant capacity in container shipping, demand growth is unlikely to keep pace, creating pressure on rates and service stability. At the same time, regional disruptions such as Red Sea diversions and port congestion will continue to distort capacity availability lane by lane, making network-specific management more critical than headline market indicators.

**Execution over ambition** will be a defining theme for maritime infrastructure and logistics development. Across ports, terminals and hinterland connectivity, the focus is shifting from announcing capacity to ensuring that cargo follows. Infrastructure alone does not generate volumes. Successful

**Domestic demand remains the key growth engine. Improved purchasing power, a stable labour market outlook, and supportive fiscal and monetary policies are expected to broaden the consumption recovery.**

ports and corridors in 2026 will be those that align manufacturing clusters, trade policies, multimodal connectivity and operational efficiency to create predictable and sustainable cargo flows.

**Digitalisation moves from experimentation to necessity.**



Real-time visibility, electronic documentation and online booking are becoming baseline requirements. The next challenge lies in integration and data quality. Artificial intelligence and advanced analytics will increasingly be applied to forecasting, routing, asset utilisation and emissions tracking, but their effectiveness will depend on clean, interoperable data

and strong governance. For many operators, 2026 will be less about deploying new platforms and more about making existing systems work together.

**Decarbonisation becomes a design constraint rather than a long-term aspiration.**

With regulations tightening in Europe and emissions reporting expanding globally, carbon is increasingly a cost and compliance factor in daily decision-making. Fleet optimisation, fuel flexibility, speed management and smarter planning will be essential to balance service, cost and sustainability objectives. Rather than a single solution, flexible decarbonisation strategies tailored to vessel type, trade and fuel availability will gain prominence.

**Finally, warehousing and fulfilment are emerging as strategic infrastructure.**

Automation, multi-node distribution networks and closer integration between storage and transport planning are reshaping how inventory supports trade and e-commerce growth.

In 2026, the winners will be those who design supply chains to absorb volatility, invest in people and data alongside assets, and quietly build systems that can bend without breaking. 

# Top 10 shipbuilding trends shaping 2026 and beyond

This article highlights how, by 2026, shipbuilding competitiveness is shifting toward AI, digitalisation, green fuels, and resilient designs that enable compliant, flexible, future-ready vessels.

The global shipbuilding industry is entering a decisive transition phase as digitalisation, decarbonisation, and advanced manufacturing reshape how vessels are designed, built, and financed. By 2026 and beyond, competitiveness will depend less on low construction cost and more on long term compliance, operational flexibility, and asset resilience.

## 1 Artificial Intelligence integration

AI is becoming central to ship design, construction planning, and operations. With Chinese yards commanding the majority of global tonnage, competing builders are adopting predictive analytics, computer vision, and location intelligence to improve safety, manage congestion, and reduce fuel consumption. AI supported navigation and decision tools are already demonstrating measurable reductions in near miss incidents and operating costs.

## 2 Smart shipyards and digital transformation

Digital twins, IoT platforms, and 5G enabled networks are increasingly standard in modern yards. These tools address labour shortages, improve build accuracy, and shorten project timelines. Drone inspections, augmented reality supported surveys, and cloud-based design platforms are streamlining construction and lifecycle management.

## 3 Advanced materials adoption

Lightweight composites, aluminium alloys, and next generation coatings are gaining traction as shipbuilders seek lower fuel consumption and longer asset life. The focus is shifting toward recyclable materials, nano coatings, and circular design principles that reduce lifecycle emissions and maintenance intensity.

## 4 Robotics and automation

Automated welding, painting systems, and autonomous guided vehicles are improving productivity and workplace safety. Robotics is also enabling additive manufacturing of structural and functional components, increasing precision while reducing build time.

## 5 Autonomous vessels and smart navigation

Progress in AI navigation, sensor fusion, and remote operations is accelerating the move toward autonomous and semi-autonomous vessels. Ongoing trials and regulatory development are

laying the foundation for wider deployment in deep sea and coastal trades.

## 6 Alternative fuels and green shipbuilding

Methanol, LNG, ammonia, and electric propulsion are driving a fundamental shift in ship design. Newbuilds increasingly feature fuel flexible specifications, energy saving devices, and readiness for future emissions technologies, including onboard carbon capture.

## 7 Modular ship design and construction

Modular construction is improving build speed and flexibility, allowing yards to deliver mission specific vessels with reduced dock time. This approach is gaining traction in both commercial and strategic shipbuilding programmes.

## 8 Immersive technologies

AR and VR are transforming training, maintenance, and design validation. Virtual simulations reduce errors early in the design phase, while real time AR support improves inspection quality and remote collaboration.

## 9 Cybersecurity by design

As ships become more connected, cybersecurity is moving from an IT issue to a core safety and compliance requirement. Regulations and industry standards are accelerating adoption of advanced threat detection, secure system architecture, and continuous monitoring.

## 10 Additive manufacturing integration

On demand 3D printing is reducing spare part lead times and supporting operational resilience. Advances in metal, wire arc, and composite printing are enabling durable, mission critical components to be produced closer to the point of use.

### Outlook for 2026

Shipbuilding in 2026 will be defined by optionality and transition readiness. Owners are ordering fewer but more capable vessels that can adapt to regulatory change, fuel uncertainty, and evolving trade patterns. The emphasis is firmly on building ships that remain compliant, financeable, and commercially relevant for decades.

### Shipbuilding in 2026 will be defined by optionality and transition readiness. Owners are ordering fewer but more capable vessels that can adapt to regulatory change, fuel uncertainty, and evolving trade patterns.

# Top 2026 trends in cruise shipping: Bigger, smarter and more sustainable

Shipbuilding competitiveness is shifting toward AI, digitalisation, green fuels, and resilient designs that enable compliant, flexible, future-ready vessels.

Cruise shipping is entering 2026 with renewed confidence and a sharper sense of direction. After a strong recovery phase, the industry is now shifting focus from simply rebuilding demand to redefining the cruise experience through technology, sustainability, destination strategy and new revenue models. For ports, tourism bodies and maritime stakeholders, the next year will be shaped by how cruise lines balance growth with responsibility and operational efficiency.

## 1 Sustainability moves from messaging to measurable action

Decarbonisation is no longer a “future plan” for cruise operators—it is becoming a competitive necessity. In 2026, more cruise lines will accelerate investments in LNG-powered vessels, shore power readiness, energy-efficient hull designs, and hybrid solutions that reduce fuel burn. There will also be stronger emphasis on emissions reporting, waste management, and water treatment systems, especially as European and North American regulations tighten. Ports offering shore power and green infrastructure will gain a clear advantage in attracting premium calls.

## 2 Shore power and port partnerships become critical

Cruise lines are increasingly choosing itineraries based on port readiness. In 2026, we will see deeper collaboration between cruise operators, port authorities and city administrations to improve passenger flow, terminal experience, security, and sustainability compliance. Ports will also invest in better turnaround efficiency, digital clearance systems and improved last-mile connectivity to tourist hubs. For emerging cruise destinations in Asia and the Middle East, port-led cruise ecosystem development will be a major focus.

## 3 Smaller ships and ‘destination-rich’ itineraries gain popularity

While mega-ships continue to dominate headlines, 2026 will also see strong growth in mid-sized and expedition-style cruises. Travellers are seeking more immersive, culturally rich, and less crowded experiences. This will drive increased demand for new routes, secondary ports, and longer stays in fewer destinations. Boutique cruise brands and premium operators

will benefit, and ports that offer authentic local experiences will become more attractive.

## 4 Technology upgrades the onboard experience

Cruise ships are becoming floating smart cities. In 2026, expect wider use of AI-enabled customer service, facial recognition boarding, digital room keys, personalised onboard recommendations, and smarter crowd management systems.

Technology will also play a be-

hind-the-scenes role in predictive maintenance, fuel optimisation, and safety monitoring—helping operators reduce downtime and improve voyage efficiency.

## 5 The new luxury is wellness and experiences

Cruise passengers are spending more on wellness, curated

dining, entertainment, and destination experiences. The 2026 cruise product will be more lifestyle-driven, with greater focus on fitness, spa therapies, mental wellbeing, and premium shore excursions. This trend will also push cruise lines to partner more actively with local tourism providers, hospitality brands, and cultural institutions.

## 6 Asia’s cruise market expands steadily

Asia—including India—is expected to see rising cruise interest, supported by improving infrastructure, growing middle-class travel demand, and government-backed tourism promotion. Homeport development, regional circuits, and winter cruise itineraries will gain traction, opening opportunities for Indian ports to strengthen

their cruise readiness.

As cruise shipping evolves in 2026, the winners will be those who combine scale with sustainability, technology

with hospitality, and growth with destination responsibility. For the maritime ecosystem, cruise is no longer just tourism—it is a strategic growth segment shaping ports, cities and global shipping innovation. 



# Six predictions shaping the EV charging industry in 2026

EV charging in 2026 will scale more intelligently—driven by AI-led optimisation, ultra-fast and bidirectional charging, industry consolidation, service-based models, and the rise of integrated multi-fuel hubs.



The EV charging industry has moved far beyond the early stage of simply “adding chargers.” Over the past year, the sector has seen major progress—from faster deployment of charging infrastructure to smarter systems that manage energy, reduce costs, and improve reliability. As we enter 2026, the big question is no longer whether EV charging will scale, but how efficiently it will scale—and who will benefit most from the next wave of change. Here are six key predictions that will define the EV charging landscape in 2026, and what they mean for charging networks, fleet operators, fuel retailers, and convenience store businesses.



## AI Will Transform Energy Management

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a backbone technology across industries. Today, an estimated 80–90 per cent of organisations are already using AI in at least one business

function—and EV charging is now joining that shift. With charging demand rising and energy prices fluctuating, AI is emerging as a practical tool to make charging infrastructure more scalable, more reliable, and more profitable. One area where AI is already making a measurable impact is energy management—the ability to control how power is used, distributed, and paid for across charging sites. AI-enabled platforms can support operators by:

- Optimising charging schedules using demand forecasts, site constraints, and real-time usage patterns
- Reducing demand charges by controlling power draw during peak utility periods
- Balancing load intelligently to avoid overloading grid connections and to maximise available capacity
- Enabling dynamic pricing, aligned with time-of-use tariffs and utility signals

For large networks and fleets managing multiple sites, these capabilities reduce operating

costs while improving charger uptime and availability. When combined with onsite renewable energy and battery energy storage systems (BESS), AI can also coordinate power from multiple sources, making charging sites more resilient and efficient.



## Ultra-fast charging and next-gen batteries will become mainstream

Speed matters. As EV adoption grows, drivers expect charging to become as fast and convenient as refuelling a conventional vehicle—especially on highways and in commercial applications. That is why ultra-fast charging (350 kW+) is quickly gaining traction. These high-power systems allow compatible EVs to reach around 80 per cent state of charge in 15–20 minutes, making them ideal for long-distance travel and high-turnover charging locations. A strong sign of this trend: in the European Union, roughly 20

per cent of ultra-fast chargers already deliver 350 kW or more, showing that high-power charging is moving into the mainstream. At the same time, battery technology is evolving fast. Solid-state batteries and other advanced chemistries are expected to deliver faster charging cycles and higher power tolerance, which will raise the performance expectations placed on charging infrastructure. However, scaling ultra-fast charging is not simple. It requires stronger site power capacity, upgraded grid connections, and significant investment. Expanding electrical capacity can be expensive and slow—but this is where smart energy systems come in. Operators who combine ultra-fast charging with intelligent load management will be able to deliver high-speed charging without overspending on unnecessary upgrades, while maintaining uptime and a smooth customer experience.



### Bidirectional charging will unlock new revenue streams for fleets

Vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology is positioned to change the economics of EV charging—especially for fleets and commercial sites. Bidirectional charging allows EV batteries not only to draw power from the grid, but also to send stored energy back during peak demand periods. With the right energy management controls, fleets can monetise this capability through:

- Demand response programs
- Frequency regulation services
- Reserve capacity and other ancillary grid services

This shift turns EV batteries into mobile energy assets, enabling operators to generate recurring revenue while improving the business case for charging infrastructure. To clarify the ecosystem:

- V2G (Vehicle-to-Grid): EVs exchange power and data with the grid
- V2X (Vehicle-to-Everything): EVs interact with homes, infrastructure, and other systems
- V2H (Vehicle-to-Home): EVs power household loads during outages or peak demand

With growing regulatory support and utility partnerships, V2G participation is becoming more practical. Aggregating multiple sites can allow fleet operators to function like virtual power plants, optimising energy use across

locations and even selling energy back into the market. Beyond revenue, bidirectional charging improves operational resilience, supports renewables integration, and reduces risk during high-demand periods—making it one of the most commercially attractive trends for fleets in 2026.



### Consolidation and interoperability will create seamless charging

The EV charging market is still fragmented. Drivers often face a confusing mix of apps, accounts, memberships, payment systems, and inconsistent user experiences across networks. In 2026, the industry will move closer to a more unified experience through two forces: Consolidation Mergers, acquisitions, and strategic partnerships will increase as companies look to scale faster, expand regionally, and build end-to-end solutions. Interoperability The push for universal standards and roaming agreements will accelerate. Drivers will increasingly be able to access multiple networks without juggling different accounts and payment systems. For automakers and major charging networks, interoperability also reduces redundant investments and improves infrastructure utilisation. The result will be a more consistent charging experience—one that builds driver confidence and accelerates EV adoption.



### Charging-as-a-service will grow rapidly among fleets and retailers

Many commercial fleets and fuel retailers see EV charging as a strategic opportunity—but high upfront costs, operational complexity, and lack of in-house expertise can slow adoption. That is why Charging-as-a-Service (CaaS) is emerging as a game-changing model. Instead of buying and managing charging infrastructure themselves, site hosts can rely on a third-party provider to own, install, operate, and maintain the chargers, while the host pays through predictable subscription or usage-based fees.

**As EV adoption grows, drivers expect charging to become as fast and convenient as refuelling a conventional vehicle—especially on highways and in commercial applications.**

Key benefits include:

- Lower financial burden: shifts large CapEX into manageable OpEX
- Reduced risk: expert support during the EV transition
- Operational simplicity: site owners focus on their core business, not charger maintenance
- Faster scaling: expand charging without long delays or heavy investment

As electrification targets grow and more businesses seek predictable cost models, CaaS will become a preferred path for many fleets, retailers, and convenience store operators in 2026.



### Hydrogen and multi-fuel hubs will complement fleet EV charging

EV charging will dominate light-duty mobility—but for heavy-duty and long-haul operations, hydrogen is increasingly seen as a complementary option.

Battery-electric trucks are well-suited for shorter routes or where charging time is manageable. Hydrogen fuel-cell trucks, however, may be better for:

- Longer ranges
- High utilisation operations
- Applications where uptime is critical

This is driving the emergence of multi-fuel hubs—stations that offer EV charging, hydrogen refuelling, and conventional fuel pumps in one location.

In 2025, hybrid hubs started shifting from concept into implementation, and in 2026 this model will expand further. Multi-fuel hubs improve site economics by serving diverse vehicle types, optimising land use, and offering a “one-stop” refuelling solution for fleet operators.

For fuel retailers and convenience store operators, this is a strategic opportunity to future-proof locations, attract commercial customers, and maintain relevance as zero-emission fleets grow. 



**Ashutosh Jaiswal**  
CEO & Director, Century Ports

## 'KPD-1(W) bets on river-ready design and scalable infrastructure'

**→ What is the biggest advantage KPD-1(W) gives customers in terms of faster decision-making, service flexibility and long-term infrastructure scalability?**

The most immediate advantage we offer is speed. In a government-run port setup, decisions often get stuck in layers of administration. At KPD-1(W), we operate with a 'single-point' decision-making structure. If a client has a problem or a request, they don't have to wait weeks for a committee, they get an answer immediately.

On the infrastructure side, we currently have 2 container berths and 1 bulk berth. Within a year, we'll have 3 more berths (2 container berths and 1 bulk berth) allocated and we'll have them vessel-ready six months after that. To support this, we've also invested in a double-extended pad Mobile Harbour Crane (MHC) with an electric drive, the first of its kind. We are already in the final stages of adding a second MHC of the same specification to ensure our terminal remains one of the most efficient in the region. For bulk cargo, we've put in dedicated material handlers and a fully automated bagging and stitching system with twin hoppers.

**→ KPD-1(W) is designed around riverine trade and draft realities. What are the 2-3 operational features that make it more "river-ready" than conventional terminals?**

You have to respect the river's limits. KPD-1(W) is designed as a multipurpose terminal, which allows us to be versatile. We are already

handling bulk cargo like pulses and fertilizers quite effectively. While we share similar draft levels with the Netaji Subhas Dock (NSD), our terminal is optimized for the specific vessel profiles that navigate these waters. Even though we accommodate slightly smaller beam sizes and LOAs than NSD, our operational setup ensures that these vessels can turn around faster, making the river's natural constraints less of a hurdle for the cargo owner.

**→ With 848 metres of berth length across multiple berths and defined vessel limits, which vessel categories and cargo mixes are you best positioned to attract immediately?**

In Phase I, we have 416 metres of berth length, where we are already handling bulk cargo at Berth No. 2 and container traffic at Berths 4 and 6. These berths are perfectly suited for vessels with a beam size of up to 22.5 metres. As we move into Phase II, we will add another 432 metres, significantly expand our footprint and allow us to scale up our volume for both bulk and containerized trade simultaneously.

**→ You emphasise "real transparency, not buzzwords." Which customer-facing KPIs will you publish to demonstrate performance, such as berth productivity, gate turnaround, rail evacuation time, or truck turnaround time?**

We want to be judged on our actual performance. We want our customers to see exactly how their cargo is moving. To prove our

efficiency, we will regularly maintain three important KPIs: Berth Productivity, Gate Turnaround Time and Truck Turnaround Time.

**→ Many terminals claim strong connectivity. What makes your combination of CFS proximity, rail linkage and in-house trucking support a stronger end-to-end proposition than competing routes and terminals?**

We have an in-house fleet of 145 trailers, supplemented by 200 outsourced units. Also, our terminal is just 2.5 to 3 kilometres from our CFS, which drastically reduces transit time and the risk of delays.

Our new freight terminal has also been a big win since it opened in December '25. In the first month alone, we handled 17 rakes and we are on track to handle 26 rakes in January 2026. The link between the berth, the rail and the CFS creates a much tighter, more reliable loop for the customer.

**→ With planned capacity of 0.33 MTEU and 0.65 MMT, what is your 12-24-month ramp-up plan and how will Nepal-bound container rail movement feature in your volume growth strategy?**

Our goal is steady, sustainable growth. For Phase I, our capacity targets are 0.165 million TEUs and 0.33 million tonnes of bulk. We intend to hit 50 per cent of our volume capacity within the first year of operations and scale up to 80 per cent within 24 months. 

# Khidderpore Dock-I (West): Kolkata port's PPP game-changer

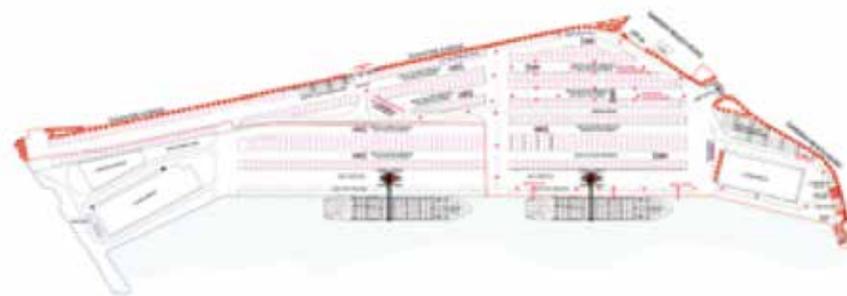
Century Ports Limited is modernising Kolkata Port's first PPP terminal, Khidderpore Dock-I (West), into a high-efficiency riverine cargo hub. With mechanised handling, digital systems and strong rail-road links, it cuts delays, boosts throughput and strengthens Eastern India's trade connectivity, including Nepal and Bhutan, setting a new regional benchmark.

Century Ports Limited (CPL) is at the helm of development and operations at the Khidderpore Dock-I (West) terminal at Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata. This marks the port's first Public-Private Partnership (PPP). As a subsidiary of Century Plyboards (India) Limited, CPL draws on strong financial backing and logistics know-how to upgrade the facility. The vision is straightforward: transform aging infrastructure into a modern, efficient cargo hub. KPD-1(W) will anchor Eastern India's logistics network and raise the bar for riverine ports. The mission targets quick, safe, sustainable operations through mechanised handling and smooth multimodal links, supporting trade to regions including Nepal and Bhutan. Riverine challenges like shallow drafts are real. CPL built the terminal for vessels up to 22.5 metres beam. This cuts transshipment costs and eliminates midstream delays for operators. Legacy terminals drag on vessel time with slow work, queues, and clunky yards. Not here. CPL invested in BS VI gear—Liebherr mobile harbor cranes, material handlers, automated bagging plants, ITVs, and key infrastructure. The payoff: faster turnarounds, better berth use, and higher vessel throughput. Containers



stay visible via a custom Terminal Operating System (TOS) for real-time tracking. Staff use rugged tablets and bodycams to keep operations tight. CFS options are close by—Sonai and JJP within 2.5 km. Rail connectivity runs through NSD yard and CPL's private terminal for seamless moves. Nepal imports get 20 free days post-LLD, matching NSD.

CPL handles trucking to NSD for rail loading once rakes are ready. Exports reverse the flow from NSD to terminal on confirmation—all via dedicated transport at no extra cost to users. This project positions Kolkata Port as a sharper trade enabler. It has set the blueprint and direction for the Eastern region, and aims to serve as a hotspot for the trade season.



**The mission targets quick, safe, sustainable operations through mechanised handling and smooth multimodal links, supporting trade to regions including Nepal and Bhutan.**



# 2026: The year logistics stops buying software and starts buying control

In this op-ed article, **Amit Maheshwari, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Softlink Global**, explains why 2026 will mark a decisive shift in logistics digitisation—from isolated tools to fully integrated systems.

**T**he logistics industry has spent years talking about digital transformation. In 2026, it will finally be forced to live it. Not as a collection of tools, but as a shift in how operations are run, decisions are made, and value is delivered across supply chains. From my vantage point, 2026 is shaping up to be a tipping point for Indian logistics, ports, and trade ecosystems because the industry is moving from tool-based digitisation to system-level thinking.

For too long, technology in logistics has been treated as a support function. A tracking platform here. A documentation portal there. A dashboard for management review. The result has been a fragmented landscape of standalone systems doing one job well but not talking to anything else. In many organisations, the same shipment data is still re-entered across freight, customs, billing, and compliance workflows. It wastes time, increases errors, and quietly undermines automation. By 2026, this will fade out. What will become mission-critical is a single operational backbone where shipment execution, documentation, compliance, and finance live together. Near real-time data flow across ports, carriers, agents, and customers will no longer be a “nice to have.” It will be the foundation for reliability, auditability, and predictability. In logistics, speed alone will not matter. Control will.

This is also why many digital and automation projects fail to scale today. The failure is rarely because of AI. Most projects fail because the



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base is weak. Poor data structure, inconsistent processes, and legacy systems that cannot integrate without expensive custom work continue to block progress. Add to this skills gap between operations teams and technology teams, and ROI discussions that focus only on cost saving rather than risk reduction and operational control, and the result is predictable. Many pilots look impressive in a demo, then stall in the real world.

The next two years will change enterprise technology decisions. Companies will invest less in shiny experiments and more in fixing the core. Platforms that can scale across branches, countries, and partners will win. Everything else will struggle to move beyond the first rollout.

Customer expectations have also matured. Today, customers are not demanding features. They are demanding outcomes. The top priorities are predictable operations with fewer escalations, faster cycle times without adding people, and clean financial visibility at shipment and customer level. Speed was once the loudest ask. Now accuracy, control, and compliance are rising fast, especially in cross-border trade.

For mid-size operators, the message is simple. Invest in a single core platform, build integration capability with the ecosystem, and automate real decision points. Stop spending on one-off tools, isolated AI apps, and spreadsheet-driven reconciliation. Global competitiveness will not come from size. It will come from how fast and cleanly you can execute end to end. 



# The next 12 months will redefine decision-making in shipping

**Kim Sørensen, CEO of StormGeo**, outlines shipping's AI inflection point, where generative AI boosts planning, safety, efficiency, emissions reduction and compliance—augmenting, not replacing, human judgement.

Shipping has always been an industry built on judgement—decisions made under pressure, with imperfect information, across oceans, time zones and constantly shifting conditions. But I believe the next 12 months will mark a clear inflection point in how decisions are made both at sea and ashore. We are entering a phase where generative AI will mature rapidly, and where autonomous AI agents—tools that can analyse situations, recommend actions and solve problems with minimal human intervention—will become



increasingly common in maritime operations. For shipping, this is not a futuristic concept. It is a practical evolution that will significantly enhance the accuracy of weather forecasting, strengthen voyage planning, and improve compliance outcomes. The impact will be felt most directly onboard vessels. Seafarers today manage an enormous number of routine, time-consuming decisions every day—many of them repetitive, procedural, and adminis-

trative in nature. Generative AI has the potential to automate a meaningful share of these tasks, freeing up time for higher-value work while also improving safety. When crews are less overloaded, they are more alert, more focused, and better positioned to respond to high-stakes situations when they arise. This shift is not only about convenience—it is about measurable performance. Traditional weather routing typically delivers fuel savings in the range of 1–3 per cent. With AI-powered variable speed optimisation, we can push those savings further—up to 5 per cent—by using more dynamic adjustments that better reflect real-world conditions and vessel-specific behaviour. In an industry where margins are tight and emissions targets are rising, these gains matter. At StormGeo, AI is already embedded into our core products and services.

**At StormGeo, AI is already embedded into our core products and services. We have recently rolled out AI-driven port analytics and machine-learning-based vessel performance predictions, developed through partnerships with innovators such as Awake.AI and Bearing AI.**

We have recently rolled out AI-driven port analytics and machine-learning-based vessel performance predictions, developed through partnerships with innovators such as Awake.AI and Bearing AI. We are also launching an AI-powered routing solution that automatically develops vessel routes based on each vessel's characteristics, cargo profile and operational constraints. None of this is possible without scale. Our data backbone processes between 15 and 20 terabytes of information daily, drawing from hundreds of observational feeds, model outputs and approximately 10,000 vessel reports from across the world. This volume and diversity of data allows AI to operate with context and precision—not as simple automation, but as real operational intelligence.

Let me be clear: AI will not replace human expertise. Shipping is a high-consequence industry. Human judgement will remain essential, and in critical situations, people must continue to have the final say. But there is no doubt that AI and machine learning will enable radical efficiency gains and significantly augment the work humans do. We are seeing a shift in mindset across the sector. Technology is no longer viewed only as a compliance requirement or a cost. It is increasingly seen as a partner and an enabler of competitiveness. That is the real transformation now underway—and the next year will prove it. 

# A new maritime energy map emerges in Europe

Europe's early lead in marine e-fuels, driven by Denmark and Spain, while policy support and offtake certainty remain vital; India is emerging.

A quiet but decisive shift is taking shape in the global push to decarbonise shipping. The momentum is not coming from Asia's mega shipyards or the Middle East's conventional fuel centres, but from a fast-moving European cluster building the supply backbone for next-generation marine fuels. Spain, Denmark, Norway and France are emerging as early leaders in green hydrogen and synthetic e-fuels that deep-sea shipping will increasingly need to meet 2030 milestones and achieve net-zero ambitions by 2050.

A recent update from Transport & Environment's shipping e-fuels observatory highlights the scale of Europe's pipeline. The region now has around 80 confirmed or announced projects covering green hydrogen, e-methanol, e-ammonia and e-methane. If these projects progress from planning to operation, they could deliver up to 3.6 million tonnes of oil equivalent of e-fuels by 2032. While this remains limited compared with today's global bunker demand, the strategic signal is clear. Supply is concentrating in specific locations, creating a new map of future maritime energy hubs.

Denmark stands out with the strongest pipeline, backed by multiple power-to-x initiatives spanning hydrogen and derivatives across sectors. Spain follows with a growing portfolio linked to its hydrogen valleys and major port ecosystems such as Algeciras and Bilbao. Norway and France have smaller overall volumes, but a higher share of their planned output is aligned to maritime consumption, reflecting a sharper focus on shipping needs. A major proof point has already arrived in Denmark. The Kassø e-methanol facility, developed by European Energy and Mitsui and inaugurated in 2025, is widely seen as the world's first large-scale commercial e-methanol plant. With part of its output tied to Mr Shailesh Garg's shipping demand through offtake arrangements supporting dual-fuel fleets, Kassø demonstrates that green e-fuels

are moving from concept to commercial reality. Yet the wider pipeline remains vulnerable. Only a small portion of announced capacity is primarily dedicated to shipping, and many projects remain at early stages. Developers face cost pressures, policy uncertainty and competition for renewable power and green hydrogen from other industries. Regulation will therefore be the decisive lever. The EU's FuelEU Maritime framework requires ships calling at European ports to progressively reduce

the greenhouse-gas intensity of the energy they use, but stronger demand signals and long-term offtake certainty are still needed to unlock investment at scale.

India's green fuels infrastructure is also gathering momentum, though it remains at an earlier stage. The National Green Hydrogen Mission targets 5 million tonnes per year of production by 2030, supported by renewable expansion, domestic electrolyser manufacturing and enabling infrastructure. Key ports such as Deendayal, V.O. Chidambaram and Paradip have been identified as green hydrogen hubs, and pilot projects at Kandla and Tuticorin signal early implementation. However, commercial-scale e-fuel plants and bunkering systems for deep-sea shipping are still evolving. For both Europe and India, the next few years will determine whether ambition becomes bankable capacity. 

**Spain, Denmark, Norway and France are emerging as early leaders in green hydrogen and synthetic e-fuels that deep-sea shipping will increasingly need to meet 2030 milestones and achieve net-zero ambitions by 2050.**



AI Generated Image



# Data quality and predictive intelligence: Why 2026 will be a watershed year for shipping

In 2026, shipping moves beyond basic digitalisation to AI-driven intelligence, with data quality, integration, and speed- defining competitiveness.

For much of the last decade, digitalisation in shipping was treated like an optional upgrade. A tracking platform here, an e-booking portal there, a few dashboards for leadership reviews. But the industry has now crossed a threshold. In 2026, digital tools are no longer differentiators. They are basic infrastructure. Real-time tracking, online documentation, electronic invoicing, and automated milestone visibility are quickly becoming standard across carriers, ports, freight forwarders, and logistics service providers. The question is no longer who has a platform. The real question is who has integration, usable intelligence, and reliable data underneath the system.

This is where the next phase of transformation is unfolding. Shipping is entering the era of practical AI and predictive analytics. Not as a buzzword, but as an operational necessity. Across the value chain, carriers, 3PLs and forwarders are embedding AI into forecasting, routing, pricing, and capacity planning. What used to be spreadsheet-based decision-making is now being replaced by continuously updated engines that learn from demand patterns, congestion signals, equipment availability, and customer behaviour. In a market

where rate volatility and geopolitical uncertainty can disrupt networks overnight, the ability to predict and respond early is becoming a commercial advantage.

Fleet and trucking operators are also becoming more data-driven. Telematics, route optimisation, and predictive maintenance are helping transporters squeeze

sation translate into big gains in profitability.

However, the biggest barrier to value creation in 2026 will not be technology adoption. It will be data quality. Many organisations still operate with fragmented systems, inconsistent shipment and customer data, and manual workarounds that quietly destroy automation. Different departments maintain different versions of the truth. Milestones do not match. Documentation is repeated. Visibility breaks down at handover points.

This is why investment is now shifting away from buying “new tools” and towards building the foundations: data governance, standard-

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more productivity out of every asset, reduce downtime, and improve turnaround time. In a tight logistics environment, small gains in utili-

isation, interoperability, and disciplined data capture. Because AI is only as good as the data it learns from. Predictive analytics is only as reliable as the inputs feeding the model. And visibility is only meaningful when the information is accurate and timely. 



AI Generated Image

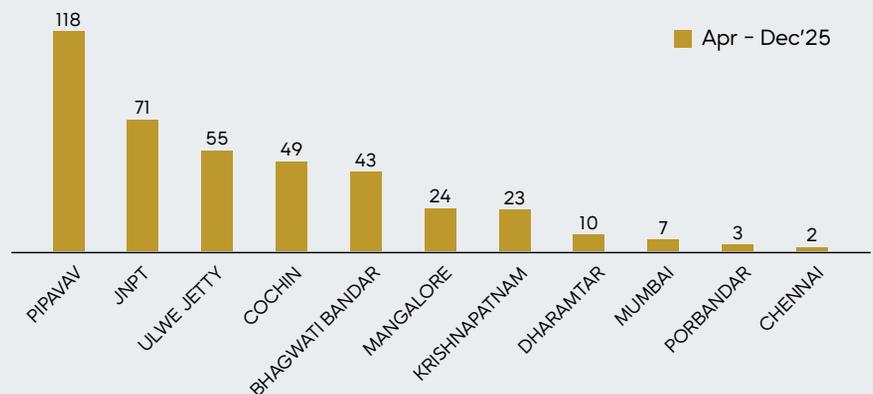
# Cement traffic at Indian ports shows steady growth

2026 global risks arise from a US AI asset bubble, China's export-led growth hiding domestic weakness, and backlash against Chinese dumping, partly offset by global deregulation boosting competitiveness and growth.

By Maritime Gateway Research Team

Indian ports recorded a healthy rise in cement traffic during April–December 2025, reflecting sustained demand from both domestic and regional markets. During the nine-month period, cement volumes handled at ports increased to 6.32 million metric tonnes (MMT), up from 5.68 MMT in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, underlining the sector's gradual recovery and expanding trade footprint. Pipavav Port emerged as the leading gateway for cement cargo, handling the high-

### Cement Vessel Calls on Indian Ports



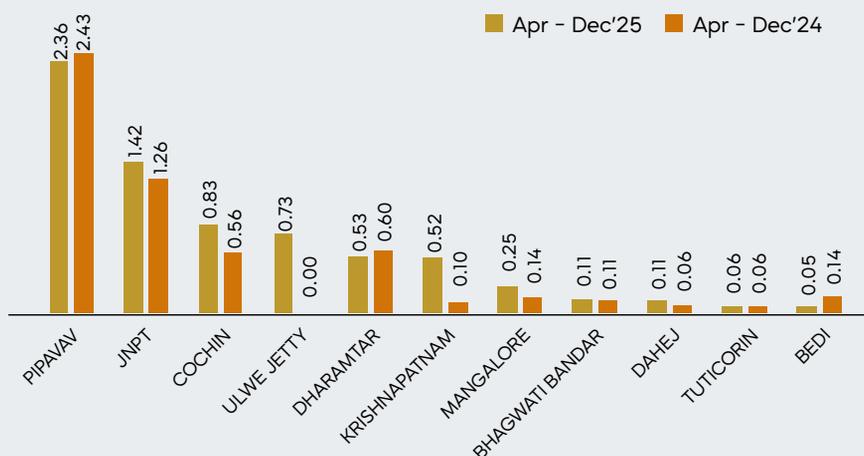
### Cement Traffic At Indian Ports (Quantity in MMT)

Ports	Apr-Dec'25	Apr-Dec'24	Y.O.Y Variance
PIPAVAV	2.36	2.43	-0.07
JNPT	1.42	1.26	0.16
COCHIN	0.83	0.56	0.27
ULWE JETTY	0.73	0.00	0.73
DHARAMTAR	0.53	0.60	-0.06
KRISHNAPATNAM	0.52	0.10	0.42
MANGALORE	0.25	0.14	0.11
BHAGWATI BANDAR	0.11	0.11	0.00
DAHEJ	0.11	0.06	0.05
TUTICORIN	0.06	0.06	0.00
BEDI	0.05	0.14	-0.09
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6.32</b>	<b>5.68</b>	<b>0.64</b>

### Cement Imports between Apr-Dec'25 (Quantity in MMT)

IMPORTERS	COASTAL	EXIM
ADANI CEMENT INDUS.	0.11	
AMBUJA CEMENT LTD.	0.20	
PENNA CEMENT INDUS. LTD.	0.35	
ULTRATECH CEMENT LTD.	2.14	
JSW GROUP	0.06	0.47
DIGVIJAY CEMENT CO. LTD.		0.05
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.87</b>	<b>0.52</b>

### Traffic of Cement on India Ports



### Cement Exports: Apr-Dec'25

Exporters	Coastal	Sri Lanka
AMBUJA CEMENT LTD.	0.08	
SAURASHTRA CEMENT LTD.	0.01	
PENNA CE- MENT INDUS. LTD.	0.39	0.04
ULTRATECH CEMENT LTD.	1.92	0.38
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2.40</b>	<b>0.42</b>

**Ultratech Cement played a dominant role in export and coastal trade. The company exported around 0.38 MMT of cement to Sri Lanka, reaffirming India's importance as a reliable supplier to neighbouring markets.**

est volume at 2.36 MMT during the period. Its strategic location and efficient coastal connectivity have strengthened its position as a preferred hub for bulk cement movements, particularly along India's western coastline. Ultratech Cement played a dominant role in export and coastal trade. The company exported around 0.38 MMT of cement to Sri Lanka, reaffirming India's importance as a reliable supplier to neighbouring markets. In addition, Ultratech facilitated 1.92 MMT of cement through coastal shipping, highlighting the growing reliance on coastal routes as a cost-effective and sustainable logistics option. On the import front, India witnessed a notable increase, with cement imports rising to 3.40 MMT during April-December 2025, compared with 2.98 MMT in the same period last year. Overall, the trends point to rising consumption, diversified trade flows and an expanding role for ports in supporting India's cement supply chain. 



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