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“Connecting Shores, Creating Opportunities.”

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Viksit Gujarat

Maritime, Logistics & Export Summit - 2026

"Connecting Shores, Creating Opportunities."

Inaugural Session

Industry, Government and Academia Converge in Ahmedabad to Advance Gujarat's Role in Viksit Bharat Vision



The Viksit Gujarat Maritime, Logistics & Export Summit 2026, jointly organised and managed by India Shipping News and the Knowledge Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) held on 27th February, 2026 at Hyatt - Vastrapur, Ahmedabad, brought together key stakeholders from government, industry, and academia to deliberate on strengthening India's trade and logistics ecosystem. The summit's inaugural session featured insightful addresses from distinguished leaders, outlining a progressive roadmap for Gujarat's maritime and export-led growth.



Shri Bharat Patel

In his inaugural address, **Shri Bharat Patel, Director General, Knowledge Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI)**, emphasized the importance of synergy between academia, government, and industry as the

three development. While acknowledging the growing influence of artificial intelligence, he underscored that shipping and logistics remain core sectors that cannot be replaced, with AI serving to enhance efficiency and operational excellence. Highlighting Gujarat's strong export ecosystem and coastal advantage, he pointed to the vital role of Deendayal Port in driving India's trade growth. Foundational pillars for sustainable



Shri Devang Joshi

Delivering the theme address, **Shri Devang Joshi, Chairman, Ahmedabad Custom Brokers' Association (ACBA)**, highlighted the transformative journey of Indian Customs from a

regulatory body to a proactive trade facilitator under the leadership of the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**. He emphasized key initiatives such as digitalisation, single-window clearance, & paperless processes that have significantly reduced dwell time and logistics costs. Referring to the role of industry bodies, he noted that ACBA, as part of the

national apex organization **Federation of Freight Forwarders' Associations in India (FFFAI)**, continues to actively support trade facilitation and policy feedback mechanisms. He stressed that achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 would require a collaborative, compliant, and growth-oriented trade ecosystem. feedback mechanisms. He stressed that achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 would require a collaborative, compliant, and growth-oriented trade ecosystem.



Shri Rajesh Menon

Sharing his insights, **Shri Rajesh Menon, Associate Director and Maritime Expert, Govt. of India** emphasized Gujarat's pivotal role in India's economic and maritime landscape, noting its significant contribution to GDP, industrial

output, and exports. He asserted that "Viksit Gujarat" is central to achieving "Viksit Bharat," supported by robust infrastructure and port-led growth, including initiatives like the **PM Gati Shakti**. He also highlighted the growing importance of integrating gender inclusion into logistics and policy frameworks.



Dr. Mangala Chouhan

In her special address, **Dr. Mangala Chouhan, Vice President, Baroda Management Association and Chairperson, Women Wing, Exim Club Vadodara**, highlighted the urgent need to increase women's participation in maritime, logistics,

and export sectors. She pointed out the current low representation of women across these industries and stressed that India's ambition to become a global economic powerhouse cannot be achieved without inclusive workforce participation. She called for greater awareness, mindset change, and effective implementation of policies aimed at women empowerment.



Shri Lokesh Damor

Shri Lokesh Damor, Additional Commissioner of Customs, Ahmedabad, reiterated Customs' evolving role as a trade facilitator in an increasingly globalised world. He emphasized that logistics is a

critical driver of connectivity, economic growth, and employment generation, particularly in a progressive state like Gujarat that is playing a leading role in India's development journey. He reaffirmed Customs' commitment to enabling seamless trade and supporting the vision of a Viksit Gujarat contributing to Viksit Bharat.



Capt. Santoshkumar Darokar

Delivering the keynote address -:

Capt. Santoshkumar Darokar, Joint Director General (Technical) and Principal Officer, Directorate General of Shipping, Government of

India, highlighted India's rich maritime heritage, tracing its legacy from ancient ports like **Lothal Dockyard** to modern port-led development. He elaborated on recent legislative reforms such as the Merchant Shipping Act 2025, and emphasized Gujarat's dominant role in maritime trade with its extensive coastline and port infrastructure. He further stressed the importance of digitalisation, maritime safety, workforce development, and enhanced participation of women, aligning these priorities with India's ambition to emerge as a leading global maritime power.



The Inaugural Session of the Summit underscored a unified vision where policy reforms, infrastructure development, technological advancement, and inclusive participation converge to strengthen India's trade ecosystem. With Gujarat at the forefront, the deliberations reaffirmed the state's critical role in driving the nation's journey towards becoming a developed economy by 2047.

Viksit Gujarat Maritime, Logistics & Export Summit - 2026

“Connecting Shores, Creating Opportunities.”

Session - I

Industry Leaders emphasize Green Shipping, Digital Integration, Coastal Connectivity and Infrastructure-Led Growth



The first technical session of the **Viksit Gujarat Maritime, Logistics & Export Summit 2026**, jointly organised and managed by **India Shipping News** and the **Knowledge Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI)**, witnessed a high-powered panel discussion on the theme “**Ports of the Future: Infrastructure, Investment & Global Integration.**” The session brought together policymakers, industry leaders, and academia to deliberate on the evolving role of ports as engines of economic growth and global trade enablers.



Shri Amit Oza

Moderating the session, **Mr. Amit Oza, Founder & CEO, Astramar Shipping & Trading Services**, set the tone by highlighting that ports are no longer mere transit hubs but have emerged as **critical nodes of global supply chains, catalysts for regional development, and drivers of economic**

transformation, with future growth hinging on smart infrastructure, sustainability, and global integration.



Shri Nilabhra Dasgupta, IRS

Sharing his perspective, **Shri Nilabhra Dasgupta, IRS, Deputy Chairman, Deendayal Port Authority**, emphasized India's growing maritime ambitions under policy frameworks such as Maritime India Vision 2030 and Amritkal

Vision 2047. He highlighted the strategic positioning of ports like Deendayal Port in global trade routes and outlined their emerging role in **green shipping ecosystems**, including development of green hydrogen, ammonia, and alternative fuels. He noted that India is well

poised to become a **global hub for green energy production and bunkering**, leveraging its geographic advantage and growing infrastructure.



Shri Rajesh Menon

Offering a policy perspective, **Shri Rajesh Menon, Associate Director & Maritime Expert associated with Government of India**, spoke about the impact of global shipping alliances on port competitiveness and supply chains. While alliances

improve operational reliability, he cautioned that they could pose challenges to India's ambitions of strengthening domestic shipping and transshipment capabilities. He emphasized the need for **policy resilience, infrastructure strengthening, and strategic autonomy** to reduce dependency on foreign hubs and enhance India's position in global maritime trade.



Dr. Dharmesh Rawal

From an academic standpoint, **Dr. Dharmesh Rawal, Head, Centre for Maritime Economy and Director, School of Maritime Management at Gujarat Maritime University**, highlighted the strong correlation

between port efficiency and economic growth. He pointed to India's transition from dependency on foreign transshipment hubs to emerging as a capable handler of global cargo, driven by privatization and public-private partnerships. He further emphasized the importance of **cluster-based development, multimodal connectivity, and ecosystem-driven port models**, drawing parallels with global benchmarks such as Rotterdam.



Mr. Hitesh Arya

Addressing the logistics and supply chain dimension, **Mr. Hitesh Arya, Vice President & Business Head, Adani Logistics**, noted that Indian logistics players are now at an inflection point, supported by improved infrastructure,

digitalization, and policy reforms such as GST. He emphasized the shift towards **integrated, end-to-end logistics solutions**, where ports, transport networks, and supply chains function as a unified ecosystem. He also highlighted the **need to strengthen coastal shipping** through dedicated infrastructure, predictable services, and corridor-based development to unlock its full potential.



Mr. Vinesh Tejwani

Bringing in the warehousing and infrastructure perspective, **Mr. Vinesh Tejwani, Founder, World Space Industrial & Logistics Park Pvt. Ltd.**, stressed the critical role of **modern warehousing and**

logistics parks in enhancing port efficiency. He noted that integrated warehousing acts as a buffer for cargo flow, reduces congestion, and optimizes turnaround time. Highlighting rapid growth in demand, he emphasized that the development of large-scale, Grade-A logistics infrastructure is essential to support increasing trade volumes. He also underlined the growing importance of **warehouse financing and free trade warehousing zones**, which can unlock significant economic opportunities while strengthening the logistics ecosystem.



The session also highlighted key emerging themes such as digital transformation through maritime single window systems, ERP integration, automation, and blockchain-based trade processes, aimed at enhancing transparency, efficiency, and ease of doing business. Additionally, discussions on corporatization of ports underscored the need for greater operational flexibility, investment capability, and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global maritime landscape.

The panel concluded with a strong consensus that the future of ports in India will be defined by **sustainable investments, integrated logistics ecosystems, technological innovation, and policy-driven growth**, with **Gujarat** continuing to play a leading role in shaping India's maritime and trade ambitions.

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Session - II

Driving cost efficiency, speed, and flexibility through multimodal infrastructure, digital innovation, and strengthened last-mile connectivity in India’s logistics ecosystem



Dr. (Prof.) Debjit Roy

Session-II featured a high-impact panel discussion on the theme “**Next-Gen Logistics : Building Efficient H i n t e r l a n d C o n n e c t i v i t y .**” The session was expertly moderated by **Dr. (Prof.) Debjit Roy, Ph D from Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) and Co-Chair, Centre for Transportation and**

Logistics, who set the tone by highlighting India’s persistent logistics cost challenge—estimated at 13–14% of GDP—and the urgent need to balance cost, speed, and flexibility in a rapidly evolving supply chain ecosystem.



Shri Govind Prasad Saini, IRSEE

Opening the discussion, **Shri Govind Prasad Saini (IRSEE), Chief General Manager, DFCCIL – Ahmedabad**, underscored the transformative role of the Dedicated Freight Corridor in reshaping India’s logistics landscape.

He emphasized that the Western and Eastern DFC corridors were

strategically designed to connect ports with industrial and mineral. He emphasized that the Western and Eastern DFC corridors were strategically designed to connect ports with industrial and mineral-rich regions, enabling faster, heavier, and more efficient cargo movement. With double-stack container operations, higher load capacities, and express-like freight movement, DFC is significantly reducing transit time and logistics costs while strengthening last-mile connectivity from major ports such as Mundra and JNPT to inland consumption centers.



Smt. Rini, IRTS

Providing an operational perspective, Smt. Rini (IRTS), Indian Railways, highlighted the critical role of multimodal logistics in achieving the national target of reducing Providing an operational perspective, **Smt. Rini (IRTS), Indian Railways**, highlighted the critical role of

multimodal logistics in achieving the national target of reducing logistics costs below 8%. She elaborated on innovative models like rail-ship-rail (RSR), which combine coastal shipping with rail transport to deliver cost efficiency and sustainability. While acknowledging the increasing competitiveness of road transport due to improved highways and dynamic pricing, she emphasized that railways offer long-term advantages in bulk movement, faster evacuation, and capacity expansion. She noted that enhanced rail connectivity across Gujarat’s ports and the integration with DFC are unlocking new efficiencies, enabling faster turnaround times and supporting industrial growth through improved cargo evacuation.



Shri Sanjeev Verma

From the infrastructure and logistics services perspective, **Shri Sanjeev Verma, Vice President & Business Head – Rail & ICDs, Adani Logistics**, highlighted how the focus has shifted from standalone rail movement to integrated end-to-end logistics

solutions. He pointed out that first and last mile connectivity costs remain a major determinant of overall logistics efficiency, often accounting for up to 50% of total costs in certain regions. By leveraging DFC-enabled cost advantages, digital tracking systems, optimized container handling, and strategically located inland container depots (ICDs) closer to industrial clusters, logistics providers are now able to offer more competitive and predictable services. He also emphasized the growing role of digitization in reducing inefficiencies, improving planning accuracy, and enhancing visibility for customers.



Shri Rajat Gupta

Echoing similar themes, **Shri Rajat Gupta, Chief Manager, ICD Khodiyar, CONCOR**, highlighted the organization's efforts in strengthening hinterland connectivity through a network of multimodal logistics parks, ICDs, and value-added services.

He emphasized that proximity to industrial clusters, combined with integrated services such as warehousing, aggregation, palletization, and even light manufacturing, is significantly reducing logistics costs and turnaround time. He also pointed to recent developments such as the introduction of India-based shipping solutions and LNG-powered trucking for first and last mile connectivity, reinforcing sustainability alongside efficiency.



Shri Tapasvi PVN

Offering a user-industry perspective, **Shri Tapasvi PVN, Vice President – Exim Commercial & Logistics, Arvind Ltd.**, provided valuable insights into real-world logistics challenges faced by manufacturers. Drawing from

his cross-industry experience, he noted that while rail and DFC infrastructure offer clear advantages in speed and cost, issues such as cargo consolidation, lack of warehousing near rail sidings, and infrastructure gaps limit their adoption for certain industries. He stressed that flexibility, reliability, and availability of supporting infrastructure—especially for smaller or fragmented shipments—are critical for a wider modal shift from road to rail. He also highlighted innovative private-sector solutions in road logistics, where consolidation hubs and scheduled services are addressing last-mile challenges effectively.



Ms. Hiral Kotadiya

Adding a forward-looking dimension, **Ms. Hiral Kotadiya, Head – AI, WebOccult**, emphasized the transformative role of emerging technologies in logistics. She explained how the evolution from digitalization to

predictive analytics and now to AI-driven vision intelligence is enabling real-time decision-making, operational efficiency, and cost optimization. By leveraging technologies such as machine learning and computer vision, logistics operations—from container handling to equipment utilization—can be monitored, analyzed, and optimized with minimal human intervention, paving the way for smarter, data-driven supply chains.



Summarizing the session, the panel collectively emphasized that while India has made significant progress in strengthening logistics infrastructure through initiatives such as the Dedicated Freight Corridors, Gati Shakti, and multimodal logistics parks, the next phase of growth will hinge on deeper integration of infrastructure, technology, and policy frameworks. In particular, Gujarat—with its extensive coastline, strong industrial base, and strategic port-led development—stands at the forefront of this transformation. The discussions underscored that enhancing multimodal connectivity, expanding warehousing ecosystems, and improving last-mile linkages across the state will be critical in unlocking greater efficiency and competitiveness. Such focused infrastructure augmentation and seamless connectivity are essential to realizing the broader vision of a **Viksit Gujarat**, positioning the state as a global logistics and trade hub aligned with India's long-term vision of **Viksit Bharat**.

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Session - III

Policy, Innovation & MSME Empowerment taken Centre Stage at Session III: Charting India’s Next Export Growth Trajectory



Dr. Darshan Mashroo

The third session of the conclave, on the Topic “**Global Trade Winds: EXIM Strategy, Policy & Supply Chain Realignment**” titled around policy, trade facilitation, and MSME empowerment, brought together a distinguished panel of policymakers, industry experts, academ-

-icians, and consultants to deliberate on strengthening India’s export ecosystem amidst evolving global trade dynamics. The session was adeptly moderated by **Dr. Darshan Mashroo, Director & COO of EPT Global Logistics Private Limited**, who set the tone by highlighting the shifting paradigm of global trade—from cost-centric competition to solution-driven partnerships.

Setting the context, the moderator emphasized that global trade is no longer dictated solely by cost competitiveness but increasingly by resilience, adaptability, and solution-oriented approaches. With disruptions such as the pandemic, geopolitical tensions, Red Sea crisis, and emerging ESG regulations, India is

positioning itself not just as a participant but as a preferred global trade partner. The discussion also highlighted India’s strategic trade agreements, including CEPA with UAE and ECTA with Australia, along with ongoing negotiations with the UK and EU, as key enablers of expanded market access.



Dr. Rahul Singh, I.T.S

Speaking on policy initiatives, **Dr. Rahul Singh, I.T.S, Jt. Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry**, elaborated on the Government of India’s newly launched Export Promotion Mission (EPM), a comprehensive initiative with an outlay of ₹25,000 crore over five years. He explained that the mission operates through two major pillars—Niryat Protsahan and Niryat Disha—offering both financial and non-financial support. Key components such as logistics cost assistance under LIFT, compliance reimbursement under TRACE, trade intelligence support through INSIGHT, and overseas warehousing support under FLOW were highlighted as transformative measures aimed at reducing export costs and improving global competitiveness. He noted that these initiatives are designed to simplify compliance, enhance logistics efficiency, and enable exporters to access international markets more effectively.

Cont’d



Shri Suvidh Shah

Highlighting global uncertainties and trade disruptions, **Shri Suvidh Shah, Additional Director General, Federation of Indian Export Organisations**, New Delhi underscored the challenges posed by fluctuating tariffs, geopolitical tensions, and volatile shipping

costs.

He stressed the importance of building resilience through strategic initiatives such as overseas warehousing, diversification of supply chains, and increased participation in global logistics networks. He also expressed optimism that increased competition in shipping and container manufacturing, along with technological advancements, would lead to



Shri T.K. Solanki

Focusing on MSME empowerment, **Shri T.K. Solanki, Assistant Director, MSME Development Institute (MSME-DI), Govt. of India** outlined a wide array of government schemes aimed at enabling first-time exporters and

strengthening small enterprises.

He highlighted initiatives such as capacity building for new exporters, reimbursement of export certification costs, testing support, and financial assistance schemes including collateral-free loans and credit guarantee programs. He also emphasized the role of digital platforms like CHAMPIONS and ODR portals in resolving payment disputes and facilitating ease of doing business. Importantly, he stressed the adoption of lean manufacturing practices and Industry 4.0 tools to enhance productivity, reduce wastage, and improve global competitiveness.



Dr. Chandra Kant Upadhyay

From an academic and policy alignment perspective, **Dr. Chandra Kant Upadhyay, Asst. Professor, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, Gujarat Maritime University** highlighted the government's efforts to

transition from a fragmented to an integrated maritime governance model. He referred to initiatives such as the Indian Ports Act 2025, Maritime Single Window system, and Logistics Interface Platform, which aim to streamline operations, reduce documentation, and align India's maritime ecosystem with global benchmarks like Rotterdam and Singapore. He emphasized that such reforms are crucial for enhancing efficiency, reducing dwell



CA Minal Mehta Buch

Providing a practical industry perspective, **CA Minal Mehta Buch, Founder and Lead Consultant, Bizbrains Advisors**, addressed the recent reduction in RoDTEP benefits and its implications on

exporters. She noted that while the immediate impact would be significant for sectors such as textiles, auto components, and engineering goods—where margins are already thin—the long-term message from policymakers is clear: Indian exporters must shift focus from dependency on incentives to building intrinsic efficiency and competitiveness. She emphasized the importance of data-driven representation to the government for policy reconsideration and encouraged exporters to actively participate in policy feedback mechanisms.



The session also delved into broader structural challenges, including limited market diversification, with speakers noting that a significant portion of India's exports and imports is concentrated among a small number of countries. This underscores the need for Indian exporters to explore new markets, enhance compliance capabilities, and adopt technology-driven solutions to remain competitive. Concluding the session, the panel collectively emphasized that while government policies, infrastructure development, and trade agreements provide a strong foundation, the onus also lies on industry stakeholders to adapt, innovate, and build resilience. The integration of policy support, digital transformation, logistics efficiency, and MSME empowerment will be critical in positioning India as a global export powerhouse.



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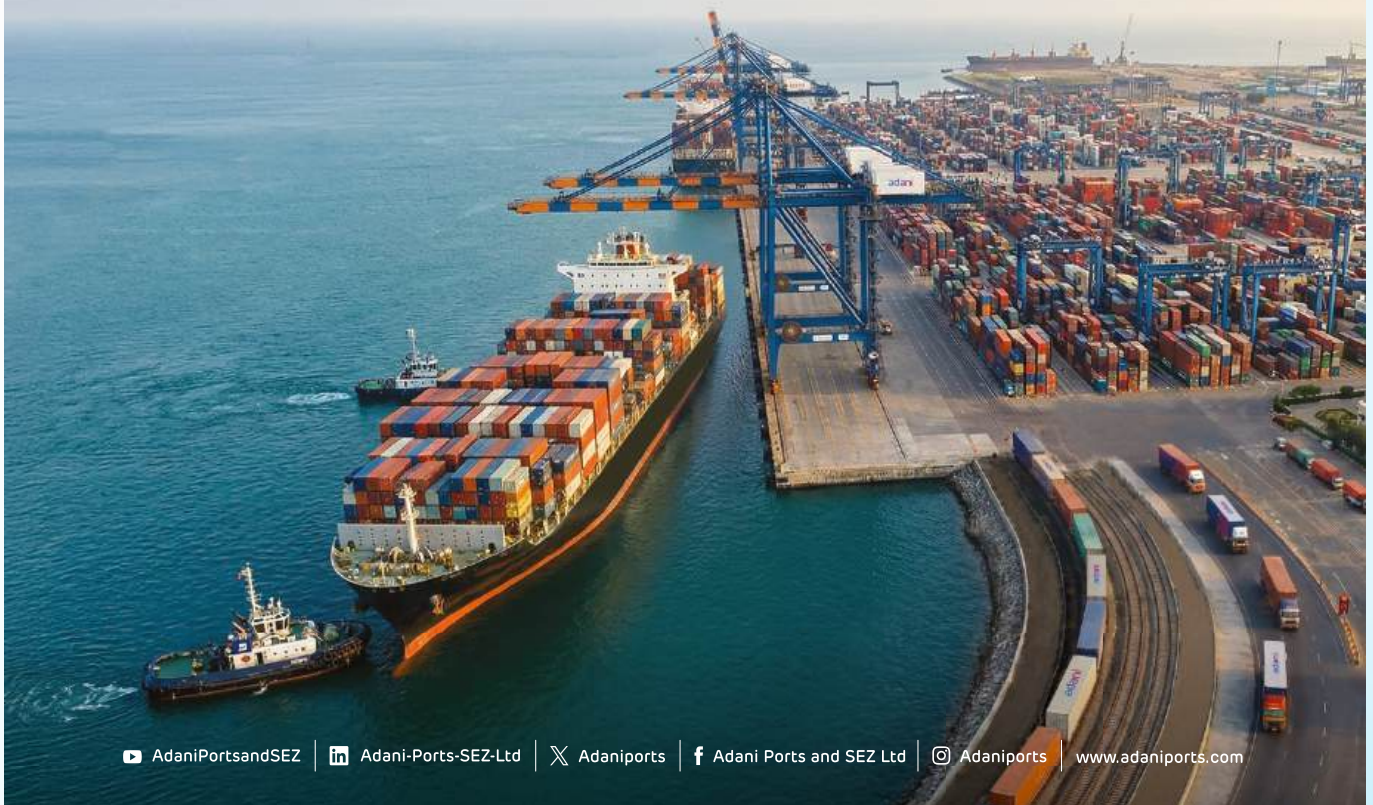
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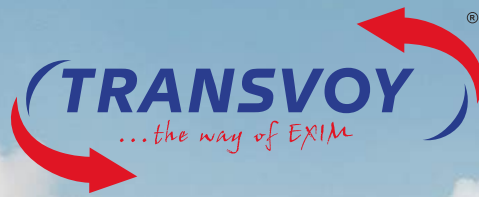
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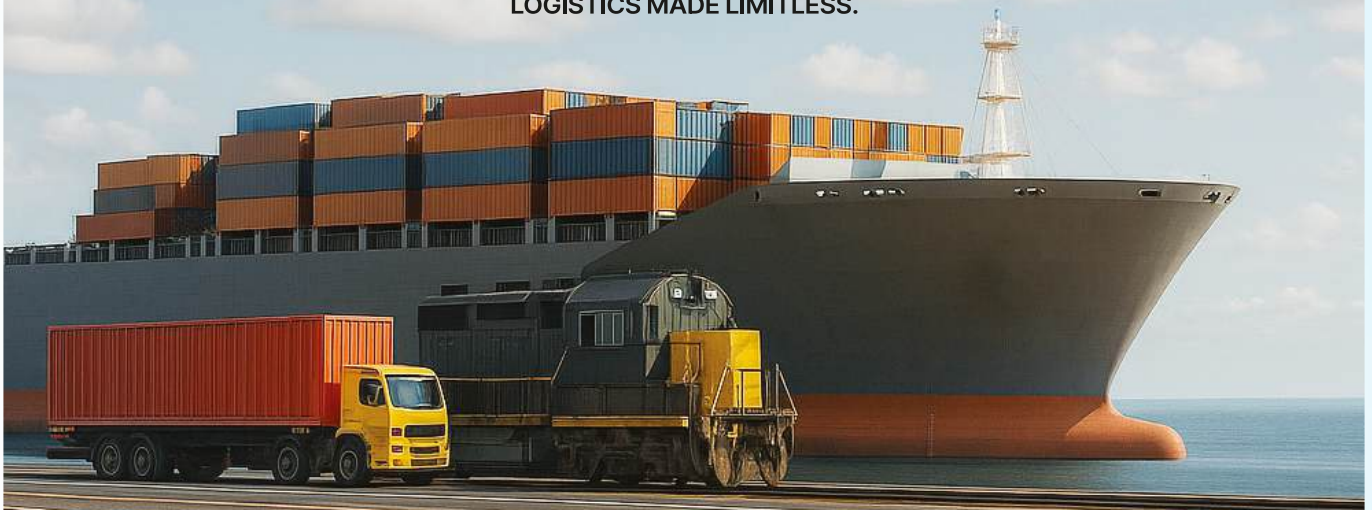
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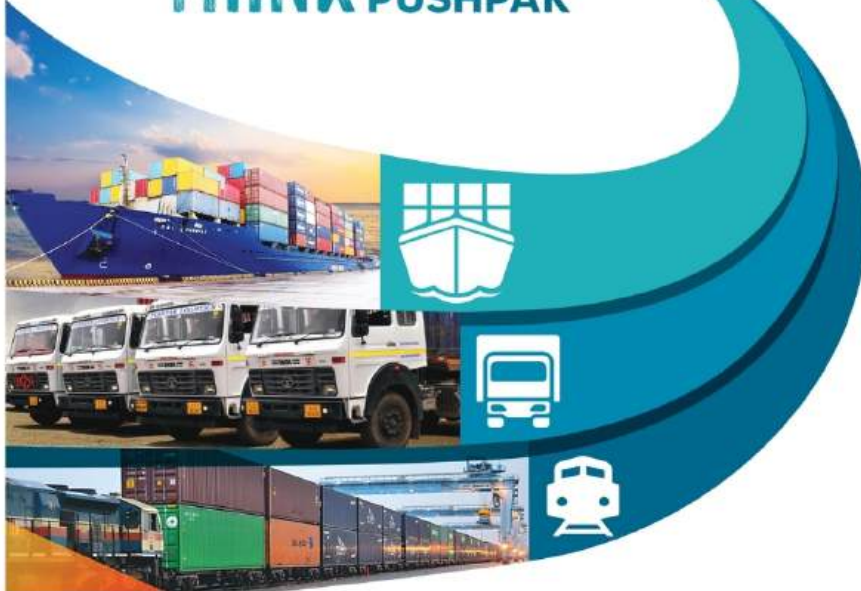
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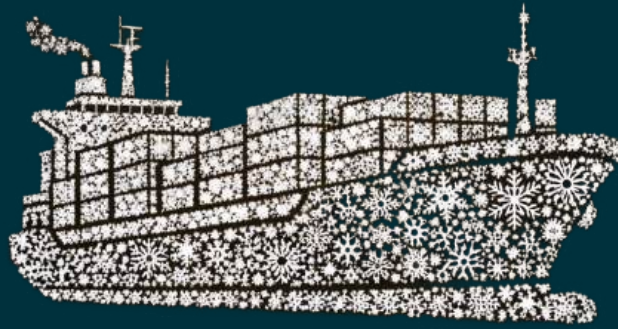
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Winner : Ms. JYOTI DESAI
(Aargus Global Logistics Pvt. Ltd.)



Category : Logistics Personality of the Year
Winner : Mr. RAJU PAPPACHAN (J.M. Baxi Marine Services Pvt. Ltd.)



Category : CSR Professional of the Year
Winner : Mr. DHAVAL SHAH (V-Care Group & Co.)

CSR Professional of the Year

At Gujarat SMILE Awards, we believe that true leadership is not measured only by business success, but by the positive impact one creates in society.

It is now time to honour a professional who has seamlessly combined enterprise with empathy – vision with social responsibility.

The CSR Professional of the Year award goes to Mr. Dhaval Shah, Founder of V-Care Group.

His non-profit training division has played a transformational role in preparing youth for careers in Export-Import and Logistics, successfully completing 15+ batches and training over 900 students and professionals. Through seminars, workshops, and institutional collaborations with leading management and educational institutes across Gujarat, he continues to strengthen industry-academia linkage.

But what truly sets Mr. Dhaval Shah apart is his deep commitment to social service.

As part of his CSR initiatives, he has been actively working toward empowerment and inclusion of visually impaired individuals, collaborating with reputed NGOs such as The Blind People's Association, Shree Pragna Chakshu Mahila Seva Kunj, V-Help Foundation, and Dream Foundation. His efforts are not symbolic – they are structured, consistent, and impact-driven.

An expert speaker at platforms like MSME, FIEO, DGFT, and EXIM forums, and a visiting faculty at prestigious institutions, Mr. Shah represents the perfect blend of professional excellence and social consciousness.

This award recognises not just a corporate leader, but a compassionate changemaker – someone who believes that growth must go hand in hand with responsibility.



Category : Lifetime Achievement Award
Winner : SHRI RAJESH MENON

Lifetime Achievement Award

Shri Rajesh Menon

Originally hailing from Vadodara, Gujarat, Shri Menon has built an illustrious career spanning nearly three decades in infrastructure, including over two decades in the maritime sector

From leading strategic initiatives at the Adani Group to heading the Sagarmala PMU at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, and currently serving as a Maritime Expert with the Logistics Division, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, he has played a pivotal role in shaping India's maritime and logistics policy framework.

A respected policy advisor, maritime strategist, author, and visiting faculty at premier institutions, Shri Menon has significantly contributed to national initiatives such as Sagarmala, PM GatiShakti, and the National Logistics Policy

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to India's maritime development and policy advocacy, and for bringing pride to Gujarat on the national stage, we are honoured to confer upon him the Lifetime Achievement Award.

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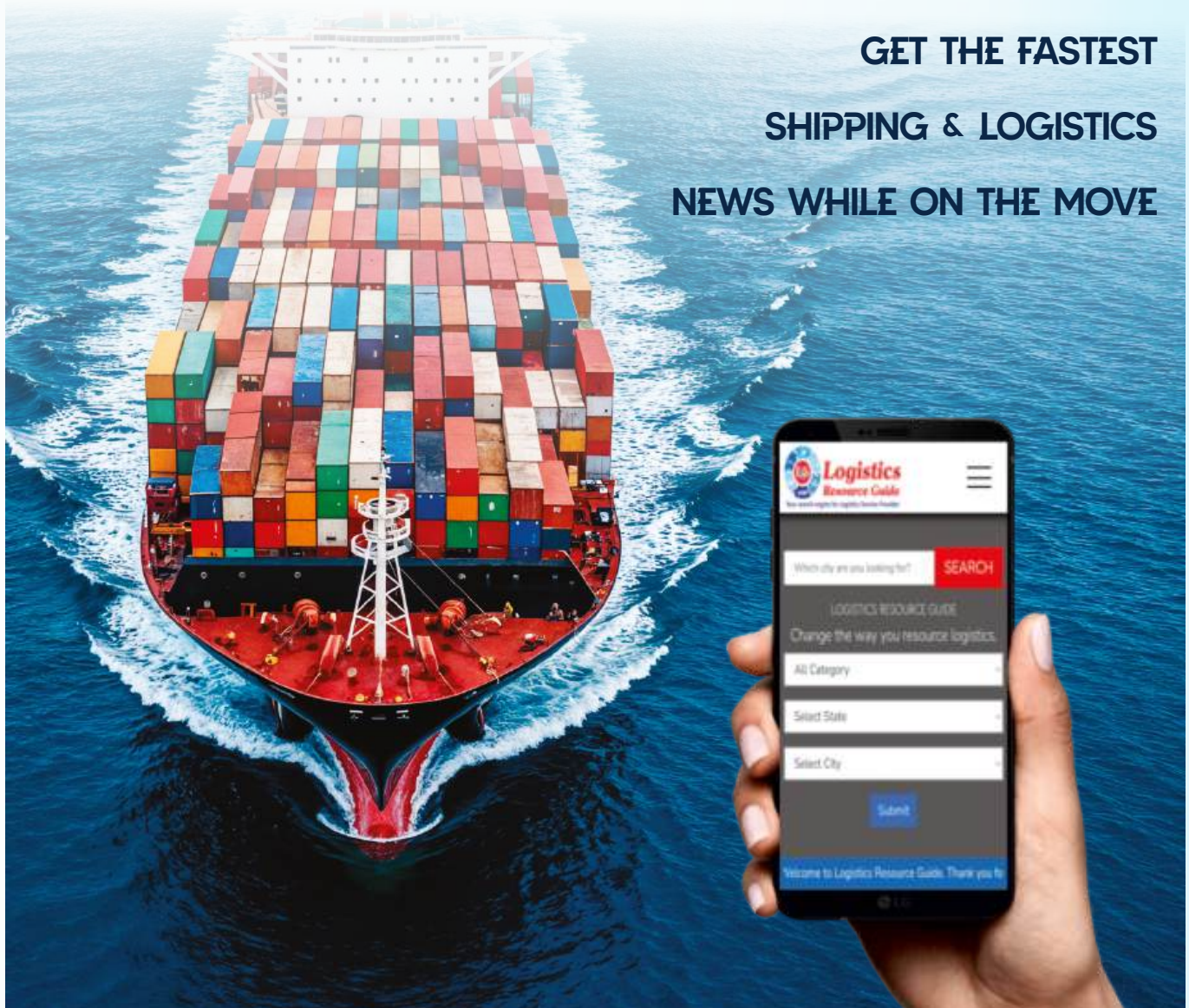
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