

# NEWSLETTER

*Connecting You to the Future of Shipping. Discover, Engage, Inspire!*

## NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY – THE FUTURE OF FREIGHT FORWARDING

**JULY: 2025**  
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*“How war, carrier vertical integration, rising client demands, and digital transformation are reshaping freight forwarding – and what forwarders in Dubai must do to stay resilient and relevant.”*

Freight forwarding has long been the invisible engine of global trade: connecting manufacturers, carriers, customs authorities and end customers across continents. Today, the industry faces an intensified set of pressures – geopolitical conflict, supply-chain interruptions, carriers moving into forwarding, relentless customer expectations and accelerating digital and sustainability requirements. For forwarders based in Dubai – a vital transshipment and re-export hub between East and West – these pressures are not theoretical. They are operational realities that require new strategies, deeper client engagement and faster adoption of technology. This article examines five critical forces reshaping the industry and outlines practical steps forwarders can take to survive and thrive.



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INSIDE  
THIS  
ISSUE

### *Seasonal Harvests*

*Building on our last edition, this newsletter provides further insights into key seasonal products, highlighting the **Saudi Arabia seasonal harvest** in this issue.*

### *An essential guide to shipping Incoterms*

*This edition continues our exploration of vital shipping documents, focusing specifically on the **DAP** used in maritime transport.*

### *Global Freight Trends: Monthly Snapshot*

*The **News head** section brings you a roundup of important developments and news across the industry.*

1. **War and interruptions:** supply chains under stress Conflicts and political instability create immediate and cascading effects on logistics. When a sea lane is disrupted, an airport closed or a land corridor rendered unsafe, carriers reroute vessels and aircraft, transit times balloon and costs rise. The recent pattern of instability around strategic waterways and bordering regions has triggered longer sailings, fuel surcharges and congested alternative ports. Ports that remain open can quickly become overwhelmed, creating stacking, demurrage and equipment shortages that ripple across global schedules.

Insurance cost volatility and evolving security protocols add another layer of complexity. Cargo moving through or near conflict zones attracts higher war-risk premiums and more detailed inspections. Meanwhile, rapid changes to sanctions, embargoes and trade restrictions force forwarders to monitor compliance in real time and to advise clients on legally permissible trade paths.

Dubai's position provides both shelter and exposure. Jebel Ali and the emirate's integrated logistics ecosystem – free zones, bonded warehouses, and DP World's extensive terminal network – offer alternative routing and consolidation options. But Dubai cannot insulate forwarders from higher global freight rates or delays caused upstream or downstream. The practical response today is contingency planning: multiple routings, regional buffer stocks, flexible warehouse capacity and rapid claims and communication protocols.

*Continues on pg.: 04*



# WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL INVOICE?

A **Commercial Invoice** in shipping is a crucial document issued by the seller (exporter) to the buyer (importer), serving as a legal record of the sale transaction. It provides detailed information about the goods sold, including their value, quantity, and terms of sale. This document is essential for customs clearance at both the origin and destination, as it allows authorities to assess duties and taxes. Additionally, it plays a key role in verifying the contents of a Letter of Credit (LC) or other trade financing instruments.

## A commercial invoice typically includes:

- ❖ Names & addresses of the buyer and seller
- ❖ Invoice number and date
- ❖ Description of goods (including HS code, if applicable)
- ❖ Quantity and unit price
- ❖ Total invoice amount and currency
- ❖ Signature and stamp of the exporter.
- ❖ Mode of transport and vessel details

# SEASONAL SPOTLIGHT: SEE WHAT'S GROWING!!!

**Saudi Arabia**, the largest country in the Middle East, occupies the majority of the Arabian Peninsula and shares borders with several nations, including Jordan, Iraq, and the United Arab Emirates. It holds a prominent position globally due to its vast oil reserves, religious significance as the birthplace of Islam, and rapidly evolving economic landscape under Vision 2030. Traditionally reliant on oil exports, Saudi Arabia has increasingly diversified its economy, investing in tourism, technology, and agriculture. The country has a harsh desert climate characterized by extremely hot summers (May to September) and mild winters (November to February), with minimal rainfall. Despite these environmental challenges, Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in agricultural innovation, utilizing techniques such as center-pivot irrigation, hydroponics, and vertical farming to maximize productivity in arid conditions. These advancements support the cultivation of key crops throughout the year, enhancing food security across the kingdom.

### Seasonal Produce in Bahrain:

- ✓ **Dates** (Summer - June to August)
- ✓ **Tomatoes** (Winter - November to March)
- ✓ **Cucumbers** (Winter - November to March)
- ✓ **Lettuce and Spinach** (Winter - December to March)
- ✓ **Watermelon and Melons** (Spring to Early Summer - April to June)



*More related on next edition>>>*



# UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF NAVAL SHIPS



**Aircraft Carriers:** These are the largest naval vessels and serve as seagoing airbases, equipped with full-length flight decks for launching and recovering aircraft. Aircraft carriers project air power worldwide without relying on local bases, making them critical assets in modern naval warfare and power projection.

**Destroyers:** Fast and maneuverable, destroyers are multi-role warships primarily designed for anti-aircraft, anti-submarine, and anti-surface warfare. They often escort larger vessels like aircraft carriers and provide fleet defense with their advanced radar, missile systems, and naval guns.

**Frigates:** Smaller than destroyers, frigates are versatile ships often used for escorting convoys, patrolling coastal waters, and conducting anti-submarine operations. They balance speed, firepower, and endurance and are a key component in protecting maritime routes.

**Corvettes:** Corvettes are compact and agile warships, primarily used in littoral (close to shore) zones. Though smaller in size, they are well-armed and ideal for patrol missions, anti-piracy operations, and enforcing maritime law in territorial waters.

**Mine Countermeasure Vessels (MCMVs):** These specialized ships detect and neutralize underwater mines, ensuring safe passage for commercial and military vessels. They include minehunters (that detect and destroy mines individually) and minesweepers (that clear mined areas).

**Replenishment Ships (Auxiliaries):** These support vessels carry fuel, ammunition, food, and supplies to combat ships at sea, allowing naval forces to remain deployed for extended periods. They are critical for sustaining naval operations far from home ports.

**Hospital Ships:** Equipped with full medical facilities, hospital ships provide care during conflicts and humanitarian crises. They are neutral vessels under international law and support disaster relief and military operations by treating the wounded.

*More related are headed way in the next edition>>>*

## “EXCITED TO DIVE DEEPER”

**DAP INCOTERM**, “**Delivery at Place**” is an Incoterm where the seller is responsible for delivering the goods to an agreed destination, with all risks and costs borne by the seller up to that point. However, under DAP, the seller is *not* responsible for unloading the goods at the place of delivery—this cost and responsibility fall to the buyer. Additionally, the buyer is liable for import duties, taxes, and any other local charges once the goods arrive. DAP can be used with any mode of transport, including multimodal shipments, and both parties must clearly agree on the exact location of delivery. It is essential for the buyer to specify unloading terms in advance to avoid delays or disputes. This term is particularly suitable for international transactions where the buyer wants the seller to handle most of the logistics, except the final unloading and import clearance.



## RARELY NOTED POINT

**CMA CGM** absorbs **Neptune Orient Lines (NOL)**. In December 2015, CMA CGM launched a voluntary cash bid for Singapore's Neptune Orient Lines (NOL) worth over S\$3 billion, adding NOL's 120-ship fleet to its own. The acquisition significantly strengthened CMA CGM's presence in Southeast Asia and boosted its annual capacity by more than 3 million TEU.

2. **When forwarders are blamed for delays they can't control:** Forwarders are often the most visible partner in the supply chain, which makes them the default target when shipments miss deadlines. Customers see one invoice, one point of contact, and so they hold the forwarder accountable for the entire journey — even when the cause lies with a carrier strike, port closure, adverse weather or force majeure.

Two dynamics deepen this problem. First, many commercial agreements and marketing materials promise narrow transit windows that do not always reflect operational volatility. Second, a lack of client education about multi-modal responsibilities and the realities of international transport leads to unrealistic expectations. The remedy is threefold: communication, clarity and contracts. Proactive and transparent client communications — real-time updates, explanations of causes, and remediation plans — preserve trust. Commercial agreements should include clear SLA tiers that distinguish between controllable operational errors and events outside the forwarder's control, and they should incorporate mutually agreed risk-sharing terms. Finally, educating customers with simple materials about the logistics chain reduces friction and positions the forwarder as an informed advisor rather than a scapegoat.

3. **Carriers entering forwarding, competition that sharpened the industry:** Major ocean carriers such as Maersk, CMA CGM and MSC have made significant moves into forwarding and end-to-end logistics. Vertical integration offers carriers closer customer relationships, additional revenue streams and control over the full shipment lifecycle. For independent forwarders, this was an existential threat on paper.

Yet many traditional forwarders have not only survived but adapted. Their advantages include niche specialization (pharma, perishables, project cargo), highly personalized service, and deep local regulatory expertise — factors that matter particularly in the UAE and the wider MENA region. Independent forwarders remain neutral intermediaries with multi-carrier access, enabling customers to avoid vendor lock-in and to secure the best pricing and routing across providers. Forwarders have also responded by forming alliances, investing in technology, and expanding into 3PL services such as warehousing, kitting and customs brokerage. The result is a market where carriers and forwarders coexist: carriers push integrated solutions for scale customers, while forwarders cater to flexibility, specialized needs and local nuance.

4. **Rising client demands and how the industry is responding:** Customer expectations have shifted from “get it there” to “get it there on time, transparently, sustainably and cost-efficiently.” Shippers demand real-time visibility, predictable ETAs, carbon reporting, cost transparency and bundled services that reduce vendor complexity.

Forwarders are answering with a rapid digitization of operations. Visibility platforms that aggregate carrier, terminal and telematics data give customers near-real-time tracking. Predictive analytics and historical data models provide dynamic ETAs and early warnings of likely disruptions. Digitized documentation — electronic bills of lading, e-customs filings and automated invoicing — cuts errors and speeds handovers. Beyond technology, many forwarders now offer bundled services that include warehousing, customs brokerage, last-mile fulfillment and insurance facilitation. These one-stop solutions simplify supply chains for customers, increase forwarder stickiness and create new revenue streams. Sustainability has also moved from optional to essential: carbon calculators, green routing options and modal shift strategies (e.g., sea-rail combinations) are now part of the commercial conversation.

5. **The future:** resilience, platforms and orchestration Over the next five to fifteen years the freight-forwarding landscape will continue to bifurcate. Large platform players — some carrier-backed, others neutral tech-centric marketplaces — will offer scale, integrated services and global reach. At the same time, agile specialists will command value by offering domain expertise, tailored solutions and high-touch services.



#### Key trends to watch:

- **Platformization:** API ecosystems and consolidated visibility platforms will become standard. Forwarders who can integrate with multiple carriers and deliver reliable, consolidated data will win.
- **Resilience as a paid service:** Clients will accept and pay for resilience features — alternative routings, buffer inventory, and rapid re-routing capabilities.
- **Automation and predictive logistics:** Routine operational tasks will be automated, while AI and analytics will power predictive ETAs and capacity optimization.
- **Regulatory and sustainability pressures:** Greater emissions reporting and cleaner transport mandates will reshape routing choices and pricing models.
- **Evolved role:** Forwarders will increasingly act as supply-chain orchestrators and advisors, encompassing risk management, trade finance facilitation and reverse logistics.

#### Steps for forwarders to prioritize:

- Investing in visibility platforms and customer portals to meet real-time expectations.
- Strengthening contract language to clarify responsibilities and manage risk.
- Expanding value-added services (warehousing, customs brokerage, insurance facilitation) to increase customer reliance.
- Building resilience playbooks with alternate routings and contingency warehousing in nearby hubs.
- Deepening specialization in high-value verticals (pharma, perishables, project cargo) where local knowledge pays.
- Embracing ESG: carbon reporting and greener routing options will increasingly influence commercial decisions.

Freight forwarding is being reshaped by forces that are at once disruptive and opportunity-rich. War and geopolitical interruptions underscore the need for resilience; carriers' vertical integration raises the bar for scale and technology; and customer demands push forwarders toward better transparency, sustainability and bundled services. Forwarders who act will not just survive disruption — they will become indispensable partners in the new era of global trade.







# “ORIGINS OF SEABORNE COMMERCE”

## The Industrial Revolution: A New Era of Transportation

The Industrial Revolution, spanning the 18th to 19th centuries, marked a pivotal era of transformation in global transportation, fueled by groundbreaking technological innovations. Steam-powered ships revolutionized maritime travel by significantly increasing speed, reliability, and cargo capacity, dramatically reducing the time needed to transport goods across oceans. On land, the expansion of railroad networks reshaped inland transportation, linking ports with interior markets and enabling the swift movement of goods and people. Together, steamships and railways formed a powerful, integrated transport system that accelerated international trade and laid the foundation for modern global commerce.

## The Rise of Modern Shipping Enterprises

The Industrial Revolution also witnessed the emergence of modern shipping businesses that played a crucial role in shaping international trade. Influential companies such as the British East India Company and the Hudson's Bay Company became key players in global commerce, establishing extensive shipping fleets and logistical networks to support their expansive operations. These corporations laid the foundation for the professionalization of the shipping industry by introducing structured maritime practices and regular shipping schedules. The development of established shipping lines brought greater efficiency, reliability, and predictability to sea transport—paving the way for the modern global logistics systems that drive trade today.

*Stay tuned for more next edition>>>*

# “LITTLE-KNOWN FACT”

## Tunnel Containers



**Tunnel containers** are specialized intermodal containers designed with double doors at both the front and rear ends, allowing for convenient access from either side. This dual-entry feature significantly enhances the efficiency of loading and unloading, making them ideal for situations where fast, simultaneous access to cargo is required. Commonly used in industries dealing with large-volume goods or time-sensitive shipments, tunnel containers streamline warehouse operations and reduce handling time. They are particularly useful in logistics hubs, event setups, and construction sites where flexible access is essential. Built to ISO standards, tunnel containers are compatible with all modes of transport—road, rail, and sea—and provide the same structural durability as standard containers, while offering superior accessibility and operational convenience.





## Global Shipping Titans Set Sights on India's Booming Coastal Trade Market

Global container shipping giants are setting their sights on India's domestic coastal trade, encouraged by favorable policy reforms, infrastructure incentives, and rising cargo volumes fueled by Asia's manufacturing diversification. Maersk is reportedly moving forward with plans to launch coastal services between Indian ports, potentially in partnership with local feeder operators and using India-flagged vessels to comply with cabotage laws. These laws limit domestic cargo transport to Indian-registered ships, although 2018 reforms eased restrictions on EXIM container movement.

French carrier CMA CGM has already taken the lead by reflagging the 2,592 TEU vessel CMA CGM Victoria under the Indian registry—the first move of its kind by a foreign line—with plans to register more vessels. Maersk has also explored sustainable transport through barge operations on India's inland waterways. Other international players, including DP World's Unifeeder and Middle East-based Global Feeder Shipping (GFS), are also active in the segment, highlighting growing global interest in India's coastal shipping opportunities.



## Greta Shipping Launches Three Key Trade Routes Connecting Middle East and Subcontinent

Greta Shipping, a Singapore-based subsidiary of Xiamen C&D Group established in March 2024, has officially launched operations on three key trade routes connecting the Middle East and the Indian Subcontinent. With the JKC route already in service, the company plans to roll out two additional routes covering vital regional ports, aiming to enhance intra-regional connectivity and trade. Positioned to capitalize on increasing trade flows between South Asia and Gulf countries, Greta Shipping's services offer an alternative to existing alliances like CStar's MER1 and MSC's Upper Gulf Express. Amid ongoing disruptions in traditional shipping lanes due to Red Sea and Suez Canal tensions, this new service provides improved schedule reliability and port access for exporters and importers in India and Pakistan. The move also supports broader initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), contributing to regional integration and logistics efficiency. As more routes are expected in the coming months, Greta Shipping is emerging as a dynamic player in a shifting maritime landscape, offering competitive and stable solutions in an increasingly volatile global trade environment.







# Mina Al Hamriya Port Revamp to Boost Dubai's Maritime Edge



Mina Al Hamriya, one of Dubai's oldest and most strategically located ports in the Deira area, is embarking on a new chapter of growth under an ambitious expansion project led by DP World. Backed by the leadership of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the project includes the development of a new 700-metre quay with a 12-metre draft, designed to accommodate larger vessels and increase the port's overall cargo-handling capabilities. This follows the successful 2024 expansion which added 1,150 metres of quay wall and significantly boosted berthing capacity.

During an inspection tour, Sheikh Mohammed emphasized the port's pivotal role in connecting global trade and Dubai's vision to become the most dynamic logistics hub in the world. He highlighted that Dubai's ports are not merely transit points but transformative gateways that catalyze innovation, efficiency, and economic growth. As part of this vision, Mina Al Hamriya will continue to be a critical node supporting food security, particularly in handling perishables and livestock.

The port has already recorded trade worth AED 9.07 billion (\$2.5 billion) in the first half of the year. Handling a mix of breakbulk, RoRo, containers, steel vessels, and traditional wooden dhows, the port uniquely blends heritage with modern operations. The current phase of expansion will double its storage capacity from 3.4 million to 6.4 million square feet, ensuring it keeps pace with growing regional demand. Vessel traffic has also surged, with a notable 11% increase in calls compared to the previous year.

Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of DP World, affirmed the company's commitment to preserving the port's historical significance while investing in its modernization. The upgraded infrastructure will play a vital role in enhancing Dubai's trade resilience, supporting national food security, and positioning Mina Al Hamriya as a key driver of the UAE's economic ambitions. As the port evolves from a dhow hub to a multi-purpose logistics centre, it reflects the emirate's long-term strategy to lead global maritime trade.

**New ports, rising TEU targets, &  
a vision for the future- here's  
why the world is watching  
Panama closely.**

**Continued on the next page**

# Panama Canal Ramps Up Logistics Capabilities with New Expansion Plans

At the 10th International Financial Summit, Panama's Minister for Canal Affairs and ACP Board Chairman, José Ramón Icaza, outlined the transformative projects shaping the future of the Panama Canal. Highlighting its 25-year track record of responsible management, Icaza emphasized the canal's critical contribution to both Panama's economy—accounting for 2.9% of its GDP—and global maritime trade. He reaffirmed the canal's role in generating employment, strengthening public finances, and driving national development.

Looking ahead, the canal's strategic vision includes expanding logistics services, advancing water sustainability, and consolidating its role as a key value route. Among the major initiatives presented were the Río Indio Reservoir Project and the planned development of five new ports, including those at Corozal and Telfers Island. These expansions aim to address growing demand, with the potential to boost container handling capacity from 9.7 million TEUs in 2024 to 15 million TEUs in the near future.



## DP World and Partners Ink Landmark MoU to Explore Magnetic Rail Freight in India

DP World, the Deendayal Port Authority (DPA), and Nevomo have signed a landmark MoU to explore the deployment of MagRail technology at Deendayal Port in Kandla. The project will pilot a 750-metre stretch of autonomous, electric-powered rail wagons using linear motor technology—marking India's first venture into magnetic rail-based freight movement within a live port environment. This initiative aims to enhance cargo capacity, improve operational efficiency, and reduce emissions by shifting short-haul cargo transfers away from diesel-based transport.

Aligned with the National Logistics Policy and PM Gati Shakti, the project represents a major step toward future-ready, sustainable infrastructure. With leadership from DP World and support from DPA, the initiative is set to redefine port connectivity and strengthen India's logistics ecosystem. By integrating cutting-edge freight technology, the project has the potential to transform ports into greener, more efficient trade hubs.



# NEOM's New Trade Corridor Trial Set to Transform Egypt–Iraq Logistics

The Port of NEOM, in collaboration with the Logistics Partnership Council and key public and private stakeholders, has successfully trialled a pioneering intermodal trade corridor linking Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. The pilot shipment journeyed over 900 km—from Cairo, through Egypt's Port of Safaga, across the Red Sea to the Port of NEOM, and onward to commercial warehouses in Erbil, Iraq—achieving delivery in less than half the time typically required by traditional routes. This successful trial showcases a scalable, efficient model for enhancing inland logistics and accelerating regional transit trade. Positioned strategically on the Red Sea and near the Arar border crossing into Iraq, the Port of NEOM is set to become a vital gateway for cross-border commerce, aligning with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 to transform the Kingdom into a global logistics powerhouse. The initiative underscores the port's potential to connect major global trade arteries, boost supply chain efficiency, and fuel economic growth across Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.



## Qatar and Saudi Arabia Advance Maritime Ties with Strategic Workshop in Riyadh



In a key move to deepen bilateral cooperation in maritime transport and logistics, the Qatar Chamber participated in a high-level Qatari-Saudi workshop held in Riyadh. Led by Eng. Ali bin Abdul Latif Al-Misnad, the Qatari delegation included key stakeholders from ministries, customs, and major logistics players like Mwani Qatar, Milaha, and QTerminals. The workshop focused on enhancing transport and shipping collaboration, with an emphasis on leveraging the advanced capabilities of Hamad Port.

Eng. Al-Misnad highlighted the critical role of the private sector in fostering Gulf integration, urging Saudi companies to tap into Qatar's cutting-edge maritime infrastructure. He emphasized the strategic advantages of Hamad Port—where transit to Saudi Arabia takes just five hours—and called for deeper partnerships that unlock greater connectivity, economic growth, and shared logistics innovation across the region.



## Our People, Our Pulse: Our Passion & Performance

On July 30, we celebrated the International Day of Friendship—a day to recognize the value of mutual respect, unity, and the bonds that bring people together across cultures and communities. This year’s theme, “**Building bridges through kindness and trust**”, reminds us that friendships—whether between individuals, teams, or nations—are essential to fostering peace and cooperation.



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