

Nashik Ojhar terminal hopes to divert 25% Mumbai cargo

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(From Left) Mr Ritesh Ramakrishnan, Director, Transworld Group of Companies, along with Mr Ganesh Krishnan, CEO, Clarion Solutions; Mr V. Ramnarayan, Vice-Chairman, Transworld Group of Companies; Mr P.V. Deshmukh, MD, Hindustan Aeronautics; Mr Arvind Bhatnagar, Executive Director, Concor, and Mr Kiran Kumar, CEO, Halcon, at a press conference to announce the commencing of operation of Nashik Ojhar Airport air cargo services in Mumbai on Tuesday. _ Pual Noronha

MUMBAI, SEPT. 20: Can Halcon's Ojhar terminal help ease congestion at the cargo complex at Mumbai airport? Its promoters believe so.

Halcon's air cargo terminal at Nashik, which started operations from Tuesday, hopes to divert at least 25 per cent of the cargo now being handled at Mumbai airport within the next one year.

Joint venture

Halcon is a joint venture, floated five years ago by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and Container Corporation of India, to set up air cargo complexes, warehouses and inland container depots.

Halcon has developed its first air cargo complex at Ojhar airport, owned by HAL.

Originally, Ojhar was a Defence airport.

Mr Ganesh Krishnan, Chief Executive Officer of Clarion Solutions, which will operate the Halcon terminal, said Mumbai airport currently handles about 40,000 tonnes of cargo.

"We hope to divert at least 25 per cent of that," he said.

Clarion is a subsidiary of Transworld Group, one of the leading coastal shipping operators in India.

Currently, a large volume of cargo generated out of Nashik and nearby areas is being brought to Mumbai for export. This could now be exported directly from Nashik.

Mr Krishnan said several dedicated air cargo operators have shown interest in starting services from Ojhar. "Handling costs at Ojhar will be 15-20 per cent cheaper than in Mumbai," he said.

Handling ability

Ojhar airport is equipped to handle aircraft such as the AN-124 which is the heaviest cargo aircraft in the world, according to Mr P.V. Deshmukh, Managing Director of HAL.

Besides Halcon's investments in the cargo terminal, HAL alone has invested over Rs 70 crore to upgrade the facilities at the airport including the night landing system.

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The cargo terminal has warehouses, cold storage and other facilities to help exporters to keep to their export schedules and ensure value addition to their products.

Nashik is linked both by rail and road to several manufacturing regions in the country.

Besides agricultural produce, several manufacturing goods such as drugs and pharmaceuticals, automobiles, spare parts and engineering goods are exported from Nashik, said Mr Kiran Kumar, CEO of Halcon.

He said Ojhar airport has the potential to become an export hub. Cargo operations at Mumbai airport have been constrained by various factors including inadequate space and facilities. Mumbai International Airport Ltd had promised to provide a new cargo handling facility, but this is yet to come up, said an official with the Air Cargo Agents Association of India.

Nashik terminal will certainly help the trade as Mumbai is already congested and as a substantial volume of cargo is generated in and around Nashik where several industrial units are located, he said.

How the terminal will fare depends on various factors. It is too early to say how far Ojhar will help decongest Mumbai as cargo volumes have been growing every year, said another air cargo agent.

Keywords: Ojhar terminal, congestion, cargo complex, Mumbai airport, Halcon, air cargo,