

IndiGo boosts cargo ambitions

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Dhaka : CarGo, the cargo arm of India's largest airline IndiGo, is aiming for a low double-digit rise in both revenue and tonnage this fiscal by scaling international operations, improving aircraft utilisation, and targeting high-yield sectors such as pharmaceuticals and electronics, said Mark Sutch, chief commercial officer of IndiGo CarGo.

The airline's two-pronged strategy includes entering new markets like Saudi Arabia and the Maldives while strengthening its freighter footprint in existing ones such as China and Vietnam. In the 12 months to December 2024, CarGo handled 400,000 tonnes-a 20pc year-on-year rise.

Domestic belly cargo rose 11pc during the period, outpacing the 6pc growth in the overall market. International belly cargo and freighter volumes also recorded strong gains.

Cargo's revenue doubled in calendar year 2024 compared to 2023, Sutch confirmed. "We are looking at early double digits in growth because you want to outgrow your capacity," he said. "The market is growing 7pc, and I'd like to make sure I'm in early double digits to outgrow that."

Freighter utilisation-a key productivity metric-peaked at 8.5 hours a day in the December quarter and now averages 6-7 hours.

"That will grow again," said Sutch, pointing to rising international flying and customised charter demand.

IndiGo currently holds a 2pc share of India's outbound export cargo, a market dominated by Middle Eastern wide-body operators and Air India.

Yet, Sutch sees room to expand through network diversification and by tapping niche opportunities.

In the Middle East, the airline is ramping up Sharjah operations.

"We previously tried this route but couldn't crack it. Now, with better consolidation, it is working well," Sutch said of the weekly Delhi-Sharjah freighter. The carrier is also eyeing Dammam in Saudi Arabia, though a load imbalance persists. "There's strong Saudi demand for goods, but less outbound cargo from the Gulf.

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