

Downturn slows down container traffic

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New Delhi, February 13

THE global economic slump appears to have had a major impact on India's railway container traffic.

While the Railways registered a robust performance in freight loading and earnings till September 30, 2008, there has been sharp drop since then as India's merchandise export entered a negative zone.



"There was a steep reduction in iron ore for export and container traffic," Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav said. Experts say container train operators, hit by the slowdown, have resorted to stabling rakes, but feel the Delhi-Mumbai freight corridor would help turn the tide.

"It is a positive move that the dedicated freight corridor on the Ludhiana-Kolkata route

would be inaugurated by the end of this month. The rail freight sector is expected to get a boost, with the railways deciding to introduce new high-capacity wagons," said D. P. Agarwal, vice-chairman and managing director of Group TCI, a freight container company.

A senior official, who did not wish to be identified, said container operators have also sought to reschedule deliveries of railway wagons till traffic shows signs of improvement.

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