

Industry 2.0 Bridging The Skill Gap

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SUPPLY CHAIN & LOGISTICS

"WE WILL BE LAUNCHING A DRIVING SCHOOL SHORTLY"



Chitra Shinde, Chief Operating Officer, Gati Limited, throws light on the situation in India and abroad.

Q: Has Gati Limited faced this obstacle (shortage of truck drivers)?

A: Not very acutely so far, as Gati has only 20 per cent owned fleet; while the rest are through vendors. In order to support the industry at large and meet internal demand, Gati will be launching a driving school as part of Gati Academy shortly.

Remote speed monitoring and Vehicle Tracking Systems installed enable safety of drivers. Besides, we always follow the double-driver system ensuring

adequate rest (for them). Moreover, we are also contemplating the idea to introduce medical cover to all drivers working with the company.

Q: How do you foresee the future?

A: Today the situation is such that if we don't evolve, the sector will not be able to cash in on the growth the country will witness in the times to come. In the West and other developed markets, a long haul driver is paid more than Rs 60,000 with stringent rules on rest, logs, breath tests etc. On paying more with proper amenities—efficiency, dedication and values can be expected from these drivers.

scenario continues (deteriorates) further, this would stall the growth of truck movement volume, thereby restricting the business prospects of all manufacturing industries, apart from the stagnation in growth of transportation industry."

"Though the consequences are severe, there is little that the truck drivers themselves can do to rectify the same.

"There is no respect in this profession. We took it up as there was no other choice for us," says Jagat Narayan Mishra, who has been a driver for the past 25 years.

Lack of social status, insecurity, threat to life and the harassment by officials all in some way or the other make this an unattractive profession.

"We are often ill treated. Some even think of us as thieves," says Snyaman Yadav, a driver for the past 22 years, and who earns a meagrely ₹4,000 per month for his job.

Lack of education has been considered to be one of the prime reasons for their neglect. Says Ramesh Agarwal, President, All India Transporters Welfare Association and Director,

Agarwal Packers & Movers, "The logistics sector has a lot of unskilled people working for them and drivers mostly comprise a non-educated class hence they cannot fully understand the rules, regulations and paper formalities required. Often they fall in a trap to the harassment by government officials."

Though considered to be the backbone of the road freight industry, truck drivers steadily comprise the profits with the most critical skill gaps in the road freight segment, says a CII-APM whitepaper titled, 'Skill gaps in the Indian logistics sector'.

The profession attracts largely illiterate people with no formal training for the job. Most of them graduate from working as helpers or driving small vehicles.

Moreover, poor quality of vehicles and support infrastructure (resting places, dhabs, resting points), check posts etc. ensure that even slightly qualified people are not keen to enter the truck driver's profession.

Even though the necessary skills required are not very high, their number and the reluctance on the part of existing drivers to undergo formal training, makes imparting necessary skills difficult, the report adds.

