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During long years of the history of Port of Colombo, millions of tonnes of cargo, in bulk form, have been transported inwards and outwards. A new era for this conventional method of transport has begun, with the introduction of containerization of cargo, in 1978-79, which came into effect with the inauguration of the Port of Colombo Development Scheme.

Overall world container traffic volumes increased five fold over the period 1970 to 1982, rising rapidly from 47 million tonnes(mt) to over 280 million tonnes at an annual average 16.2% per annum. While increasingly influenced by the pace of global economic development, the rapid expansion of container traffic during the 1979's has primarily stemmed from the growing momentum of container penetration on both established and newly containerized trades. It is inevitable that the pace of economic activity within major market economies together with the allied growth of world sea borne dry cargo trade will prove of increasing relevance to the future expansion of box traffic volumes, virtually all prime trades now having been containerized.

This paper looks into the effects of this "Containerization" on Cargo Transport in Sri Lanka, taking into account the years of service with conventional transport system alone, and also with container system, since early '80s.