

Business Line Dt: 09/14/25

Steel trade deficit at 10-year high as imports outweigh exports in FY25

DEEPENING CRISIS. With China flooding markets with cheap alloys, India turns net importer of the metal again

Abhishek Law
New Delhi

India's steel sovereignty is buckling under China's relentless export machine. With Asia's largest economy flooding global and Indian markets with cheap alloys, India has become a net importer of the metal. In FY25, India's steel trade deficit hit a 10-year high of 4.5 million tonnes (mt). Imports soared to 9.5 mt, the highest since FY16, while exports crashed to a decade-low 5 mt, data accessed by *businessline* from the Steel Ministry show.

Between FY16 and FY25, India's steel imports have averaged in the 7mt range, barring last fiscal when it shot up 15 per cent year-on-year (y-o-y) (9.5 mt vs 8.3 mt), while exports, which have been in the 8-9 mt range, dropped 35 per cent y-o-y to 5 mt (vs 7.5 mt in FY24).

Over the last 10 years, India was a net importer of



steel. In FY19, the deficit stood at 1.7 mt, and in FY24, it was around 1 mt. However, the trade deficit rose four-fold y-o-y to 4.5 mt in the just concluded fiscal.

"Increase in imports have been a concern. Initially, it was China and Vietnam; now, its other ASEAN nations with which India has FTA. This has skewed India's domestic market dynamics and price equations. Even today, most of the Chinese steel coming in are at a lower

cost of production compared to Indian steel," a market participant said.

In view of the concerns raised by India's steel industry, the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has recommended a 12 per cent safeguard duty (on all imports) for a period of 200-odd days. An official notification is yet to come regarding its implementation.

THE CHINA FACTOR

Analysts estimate that China

will export close to 110 mt of steel, targeting global markets, following a supply glut of the metal in the country. China's slowing real estate sector (a key consumer of the alloy) is also contributing to it.

A part of this glut is making way into Indian markets across categories like stainless steel, steel pipes, etc.

Market anticipates steel exports from China to taper off in the later part of the year, if trade barriers put up

by various countries, including in India, come into play. Initial estimates indicate that China exported 17 mt of steel in the first two months of 2025, reflecting a 7 per cent y-o-y increase.

EXPORTS HIT

India has also been hit in its key export markets. Shipments to EU and ME are down. The former is due to economic headwinds in member countries; and the latter is because of cheaper alloys coming in from China.

Non-alloyed steel exports from India, are down 30 per cent in FY25 to 4.2 mt (6.8 mt); while alloyed and stainless steel shipments are flat at around 0.7 mt range. On a sequential basis (March vs February) exports showed a slight 10 per cent improvement at 0.45 mt vs 0.41 mt; but on a y-o-y basis (March 2025 vs March 2024), there was a substantial 46 per cent drop, the numbers available with the Steel Ministry show.

Business Standard. Dt: 09/04/25

US retains top spot in pharma exports

Shipments to America grew 14% in Apr-Feb

SOHINI DAS

Mumbai, 8 April

The US remained the largest destination for India's pharmaceutical (pharma) exports, accounting for a 36.6 per cent share, or \$9.8 billion, during April-February 2024-25. With the US administration expected to impose tariffs on pharma imports, Indian exporters are looking to diversify their markets.

The US market grew 14 per cent despite a large base in April-February 2024-25, according to data shared by the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil).

Speaking to *Business Standard*, Bhavin Mehta, vice-chairman of Pharmexcil and whole-time director of Kilitch Drugs (India), said it is not easy to penetrate new markets. "The minimum gestation period to enter a new market is at least a year and a half to two years. Even if exporters start work on a war footing today, it will not be until 2026 that we see something on the ground," he said, adding that Pharmexcil has begun a risk-based assessment of export markets.

Meetings between exporters and senior government officials are expected later this month.

"The idea is to derisk our export business, and the obvious focus countries would be in Africa and Latin America (LatAm)," said one Gujarat-based exporter. "However, even big pharma firms will try to derisk their business and increase their share in emerging markets like LatAm, Africa, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), it will not be easy for small and mid-sized exporters like us to compete with the larger

players, as they have the advantage of economies of scale," he added.

Pharmexcil has identified Africa as a 'thrust' area, Mehta said, adding that last week Pharmexcil led a delegation to three African countries — Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Zambia.

Mehta said India's pharma exports grew by 6.95 per cent to \$26.78 billion between April and February 2024-25. The March numbers are yet to come in, and exports for the full year are expected to be around \$27 billion. The US, Europe, and Africa are the largest export regions for India, together accounting for almost 70 per cent of the country's total pharma exports.

The European Union (EU) and Africa will be the next focus markets for Indian exporters, he felt. While exports to the EU grew by a modest 2.72 per cent, exports to Africa fell by 1.74 per cent.

Mehta pointed out that the UK and France have shown strong growth during the year. "The UK market grew by around 17 per cent, while France saw growth of around 9 per cent," he said, adding that several Indian exporters supply to France, which, in turn, exports to several French-speaking West African countries.

Pharmexcil typically leads four delegations to overseas markets each year — the Commonwealth of Independent States, LatAm, Africa, and Asean countries.

Mehta said that in the 2025-26 edition of the International Pharma and Healthcare Exhibition, the idea is to invite regulators from different countries to showcase the quality of Indian pharma manufacturing.

Export of petroleum products up 8.3% in March

ARUNIMA BHARADWAJ
New Delhi, April 9

INDIA'S EXPORT OF petroleum products in March increased by 8.3% to 1.47 million barrels per day against 1.35 million barrels per day in March 2024, the highest level for the month in recent years, as per data from global real-time data and analytics provider Kpler.

However, compared to the previous month, the exports declined by 2% from 1.49 million barrels per day in February.

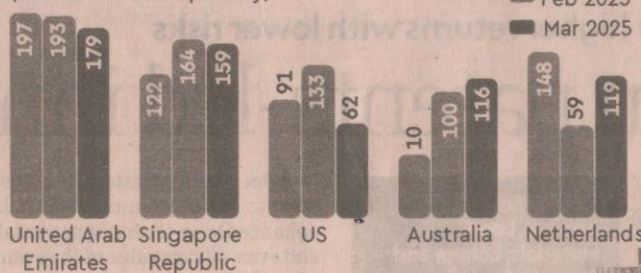
"This increase was driven by fiscal year-end effects and elevated refinery run rates during February and March. Kpler estimates crude throughput for February-March at around 5.6-5.7 million barrels per day," said Sumit Ritolia, lead research analyst, refining & modeling at Kpler.

The United Arab Emirates emerged as the top destination for the country's exports in March, followed by Singapore, and the Netherlands.

India exported 179,000 barrels per day of petroleum products to the United Arab Emirates last

FUELLING GROWTH

Exports of petroleum products
(thousand barrels per day)



*Total figures also include exports to other countries; source: Kpler

■ Compared to the previous month, the exports declined by 2% from 1.49 million barrels per day in February

■ Kpler estimates crude throughput for February-March at around 5.6-5.7 million barrels per day

■ The UAE is the top destination for the country's exports in March, followed by Singapore, and the Netherlands



month, down 7.2% from 193,000 barrels per day in February.

Exports to Singapore and the United States also declined by 3% and 53.4% sequentially to 159,000 bpd and 62,000 bpd, respectively in March.

During the period, exports to Australia and Netherlands, however, increased 16% and 101% to 116,000 bpd and 119,000 bpd, respectively from February levels.

India primarily supplies petroleum products to countries in

Europe and Asia. The country has emerged as a major fuel supplier to Europe in the past few months after European countries started boycotting Russian supplies post its invasion of Ukraine.

Looking ahead, Kpler anticipates a temporary decline in crude processing volumes of around 250,000 barrels per day in the second quarter of 2025, as refiners such as Reliance Industries, Indian Oil, and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals commence planned

maintenance. "However, export volumes are expected to remain strong, even if they do not match the March peak," Ritolia said.

He noted that a more substantial increase in crude processing is expected towards late 2025 or into 2026, as several brownfield expansions currently underway — at Koyali, Barauni, and Panipat — begin to come online. "That said, the ramp-up is expected to be gradual," Ritolia said.

Union minister for petroleum

and natural gas Hardeep Singh Puri on multiple events has said that there is no shortage of oil in the market but if there are geopolitical tensions, it may increase the cost of freight for shippers.

While the US imposed reciprocal tariffs of 26% on India, some goods, including energy and other certain minerals, have been exempted from the tariffs. The exemptions come as a relief to the energy markets with Indian exports of petroleum products likely to witness a muted impact, industry players say.

"US' share in the Indian petroleum products export has been in the range of 6-8% over the last 2-3 years. This, coupled with the fact that petroleum products have been exempted from the recently announced tariffs, point towards a muted impact of these tariffs on Indian exports of petroleum products. Any change in the crude sourcing mix on account of these tariffs remains to be seen," said Ankit Jain, vice president & sector head, corporate ratings, ICRA Limited.

The country exports a variety of goods via the Red Sea, including petroleum products.

Instant coffee exports to US may get impacted by tariff, say exporters



BREWING TROUBLE. India's coffee shipments to the US were over \$67 million while overall exports were \$1.8 billion

Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

India's exports of coffee to the US, mainly instant or soluble coffees, could be impacted by the 26 per cent tariff, exporters said.

"The main problem is going to be for the instant coffees in the US. Indian instant coffee faces competition from Brazil and Ecuador; both of them have a 10 per cent tariff. Because India is going to be at 26 per cent tariff, instant coffee could be badly hit," said Ramesh Rajah, President, Coffee Exporters Association.

Speciality coffee exports also may be impacted, while there's no significant impact on the normal green bean shipments, he said.

SMALLER MARKET

The US is relatively a smaller market for Indian coffees, accounting for less than 4 per cent of the exports in value terms. India's coffee shipments to the US were over \$67 million; overall exports were \$1.8 billion.

In volume terms, India exports about 9,000 tonnes of coffee to the US, while overall exports during 2024-25 were estimated at 3.89 lakh tonnes.

Instant coffee comprises the bulk of the exports to the US of about 60 per cent, while the rest is normal coffee. There is also some quantity of speciality coffees.

India exports about 9,000 tonnes of coffee to the US, while overall exports during 2024-25 were estimated at 3.89 lakh tonnes

Brazil, the largest producer of coffee, which has been slapped with a 10 per cent tariff, will be the biggest gainer in the US market as coffee from Vietnam, the second largest producer, come under the 46 per cent levy.

Most of the coffee producers in Asia and Africa have been slapped with very high tariffs.

SPECIALTY COFFEE

Rajah said Indian exporters may have to look at other markets. Already, India suffers a great disadvantage compared with the Central and South American producers. Mexico is a major supplier to the US.

DM Purnesh, President, Speciality Coffee Association of India, said there won't be any significant impact on speciality coffee exports to the US as most of the price negotiations with the buyers had already taken place in February-March.

There have been a few instances of buyers seeking a discount, he said.

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Cashew nut exports rise 8% on EU imports

V Sajeer Kumar
Kochi

Riding on surging cashew nut imports by the European Union, India has witnessed a modest 8 per cent rise in exports during the first quarter (Q1) of 2025.

Vietnam accounted for 72 per cent of total EU imports. Cashew nut imports by the EU soared to an unprecedented level in Q1 25, registering a record 42,850 tonnes valued at €273 million (\$300 million). This marks a significant increase of 16 per cent in volume and 42 per cent in value compared with the same period in 2024, when 37,054 tonnes worth €193 million (\$212 million) were

imported, said J Rajmohan Pillai, Chairman of Beta Group, which owns the brand NutKing.

US TARIFF IMPACT

However, he pointed out that speculation is rife on the potential shift in cashew trade dynamics in the wake of the Trump tariff, forcing suppliers to explore alternate markets in the EU, Japan and the Middle East.

The US is a major market for cashew nuts, with Vietnam holding a major share. The recent 46 per cent US tariff on Vietnam could be a game changer.

At the same time, the impact of the 26 per cent US tariff on Indian cashews remains a topic of speculation,



NEW RECORD. Cashew nut imports by the EU registered a record high of 42,850 tonnes valued at €273 million in Q125

with contrasting views on the country's ability to capitalise on the situation given domestic demand constraints and rising kernel prices, he said.

Pratap Nair, Managing Partner, Vijayalekshmi

Cashews, said there are some countries in the EU whose requirements are of high quality standards which could be met only by Indian processors.

There are very few Vietnam processors who can

match these quality standards, he added.

DUTY-FREE IMPORTS

Pillai attributed the reasons for higher EU imports to the FTA with Vietnam, which reduced the import tax rate on cashew kernels to zero per cent. This facilitated Vietnamese exporters to offer their products more competitively. The imposition of high tariffs by the US on cashew imports from India and Vietnam is likely to redirect more cashew supplies towards the EU market, further increasing import volumes, he said.

With the new tariff announcement, there are no new contracts being signed for exports to the US, he said.

Business Line, 1st, 11/4/25

Edible oil industry calls for halt to duty-free imports from Nepal

KV Kurmanath

Hyderabad

The Indian Vegetable oil Producers' Association (IVPA) said the duty-free import of edible oil from Nepal is posing a serious challenge to domestic players.

IVPA has asked the government to impose bank guarantees equivalent to the applicable duty differential from the importers to ensure compliance with the Rule of Origin guidelines.

'INCREASE AIDC'

Further, IVPA has sought an increase in the Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on refined oil from 5 per cent to 10-15 per cent. They also asked the Centre to channelise the imports through agencies like NAFED and to cap import volumes.



TARIFF WOES. IVPA has written to Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan seeking his intervention

Under the South Asia Free Trade Area (SAFTA) Agreement and the India-Nepal Trade Treaty, vegetable oil imports from Nepal are tariff-free. This has resulted in a significant rise in refined soybean and palm oil imports from Nepal. The sharp increase in imports suggests that other countries are using Nepal as a channel to access India's market with zero-duty benefits, alleged the industry.

"The influx of low-duty

vegetable oil imports is exerting downward pressure on domestic prices, adversely affecting soybean and mustard seeds prices to operate below MSP. This not only affects farmers' income and discourages cultivation, but also poses a serious setback to India's goal of achieving self-reliance in edible oils," the IVPA said.

The association has written to Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh, seeking his intervention.

Sugar traders body pegs exports near 3 lakh tonnes

Our Bureau
New Delhi

*Business Line,
at 4/4/25*

India has exported 2.87 lakh tonnes (lt) of sugar till April 8 out of the 10 lt quota permitted by the government in January in the ongoing 2024-25 season (October-September). Out of this, the maximum quantity was shipped to Somalia, said the All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA) on Wednesday.

The sugar despatch from mills for export, however, was 3.05 lt, as nearly 18,000 tonnes are in transit or under loading.

PROVIDES FLEXIBILITY

After a gap of more than a year, India allowed sugar exports on January 20 by distributing mill-wise quota and also provided flexibility to sugar factories to exchange the permit with domestic quota.

The maximum quantity of 51,596 tonnes was shipped to Somalia

Sharing the details of countrywise export, AISTA said 51,596 tonnes had been shipped to Somalia, 48,864 tonnes to Afghanistan, 46,757 tonnes to Sri Lanka and 30,729 tonnes to Libya.

Other countries which imported Indian sugar included Djibouti at 27,064 tonnes, the UAE at 21,834 tonnes, Tanzania at 21,141 tonnes, Bangladesh at 5,589 tonnes and China at 5,427 tonnes. The pace of exports, though slow now, is likely to pick up in one month, the trade body said.

"The impact of falling crude prices has to be seen on sugar prices because ethanol is a major contributor to transportation fuel," it said.

Chennai airport sees 4x rise in electronics & electricals export

Business Line, dt. 11/4/25

GADGET RUSH. Shipments include large volumes of mobile phones, including iPhones

TE Raja Simhan
Chennai

From January to March, Chennai airport's air cargo has been buzzing with activity driven by exports of electronics and electrical products, which saw a four-fold increase in the first three months of the year, per Chennai airport data.

Exports of 'electronics and electricals' stood at 541 tonnes in January 2025, and went up to 1,561 tonnes in February and 2,203 tonnes in March. In March 2024, the export quantity was around 860 tonnes.

Out of the total exports between electronics and electrical goods, the former contributes to over three-fourths of the volume, sources said.

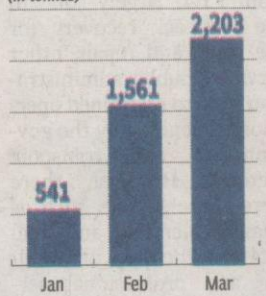
IPHONE EXPORTS UP

Within mobiles, the export of Apple phones from Chennai airport has increased significantly, they added. However, the exact numbers could not be ascertained.

The consignment is usually carried in the passenger aircraft's belly. However, in the last three months, ad-hoc freighters have picked up a large volume of special parcels, including mobile phones, from Chennai, airport sources said.

Export boom

Export of electronics and electricals
(in tonnes)



Source: Chennai airport data

The US-based National Airlines, which specialises in cargo flights, operated two special flights to Chennai in this period. National Airlines' jumbo Boeing 747-400 arrived at Chennai International Airport from Birmingham and soared onward to Incheon with 116 tonnes of cargo in its hold, said a social media post by the Airports Authority of India, Chennai.

An industry source said the export data indicate Chennai is the major hub for mobile manufacturing with players such as Foxconn and Tata Electronics having their plants in and around the metropolis.

A Reuters report noted that Apple chartered cargo flights to ferry 600 tonnes of iPhones, or as many as 1.5 million, to the US from India.

The company lobbied with Indian airport authorities to reduce the customs clearance time at Chennai airport from 30 hours to just six, according to the report.

ELECTRONICS PLI

J Krishnan of S Natesa Iyer Logistics LLP, a Chennai-based freight forwarder, said Chennai's tryst with mobile phones began with Nokia, and then there was a pause. Now, the assembly of iPhones with renewed vigour is a testament to the availability of talent, infrastructure and policy decisions like PLI. This will hasten the call of the air cargo users.

"We need to have state-of-the-art air cargo terminals to nurture and drive this business at a very competitive cost," he added.

Tarun Pathak, Research Director, Counterpoint Research, said the "electronics component PLI timing could not have been better" and he expects an accelerated pace of getting JVs in place.

"The only area of caution is the small sub-assembly. We are still dependent on China," he said, adding that it all hinges on whether China sees this as an opportunity to scale things up in India or sees India as an emerging competitor in global electronics manufacturing. "Nonetheless, it's ad-

vantage India. Capacities won't ramp up overnight, but at least the electronics ecosystem is in a better space if we play our cards right," he said.

Electronics industry executives *businessline* spoke to say that in the short term, nothing much will change because of US President Trump's frequent change of stance. "We are planning some short-term order realignment but for components, we still depend heavily on China; so, we are waiting to see if Chinese suppliers will support the ramp up of orders," an executive at an EMS firm said.

'Made in India' smartphone shipments grew 6 per cent on year in 2024, driven by increasing exports from Apple and Samsung, according to Counterpoint's 'Make in India' Service report in March. Foxconn Hon Hai's volumes in India grew 19 per cent in 2024, propelled by increasing shipments of the iPhone 14, iPhone 15 and iPhone 13 models.

Tata Electronics (earlier Wistron) was the fastest growing smartphone manufacturer in India in 2024 with 107 per cent y-o-y growth. The iPhone 15 and iPhone 16 models were the major volume contributors here.

With inputs from Sindhu Hariharan

Relief for seafood and rice exporters

Financial Express, 11/14/25

SANDIP DAS

New Delhi, April 10

INDIA'S SEAFOOD EXPORTERS

have got a relief after a 90-days pause on US's reciprocal tariff of 26% with lowering of the duty to 10%.

This has put India's seafood exports at par with its competitors, including Ecuador, in the US market.

Exporters said the reciprocal tariff of 26% for items from India would have hit the seafood exports to US just at the beginning of the season, as the farmers started preparation for the cultivation of shrimp, which constitute the biggest chunk of shipment.

"There is a lot of relief now as we are at par with other exporters to the US," KN Raghavan, secretary general, seafood exporters association of India, told *FE*.

He said the government must now negotiate with the US for entering into a bilateral trade agreement so that higher imports tariff does not hit again.

Earlier, Indian industry had stated that imposition of tariff could have hit farmers, processors and other stakeholders in the chain as they had started preparation for shrimp cultivation.

There were also fears of losing a portion of the market to Ecuador, which is closer to the US geographically as well as attracting lesser import duty at 10%.

Industry had also raised concern that as a portion of seafood



exports from India is sent to south east Asian countries, including Vietnam and Thailand where its re-exported to the US after value addition, higher tariff imposed on imports of these countries would have an impact on the trade

The seafood exports to the US was valued at \$2.55 billion in FY24, out of India's total exports of \$7.38 billion. Frozen shrimp continue to be the principal item exported to the USA with a share of close to 92%.

Bulk of the country's seafood exports to the US is 'Vannamei Shrimp', and in FY24, over 41% of India's shrimp exports went to America, which was by far its largest market. The US exports only Atlantic Salmon to India in small quantities where India has imposed a 30% duty.

The reciprocal tariff earlier had covered the major exporters to the US shrimp market, including Ecuador (10%), Vietnam (46%) and Indonesia (32%).