Business Line. Dt: 14/01/25

Domestic tractor sales dip in 2024, exports see growth after slump

G Balachandar
Chennai

Domestic tractor sales saw a slight decline in the calendar year 2024 while tractor exports experienced positive growth after a double-digit drop in the previous year. Total tractor production remained below one million units for the second consecutive year, following two years of surpassing the million-unit mark.

For 2024, total domestic tractor sales reached 9.02 lakh units, compared to 9.15 lakh units in 2023, according to data from the Tractor & Mechanisation Association (TMA). Tractor sales were sluggish in the first five months of 2024 but began to recover. This was driven by favourable monsoon conditions and an increase in minimum support prices (MSP), which provided better financial stability for farmers. Sales peaked during festive season.

MILLION MARK MISSED

Total tractor production in 2024 was slightly lower at 9.82 lakh units, compared to 9.86 lakh units in 2023, 10 lakh units in 2022, and 10.6 lakh units in 2021, which marked the highest-ever annual production.

The year 2024 marked a recovery period for tractor exports. Total shipments of 'Made in India' tractors rose to 97,745 units, up from 96,223 units in 2023. However, exports were still lower than the 1,31,850 units shipped in 2022.

In December 2024, domestic sales showed positive growth, with volumes increasing to 50,993 units from 44,735 units in December 2023. The sentiment remained positive, supported by cash flow from the kharif harvest. Favourable reservoir levels contributed to robust sowing for the rabi season, further boosting tractor demand.

Hemant Sikka, President of the Farm Equipment Sector at Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd, said the tractor industry is poised for growth, driven by positive agricultural sentiment and favourable trade conditions for farmers.

Business Line. Dt: 14/01/25

With China buying less, iron ore exports decline nearly 30% to 22.67 mt in nine months of FY25

Abhishek Law
New Delhi

The country's iron-ore exports for the nine-month-period (9MFY25) saw a near 30 per cent drop y-o-y with shipments slowing down to 22.67 million tonnes.

A slowdown has been noticed in the largest buyer market China — down to 20.17 mt — on account of excess steel stocks due to poor demand there, iron-ore stockpiles and tightening of imports (of steel) into India by policymakers, thereby impacting buying. Iron ore exports for 9MFY24 stood 32.46 mt. However, the numbers are substantially higher than 9MFY23 — when duty imposition by India's policy makers — slowed down shipments going out of the country to 9.67 mt.

TOP BUYER

According to data available from market intelligence firm, BigMint, China continues to be the major buyer of iron ore from India for the nine months of this fiscal, accounting for 90 per cent of the shipments, at 20.17 mt.

In comparison, China's iron ore buying from India was at a three-year high last year and stood at 24.75 mt (higher than 9M FY25) for eight-month period of April-November in FY23.

For the fiscal, iron ore exports in April were 2.44 mt and peaked in May to 4.17 mt. Shipments started declining June onwards to 3.64 mt, and moderated further during the monsoon seasons – to 2.55 mt in July, further down to 1.85 mt in August, and then slid to 1.65 mt in September. Some pick-up was witnessed October onwards – at 2.41 mt, but again dipped to 1.82 mt in November and then to 2.14 mt in December.

"So, China has seen record buying of iron ore, but from bigger sourcing nations like Australia and Brazil. Since, stockpiles have happened, shipments or order to smaller supply nations like India are down," a market participant told *businessline.*

China continues to be a global buyer of the steel-making feedstock; and as per data publicly available, in 2024 (calendar year), China increased iron ore imports by 5 per cent-odd (versus 1.18 billion tonnes in 2023) to 1.24 billion tonnes.

The country has been importing raw materials in record volumes for the second year in a row, a market source said. Poor steel demand globally has led to a dip in iron ore prices, which the Asian nation has taken advantage of to make increased purchases.

However, steel production in China has declined and in the 11M CY2024 production fell by 2.7 per cent with electric arc furnace makers slowing down on production.

Business Line. Dt: 14/01/25

European demand lifts soyameal exports in December

Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

Soyameal exports are up a tad during December at 2.77 lakh tonnes (lt) on higher demand from European buyers, such as Germany and Netherlands.

However, the offtake by the domestic livestock feed sector was flat at 5.5 lt, as per the latest estimates by the trade body Soyabean Processors Association of India (SOPA).

BEARISH TREND. The prices of soyabean continued to rule below the MSP across key producing regions

Soyameal exports during December were up by over a per cent at 2.77 lt compared with 2.74 lt in the year-ago period.

However, cumulative exports for the oil year 2024-25 starting October were down 21 per cent at 5.18 lt compared with 6.59 lt a year ago as India continues to be expensive in the world market. Exports declined during October and November.

LARGEST BUYER

Germany was the largest buyer of Indian soyameal in December with purchases of 49,875 tonnes, followed by the Netherlands at 39,088 tonnes, Bangladesh at 32,002 tonnes and France at 28,542 tonnes. Neighbouring Nepal purchased over 27,724 tonnes during December while Belgium bought over 17,800 tonnes. Offtake from Iran, a large buyer in the previous year, remained muted around 500 tonnes during December.

Meanwhile, the market arrivals of soyabean have been estimated at 46 lt till December-end, down 11 per cent against 52 lt a year ago as the bearish price trend continued in the domestic market tracking the global trend.

The crushing till end December was also lower by 14 per cent at 30.5 lt, down from previous year's 35.5 lt. However, the direct use of soyabean was up marginally at 1.4 lt, up from 1.1 lt.

Stocks with the crushing units and traders are estimated to be lower at 89.82 lt, down from 93.46 lt in the same period a year ago.

OFFTAKE DOWN

As a result of the lower market arrivals, the production of soyameal dropped 14 per cent to 24.07 lt during the October-December period. It was 28.01 lt a year ago.

The domestic consumption by the food sector is down marginally at 2.1 lt from 2.25 lt. Consumption for the feed is also lower at 17 lt down from 18.5 lt during the period.

Meanwhile, the prices of soyabean continued to rule below the MSP across key producing regions.

The government has fixed an MSP of ₹4,892 per quintal while the modal prices in the markets of Madhya Pradesh, the largest producing State, ranged between ₹3,500 and ₹4,400 per quintal on Monday.

Government agencies have procured over 8.84 lakh tonnes of soyabean so far, with the bulk of the procurement of over 3.88 lt being made in Madhya Pradesh, followed by 3.1 lt in Maharashtra, 83,075 tonnes in Telangana, 51,026 tonnes in Rajasthan, 32,687 tonnes in Gujarat and 18,282 tonnes in Karnataka. The sanctioned quantity for public procurement by the government is 33.85 lt.

FINANCIAL EXPRESS. Dt:- 14/01/25

Finished steel imports at 6-year high

NEHA ARORA
New Delhi, January 13

INDIA'S FINISHED STEEL imports hit at least a six-year high in the first nine months of FY25, according to provisional government data.

India, the world's second-biggest crude steel producer, had turned a net importer of finished steel products in the previous financial year. The trend has since continued, with shipments from China touching a record high in April-November 2024. China's steel exports in 2024 hit their highest level since 2015 at 110.72 million tonne, an annual increase of 22.7%. India last month launched a probe to determine the need for imposition of a safeguard duty or a temporary tax to curtail unbridled steel imports.

India imported 7.27 million tonne of finished steel during April-December, up 20.3% year-on-year, the provisional data showed. The country remained a net importer of finished steel during April-December, with exports slumping 24.6% to an at least six-year low of 3.6 million tonne, the data showed. The government will detail country-wise trade data later this month. Demand in Asia's third-largest economy has been robust from infrastructure and automotives, while it tapers off overseas. Consumption of finished steel during April-December reached an at least six-year high of 111.25 million tonne, up 11.2% from the previous year, the data showed. —REUTERS

RUVANANTHAPURAM - TIRUCHIRAPALLI - TIRUPATI - VIJAYAWADA - VISAKHAPATNAM

RNI No. Applied

Business Line. Dt: 16/01/25

Gold buy dips in Dec, but overall import jump widens trade deficit

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

India's gold imports in December plummeted by half to $4.7 billion compared to November's sharply lowered $9.8 billion (after last week's data revision).

Overall goods exports in December dropped (year-on-year) for the second straight month, falling 1 per cent to $38.01 billion, pulled down mostly by petroleum products, and gems and jewellery, per quick estimates shared by the Commerce Department on Wednesday.

FADING GLOW. Gold imports worth $4.7 billion in Dec 2024 were lower compared to the previous month's inflows but were 55.39% higher than imports worth $3.02 billion in Dec 2023 REUTERS

WIDENING DEFICIT

Imports in December rose 4.9 per cent (year-on-year) to $59.95 billion with the trade deficit widening to $21.94 billion from $18.76 billion in the same month of 2023.

The trade deficit, however, was the narrowest in the last three months.

While gold imports worth $4.7 billion in December were lower significantly compared to the previous month, they were 55.39 per cent higher than imports worth $3.02 billion in December 2023.

On data robustness, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal told the media: "Let me assure you that from now onwards, we are creating very good SOPs (standard operating procedures)."

"A committee is already looking into an SOP that will ensure better coordination between DGCIS and DG Systems. So, now you will always have robust data."

IMPROVED DATA

The government is also working to develop a data analytics platform, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to get better insights into the country's trade figures, Barthwal said.

On January 9, the Commerce Department said in a statement that due to the migration of the data transmission mechanism from SEZ to ICEGATE, some double counting had taken place for precious metals (largely gold).

Gold import figures for November were pared by $5 billion and by $11.7 billion for April-November 2024.

During April-December, exports grew 1.6 per cent to $321.71 billion and imports by 5.15 per cent to $532.48 billion, widening the trade deficit to $210.77 billion from $189.74 billion in the same period the previous fiscal.

NARCL is sole bidder of debts of Jaiprakash Associates; offers ₹12,000 crore

KR Srivats
Abhishek Law
New Delhi

State-owned National Asset Reconstruction Co Ltd (NARCL) has emerged the sole bidder to take over the distressed debt of Jaiprakash Associates Ltd, due to nearly 25 lenders, with process advisor IDBI Capital Markets & Securities (ICMS) receiving no competing offer.

NARCL's proposal was for a settlement at ₹12,000 crore, with the offer including an upfront cash payment of 15 per cent and security receipts of 85 per cent.

ICMS had extended the last date by a week to January 14 to attract rival bids but none materialised, making NARCL the sole bidder for JAL, sources familiar with the matter told *businessline*.

While over half a dozen asset reconstruction companies had initially expressed interest in acquiring lenders' exposure to JAL on an all-cash basis, no firm offers were received to challenge the government-backed bad loan aggregator.

JAL has admitted claims totalling ₹52,073.79 crore under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

Read more on p2

Business Line. Dt: 16/01/25

New US export controls on artificial intelligence chip raise concerns for India's semiconductor ambitions

Sanjana B
Bengaluru

The US government on Monday announced plans to tighten restrictions on the export of AI chips and technology, seeking to consolidate advanced computing capabilities within the country and its allies while intensifying efforts to curb China's access. However, this decision may pose challenges to countries like India, industry players said.

According to the Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), the new License Exception Artificial Intelligence Authorization (AIA) allows for the export, reexport or transfer (in-country) of advanced computing chips, without authorisation, to a set of allies and partners. New License Exception Advanced Compute Manufacturing (ACM) allows for the export, re-export or transfer (in-country) of advanced computing chips, without authorisation, for the development, production and storage of these chips, except to arms-embargoed countries.

"The US has a national security responsibility to preserve and extend American AI leadership, and to ensure that American AI can benefit people globally. Today, we are announcing a rule that ensures frontier AI training infrastructure remains in the US and closely allied countries, while facilitating the diffusion of American AI globally," said National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

"The rule both provides greater clarity to our international partners and industry and counters the serious circumvention and related national security risks posed by countries of concern and malicious actors who may seek to use the advanced American technologies against us."

Ashok Chandak, President of the India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA), shared that the export control framework for AI diffusion, introduced by the Biden administration, is expected to significantly affect global AI development and deployment. These restrictions extend beyond US-based companies, influencing nations like India, which now faces licensing requirements for importing advanced AI chips.

The new export curbs are set to take effect in 120 days

CHALLENGES AHEAD

India's AI sector could face several hurdles due to the restrictions, like restricted access to advanced AI chips slowing innovation and development and scaling up of installations. Licensing requirements could raise costs and introduce delays due to authorisations. Indian companies may rely heavily on global corporations for AI infrastructure, like data centres.

Large-scale AI data centres, requiring several hundred thousand GPUs, may be delayed or scaled-down, putting global companies at a competitive advantage over Indian enterprises. However, small-scale setups could still enable experimentation, innovation, and restricted model development.

"The export controls are set to take effect in 120 days, allowing the incoming administration under President-elect Trump to potentially amend them. It is a bit uncertain whether the Trump administration will make it easy or pass the rule as is. Amid growing concerns from technology industries, the global AI landscape may witness a shift, impacting both US technological leadership and India's growth trajectory in AI infrastructure," Chandak said.

Though in the short-term India may not have a major impact, in the long run scaling up by any Indian conglomerate could face the hurdles of quantity cap, he added.

"The US imposing restrictions on the import of GPUs to India brings us back to the old licensing regime to haunt us again. China can follow with other technologies, and the rest of the West too. Imagine the export of semiconductor manufacturing machines being restricted tomorrow which will stop our semiconductor ambitions," explained Ajai Chowdhry, Founder of HCL, and the Chairman of EPIC Foundation & MGB.

Business Line Dt:- 16/01/25

To boost exports to $1 billion by 2030, Centre launches National Turmeric Board

KV Kurmanath
Hyderabad

With turmeric exports expected to cross the $1 billion mark by 2030, the Union government has launched the national Turmeric Board to develop and grow turmeric and turmeric products in the country.

Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal formally inaugurated the Board's office in Nizamabad in northern Telangana, one of the key turmeric hubs in the country.

Set up on the lines of the Tobacco Board, which has been regulating tobacco farming and trade in the country, the Turmeric Board will work with the Spice Board and other government agencies to provide leadership on turmeric-related matters and augment the efforts to develop and grow the sector.

Inaugurating the Board virtually from New Delhi on Tuesday, Piyush Goyal said it would promote research and development of new products and would look into value-addition of turmeric related products for marketing abroad.

"The Board will also look into creating awareness on the essential and medicinal properties of turmeric, ways to increase its yield and boost logistics and the supply chain to foster trade in newer markets," he said.

India, the world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of turmeric, grows it on 3.05 lakh hectares and produces 10.74 lakh tonnes, accounting for more than three-fourths of the global production.

RISING EXPORTS

More than 30 varieties of turmeric are grown in the country.

Though it is grown in over 20 States, the key producing hubs are Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

India exported 1.7 lakh tonnes (lt)of turmeric and turmeric products in 2022-23 against 1.53 lt in the previous year.

This earned forex of $207.45 million for the country, with key export markets being Bangladesh, the UAE, the US and Malaysia.

The government is planning to breach the $1 billion mark in exports by 2030.

The Board would focus on building capacities and skill development of turmeric growers to promote value addition so that farmers get additional income.

The notification said the Board would promote quality and food safety standards so that the produce gets a premium in the domestic and international markets.

The government has appointed BJP leader Palle Ganga Reddy as the first Chairman of the Board.

The Board would have members from the Ministry of AYUSH, the Departments of Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Commerce and Industry, senior government representatives from turmeric-growing States, select national/state institutions involved in research, and representatives of turmeric farmers and exporters.

The Board would also have a bureaucrat as Secretary to take care of its functioning.

Business Line. Dt:- 16/01/25

Soyabean, sunflower oils push India's edible oil imports up by 13%

AJ Vinayak
Mangaluru

A significant jump in the imports of soyabean and sunflower oils led India to register 13.03 per cent growth in edible oil imports in the first two months of the oil year 2024-25 (November-October).

According to data compiled by the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA), the country imported 27.25 lakh tonnes (lt) of edible oils during the first two months of the oil year 2024-25 against 24.55 lt last year.

Import of palm oil (including RBD palmolein and crude palm oil) decreased to 13.42 lt in the first two months of the oil year 2024-25 against 17.63 lt last year. This is a decline of 23.89 per cent.

BV Mehta, Executive Director of SEA, said tightening export supplies and higher prices prompted consumers to switch to lower priced South American soyabean oil.

The share of palm oil in total edible oil imports decreased to 48% in the first two months of the oil year 2024-25

India's soyabean oil imports increased 173.78 per cent to 8.28 lt. India imported 6.05 lt of sunflower oil (3.89 lt) during the first two months of the oil year 2024-25.

The share of palm oil in total edible oil imports decreased to 48 per cent (72 per cent) in the first two months of the oil year 2024-25 while that of soft oils increased to 52 per cent (28 per cent).

USDA REPORT

Meanwhile, the January report of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Foreign Agricultural Service, titled 'Oilseeds: World Markets and Trade', said the Indonesian Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources on January 3 had decreed 15.6 million kilolitres of biodiesel to be included in the domestic fuel pool, raising the blend rate for biodiesel from 35 per cent to 40 per cent.

This is expected to reduce the amount of palm oil available for export. Lower available supplies for export have fuelled gains in prices, helping to propel palm oil to its position as the highest priced vegetable oil in recent months, the report said.

Vegoil importers across the globe have started shifting to lower-priced oils, including soyabean oil from the US, it added.

IMPORT PRICE

The CIF price for imported RBD palmolein increased to $1,236 a tonne in December against $1,233 a tonne in November, and crude palm oil (CPO) to $1,270 a tonne in December from $1,269 a tonne in November.

Meanwhile, the CIF price for the imported crude soyabean oil decreased to $1,123 in December from $1,219 a tonne in November, and crude sunflower oil to $1,206 a tonne in December to $1,265 a tonne in November.

Business Standard Dt:- 16/01/25

Cumulative merchandise exports rise 1.6% in Apr-Dec

In November alone, gold imports were slashed by $5 billion to $9.8 billion following the discovery of a calculation error caused by double-counting shipments stored in warehouses.

Last week, the commerce department said that data revision was necessitated due to the "migration of data transmission mechanism" from National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) — which captures special economic zone (SEZ) data — to the Indian Customs Electronic Gateway (ICEGATE).

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that a standard operating procedure is being developed to improve coordination between the commerce and revenue departments and ensure more accurate data reconciliation.

The government is still reviewing trade data, and the process is expected to be completed by next month, said another official. The revisions could have implications for key macroeconomic indicators, including the current account deficit (CAD) and gross domestic product (GDP).

Gold imports remained elevated in December, rising 55 per cent year-on-year to $4.7 billion. Aditi Nayar, chief economist and head-research & output at ICRA, noted that a Customs duty cut earlier this financial year was the reason for more than half the rise in the trade deficit.

Other import categories also recorded increases, with electronics up 9.6 per cent, petroleum products rising 2.2 per cent, machinery up 11.75 per cent, organic and inorganic chemicals increasing 7.59 per cent, and vegetable oil imports surging 18.61 per cent.

"The sequential dip in the trade deficit in December, coupled with the sharp downward revision for the previous month due to rectified gold import values, is expected to result in a relatively favourable CAD for Q3FY25," Nayar said. "We now estimate the CAD to print at 2.0 per cent of GDP for the quarter and around 1 per cent of GDP for FY25."

On the export front, petroleum shipments fell by 28.6 per cent year-on-year to $4.9 billion, while gems and jewellery exports plummeted by 26 per cent to $2.5 billion. However, other key sectors showed growth: Engineering goods rose 8.35 per cent, drugs and pharmaceuticals were up 0.63 per cent, electronics surged 35.11 per cent, and readymade garments increased 12.89 per cent.

Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery product exports (core exports) together grew 8 per cent to $30.9 billion.

For the April-December period, cumulative merchandise exports rose 1.6 per cent to $321.71 billion, while imports climbed 5.1 per cent to $532.48 billion.

In the services sector, exports grew by 3.2 per cent year-on-year to $32.66 billion in December, while imports rose by 11.9 per cent to $17.5 billion, leaving a services trade surplus of $15.16 billion. However, December's services trade data remains provisional and will be revised following Reserve Bank of India updates.

Business Line. Dt:- 17/01/25.

Govt may restore export support to SEZ units, MSMEs

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

Ahead of Budget 2025, the government is considering extending key export schemes that have lapsed. The objective is to provide relief to exporters in the backdrop of volatile global demand.

The Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) is likely to cover SEZ units and EOUs, which were excluded from January 1, and the interest equalisation scheme for accessing cheap export credit, sources said.

An additional provision of ₹1,600-1,700 crore is being considered to extend RoDTEP to SEZs and EOUs till the end of the fiscal year. The Commerce Department has also made a case for extending the interest equalisation scheme in a "slightly modified form" for four to five years, sources said.

"Last week, the PMO discussed a key grievance of SEZs and EOUs of having being cut off from the RoDTEP scheme from January 1, 2025, while the scheme continues for other exporters."

ON THE CARDS. Provision of ₹1,600-1,700 crore being considered to include SEZs and EOUs in the RoDTEP scheme till the end of the fiscal year

FIRST STEP

"Once that happens, further extensions can be considered in the next fiscal when more funds will be available," officials tracking the matter told *businessline.*

The RoDTEP scheme, announced in January 2021, refunds embedded duties and taxes, such as VAT on fuel used in transportation, mandi tax and duty on electricity used during manufacturing of the exported items. Units in SEZs and EOUs and advance authorisation holders were included in the scheme in March 2024 but were excluded from January 1 while other exporters are eligible till September 30, 2025, per a notification issued by the DGFT in September 2024.

In representations made to the Department of Expenditure and the Department of Commerce, the Export Promotion Council for EOUs and SEZs noted that there was no justification for denying the benefits to one set of exporters (SEZ/EOU/AA holders) *vis-a-vis* other exporters in the domestic area (DTA). If there are budget constraints, product categories/sectors may be reduced rather than one small set of exporters being put to a disadvantage, it suggested.

SUPPORTING MSMEs

In the case of the interest equalisation scheme, which lapsed on December 31, 2024, the DGFT is trying to persuade the Finance Ministry to extend it to all initial beneficiaries but is ready to negotiate on limiting the beneficiaries to the MSME sector if funds are a constraint, the source said.

The interest equalisation scheme, under which beneficiaries are extended export credit by banks at a subsidised interest rate, was implemented in April 2015 and has been in place for five years. It covers non-MSME exporters of about 410 identified products and all exporters from the MSME sector. The scheme was subsequently extended for limited periods; the last extension, only for MSME exporters, lapsed on December 31, 2024.

"The DGFT has made a case for extending the interest equalisation scheme for four-five years with the initial annual budget of ₹3,000 crore. Various formats have been proposed to choose the beneficiaries," the official said.

SAFETY NET

With goods exports still facing rough weather as geopolitical risks continue to affect global demand, existing schemes play an important role in ensuring competitiveness of Indian exporters, per the Commerce Department.

Exports of goods in April-December 2024 increased 1.6 per cent (year-on-year) to $321.71 billion while exports in the last two months registered consecutive declines.

Business Line, dt. 17/01/25

India will be largest manufacturing hub for global exports: Suzuki

S Ronendra Singh
New Delhi

Suzuki Motor Company (Japan) on Thursday said its Indian subsidiary will be the largest manufacturing hub for global exports — for both internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles and electric cars.

The company does not see any threat from competitors, including its partner as well as rival Toyota Motor, in its aim to achieve 50 per cent market share.

Toshihiro Suzuki, Representative Director and President, Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC), told reporters here that the company will be launching affordable small electric vehicles (EVs) as India still has a big potential for small cars with more than one-billion two-wheeler customers likely to upgrade.

"India is now the third largest automobile market in the world, hence the entire world is looking at it. So, naturally the competition is getting intense/tougher but Maruti Suzuki India (MSIL) would like to respond with products, services and marketing. By making efforts in these areas, we would like to expand our market share to 50 per cent," Suzuki said to a query by *businessline*.

MARKET SHARE

In CY24, MSIL had a market share of 40.26 per cent in retail sales against 40.85 per cent in CY23. In FY20, the company had market share of 51 per cent.

He said since other automobile manufacturers are getting competitive, SMC and MSIL will "hold our hands tightly".

"That is how we will sustain and maintain our market share," he added.

When asked about any threat from other Japanese rivals like the partnership

Toshihiro Suzuki, Representative Director and President, Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC)

between Nissan and Honda, Suzuki said the partnership is still nascent, and their future plans are not known.

LAUNCHING MORE SUVS

In terms of competition in other segments, Suzuki said since the Indian market is attracted to sports utility vehicles (SUVs) right now, the company will be launching more SUVs with an aim to lead in that segment too.

"Our first priority is to get to the top market share in the SUV segment by introducing more models in the future. We would like to expand our market share in various segments like hybrid, CNG and hydrogen by launching such models," Suzuki said.

In the SUV segment, Mahindra & Mahindra is the market leader with 23.2 per cent market share in April and December 2024 sales, followed by MSIL with 20 per cent market share.

MSIL will be unveiling the e Vitara electric vehicle on Friday at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025.

EXPORTING EVs

Apart from catering to the domestic market here, the company will also export the e Vitara and future EVs to global markets like Europe, Japan, West Asia, Africa, Central and South America and Asian countries, he said.

The company resumed exports to Japan last year with Fronx and there is a pending order of 15,000 units; currently the model is exported to over 70 countries from India, he informed.

In 2024, the company achieved exports of 3.26 lakh units, which was the highest-ever irrespective of the calendar or fiscal year.

Business Standard. Dt:- 17/01/25

Pharma regulator against pre-owned med devices import

SANKET KOUL
New Delhi, 16 January

The import of pre-owned and refurbished, or second-hand, medical devices into India will not be allowed by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) until a regulation is established for such devices, according to senior officials.

In a joint workshop between CDSCO and the Confederation of Indian Industry on medical device regulation held on Wednesday, Deputy Drugs Controller (India) Aseem Sahu announced that any consignment containing refurbished devices present at ports would not be released and would have to be returned. This comes after CDSCO, in a letter to the Principal Commissioner of Customs dated January 10, clarified that refurbished medical devices cannot be imported into the country for sale and distribution, as there is no specific regulation for such devices under the Medical Devices Rules, 2017.

The letter, reviewed by *Business Standard*, adds that no licence is issued for the import of such devices.

Officials also said that the Ministry of Health is working to constitute a high-level expert committee to discuss regulatory aspects with stakeholders regarding the import of refurbished medical devices.

Industry experts say the import of such devices may remain suspended until a regulation is passed by the expert committee. One expert mentioned that the industry was shocked by the lack of prior notice from the health ministry.

Valued at ₹1,500 crore, the pre-owned medical equipment market currently constitutes around 10 per cent of the total medical equipment industry in India, playing a critical role in meeting the growing demand in Tier-II, -III, and -IV cities, as well as rural and underserved areas.

Highlighting the need for a fast policy framework, the Medical Technology Association of India (MTaI) said that if a swiftly implementable policy is not introduced soon, it could lead to irreversible damage to both healthcare providers and the workforce.

The move to disallow imports also follows several lobby groups urging the health ministry to intervene and recall the policy that allows the unregulated influx of second-hand medical equipment such as computed tomography scanners and magnetic resonance imaging machines, citing patient safety concerns.

Welcoming the step, Rajiv Nath, forum coordinator for the Association of Indian Medical Device Industry (AiMED), said that while one ministry and its regulations may permit the import of pre-owned medical devices with respect to e-waste management concerns, other regulators like CDSCO must play their part in addressing the high-risk patient safety concerns.

"We hope that the policy review underway at the health ministry will consider alignment with the National Medical Devices Policy, 2023, which envisions India emerging as the leading manufacturing hub for medical devices," he added.

Business Standard. Dt: 20/01/25

Tesla rival VinFast readies India drive for export hub

PHOTO: SHINE JACOB

VinFast Asia CEO Pham Sanh Chau *(left)* and Deputy CEO of Sales and Marketing Ashwin Ashok Patil unveil VF6 at Auto Expo 2025 in New Delhi

EV major plans first stop in Tamil Nadu

SHINE JACOB
New Delhi, 19 January

Vietnamese electric vehicle (EV) major and Tesla's global rival VinFast is set to make India a global export hub eyeing markets like West Asia and Africa, with the first phase of its $2 billion facility in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, expected to be operational by mid-2025, a senior company executive has said.

The company will also focus on developing an entire EV eco-system, including battery manufacturing and setting up of charging stations across the country. V-Green, a group company, will be looking for co-investors in creating charging infrastructure.

On Saturday, the Vietnamese company showcased its first electric vehicles for the Indian market at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025.

The Nasdaq-listed automaker unveiled two all-electric premium SUVs — VF 7 and VF 6 — that will be launched this year.

"We selected Thoothukudi since it is close to the seaport and airport, which will allow us to export. We have two factories in Vietnam — one is 50,000 and another around 100,000. We are looking at India for the domestic market, West Asia, and Africa," said Pham Sanh Chau, chief executive officer of VinFast Asia.

The initial phase of the unit will see an investment of $500 million.

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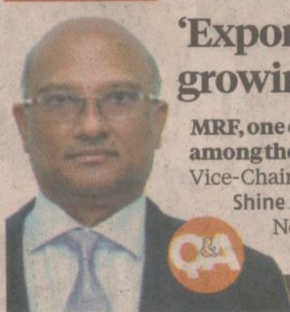

'Exports will be key driver, growing at 25% every quarter'

MRF, one of the largest tyre makers in India, is among the most expensive stocks in the country. Vice-Chairman and MD **ARUN MAMMEN** talks to Shine Jacob during the ongoing Bharat Mobility in New Delhi, about the firm's growth strategy, export road map among others. 2

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India Inc top brass to attend Davos summit

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

India Inc's top brass, including RIL's Mukesh Ambani, JSW's Sajjan Jindal, Aditya Birla group's Kumar Mangalam Birla, and Tata's N Chandrasekaran will attend the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s annual summit in Davos, beginning today. **DEV CHATTERJEE** writes

INVESTOR PITCH FEST AS 6 STATES COMPETE FOR GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT IN DAVOS

FINANCIAL EXPRESS. Dt:- 20/01/25

Petroleum products exports rise 2% in April-December

ARUNIMA BHARADWAJ
New Delhi, January 19

INDIA'S EXPORTS OF petroleum products grew marginally by 1.5% to 47.5 million tonne during April–December, compared to 46.8 million tonne in the same period last fiscal, according to data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell.

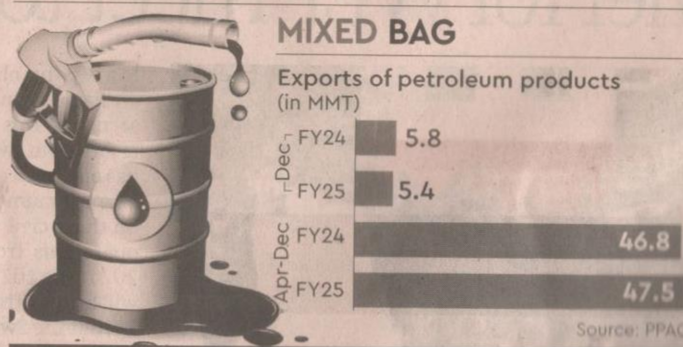
The rise in exports was primarily driven by increased shipments of motor spirit, petcoke/CBFS and fuel oil.

In December 2024, however, petroleum product exports declined to 5.4 million tonne from 5.8 million tonne in December 2023.

Imports of refined oil products increased by 7% to 38.5 million tonne during April–December 2024, compared to 36 million tonne in the same period last fiscal. The import bill for these products also rose to $18.2 billion, up from $17.1 billion in the same period of previous fiscal.

India's consumption of petroleum products during the first nine months of the ongoing fiscal rose to 178.5 million tonne, up from 172.6 million tonnes in the same period last fiscal. This growth was attributed to higher demand for diesel, motor spirit, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

While the demand for ATF increased by 9.8%, that of LPG and motor spirit grew by 6.7% and 8.0% respectively. Diesel consumption recorded a growth of 2.2% during April-December from last year.



Looking ahead, India projects domestic petroleum product demand to reach a record 252.9 million tonne in FY26. India's petroleum product exports in December increased by 3.1% to 1.37 million barrels per day (bpd), compared to 1.33 million bpd in December 2023, according to energy cargo tracking firm Vortexa. This also marked a 4.5% rise from November 2024, when exports stood at 1.31 million bpd.

Africa emerged as the top destination for India's petroleum exports in December, while shipments to traditional importers in Asia and Europe witnessed significant decline.

Even though analysts fear a supply glut in the oil market 2025 onwards, rising uncertain geopolitical tensions and weak demand outlook from the world's top consumers could negatively impact India's exports going forward.

Union minister for petroleum and natural gas Hardeep Singh Puri has repeatedly emphasised that there is no shortage of oil in the market. However, he acknowledged that geopolitical tensions could lead to increased freight costs for shippers.

India primarily supplies petroleum products to Europe and Asia. The EU implemented a price cap and embargo on Russian crude oil imports in December 2022, aiming to limit Russia's revenues during its conflict with Ukraine. However, refined petroleum products derived from Russian crude were excluded from the restrictions.