

Business line. Dt: 01/08/23

India resumes pomegranate exports to US; 150 boxes shipped to New York

Our Bureau

Pune

APEDA in collaboration with the National Plant Protection Organisation of India, US-APHIS, the Maharashtra government, and the Agriculture Marketing Board and National Research Centre on Pomegranate has facilitated the export of the first trial consignment of pomegranate to the US by air route.

The shipment of the "Bhagwa" variety of pomegranate with high antioxidant content from Maharashtra was carried out by APEDA-registered INI farms, one of the biggest exporters of fruits and vegetables. The best-known variety in India, Bhagwa, has generated a lot of demand. As part of the pilot project, 150 boxes (450 kg) of pomegranates were air-shipped to New York from the Vashi market in Navi



NEW BEGINNING. As part of the pilot project, 150 boxes of pomegranates were air-shipped to New York

Mumbai. The US imposed a ban on Indian pomegranate in 2017-18 after concerns were raised over fruit fly infestation in the pomegranate seeds. After the Indian government's initiative to discuss the matter with the US, the ban was lifted in 2022 following the fulfilment of quality standards.

RIISING PRODUCTION

The Indian pomegranate production is growing by 20 to 25 per cent every year, ac-

cording to the APEDA. The demand is rising, both at the domestic level and in the export market. India is a growing player in destinations in Europe, the Middle East and Asia. According to APEDA, India competes with various players globally, but it manages to stand out with unique varieties.

UAE is the major importing country of Indian pomegranates, accounting for nearly 32 per cent of Indian global exports.

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reducing costs.

—REUTERS

China curbs exports of drone equipments

REUTERS

Beijing, July 31

CHINA ON MONDAY announced export controls on some drones and drone-related equipment, saying it wanted to safeguard "national security and interests" amid escalating tension with the United States over access to technology.

The restrictions on equipment including some drone engines, lasers, communication equipment and anti-drone systems would take effect on September 1, the commerce ministry said.

The controls would also affect some consumer drones, and no civilian drones could be exported for military purposes, a ministry spokesperson said in a statement.

"China's modest expansion of the scope of its drone control this time is an important measure to



AMID RIFT WITH US

■ The restrictions on equipments like drone engines would take effect on September 1

■ More than 50% of drones sold in the US are made by Chinese-based company DJI

tries or regions in which it operates, including China's export control regulatory requirements.

"We have never designed and manufactured products and equipment for military use, nor have we ever marketed or sold our products for use in military conflicts or wars in any country," the drone maker added.

A German retailer in March 2022 accused DJI of leaking data on Ukrainian military positions to Russia, which the company rejected as "utterly false".

China's commerce ministry said in April this year that U.S. and Western media were spreading "unfounded accusations" that it was exporting drones to the battlefield in Ukraine, adding the reports were an attempt to "smear" Chinese firms and it would continue to strengthen export controls on drones.

eral markets including the U.S.

US lawmakers have said that more than 50% of drones sold in the US are made by Chinese-based company DJI, and they are the most popular drone used by public safety agencies.

DJI said on Monday it always strictly complied with and enforced laws and regulations of the coun-

demonstrate our stance as a responsible major country, to implement global security initiatives, and maintain world peace," the unidentified spokesperson said.

Authorities had notified relevant countries and regions, the spokesperson said.

China has a big drone manufacturing industry and exports to sev-

Strong exports boost Wheels India Q1 net 25%

BUSINESSLINE AT 2/8/23

Our Bureau

Chennai

Wheels India has reported a 25 per cent increase in net profit at ₹13.3 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2023, driven by exports that accounted for a quarter of the company's sales during the period.

"In Q1, amidst a muted domestic market, exports were strong at 25 per cent of our sales. There was a strong demand for buses in the latter part of Q1," said Srivats Ram, Managing Director, Wheels India.

The strong export growth in Q1 comes after some challenges in FY23, which saw the company report a marginal decline in exports. Export sales stood at ₹976 crore in FY23 as against ₹1,001 crore in FY22. Share of exports in total revenue stood at 22 per cent in FY23 as against 27 per cent in FY22.

Addressing the company's AGM recently, Ram indicated that the company would show some growth in its ex-



Srivats Ram, MD, Wheels India

port business, building on its strong relationships with global OEMs.

Revenue for the June 2023 quarter grew 7 per cent to ₹1,124 crore (₹1,053 crore).

GROWTH PROSPECTS

"We believe that there is a strong prospect to grow the hydraulic cylinder business with our existing customers," he said, while referring to the recent NCLT approval for the merger of Sundaram Hydraulics with Wheels India.

Presenting the growth outlook, he said: "The domestic wheel business should pick up post-monsoon in the second half."

Speciality coffee exporters see no let up in overseas demand

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Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

The overseas demand for India's speciality coffees such as Monsooned Malabar and Robusta Kapi Royale is seen intact despite the prevailing weak economic conditions in various consuming regions such as Europe and the United States.

Growers-exporters said the long-term relationships with the buyers, who offer a premium to these speciality coffees that range as high as 50 per cent over the terminal prices in New York and London, is keeping the demand intact. However, the prevailing weaker economic conditions in parts of Europe had prompted a section of consumers to shift to better value coffees, which was seen impacting the overall coffee export volumes marginally in the recent past. "There is no let-up in demand for speciality coffees," said



DM Purnesh, President, Speciality Coffee Association of India (SCAI).

SPIKE IN GROWTH

Speciality coffee shipments account for less than a tenth of the overall Indian coffee exports. Over the past decade India's exports of speciality coffees have jumped by over 50 per cent on rising overseas demand and the increasing interest among the growers to produce the premium beans.

Coffee growers have to invest in various processing techniques to produce the

speciality beans, which have to meet the criteria set by The Speciality Coffee Association, a global non-profit body representing coffee professionals such as producers and baristas among others.

"Single origin and micro lots are all called speciality coffees and the market for such coffees is intact as the roasters who source them sell them as standalone coffees or use it in their blends. That demand has not come down as they don't replace such coffees," said S Appadurai, Managing Director of Sangameshwar Coffee Estates, which sells speciality coffees to buyers in Japan, Korea and Australia.

Appadurai, said the producers of such special grades of coffees work with the buyers on a long-term basis and are assured of demand for such premium beans. In the current market scenario, where the prices are at a multi-year high, the buyers are prepared to renegotiate the prices, he said.

Russia Oil Imports Jump on Demand from Private Cos

1.92 mbpd crude imported in July



Sanjeev Choudhary
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New Delhi: Private sector refiners helped boost India's imports of Russian oil in July after a decline in June amid reports of narrowing discounts. India imported 1.92 million barrels a day of Russian crude in July, almost reaching the record levels of May according to energy cargo tracker Vortexa.

Imports in July were 5% higher than in June and barely 6,000 barrels per day lower than in May.

Private sector refiners, comprising Reliance Industries and Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy, imported 21.5% more crude from Russia last month compared to June while state-run refiners reduced imports by 2.5%. The private sector accounted for 37% of Russian oil imports in July.

India's imports of Russian flagship grade Urals reached a record-high of 1.6 million barrels per day in July, 18% higher than in June amid reports that its rising prices, which have breached the \$7 price cap of \$60/barrel, could dissuade buyers from ordering more.

An Indian oil ministry official complained last month that

narrowing discounts on Russian oil and payment troubles could prompt state-run refiners to reduce imports from Russia.

"(Narrowing discounts) has been a strategic move by Russia given limited alternative medium-sour crude suppliers that Indian refiners can turn to amid OPEC's production cuts," said Sorena Huang, an analyst at Vortexa. "But cognisant that India and China remain key outlets for its crude, Russia will likely keep its crude attractively priced, but narrow the discounts relative to previous months," she added.

Prices are usually linked to the average of international benchmarks in the month of loading and orders are placed at least a month in advance. The effect of higher prices would be clearer in the months ahead.

Russia's overall exports in July are down by almost 650,000 barrels per day from the peak seen in April/May. "With Russia cutting crude production and ramping up its refinery runs to meet domestic demand, the country's crude exports have expectedly reduced. Russia's crude exports could retreat more in August if its domestic refiners ramp up further," Huang said.

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India assures Mozambique of unrestricted tur, urad imports till March 2024

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

India has told exporters of pulses in Mozambique that it will import pigeon peas (tur) and urad (black matpe) without any quantity restrictions until March 2024.

In a statement, The High Commission of India in Maputo told exporters in Mozambique that the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India has emphatically clarified that India will import tur dal and urad dal under the "Free Category" (OGL) till March 31, 2024.

"The import of the tur dal will be done by Government of India freely without any restriction on quantity or those enshrined in the modalities for import of the same un-



WEATHER VAGARIES. Erratic and excess rains had impacted the production of tur and urad during kharif 2022, and in the current cropping season, the acreage has been lower

der the bilateral MoU between India and Mozambique," the release said. Exporters can export tur dal without any upper limit till March 31, 2024.

Further, the Indian High Commission has emphasised that MoU quota for the assured minimum purchase of 2 lakh tonnes (lt) of pigeon pea by India

from Mozambique that was renewed in November 2020 has no relevance under the free import policy regime for the pigeon peas by India till March 31, 2024.

"Government has also removed import duty of 10 per cent on pigeon peas with effect from March 3, 2023 in order to avoid the

procedural hurdle created by the need for importers to produce country of origin certificate to avail of the Duty Free Preferential Treatment Scheme".

RAIN-HIT

Erratic and excess rains had impacted the production of tur and urad during kharif 2022 season and in the current cropping season the acreage has been lower on account of delayed progress of monsoon in key growing regions of Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Per the latest sowing data, pulses have been sown on 96.84 lakh hectares (lh) as on July 28 compared with 109.15 lakh ha in the year ago period. Acreage under tur is down at 31.51 lh (37.50 lh).

Similarly, the area under urad is also down at 25.83 lh (30.06 lh).

Govt curbs import of laptops, tablets on security concerns

Amiti Sen

New Delhi

The government has imposed restrictions on the import of laptops, tablets, all-in-one personal computers, and ultra small form factor computers and servers to address security concerns and give domestic manufacturing a boost, according to officials.

Since imports will now be allowed only against valid licences, the government can keep a close watch on imports, especially from China, and check inflows whenever it feels the need.

SOME EXEMPTIONS

The import restrictions, notified by the Directorate-General of Foreign Trade on Thursday, come with a number of exemptions, including for imports under 'Baggage Rules' for international travellers.

"The idea behind the import restrictions (on items falling under HSN 8741) is not to bar imports but to regulate them to ensure that items that come into the country are compliant with India's security concerns and don't expose consumers to any risks," an official source told *businessline*.

These are not in violation of WTO norms as the multilateral body allows members to



Move to also boost domestic manufacturing

put in place policies that address their security concerns, he added. "Keeping in view that some of the imported hardware could potentially have security related issues and compromise sensitive and personal data of users, it is important to source them from trusted and reliable partners. The safety of Indian citizens is the topmost priority," the source said.

Citing possible security threat, the government, over the last few years, banned more than 200 Chinese apps such as TikTok, Shareit and WeChat.

MAY HIT CHINA

Although these import restrictions are not country-specific, it would affect inflows from China as that country accounts for a substantial portion of the \$7-billion annual imports of these items. The move would

also give a leg-up to domestic manufacturers, including investors under the Production Linked Incentive scheme, the source said. "A lot of MNCs have also set up a manufacturing base in India in the IT and electronics sector. We hope that our domestic manufacturing is also able to cater to the needs," he added.

TRANSITION PROVISION

While the notification comes into force with immediate effect, under the transition provisions of the foreign trade policy if the bill of lading and the letter of credit have been issued or opened before August 3, those import consignments can be imported without licence till August 31. After that, importers will need licences.

The government has further decided to exempt from import licence up to 20 such items per consignment for the purposes of R&D, testing, benchmarking and evaluation, repair and re-export and product development purposes.

The restricted items, which are an essential part of a capital goods, like a machine embedded with a computer, shall also be exempt from import licence. For re-import of goods repaired abroad, licence for restricted imports shall not be required for repair and return

Citroën looking to make India its export hub

SHINE JACOB

Chennai, 6 August

French carmaker Citroën will launch its C3 Aircross Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) in India by October, and is betting big on exports from India to markets like South Africa, ASEAN (association of Southeast Asian Nations) and Nepal, Saurabh Jaisa, Citroën India branch head, told

Business Standard.

Citroën, which sold 6,000 units through Citroën C3 and C5 Aircross SUV, is likely to double its sales during the current year, as it has already sold 6,000 units of Citroën C3 and eC3 electric vehicles during the first six months.

"We are going to start bookings for the C3 Aircross SUV in September and launch it in October. Price will be at the heart of the midsize SUV market," said Vatsa.

The company is also poised to launch a new vehicle on the C-cubed platform by early next year. "Earlier, we said we will be launching three vehicles on a C-cubed platform. Now, we are going to launch the fourth one by

early next year," he explained.

Stellantis, which came into existence after the merger of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and the French PSA Group in 2021, currently sells its Jeep and Citroën brands in the country. At present, Citroën sells three vehicles in India based on the C-cubed platform. These include Citroën C3, C5 Aircross SUV and eC3.

The company will launch the C3 Aircross SUV in India by October



The group has invested over ₹600 crore in the Indian market with two factories in Tamil Nadu – a vehicle assembly plant in Tiruvallur and an engine and transmission plant at Hosur along with a research and development (R&D) centre in Chennai.

"Stellantis is going to invest Euro 30 billion globally by 2025. India is going to be our key market. We are looking at launching Citroën in Indonesia too," said Billy Hayes, head of sales, marketing and regional operations (India and Asia Pacific Region), Stellantis.

The company recently began exports to South Africa, ASEAN and Nepal from the Kamraj Port in Chennai and are expecting export growth in future.