

India remained net buyer of steel in Apr-Dec as imports rose 20%, exports fell 25%

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India continues to be a net importer of steel for 9MFY25 (April-December), with shipments of the metal coming in being almost double the exports.

As per an internal report of the Steel Ministry accessed by *businessline*, imports rose over 20 per cent y-o-y to 7.3 million tonnes (mt) for the nine-month period while exports slumped by 25 per cent to 3.6 mt during the same period. This is amongst the lowest exports by Indian steel mills in recent years.

WIDENING BALANCE
Imports for the 9MFY24, the year-ago-period, stood at 6 mt whereas exports stood at 4.8 mt. As per the report, non-alloy steel imports stood at 5.4 mt, up 23 per cent as against the 4.4 mt of shipments coming in for the same period last year. Alloyed steel, including stainless steel imports rose by 15 per cent to nearly 2 mt (vs 1.7 mt). In comparison, exports of non-alloyed steel slumped 27 per cent y-o-y to 3.1 mt (vs 4.2 mt) whereas alloy and stainless steel saw a lesser export slump of 3 per cent to 0.5 mt (vs 0.6 mt).

A Ministry official said slowdown or flattening of imports have been noticed



HEADWINDS. Exports slumped to 3.6 mt during the nine month period, dropping to lowest levels in recent years

over the last couple of months following policy interventions like bringing most imported categories of the metal under BIS or "like strengthening quality norms and so on while some firming up of imported steel price was also reported. However, the situation is still volatile with the Chinese economy still struggling with low steel consumption. We are hoping that the safeguard duty imposition will see some improvement in prices here," an official said.

FLATTENING EXPORTS
Incidentally, over the last quarter, India has seen a slowdown in import numbers while exports have been more or less flat — or varying in the 10-12 per cent range depending on the "base effect". For instance, in December, imports stood at 0.76 mt — almost flat at

November-levels of 0.75 mt. Imports peaked between August and October, varying around 0.96 mt, 1.07 mt and 0.98 mt respectively.

On the other hand, exports continue to vary in the 0.4-0.45 mt range. In December, exports of the metal was around 0.45 mt, some 12 per cent up sequentially, as against 0.4 mt in November. The September and October numbers were around 0.4 mt and 0.45 mt respectively. However, ex-

port numbers still continue to be lower than April, when it was 0.51 mt (the highest monthly shipments reported so far this fiscal).

So far, domestic demand has been good and continues to witness a double digit growth. As per the report, finished steel consumption was at 111.25 mt, up 11.17 per cent (100 mt) for the 9M period. Finished steel production on the other hand was around 107 mt, up 4 per cent y-o-y.

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