

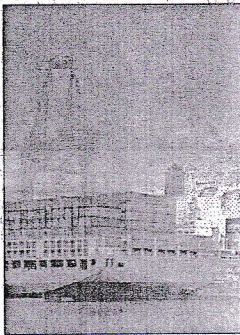
Trade deficit at \$21.9 bn; exports fall 1% in Dec

THE TRADE DEFICIT in December 2023 was \$18.1 billion. The sharp fall in the trade deficit in December would ease pressure on the rupee, which has fallen sharply in recent trade sessions.

Imports of gold fell to \$4.7 billion from a re-estimated \$9.84 billion in November. Imports during December rose 4.9% on year to \$59.95 billion.

The government has also revised the import figures for November to \$63.8 billion from \$69.95 billion earlier. This massive revision came after the data of imports of gold, silver and electronics were reset. The exports for November were also adjusted to \$32 billion from \$32.11 billion. Earlier, the April-November deficit was reported to be \$202.42 billion, but now it is pegged at \$188.9 billion.

"Our trade growth is quite good and we will be crossing \$800 billion in goods and services exports this financial year. We have done better than the rest of the world which shows the



resilience of our exports and 'improvement in manufacturing competitiveness,' secretary in the department of commerce Sunil Barthwal said.

In calendar year 2024, India's overall exports have grown 5.6% to \$812.4 billion. This growth is much better than the 3.3% growth in world trade forecast by UNCTAD.

The drivers of export growth in December were the engineering sector that grew 8.3% to \$10.8 billion and electronics goods that grew 35% to \$1.5 billion. The exports from the apparel sector were up 12.9% to \$1.4 billion. Rice exports also were on an upswing,

growing at 64% to \$1.4 billion.

The petroleum exports were down 28.6% to \$4.9 billion, while gems and jewellery exports were down 2.6% to \$2.1 billion. In line with the growth in the apparel sector, the imports of raw cotton and waste was up 384% to \$142.8 million. While gold imports moderated, imports of silver grew 210% to \$421.9 million.

The services exports in December were up 3.2% to \$32.66 billion, while imports were 11.9% to \$17.5 billion.

In April-December, the merchandise exports were up 1.6% to \$321.71 billion, while imports were up 5.15% to \$532.4 billion. The overall exports in April-December were up 6.03% to \$602.6 billion, while imports were up 6.91% to \$682.15 billion.

In December, India's shipments rose positively to the US, Saudi Arabia, France, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, while the top five import sources were China, Switzerland, Thailand, Germany and the US.