Major port cargo rose 6% in September

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Major ports, owned by the central government, registered a 6 per cent growth in cargo in September at 65 million tonnes (mt), primarily driven by crude oil cargo shipments and an increase in miscellaneous commodities. The previous month saw a near 9 per cent increase in export-import (Exim) cargo and a 1.9 per cent fall in coastal cargo.

Crude oil and miscellaneous (other) commodities, which cumulatively account for a third of major port cargo, saw an increase of 9 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

On the other hand, ahead of the festival season, the last month also saw private ports — or non-major ports — reversing their slow growth so far this financial year (FY25), seeing a cargo growth of 10 per cent, with a 12 per cent increase in Exim cargo.

For major ports, containers, which are a proxy for trade of finished goods, grew only by 3 per cent in September as private ports took a large pie of festive shipments with a 26 per cent growth.

While crude oil volumes at non-major ports had been contracting throughout FY25, September saw a sharp 20 per cent year-on-year rise in crude oil shipments, and experts opine that these volumes will continue to rise as crude oil cargo at private ports had been sluggish due to planned shutdowns in refineries of oil majors like BPCL Kochi, IOCL and Nayara Energy took planned shutdowns in FY25, which also impacted the petroleum product exports. Major ports have so far in FY25 handled 414 mt of cargo, which is a 5 per cent increase compared to the last year. At this pace, they outpace their private peers growing at 4 per cent.

During the same period last year, major ports were on a slow growth trajectory with a 2.4 per cent growth in cargo, and over the last two years, the first half of the financial year has been fraught with international shipping challenges such as the Russia-Ukraine war, Israeli attacks across West Asia and the prominent emergence of Iran in the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In terms of port performance, traffic at Deendayal Port Authority (Kandla Port) grew by 28 per cent in September. Part of it is due to a low-base effect, as the port struggled with cargo in FY24.

KEEPING STEADY

Commodity	Sep (Vol in mt)	% chg Y-o-Y	H1FY25 (Vol in mt)	% chg Y-o-Y
Crude oil	13.2	8.66	83	0.07
Thermal coal	8.6	-0.53	56.9	2.70
Iron ore	3.5	-10.90	24.9	-3.10
Containers	15.4	3.40	94.6	4.60
TOTAL	65.6	5.90	413.7	5.10

Note: Total does not add up as the list is not inclusive of all commodities; mt: million tonnes
Source: Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways