Port cargo sets sail with 3.2% rise in December

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India's 12 major ports, owned by the central government, handled 72.2 million tonnes (mt) of cargo in December, registering a growth of 3.22 per cent — primarily due to a sizeable decline in iron ore cargo and rising container volumes.

Coal volumes across sectors also saw annual contractions. Volumes of thermal coal, which account for 12 per cent of total cargo volumes for major ports, fell marginally to 8.7 mt, while coking coal cargo dropped by 4 per cent to 2.9 mt.

Meanwhile, coal (other than thermal/coking) nearly halved to 2.5 mt last month. Similarly, iron ore volumes were down by 31 per cent.

However, container volumes, which represent trade in finished

AT A GLANCE

Cargo volume at major ports in FY25* (in mt)
(figures in bracket show year-on-year change in %)

	Overseas cargo	Coastal cargo	Total
Kandla Port	98.5 (12.2)	10.2 (-5.3)	108.8 (10.2)
Paradip Port	64.9 (4.0)	44.6 (3.5)	109.5 (3.8)
Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust	63.4 (5.1)	4.9 (40.0)	68.4 (7.0)
Visakhapatnam Port	46.4 (-2.2)	14.1 (11.9)	60.5 (0.8)

*As of December 2024 Source: Ministry of Ports Shipping and Waterways

goods and account for a quarter of all commodities, increased by 17 per cent to 17.4 mt in December. Container prices have been volatile since the beginning of 2024, with traders struggling to secure stable supply chains.

The Drewry World Container Index, which tracks bi-weekly ocean freight rate movements of 40-foot containers in seven major maritime lanes, fell by 11 per cent to $3,445 per 40-foot container this week, following weeks of fluctuations in the preceding months.

So far in 2024-25, major ports have handled 620 mt of cargo, reflecting a year-on-year (Y-o-Y) growth of 2.7 per cent. This is primarily due to a decline in crude oil volumes at central government-owned ports. In the first three quarters, 124 mt of crude oil cargo was handled at major ports, 0.3 per cent lower than the previous year.

The commodity accounts for 20 per cent of major ports' cargo mix.

On a port-wise basis, Deendayal Port Authority (Kandla Port), after a sluggish 2023-24, has regained its position as the highest cargo-handling major port, with a 12 per cent increase in overseas cargo to 98 mt. According to experts, the port's poor performance last year was due to a ban on the export of non-basmati rice, which is one of the port's key moneymakers. In contrast, foodgrain cargo at major ports has increased by 3,655 per cent Y-o-Y.