

Trade deficit narrows to nearly \$21bn in Nov

Goods Exports, Imports Back In 'Red Zone' | Favourable Services Trade Provides Buffer

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

IN 'UNCERTAIN' WATERS

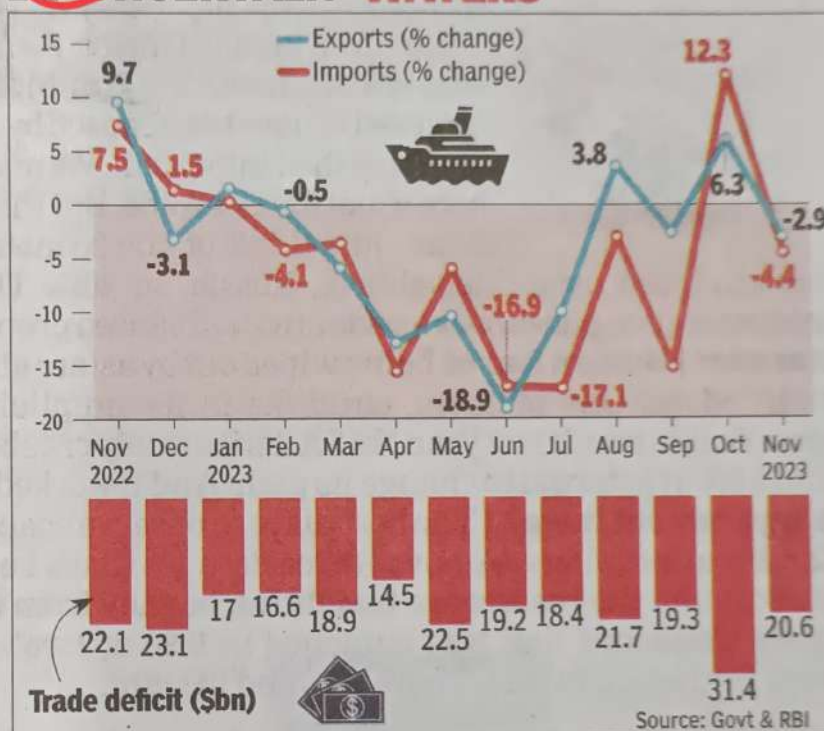
New Delhi: India's trade deficit narrowed to \$20.6 billion in November as both goods exports and imports fell during the month after a rise in October.

Goods exports shrank 2.9% to \$33.9 billion in November due to a decline in key product categories — engineering goods, petroleum products and garments. The 4.4% fall in imports to \$54.5 billion was driven by oil and coal.

While a fall in the value of crude oil and petrol and diesel shipments was on account of a decline in commodity prices, high inflation, and the consequent spike in interest rates in developed nations have dented discretionary demand.

Commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal said that given the global situation, India's exports numbers are healthy. "Despite general global slowdown, interest rate regime not softening, and global conflict, India has done extremely well," commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal told reporters.

Barthwal and his team are seeking to draw comfort from the combined trade numbers, which includes both goods and services. Latest data showed that in November services exports went up 6.6% to \$28.7 billion, while imports fell 13% to \$13.4 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of \$15.3 billion,



helping narrow the overall trade deficit to \$5.3 billion.

Most analysts and industry are, however, focused on goods. "Today's trade print offers some relief following the unusually large trade deficit of October. The recent retracing in commodity prices, if sustained, may become more apparent in India's import values in the fourth quarter of 2023-24. Exports, however, remain weak, dragged on by sluggish global demand. The services trade surplus has risen incrementally for six months now, providing a significant buffer to the goods trade deficit. For now, we maintain our current account deficit projections of \$45 billion (1.2% of

GDP) for FY23-24 and around \$61 billion (1.5% of GDP) for FY24-25," said Rahul Bajoria, MD & head of EM Asia (ex-China) economics, Barclays.

In a statement, Fieo president A Sakthivel attributed the decline to rising uncertainties, slow global economic recovery and demand and proposed easy and low-cost credit, marketing support in addition to interest equalisation to all sectors. "The softening of the commodities' prices from the elevated level in 2022 also contributed to the decline. Almost all countries' exports are exhibiting a declining trend, many witnessing a double-digit dip," the lobby group said.

Source: Govt & RBI

'If military emissions worldwide were a country it would be the fourth largest emitter on Earth'

Neta Crawford is Montague Burton Chair in International Relations at Oxford University. Speaking to **Srijana Mitra Das** at *Times Evoke*, she outlines the history — and possible future — of emissions from armies:

What is the core of your research?

I work on the causes and consequences of war. I also research US foreign and military policy and teach international relations theory.

What is the role of militarisation globally in causing greenhouse gas emissions — and why is this so overlooked?

Military emissions come in two types — direct emissions from operating aircraft or tanks and from the destruction that occurs in a war. Then, there are emissions from the supply chain of the military industry and those caused by rebuilding with concrete, another major greenhouse gas emitter.



If you look only at the emissions coming directly from the military and its industry, an estimate from Scientists For Global Responsibility finds this to be about 5.5% of all global emissions in any one year — if military emissions worldwide were a country, it would be the fourth largest emitter on Earth. The United States military specifically is the US' single largest energy consumer — its direct emissions are the largest in the US government and around 1.5% of American emissions. Its emissions are thus larger than most countries.

Despite their size, military emissions are not discussed much because national security is mostly taken for granted and we almost always give governments what they ask for in terms of preparedness for war. Armies are rarely questioned over fuel use or military industrial activities in terms of greenhouse gas emissions. In the negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol, the US military apparently lobbied the Clinton administration to omit the reporting of greenhouse gases from all militaries and especially America's — the administration agreed and thus, most military emissions are excluded from reporting in the common reporting for-

getty images



THE BERLIN WALL FALLS: A symbol of the Cold War which raised military emissions



mat for the UNFCCC. So, from the beginning of the counting of emissions, there has been no category where emissions from bases, air operations, etc., can be included. All multilateral operations, whether war authorised by the UNSC or NATO, are not required to be reported — hence, they are not. The numbers might get mixed with civilian or commercial categories, so you cannot precisely tell the portion coming from a military. For the last 25 years thus, this has not been part of how we think about a country's emissions profile.

THE GLOBAL NORTH

Why do you use 'the deep cycle' to describe how the Pentagon became the world's largest institutional greenhouse gas emitter?

In the 19th century, there was a transition from human and animal power to steam. Then came oil — this impacted the very perception of the need for fuel. The US and Britain, the first having hegemonic aspirations, the second, an empire, wanted bases where fuel was prepositioned for use — for this, you needed commercial or diplomatic arrangements or to control territory yourself.

The US took over British dominance in the Persian Gulf in the 1960s. After the oil embargoes, the fall of the Shah and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it increased its military presence to ensure the supply of oil. Those bases and forces themselves required fuel — so, fossil fuel was used to protect access to fossil fuel.

That dependence on cheap fuel then shaped the US domestic economy which grew to be very energy-intensive. To shift military-industrial supplies across the US, a huge interstate highways system, using cement, was developed. This also

allowed civilians to move to suburbs which generated more fuel need for cars, larger buildings and other civilian requirements. Of course, these highways were also developed to evacuate American cities in case of nuclear war — the idea of conflict thus drove the conception of needs and shaped US development.

Anxiety about fuel and growing demand for it caused the US to continually worry about supply — a cycle formed where you had to supply fuel which was used to develop in a fuel-intensive way and then, you had to increase military presence to ensure supply. Having more bases and troops often destabilised regions, causing more anxiety about access to fuel. The way to get off that cycle was to reduce fossil fuel use — but that has not happened until recently.

What are the US military's emissions today?

We don't have data on this until 1975. From then on, I could calculate military emissions from American forces, mobility, operations and installations. I estimate emissions were much higher prior to 1975 — the US was in Vietnam from the early 1960s to 1975, in Korea before and earlier in WW II, all very air power-intensive conflicts which causes a lot of emissions. In 1975, US military emissions were about 109 million metric tons CO₂ equivalent — that's by the end of the Vietnam war. These reduced until the Reagan administration when they rose again as the Cold War heated up. Reagan believed the US had to force the USSR to 'tear down that wall' and be less aggressive. So, the US increased its nuclear weapons, forces and exercises — and emissions went up. At the end of the Cold War, US mili-

tary emissions began declining as overseas bases and installations decreased in what was called 'base realignment and closure'. Troops and exercises reduced — emissions dropped but then, in 2001, with Afghanistan and Iraq, emissions increased until 2005-06. They then started to reduce with America becoming more fuel-efficient and using less air power, not bombing as much since there was physical control over territories.

Military emissions thus depend on operations — the peak of post-1975 direct emissions was 1991's Gulf War at about 110 million metric tons. In 2022, US military emissions were around 48 million metric tons, a drop of over 50%.

Much of this risk perception — is climate change seen as a security threat now?

That depends on our understanding. Clearly, the security of individuals worldwide in terms of their ability to live without misery from extreme heat, floods or drought is imperilled by climate change — this is a risk to survival. Now, some also argue climate change will cause more instability and thereby, national risk. The US military posits global warming is a threat multiplier as extreme



NATION ON THE MOVE: From highways to suburbs, the US economy needed fuel

CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Often, war is over a factor as great as a piece of land — colonisation in the 1900s meant control by European nations over territory from where they could force labour, resources and markets. World War I was sparked by the imperial power of Britain and France, resented by Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, grouping into the Central Powers challenging the Allied Forces — all over who would enslave new lands in Africa and Europe.

Some wars are triggered by ideology — the Cold War, waged between the US and former USSR, was over capitalism versus communism. This carved the world into the Eastern and Western Blocs engulfing countries as disparate as Germany and Afghanistan. It also meant the continual development of deadly weapons — including nuclear arms — which many argued would be deployed, given the aptly termed 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD).

Life may be fleeting but diamonds are forever — this view has caused numerous conflicts. 'Blood diamonds' were used for battles in Angola and Sierra Leone — war in the latter waged between 1991 to 2002 saw over 75,000 people lose their lives and 5,00,000 become refugees. In one of Earth's profound ironies, diamonds are a form of carbon — same chemical element in fossil fuels and emissions heating up Earth.

Research: Smithsonian Magazine, CNN, United Nations, Encyclopaedia Britannica, National Geographic.

weather and resource instability cause regional conflicts and migration which might destabilise Western nations.

This is both viewing global climate migrants as threats — and inadequately understanding the US role as being the single largest contributor over the century to emissions and thus, climate misery. We must tell the causal story of the beginning, starting with increasing emissions and the scarcities migration this causes — that will help us understand how militarisation of climate change and not necessarily the other way around.

India takes another flight towards desi stealth drone

Joins Elite Club With Controls Of Flying-Wing Tech

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New Delhi: In another step towards building a stealth unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) and eventually a larger remotely-piloted strike aircraft (RPSA), India conducted a flight trial of the 'autonomous flying-wing technology demonstrator' from the aeronautical test range at Chitradurga in Karnataka on Friday.

"The successful flying demonstration of this autonomous stealth UAV is a testimony to the maturity in technology readiness levels in the country. With this flight in the final tailless configuration, India has joined the elite club of countries to have mastered the controls for the flying-wing technology," the defence ministry said.

Designed and developed by DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), the high-speed flying-wing UAV — which weighs over a tonne — will lead to a major project to develop the RPSA in the years



The high-speed flying-wing UAV will eventually lead to the development a remotely-piloted strike aircraft

ahead, sources told **TOL**.

"The critical technologies involved have been proven in the improved final configuration now. The RPSA project, after the government sanctions it, will involve scaling up the size and the dimensions of the UAV with a new aero-engine," a source said.

The ADE has been focusing on developing 'stealthy' drones and aircraft, with a reduced radar cross-section to evade hostile air defence systems, which have autonomous take-off and landing capabilities. "The priority has to be on NGAD (next-generation air dominance) like the US and a few other countries," he said. The aircraft prototype, is designed and manufactured with 'light-weight carbon prepreg composite material' developed indigenously.

Defence ministry inks ₹5,000 crore deal with PSU

New Delhi: The defence ministry on Friday inked a major Rs 5,336 crore deal with defence PSU Bharat Electronics for procurement of electronic fuzes for the artillery guns of the Army as part of the long-term requirement of 10 years.

Electronic fuzes are an integral component of medium to heavy calibre artillery guns that provide sustained long-range firepower for military operations.

"The fuzes, which will be manufactured by BEL at its Pune and upcoming Nagpur plants, will be used in artillery guns capable of lethal engagements in various kinds of terrain including high-altitude areas along the northern borders (with China)," a defence ministry official said.

"The aim of the project is to build up ammunition stocks to minimize imports, achieve self-sufficiency in ammunition manufacturing, obtain critical technologies and secure stock affected by supply chain disruptions," he added. **TNN**

India will drive demand for coal through 2026, says IEA

Despite Solar Expansion, Coal Demand Expected To Rise 3.5% Per Yr

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New Delhi: India will be the main engine of global coal demand growth through 2026 as the country scrambles to add thermal generation capacity to power up its expanding economy, the International Energy Agency said on Friday, days after the COP28 climate declaration called for driving out all fossil fuels.

The IEA coal market report and forecast 2023 projected India's coal demand rising 3.5% annually to 1,397 million tonnes (mt) in spite of an expected tripling of solar power capacity by 2026, compared to 2021, and a target of raising the share of green power to 50% by 2030. Coal-fired generation currently accounts for about 70% of electricity flowing in the grid.

The report said India needed new coal-based generation capacity as the increase in solar power capacity will not be enough to meet the incremental demand for power for sustain-



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ing the pace of economic growth. India has over 4 gigawatts generation capacity and recently saw demand peaking at 2.4 gigawatts.

As **TOI** reported earlier, Union power minister R K Singh, in his opening remarks at the state power minister's meeting on November 6, had said India has to start work on 30,000 MW (wiegawatt) new thermal genera-

tion capacity on top of the 50,000 MW already underway to avoid shortage in the face of rising electricity demand.

Power generation determines India's coal demand as it accounts for 74% of consumption, which surged 9% to 1,162 mt in 2022. This marked second year of "remarkable" growth of 14% seen in 2021 as the economy rebounded from the pandemic, the report said.

Noting that India's 7% GDP growth in FY22 was supported by a 12% higher coal production, the report projected coal consumption for power generation to rise 2.4% annually for the next three years to reach 1,006 mt by 2026, based on 5% GDP growth estimates.

The report also doubted the impact of the biomass co-firing policy on coal consumption as the biomass supply chain is in its infancy. The policy, scheduled to come into force from April 2024, sets an obligatory blending rate of 5% for coal plants, increasing to 7% subsequently.

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Hungary blocks Ukraine aid as EU opens door to membership

Orban Says Can Still Halt Entry; Kremlin Lauds His Move

Brussels/Budapest: Hungarian PM Viktor Orban vetoed a big European Union aid package for Kyiv on Friday, and said he could still halt Ukraine's accession after EU leaders approved the start of lengthy membership talks.

Leaders of all 27 EU states except Hungary agreed at a summit on Thursday to start accession talks with Ukraine despite Russia's invasion of its neighbour, bypassing Orban's grievances by getting him to leave the room.

But they could not overcome resistance from Orban to a revamp of the EU budget to channel 50 billion euros (\$55 billion) to Ukraine and provide more cash for other tasks such as managing migration.

EU leaders said they would continue to help Kyiv. If no deal is found to do so within the EU budget, they will find workarounds, possibly with bilateral aid, they said.

The Kremlin praised Orban's stance, which spokesman Dmitry Peskov said impressed Moscow, while criticising the EU, saying the decision to open membership talks was a politicised one that could destabilise the bloc.

Orban, who has a history of trying to use disagreements with other EU leaders for his electoral benefit, said he blocked the aid package — part of a broader multi-year EU budget plan — to ensure Budapest gets funds from the EU budget that are frozen over concerns about the rule of law in Hungary. "It is a great opportunity for Hungary to make it clear that it must get what it is entitled to. Not half of it, or one-fourth," he said.



People take shelter at Kyiv metro station during a Russian strike on Thursday

Ukrainian councillor throws grenades at colleagues at meeting, 26 injured

A Ukrainian village councillor threw hand grenades at colleagues at a meeting, wounding 26 people, national police said Friday. The incident took place Friday morning at the headquarter of the village council of Keretsky in western Ukraine. A video posted by police shows a man dressed in black entering a council meeting during a heated discussion. He pulls three hand grenades from his pockets, releases the safety pins and drops them on the floor, triggering explosions as those at the meeting scream. "As a result, 26 people were wounded, six of whom are in a grave condition," the police said, adding medics were trying to resuscitate the man who threw the grenades. AFP

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the approval of membership talks as a victory for Ukraine and Europe.

Orban said Hungary could still block the talks at any time. "This is a bad decision," he said. "We can halt this process later on, and if needed we will pull the brakes."

EU leaders, who would prefer a deal backed by all members but also have a plan B, are expected to revisit the issue at an emergency summit at the end of January or in February. All except Orban agreed to provide Ukraine with 50 bil-

lion euros over four years, but his veto blocked the aid as the decision requires unanimity.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and French President Emmanuel Macron were among those expressing optimism on getting aid to Kyiv.

Ukraine is unlikely to join the EU for many years, but the decision at the summit took it a step closer to its long-term strategic goal of anchoring itself in the West and leaving Russia's orbit. EU leaders reconvened on Friday to discuss other topics including Israel-Hamas war. REUTERS

Guyana, Venezuela agree to not use force in land row

Kingstown: The leaders of Guyana and Venezuela promised in a tense meeting Thursday that neither side would use threats or force against the other, but failed to reach an agreement on how to address a bitter dispute over a vast border region rich with oil and minerals that has concerned many in the region. Instead, a joint commission composed of the foreign ministers of both countries and other officials will address the problem, with a report expected in three months.

The two presidents also agreed to meet again in Brazil within three months or at another agreed-upon time. AP