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## Slowdown signs - Drop in cargo movement at Kochi

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The decline in cargo movement on account of the global slowdown, coupled with the non availability of experienced trailer crew is adding to the woes of container trailer operators at Kochi port.

The trailer operators' association said there has been a drop in exim cargo movement and import arrivals through the port, leading to the idling of most container trailers operating in and around the port. In this backdrop a good number of experienced trailer crew are seeking lucrative pastures elsewhere, including the Gulf region.

The figures available with the Cochin Chamber of Commerce and Industry justify the version of trailer operators. According to the figures, the port handled 36,391 TEUs of export cargo between April and September against 46,883 TEUs in the corresponding period last year.

However, there was only a marginal drop in import arrivals which was in the range of 4300 TEUs during April to September against 43,843 TEUs in the corresponding period last year.

Mr MKM Nair president of Cochin Container Carrier Owners Welfare Association said that there was a drop of nearly 23% in exports from the port due to lower demand. The demand for costly cargoes such as cashew and seafood has gone down.

Especially in the US and Europe, as there was virtually no buyers. Besides, the declining demand for garments in several countries had also affected the arrival of garment shipments from Tirupur through Kochi.

He attributed the marginal difference in import arrivals at Kochi to low prices for raw cashew nuts in several African countries, scraps and paper reels in the market.

Amid this depressing scenario, the non-availability of trained trailer crew in Kochi has only added to the woes of the trailer owners. Mr Nair said trailer operators were looking forward to the commissioning of Vallarpadam International Container Transshipment Terminal by March 2010, which is expected to improve the business. He added that once the Vallarpadam terminal becomes operational, several mainline vessels will start calling at Kochi and there would be good movement of cargo from the hinterland.

(Sourced from Business Line)

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