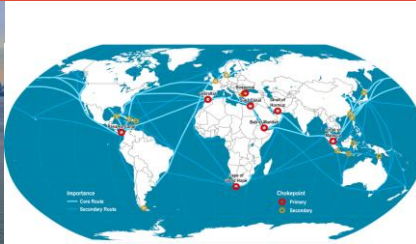


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4 Seamen Killed in Hormuz Attack, IMO Chief Warns of Risk to Crews



At least four seafarers have reportedly been killed in an attack on a tug operating near the Strait of Hormuz, prompting a warning from the head of the International Maritime Organization that civilian mariners are increasingly being caught in the crossfire of the escalating Middle East conflict.

IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said he was "alarmed and deeply saddened" by reports that the March 6 incident left at least four seafarers dead and three others severely injured.

"My thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those affected, as well as the global maritime community mourning these losses," Dominguez said in a statement Friday.

The casualties are believed to have occurred aboard a tug assisting the container ship SAFEEN PRESTIGE, which had been [damaged in an earlier projectile strike](#) earlier this week.

According to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the tug was struck by unknown projectiles while operating approximately six nautical miles north of Oman in the Strait of Hormuz.

UKMTO said authorities are investigating the incident and advised vessels transiting the area to exercise caution and report any suspicious activity.

The strike appears to be part of the widening wave of attacks against commercial shipping across the region that has transformed one of the world's most important maritime chokepoints into an active conflict zone.

Around 20,000 seafarers remain aboard vessels stranded across the Persian Gulf, many unable to leave the region as shipowners suspend voyages and insurers reassess war-risk exposure.

"This is unacceptable and unsustainable," Dominguez said. "All parties and stakeholders have an obligation to take necessary measures to ensure the protection of seafarers, including their rights and well-being, and the freedom of navigation, in accordance with international law."

The latest fatalities follow earlier casualties reported during the opening wave of attacks that triggered the current crisis. On March 2, product tanker MKD VYOM was [struck above the waterline](#) roughly 44 nautical miles northwest of Muscat, triggering an explosion and engine-room fire that killed one crew member.

V.Ships Asia, managers of the Marshall Islands-flagged product tanker, has confirmed all other crew members have been repatriated.

"The vessel remains in a safe and stable condition, and there continues to be no reports of pollution," it said. "Towing operations are ongoing to bring her safely into a port of refuge, where she will undergo further inspection and any necessary repairs."

That incident occurred during a concentrated series of missile and drone strikes on commercial vessels across the Gulf of Oman and UAE waters that prompted the Joint Maritime Information Center to elevate the regional maritime threat level to CRITICAL, warning that further attacks against merchant vessels were highly likely.

Since then, multiple ships have been struck or targeted in the **Gulf of Oman**, the **Arabian Gulf**, and the Strait of Hormuz, including the tanker **SKYLIGHT** and the chemical tanker **STENA IMPERATIVE**.

The attacks have sharply curtailed vessel movements through the strategic waterway, which normally carries a significant share of global oil shipments, as shipowners pause transits and charterers reassess the risks.

For the thousands of seafarers still aboard ships in the region, the crisis has turned routine voyages into one of the most dangerous operating environments in global shipping.

"Seafarers must not be targets," Dominguez said. "They are essential workers who keep global trade moving and whose safety must be protected." (Source:gCaptain)





West Asia crisis: Govt asks ports to consider waiving charges, issues SoP

As part of the SoP that followed extensive consultations with all stakeholders on Friday, each port will appoint a nodal officer at the level of head of department or deputy head of department

Union Shipping, Ports and Waterways Ministry has proposed that ports may consider requests regarding reduction, waiver or remission of charges, including change of vessel charge, and also rolled out a standard operating procedure (SoP) for them to deal with issues arising from the West Asia crisis.

As part of the SoP that followed extensive consultations with all stakeholders on Friday, each port will appoint a nodal officer at the level of head of department or deputy head of department, who will be the single point of contact for addressing the issues coming up for consideration at ports.

The nodal officer will be responsible for taking up the matter with the competent authority and ensure that the action is taken within 24-72 hours.

Also, as per the SoP, port chairpersons should have periodical meetings with stakeholders such as shipping lines, exporters, terminal operators, customs, among others to closely monitor the situation and ascertain and address legitimate concerns.

The ministry also said that the port may consider various facilitation measures such as considering requests from users regarding reduction, waiver or remission of storage rent and change of vessel charge, among others on a case-to-case basis, depending on the prevailing circumstances at the port.

It said the port may also consider permitting the storage of cargo destined for the Middle East as transshipment cargo during the affected period besides allotting additional storage area, if required, for storing such cargo during the crisis.

Ports may also consider facilitating berthing of ad-hoc call vessels for dropping or picking Middle East bound transshipment cargo and expeditiously facilitating 'Back to Town' movement of export cargo lying in port premises in co-ordination with Customs, it said.

Besides, ports may provide priority handling for perishable cargo to prevent deterioration and give priority to export cargo returning from the Middle East, in addition to facilitating additional bunkering capacity, wherever feasible, to meet potential demand, the ministry said. Ports have been directed to coordinate closely with agencies such as Customs, DGFT and other relevant authorities to ensure implementation of these measures within the stipulated timelines, it stated. (Source: Business Standard)



Tanker attacks escalate in Gulf as US-Iran conflict intensifies



Attacks on commercial shipping in the Gulf have intensified as the war between the US and Iran escalated, raising concerns about disruptions to energy supplies from one of the world's most critical oil transit routes.

On Thursday alone, several tankers came under attack in Gulf waters even as Iranian drones entered Azerbaijan, threatening to spread the crisis to more oil producers in the region, reported *Reuters*.

A Bahamas-flagged crude tanker anchored near Iraq's Khor Al Zubair port was targeted by an Iranian remote-controlled boat carrying explosives, according to initial assessments. A second tanker at anchor off Kuwait was damaged by a large explosion on its port side and was reported to be taking on water while spilling oil.

The latest incidents bring to nine the number of vessels attacked since hostilities between the US, Israel and Iran began on Saturday.

Iran also launched a new wave of missiles at Israel early on Thursday and sent drones into neighbouring Azerbaijan, injuring four people and raising fears that the conflict could spread to additional oil-producing countries in the region, said media reports.

The escalation comes after efforts in Washington to halt US attacks were blocked and as the son of Iran's slain supreme leader emerged as a leading contender to succeed him, signalling that Tehran is unlikely to retreat under mounting pressure.

Shipping activity in the region has slowed sharply. Around 200 vessels — including oil tankers, liquefied natural gas carriers and cargo ships — were anchored in open waters near major Gulf producers, according to *Reuters* estimates based on MarineTraffic tracking data. Hundreds more ships remained outside the Strait of Hormuz, unable to reach regional ports.

President Donald Trump offered US Navy escorts and insurance in a bid to restart shipping flows and curtail energy prices. Insurance market Lloyd's of London said on Thursday it is engaging with the US government on a plan.

BP evacuated foreign staff from Iraq's Rumaila oil field after two unidentified drones landed inside the field, Iraqi oil sources said. Iraq has cut its oil production by nearly 1.5 million barrels a day as it ran out of storage and was unable to load tankers, stated senior officials.

A refinery in Kuwait shut down and another reduced its processing rate. A third refinery in Bahrain also cut its output.

Oil prices on the rise

Oil prices extended their rally on Thursday, with Brent climbing 3% and WTI rising 4%. They have both jumped 16% since the war started on Saturday, as U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran disrupted Middle East supplies.

A benchmark European gas price gained around 3% on Thursday. It has surged nearly 60% so far this week.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said his country could halt gas supplies to Europe right now, amid the spike in energy prices from the Iran crisis.

Qatar, which provides 20% of the world's LNG supply, halted gas production earlier this week due to the conflict. Other major producers such as the U.S. and Australia have little spare capacity to offset this lost supply, according to Reuters calculations and industry analysts. (Source: Gulf Industry Daily News)



Port of Nansha Leads South China Growth as Shippers Prioritize Lower-Risk Gateways

India may relax cabotage rules amid West Asia shipping crunch

India might ease cabotage rules for foreign ships carrying domestic cargo. This move is being considered due to a potential shortage of vessels and containers. The West Asia conflict is impacting freight costs and shipping. Authorities are discussing temporary solutions to manage the crisis. Discussions also involve handling stranded cargo and ensuring the safety of Indian vessels.



Central Asia War and Trade

Major carriers suspend Hormuz transits amid Gulf tensions



Hapag-Lloyd, Ocean Network Express (ONE), and A.P. Moller-Maersk (Maersk) have all taken precautionary operational measures amid escalating conflict in the Middle East, following the official closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Hapag-Lloyd has suspended all vessel transits through the waterway until further notice. The carrier said the decision was driven by safety and regulatory constraints rather than commercial considerations, with conditions in the region described as fluid.

It remains in contact with relevant authorities and security partners as it monitors developments. Services calling at ports in the Arabian Gulf are now likely to face delays, rerouting, or schedule revisions, and the line is working to limit disruption.

Shippers with cargo already moving, or with planned shipments to and from the region, have been advised to contact their local Hapag-Lloyd representative for guidance.

Meanwhile, **ONE** is taking steps to safeguard its seafarers, vessels, landside staff, and customer cargo. With immediate effect, the carrier is temporarily suspending acceptance of new bookings to and from the **Persian Gulf**.

For cargo currently in transit or planned shipments, **ONE** is assessing the situation voyage by voyage and will provide updates directly to affected customers as operational plans are reviewed and adjusted.

Maersk has also paused all **Trans-Suez** sailings through the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait** and is rerouting its **Middle East-India to Mediterranean** (ME11) and **Middle East-India to US East Coast** (MECL) services around the **Cape of Good Hope**.

The carrier emphasised that the safety of crews, vessels, and customer cargo remains its top priority and it continues to monitor developments closely. Once security conditions stabilise, the **Trans-Suez** route will resume for ME11 and MECL services, its fastest and most sustainable option. (**Source: Port Technology**)



Indian Port Sector

Government Warns Of Port Congestion Risk At Mundra, Nhava Sheva



Authorities said congestion at ports could disrupt cargo movement if shipping schedules and container circulation remain affected.

India's government has warned that congestion may build up at key ports including Mundra and Nhava Sheva within four to five days as disruptions linked to the West Asia crisis begin to affect cargo movement.

Officials said the situation could slow shipments headed to major export markets such as the United States and the European Union. The concerns emerged during a March 6 meeting of an inter-ministerial group that reviewed the impact of the crisis on trade flows, logistics and energy supplies. The discussions focused on port operations, container availability and possible steps to support exporters if disruptions continue.

Officials from the Ministry of External Affairs, Department of Financial Services, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and the Reserve Bank of India attended the meeting along with exporters, according to people familiar with the discussions.

Authorities said congestion at ports could disrupt cargo movement if shipping schedules and container circulation remain affected.

Officials also discussed issues related to "Back to Town" containers, which are affecting the movement of agricultural shipments at ports. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is in talks with stakeholders on the matter, people aware of the discussions said.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs is expected to meet the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India to review the status of agricultural shipments, particularly in cases where vessels may return or consignments face delays.

Officials from the Petroleum Ministry told the group that crude oil imports remain largely unaffected so far. However, supplies of liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas could face pressure if the situation escalates.

Authorities are examining options including diversifying energy supplies and securing long-term procurement contracts.

The inter-ministerial group also suggested that the Reserve Bank of India and banks could consider extending payment timelines for exporters, while the Export Credit Guarantee Corporation may examine temporary relaxations. Jewellery exporters have also sought interest relief from the government.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade is scheduled to convene a special meeting of the Service Improvement Group on March 9 to assess developments and review possible responses.

Shipping freeze strands fresh produce at Indian ports

The conflict in the Middle East has caused a backlog of fresh produce containers in India as shipping lines suspend services.

According to a report from the *Indian Express*, hundreds of containers loaded with bananas, grapes, onions, melons and more are stranded at Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) near Mumbai. New consignments continue to arrive, but new bookings have been halted.

The backlog is reverberating across India's supply chain and exporters have expressed concerns that if shipments do not resume soon, they will have to divert export quality product to the domestic market, driving down prices. Some exporters are already seeing this play out.

"Bananas, grapes, and onions are main exports from Maharashtra. Farmers and traders are suffering major losses. The goods are stuck in transit as well. I request the government to intervene and provide compensation," said Pune-based trader Suyog Zende told the *Indian Express*.

A JNPA spokesperson told the *Free Press Journal* the port is working to find solutions. "More than 5,000 containers are currently stranded, including around 1,000 reefer containers. All reefer containers are plugged in," the spokesperson said.

JNPA has provided stacking facilities and extended storage within port premises. Cargo handling charges at most terminals have also been capped. As the disruption drags on, there is concern for other commodities as their seasons commence.

Pansare, director of the Mumbai Agricultural Produce Market Committee fruit market, told the *Free Press Journal* that almost 30 per cent of mango production is exported every year. This year, mango production is already less due to the extended rains last year. If exports do not take place as usual, farmers will face huge losses," Pansare said. (Asia Fruit)



The advertisement features a dark blue background with a circular inset image of a busy port terminal at night. On the left, the text reads: "Container Terminal Automation Conference Europe" with a red circular logo containing a white globe icon. Below this, it says "21 - 22 April 2026 | Las Arenas Balneario Resort Valencia". In the center, the text reads "Europe's Terminal Technology Hub" above a red button that says "SAVE THE DATE".

India's Foreign Trade

Trade minister in talks with shipping ministry to tackle stuck cargoes



File Photo

The Director General of Shipping, India's statutory maritime authority, will hold a meeting with ship owners, cargo owners and charterers on Friday to discuss issues affecting vessel operations, particularly for Indian-flagged vessels or ships carrying Indian cargo, amid the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Meanwhile, the customs department has assured freight forwarders that it will facilitate an early "back-to-town" process, allowing exporters to move their cargo back from ports to their premises or warehouses, the Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations in India (FFFAI) said.

"The Indian exporters who had already processed shipments at ports across the country for the Middle East are stuck. They cannot find ships to carry those containers. Customs has readily agreed to facilitate the early return of these containers back to exporters' premises or warehouses," said Dushyant Mulani, Chairman of FFFAI.

Freight forwarders met officials from the customs department on Thursday to discuss the disruptions. According to them, shipments of perishable goods such as fruits, vegetables, meat products and fish — which are exported daily from India to the Middle East — have come to a complete standstill.

Containers carrying such cargo are already loaded and cleared by customs but remain stuck at ports as ships bound for the region are unavailable. Exporters are therefore incurring detention and demurrage charges at port terminals, container freight stations and depots, besides container rental costs charged by shipping lines.

Freight forwarders said a faster back-to-town process would help exporters mitigate losses during the disruption.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has also issued instructions to all Chief Commissioners of Customs across the country to engage with stakeholders and address operational issues at ports and inland facilities.

Another concern raised by the industry relates to rising logistics costs during such disruptions. Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), one of the world's largest container shipping lines, has imposed an Emergency War Risk Surcharge (EWS) on shipments to several East African and Indian Ocean destinations, citing heightened geopolitical risks affecting maritime trade routes.

"Storage charges at terminals, demurrage levied by shipping lines and port-related charges can escalate quickly when cargo remains stationary due to circumstances beyond the exporter's control. Trade bodies have therefore urged the government to issue appropriate advisories to port authorities, custodians and other service providers to consider waiving or rationalising such charges to prevent avoidable financial stress on exporters," said Shankar Shinde, Managing Director of Global Express Multi Logistics

India will look at ways to ease the burden on exporters, such as the high cost of insurance and cargo shipments, he added. (Source: Indian Express/Reuters)

India notes strong potential for growth in textile exports to Japan



At an economic partnership meeting in Tokyo, Indian commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal noted the significant potential of export of Indian textiles, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and services to Japan.

While Japan underscored the need to enhance and diversify bilateral trade and investment, Agrawal underlined the importance of achieving a more balanced trade relationship for long-term sustainability.

At the seventh joint committee meeting under the India-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) held recently in Tokyo, Indian commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal noted the significant potential of export of Indian textiles, pharmaceuticals, agriculture and services to Japan.

Both sides reviewed issues relating to the implementation of the CEPA and deliberated on ways to further strengthen bilateral economic engagement, the Indian Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a release.

Discussions covered a wide range of issues, including bilateral trade and investment, improving the business environment, and the upcoming 14th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation. While the Japanese side underscored the need to enhance and diversify bilateral trade and investment, Agrawal underlined the importance of achieving a more balanced bilateral trade relationship to ensure long-term sustainability.

Government Reviews Risks to Ensure Smooth EXIM Cargo.

Amid raging conflict in West Asia and Middle East, the government is keeping close watch on any development with potential to impact India's export-import (EXIM) cargo flows and the broader export ecosystem. Senior Officials in the Ministry of Commerce have held a high-level meeting with representatives from logistics operators, [shipping](#) lines, freight forwarders and key government agencies along with members of the export promotion ecosystem.

Shipping & Logistics

Industry Highlights Emerging Logistics Challenges

During the consultation, stakeholders presented assessments of the changing operational environment, including alterations in shipping routes, longer transit times, vessel scheduling adjustments, and challenges related to container and equipment availability. Participants also discussed trends in freight and insurance costs and the implications for time-sensitive exports. The meeting underscored the importance of maintaining predictability in cargo movement while minimising delays and ensuring seamless documentation and payment processes for exporters and importers.

Focus on Supply Chain Resilience

Officials reiterated that ensuring continuity in EXIM logistics remains a priority for the Government of India. The approach, they said, would remain coordinated and facilitative to maintain supply chain resilience and protect exporters, particularly micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The meeting also stressed the need to safeguard essential imports required for domestic production and consumption while maintaining smooth export flows.

Real-Time Coordination and Support for Key Export Segments

Stakeholders agreed to maintain close, real-time coordination to monitor developments in shipping routes, cargo capacity, surcharges and equipment availability. Special emphasis was placed on facilitating time-sensitive exports such as perishables, pharmaceuticals and high-value manufactured goods.

The consultation also highlighted the importance of strengthening trade facilitation at ports and inland container depots (ICDs) to prevent congestion and ensure faster cargo evacuation.

Government Assures Trade Facilitation Measures

The government reaffirmed its readiness to support trade operations through a range of facilitative measures, including procedural flexibility in export-related authorisations in cases of genuine disruption, coordination with customs authorities to ensure smooth cargo clearance, engagement with financial and insurance institutions to safeguard exporter interests, and continued inter-ministerial coordination to address emerging challenges.

(KNN Bureau)

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