

# No port pileup as exports to West Asia continue

2,600 containers shipped in five days, says govt; LPG tanker reaches Mundra

**SHUBHANGI MATHUR &  
DHRIJANKSH SAHA**  
New Delhi, 16 March

Amid concerns over congestion at Indian ports during the West Asia crisis, the government on Monday said container movement to the region continues smoothly, and there is no hold-up at major ports.

According to the latest government data, around 2,600 containers have been shipped to West Asia from India's export cargo hub, the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA), over the past five days.

Rajesh Kumar Sinha, special secretary at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, shared the figures at a press conference of the inter-ministerial group (IMG) here.

"There is no congestion reported at any major port. Export-bound

containers at Nhava Sheva have reduced from 5,600 to 3,900 as of today," Sinha said.

Concerns had earlier been flagged by maritime intelligence agencies, including Xeneta, which reported high levels of congestion at both JNPA and Kandla Port on Monday.

The IMG dismissed the concerns, saying ports are actively monitoring cargo build-up and implementing measures to ensure additional storage and back-to-town facilities.

After India secured safe passage for two Indian-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, the first vessel, Shivalik, arrived at Gujarat's Mundra Port on Monday evening carrying 46,000 tonnes of LPG contracted by Indian Oil Corporation. Of this, 20,000 tonnes will be unloaded at Mundra and the remaining 26,000 tonnes at

New Mangalore Port.

The second LPG vessel, Nanda Devi, is expected to arrive at Kandla Port on Tuesday.

Another Indian-flagged vessel, Jag Laadki, carrying about 80,800 tonnes of Murban crude oil, sailed from the United Arab Emirates on March 14 and is safely en route to India. The vessel and all Indian seafarers on board are safe, Sinha said.

Of the 22 Indian-flagged vessels currently stuck west of the Strait of Hormuz, six are LPG tankers. The remaining include crude oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG), chemical and product tankers, container ships, and bulk carriers, a senior government official said.

The government is in talks with several stakeholders to ensure the safe passage of Indian vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime chokepoint through which considerable volumes of crude oil and LNG transit, said Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson

for the Ministry of External Affairs, on Monday.

Led by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, New Delhi has been engaging with Tehran to secure safe passage for Indian-flagged merchant vessels.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has urged countries to send warships to ensure the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz after Iran blocked the maritime artery in response to US-Israeli attacks.

India has not yet held bilateral discussions with the US on deploying ships in the Strait of Hormuz, Jaiswal said. "We are aware that this is being discussed by several countries. We have not yet discussed this in a bilateral setting," he added.

Meanwhile, India's maritime regulator, the Directorate General of Shipping, has issued another advisory after exporters raised concerns over commercial challenges, including higher freight charges.

## No blanket arrangement with Iran for transit of ships via Hormuz: Jaishankar

India does not have a "blanket arrangement" with Iran for transit of Indian-flagged ships through the Strait of Hormuz and "every ship movement is an individual happening", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said. In an interview to the *Financial Times*, Jaishankar said that negotiations between New Delhi and Tehran have resulted in two Indian-flagged tankers pass through the key shipping route. He, currently on a visit to Brussels, also thanked the government and the people of Armenia for facilitating the safe evacuation of over 550 Indian nationals from Iran so far.

PTI

## India hasn't engaged in bilateral talks with US, says MEA

India on Monday said it hasn't engaged in bilateral talks with the US to ensure safe transit of merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. The remarks by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) came against the backdrop of US President Donald Trump calling on several countries to send warships to keep the strategically key shipping route open. "We are aware of this particular matter being discussed by several countries. We have not yet discussed it in a bilateral setting," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at a media briefing.

PTI



# Feb goods exports dip a tad to \$36.61 b, but trade deficit doubles to \$27 b on import surge

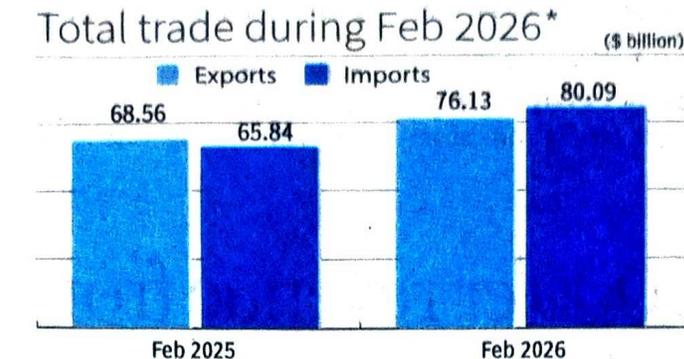
**Amiti Sen**  
New Delhi

Goods exports declined a marginal 0.81 per cent year-on-year in February to \$36.61 billion amid global uncertainties, but March is set to be even more challenging due to the West Asia crisis and logistical bottlenecks, according to the Commerce Department.

Imports increased 24.11 per cent to \$63.71 billion in February, which widened the trade deficit to \$27.1 billion, almost double of \$14 billion in February 2025.

But the trade deficit was lower than \$34.68 billion in January, according to the Commerce Department data.

Despite the increased geopolitical turmoil following the US-Israel attack on Iran in February-end, the government is hopeful that annual exports of goods will remain in the positive territory in



\*India's total exports during April-February 2025-26\* are estimated at \$ 790.86 billion registering a positive growth of 5.79 per cent. Total imports 2025-26\* are estimated at \$ 900.51 billion registering a growth of 7.37 per cent

FY26 with efforts on to help exporters deal with the West Asia crisis and also increase shipments to other parts of the world, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said.

## GREATER CHALLENGE

"On the trade front, we are facing one challenge after another... March will pose a greater challenge (due to the West Asia problems)... Whatever exports we lose from that part of the world, we will try and make up with more exports to other markets. We would like to be in

positive territory versus last year on merchandise exports by the end of this fiscal," Agrawal said.

The government will unveil a support package within a week to assist exporters struggling with the West Asia trade disruptions, the Secretary said.

India's goods exports stood at \$402.93 billion in April-February 2025-26, which is about 1.84 per cent higher than \$395.66 billion in the same period last fiscal year.

A drop in performance in

March due to the Iran war could upset the math but the government is working against that.

In April-February 2025-26, imports also increased 8.53 per cent to \$713.53 billion.

The Commerce Secretary explained that the decline in exports in February was largely due to a fall in petroleum shipments, which slumped 40 per cent to \$3.42 billion, while the higher trade deficit was due to an increase in imports of gold and silver.

Apart from petroleum, export of readymade garments, leather and leather products, iron ore and plastic also declined.

Exports to the US, India's largest market, declined 12.88 per cent to \$6.88 billion in February as a fallout of the 50 per cent reciprocal and penal tariffs, which were subsequently removed and replaced with a 10 per cent short-term global tariff.

# SUGAR EXPORTS IN OCT-FEB AT 315,000 TONNE



INDIA  
EXPORTED  
315,000  
tonne sugar  
in October-  
February in

the 2025-26 marketing year, with the UAE emerging as the top destination, the All India Sugar Trade Association said on Monday. Sugar exports remain under government control through quotas distributed among mills.

# Import curbs on diamond-studded silver jewellery



THE CENTRE ON Monday imposed import curbs on silver jewellery

studded with cheap diamonds till June 30 this year, according to a notification. "The import policy of items...is revised from free to restricted for the period up to June 30, 2026, with immediate effect," the Directorate General of Foreign Trade said.

GOVT STEPS IN TO EASE IMPACT OF WEST ASIA WAR ON ENERGY SUPPLY, BUSINESSES

# More relief for exporters this week

● Easing logistics constraints and insurance support on the cards: Govt

**MUKESH JAGOTA**  
New Delhi, March 16

**THE GOVERNMENT WILL** announce a clutch of measures later this week to support exports, particularly to West Asia, which has been disrupted by the conflict in the region, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Monday.

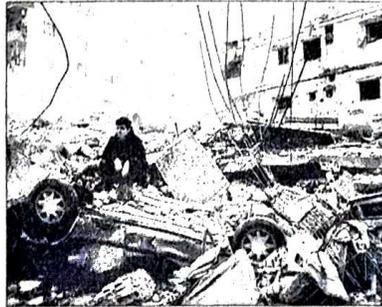
Along with the support measures for exporters, the government is working with the countries of the region to address logistics challenges, as they also depend on India for multiple product categories, he added. Logistical challenges are being faced regarding the movement of ships and even air cargo is facing certain challenges due to disruptions in flights and the movement of air freighters in that region. The region takes in \$58.8 billion worth of Indian goods each financial year. Cereals, fish, meat, dairy, coffee, tea, fruits and vegetables are major Indian exports to the region.

## SOFTENING BLOW

■ India is working with countries to address logistics challenges

■ Support measures for exporters could include help on insurance front

■ West Asia takes in \$58.8 billion worth of Indian goods each financial year



■ Cereals, fish, meat, dairy, coffee, tea, fruits and vegetables are major Indian exports to the region

The conflict has led to shipping companies avoiding sending vessels through the region. Many ships remain stranded and those going to Europe and the US have taken detours through the Cape of Good Hope. Congestion and longer journeys have even impacted schedules on other routes.

Earlier, an official had said that support measures for exporters could include help on the insurance front.

In the meantime, the Inter-Ministerial Group under the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) meets daily to take feedback from the ground on the export-import situation

and ensure that whatever challenges can be resolved through the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) are addressed.

Already some steps have been taken like the export obligation time period under the Export Promotion Capital Goods Scheme and Advance Authorisation have been extended by four more months to till August 20.

The CBIC has brought in certain regulations to ensure the return of cargo stuck at sea back to India. Some port charges have been waived as cargo clearance is taking longer.

## Basmati exports may rise despite war impact: Crisil

**SANDIP DAS**  
New Delhi, March 16

**INDIA'S BASMATI EXPORTS** are expected to be steady and likely to witness a growth of over 2% year-on-year in FY26 to 6.06 million tonne (MT) despite being impacted by the West Asia conflict, Crisil ratings said in a report on Monday.

While exports of the aromatic and long-grain rice to Iran, one of the biggest destinations for basmati, are likely to be affected, higher demand from other markets in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen will provide an offset, the report noted. It stated that if logistical challenges persist for a month, basmati rice trade volume might be impacted by 0.35-0.37 MT.

"However, demand from other import-dependent countries in the region where bas-

mati rice is a staple, to maintain food security, will help offset this impact," according to the report.

"Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, which is a critical transit route for rice exports to West Asia, could lead to blockage of goods and delayed payments

from customers in the near term," Nitin Kansal, director, Crisil Ratings, said. Basmati rice exporters are also exploring alternative routes to avoid the Strait of Hormuz to ensure supply to the region, the agency has stated. The

exporters are, however, likely to pass on any increase in freight and insurance cost to customers, which will help protect their operating profitability.

India's exported basmati rice valued at \$5.94 billion in FY25. Saudi Arabia (20.25%), Iraq (14.3%), Iran (12.67%), the UAE (6.13%) and Yemen (6.03%) had a major share in the shipment last fiscal.

**Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz could lead to blockage of goods and delayed payments from customers in the near term**

# China overtakes Netherlands as India's 3rd-largest export market

Business Standard 18.03.2026

SHREYA NANDI

New Delhi, 17 March

China overtook the Netherlands to become India's third-largest export destination in February, according to commerce department data.

Exports to seven of India's top 10 destinations contracted during the month, with overall exports declining 0.81 per cent year-on-year to \$36.61 billion. These 10 countries together account for over 50 per cent of India's merchandise exports. Exports to China rose 32.4 per cent to \$1.67 billion in February, mainly due to a low base. While disaggregated data for the month is not yet available, recent trends suggest that growth has been driven by higher shipments in sectors such as electronics and marine products.

Exports to the Netherlands fell sharply by 31.3 per cent to \$1.29 billion. The country serves as a key gateway for Indian goods entering Europe and has been a major destination for refined petroleum exports over the past three years. An industry expert said the decline may have contributed to



the reduced shipments of refined petroleum, as India has lowered imports of Russian crude oil for refining.

The United States (US) continued to be India's largest export destination, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, exports to both countries declined in February. Shipments to the US fell nearly 13 per cent Y-o-Y to \$6.89 billion, while exports

## The leaderboard

### India's exports to top 10 countries in Feb

Country	Value (\$ bn)	Growth (%)
US	6.89	-12.9
UAE	3.25	-0.3
China	1.67	32.4
Netherlands	1.29	-31.3
UK	1.11	-4.6
Germany	1.01	4.0
Saudi Arabia	0.95	-10.4
Bangladesh	0.79	-22.9
Singapore	0.65	-13.7
Hong Kong	0.99	32.1
<b>Total Exports</b>	<b>36.61</b>	<b>0.81</b>

Source: Department of Commerce

to the UAE dipped marginally by 0.3 per cent to \$3.25 billion.

Exporters said the slight decline in shipments to the UAE is likely a oneoff. In the case of the US, the drop has been attributed to tariff-related uncertainties. Exports to the US have been more or less at the same level — between \$6.3 billion and \$6.9 billion — since October. The contraction can also

be attributed to a relatively higher base as exports to the US surged last year in anticipation of higher tariffs.

"With the lowering of the US tariff to 10 per cent (from February 24), we expect exports to pick up. However, the uncertainty continues since the US has launched investigations under section 301 (b) as well targeting several countries, including India," said Ajay Sahai, director general and chief executive officer of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations.

Other countries that saw a decline in imports from India include the United Kingdom (-4.6 per cent), Saudi Arabia (-10.4 per cent), Bangladesh (-22.9 per cent), and Singapore (-13.7 per cent).

Meanwhile, exports to Germany and Hong Kong grew by 4 per cent and 32.1 per cent, respectively, the data showed.

March is expected to be a challenging month for merchandise exports due to disruptions in freight movement through the Strait of Hormuz amid the ongoing West Asia crisis. "March will be a challenging month due to the logistics bottlenecks affecting trade. Exports are likely to be impacted," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Monday.

# Exports of marine & meat products up 15% in Apr-Feb

● Rice shipments fall due to conflict in West Asia

SANDIP DAS

New Delhi, March 17

**DESPITE BEING HIT** by high US tariffs, India's marine exports increased 15% year-on-year to \$7.75 billion in April-February, thanks to a surge in shipments to several new markets such as Europe and Southeast Asia, according to the commerce ministry.

In February 2026, India exported marine products valued at \$0.57 billion, an increase of 13% compared to a year ago.

While the US remains the largest market, tariffs imposed last year had hit marine products exports.

Earlier, trade officials had feared that seafood exports would suffer as effective duties imposed by the US increased to 59.71% which includes countervailing (5.76%) and anti-dumping duties (3.96%) along with a 50% tariff announced for India by US President Donald Trump.

This loss in shipment was 'more than compensated' by rising shipments to China, Vietnam, Belgium, Japan, Russia, Canada and the United Kingdom, sources said.

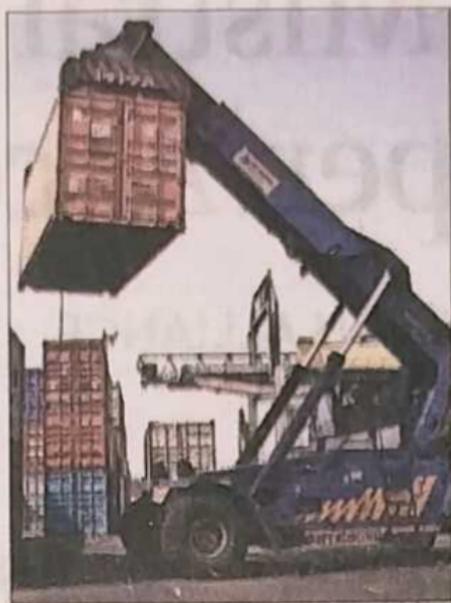
"Non-US markets have emerged as the new growth engines," according to an official note.

Subsequently, Trump had announced a slashing of duties under the proposed trade deal.

India's seafood exports, mostly frozen shrimp, were \$7.45 billion in FY25, with the United States having a share of 35% (\$2.8 billion). The bulk of the country's seafood export to the US is 'Vannamei Shrimp'.

In 2022-23, India's shipments of marine products were at a record \$8.09 billion.

The tariff by the US had put



Indian seafood at a major disadvantage compared to competitors like Ecuador, Vietnam, and Thailand.

Despite global price pressures, recessionary trends in the US, and volatile logistics conditions, India's marine sector demonstrated strong resilience, an official had stated.

India's exports of meat, dairy and poultry products during April-February period of FY26 increased by over 24% to \$5.74 billion compared to previous fiscal.

Officials said there has been a rise in demand for the Indian bovine meat across the globe due to its quality and nutrient value.

India has emerged as the second biggest exporter of buffalo meat and the export destinations are Vietnam, Malaysia, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

However, India's rice exports, including basmati and non-basmati varieties during the first eleven months of FY26 declined by over 6% to \$10.53 billion compared to same period in 2024-25, as shipment to Iran has been hit due to geopolitical factors.

In February 2026, however, the value of rice exports rose marginally to \$1.2 billion on-year.

The overall shipment of rice was 19.86 million tonne (MT) during FY25, which was valued at a record \$12.47 billion.

# Exporters to benefit as CBIC now allows back-to-town clearance for diverted cargo

**T E Raja Simhan**

Chennai

In a major relief to exporters hit by disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has clarified that containers loaded at one Indian port but off-loaded at another on return can be cleared under the back-to-town (BTT) procedure.

The move resolves confusion that emerged over the past week after Customs authorities at the port of discharge were reluctant to clear containers originally shipped from another port, citing jurisdictional issues.

## UNIFORM PROCEDURE

Issuing directions on Tuesday, CBIC asked all Custom Houses to adopt a uniform procedure to ensure faster



**SMOOTH SAILING.** CBIC has asked all Custom Houses to adopt a uniform procedure to ensure faster handling of cargo

handling of export cargo brought back to Indian ports due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz or similar disruptions.

The clarification comes as relief to exporters such as Venkata Ramarao Pothina, CEO of the Vijayawada-based Venspra Impex, who has been struggling to retrieve 21 containers from Mundra; they were originally loaded at Chennai. Over the past week, Pothina has been

travelling between Chennai and Mundra to secure the release of his shipment bound for Jebel Ali.

To address such cases, CBIC said representations had been received on procedures for transshipment and BTT when vessels return to a different port than the original port of departure.

The directive is expected to streamline cargo handling and reduce delays for exporters impacted by geopolitical

disruptions affecting key shipping routes.

## HAILS MOVE

Welcoming CBIC's direction, Dushyant Mulani, immediate past Chairman of the Freight Forwarders Association in India, said the industry body had represented to CBIC seeking a uniform practice across all ports, including inland container depots and container freight stations for export consignments stranded after Customs clearance.

However, he pointed out that non-vessel operating common carriers, shipping lines and custodians were yet to agree on reducing costs such as detention charges and ground rent.

He said that refraining from imposing higher charges will help Indian trade and industry.

# Garment exports slip in Feb amid weak demand

**Our Bureau**

Chennai

The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) export sector declined 8.6 per cent in February 2026 to \$1.40 billion as against \$1.53 billion in February 2025.

However, the cumulative exports for the period April 2025 to February 2026 stood at \$14.53 billion, up from \$14.46 billion, reflecting a marginal growth of 0.51 per cent, said A Sakthivel, Chairman, Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC), in a press release.

## GLOBAL TENSIONS

The RMG sector continues



**LOOKING AHEAD.** Industry leaders cite subdued demand, rising freight costs and higher input prices as key challenges, while expressing confidence in long-term growth through diversification and innovation

to demonstrate resilience despite persistent global economic uncertainties and supply chain disruptions.

The sector has been navig-

ating multiple external challenges, including subdued demand in key markets, he added.

Sakthivel said geopolitical

**Cumulative exports for April 2025 to Feb 2026 reflected a marginal growth of 0.51 per cent**

tensions and economic uncertainties had impacted order flows, particularly from major markets, such as the US and parts of West Asia. These developments had resulted in cautious sourcing patterns among global buyers.

“Going forward, the elevated freight rates and the increased cost of inputs have started placing additional

pressure on exporters, affecting overall margins and operational planning for manufacturers and exporters across the value chain,” he said.

Despite these headwinds, the Chairman of the AEPC expressed confidence in the long-term strength of India's apparel sector, emphasising that the industry continues to adapt through market diversification, product innovation and improved supply chain efficiencies.

He reiterated the industry's commitment to strengthening India's position as a reliable global sourcing destination for apparel.

# Tea imports doubled to 50.14 m kg in 2024-25

**Our Bureau**  
Mangaluru

Tea imports doubled in 2024-25 compared with the 2023-24 fiscal, while 33.5 million kg were imported during April-January this fiscal, according to a reply in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

In a written reply, Jitin Prasada, Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, said India imported 50.14 million kg of tea during 2024-25 against 25.21 million kg in 2023-24. In fact, India imported a significant quantity of tea during the first 10 months of 2025-26. Tea imports stood at 33.55 million kg during April-January of 2025-26.

Stating that the Tea Board had taken several measures in respect of teas imported into the country, he said the government issued a notific-

ation dated November 11, 2021, with a directive stating that imported tea must not be blended with GI teas, and if blending is done, the end product must not be claimed as GI tea.

Directives were issued to packers, requiring them to clearly indicate on the packaging that the blended tea contains imported ingredients. Importers and exporters have been directed to mandatorily obtain clearance certificates from the board's Tea Council portal before importing or exporting tea, and the origin must be clearly mentioned on the tea packages.

## **WOMEN FPOS**

He said the importers should notify to the Tea Board the place of storage of the imported teas within 24 hours of import. The importers shall ensure that origin of the im-



ported teas is mentioned in all sale invoices.

In a written reply to a question on women in farmer producers organisations (FPOs), Bhagirath Choudhary, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, said 1,175 FPOs had been registered as 100 per cent women members under the 10,000 FPOs

scheme till March 1 2026. He said 23.55 lakh women farmers were registered across the country under the 10,000 FPOs scheme till March 1.

To a question on fish landing centres in the country, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, said the government had so far taken up development of 380 notified fish landing centres and fishing harbours, out of the total 1,547 notified fish landing centres.

Of the 380 fish landing centres taken up for development, works on 301 have already been completed.

The formulation of projects are done by the respective State/Union Territories by prioritising the projects as per technical and financial viability, social impact and availability of budget in the concerned State/Union Territory.

# War in Gulf hits apple imports, local fruit pricier

**Gulzar Bhat**  
Srinagar

The conflict in Iran has disrupted apple shipments to India, pushing up prices of domestic produce, particularly from the Kashmir Valley, traders said.

Consignments that left Iran before the escalation have reached Indian ports. But “fresh supplies from Iran are not coming following the conflict,” said Sunil Sachdev, Chief Executive of Jhulelal Fruits in Mumbai.

“Naturally, prices of Indian apples are rising as imports from Iran dry up,” Sachdev added.

Industry representatives said prices of both Delicious and Kullu Delicious varieties had risen significantly, providing some relief to domestic farmers.

“Kullu Delicious is trading at ₹140-145 per kg, while Delicious is priced between ₹120 and ₹122,” said Mohammad Ashraf Wani, an



**BRIEF RESPITE.** Farmers and traders in the Valley said the firming prices were helping improve returns after seasons marked by volatile rates and rising input costs IMRAN NISSAR

apple trader from Kashmir.

## RELIEF FOR FARMERS

Farmers and traders in the Valley said the firming of prices were helping improve returns after seasons marked by volatile rates and rising input costs.

Last season, erratic weather and the closure of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway during the harvest period led to heavy losses, as truckloads of apples rotted en route to

wholesale markets outside the region.

India imports around 1.3 lakh tonnes of fresh apples annually from Iran, valued at \$60-65 million. According to trade data, the country accounted for around 23 per cent of India's apple imports in 2024.

Around 5 lakh tonnes of apples were stored in controlled atmosphere facilities across the Valley last season. While more than half the stock has been released, a

**India imports 1.3 lakh tonnes of apples valued at \$60-65 million from Iran, which accounts for 23% of its imports**

substantial quantity remains in storage. Kashmir produces around 20-22 lakh tonnes of apples annually and accounts for over 75 per cent of India's production.

Izhar Javed, a prominent apple grower and spokesperson of the J&K Fruits and Vegetables Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association (JKPICCA), said that about 2.5 lakh tonnes of apples are lying in controlled atmosphere storage.

“Farmers and traders are now releasing their produce, and shipments are being sent to wholesale markets across the country as prices have improved significantly,” he said.

# Exporters Heave Sigh of RELIEF, Get ₹497cr Cushion for Shipments

Scheme to cover consignments to about 17 countries, as global reinsurers pull back

## Our Bureau

**New Delhi:** India Thursday rolled out a ₹497-crore export support package to cushion shipments hit by disruptions from the West Asia conflict, offering enhanced insurance cover and logistics relief as war risks drive up freight and premiums.

The Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation or RELIEF scheme will cover consignments to about 17 countries, as global reinsurers pullback from conflict-hit routes, including the Strait of Hormuz, aiming to stabilise trade flows and prevent order cancellations.

This is the first of the set of measures in the offing that also include banking and finance-related relief, officials said.

“The Middle East conflict has had an impact. We are listening to exporters and responding to their challenges,” Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said at the launch, adding the scheme focuses on the geographies most exposed to the disruption.

The government-owned Export Credit Guarantee Corporation will implement the scheme, which spans the export cycle —



covering both shipments already dispatched during the disruption window and upcoming exports. In eligible cases, coverage of up to 100% of losses will be provided, with the government reimbursing the insurer.

The move follows a surge in freight rates on key routes, straining smaller exporters with limited working capital. The scheme includes automatic extensions of export obligations, logistical support and potential financial measures to manage delays.

“There is a dependence on our exports in these countries....We are trying to ensure that even in

these difficult circumstances, exporters are supported” as “these are extraordinary times”, Agarwal added.

The package is structured in three parts. The first allocates Rs 56 crore to support shipments with bills of lading issued between Feb. 14 and March 15, keeping insurance premia at pre-disruption levels while topping up compensation for war-related losses.

A second component of Rs 159 crore will cover exports between March 16 and June 15, bringing fresh shipments under the insurance umbrella without raising premium costs. Under this com-

ponent, cover of as much as 95% of losses may be provided.

The third, with an outlay of Rs 282 crore, targets uninsured small exporters for shipments in the initial disruption phase, reimbursing additional war-risk premia and route-related shipping costs. Support will be capped at Rs 50 lakh per exporter, alongside up to 50% reimbursement for incremental freight and insurance expenses.

Industry said the initiative is timely and well-calibrated to address rising logistics and risk costs amid disruptions in West Asia. “The expanded ECGC coverage, coupled with focused support for MSMEs, will actively reinforce exporters’ confidence, facilitate smoother risk management, and ensure uninterrupted movement of shipments”, said , Ajay Sahai, director general, Federation of Indian Export Organisations said.

## IMPACT ON EXPORTS

Officials said the overall hit to March exports may be limited despite the disruptions.

“March exports won’t be very much lower than last March...the impact due to the Strait of Hormuz situation will be limited,” said one official.

# Exports of agricultural items to Gulf resume at slow pace

## ● Three vessels carrying rice to Iran dispatched

**SANDIP DAS**

New Delhi, March 22

**ENDING A HALT** after West Asia conflict, India's agricultural exports to the Gulf region have commenced but at a slow pace, exporters said.

However, higher freight charged by shipping lines is still causing problems for exporters. In addition, the onward movement of perishable cargoes like fruits and vegetables through Dubai to Saudi Arabia and Qatar has been hampered because of the security situation. A major chunk of the country's horticulture exports to Gulf countries passes through Dubai, which also serves as the region's key trans-shipment hub.

Ajit Shah, a leading onion exporter said that few consignments carrying onions and vegetables have been sent to Khorfakkan and Fujairah ports, Dubai and Muscat. "The cargo movement is slow and freight rates have increased

## QUICK TAKES



■ Higher freight costs strain exporters

■ Dubai trans-shipment upheaval hits regional flows

■ Perishables rerouted via alternative Gulf ports

■ Conflict disrupts trade and payments

sharply," Shah, told *FE*.

Dubai Customs earlier this month introduced a temporary facilitation for cargo destined for Jebel Ali Port through the ports of Khorfakkan and Fujairah, from where containers may be transported by road. "Exports of onion, bananas, grapes and other perishables have been really hit in the last three weeks following the conflict," a leading exporter of fruits said.

Rice exporters have dis-

patched three vessels to Iran, a key destination for India's basmati rice recently. "However, for several days now, these ships have remained anchored near Iran's Bandar Abbas port, unable to secure berthing access. Owing to the conflict, Bandar Abbas, one of Iran's busiest ports is operating below full capacity," Ranjit Singh Jossan, managing director, Jossan grains, a leading exporter of basmati rice in Punjab, said.

The West Asia accounts for nearly 60-70% of India's total basmati exports, and instability in the region is directly affecting shipments, payments, and trade coordination.

Some consignments of perishable goods such as fruits and vegetables are being sent through air routes, which exporters said is not economically sustainable because of the huge cost involved. In terms of overall agricultural product exports, West Asia accounted for 21.8% of India's total food exports in 2025 valued at over \$50 billion, making it one of the country's most important markets for the shipment of rice, bananas, spices, meat and dairy.

# COAL IMPORTS DROP 4.2% TO 213 MT IN APR-JAN

Financial Express 23.03.2026



THE COUNTRY'S COAL imports dropped 4.2% to 213.10

million tonne (MT) in the April-January period of the current fiscal year and with seaborne prices showing an uptick, imports are likely to remain subdued in near term. The dip shows push towards self-reliance in production.

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