



E-Serve No.: 79 of 2026 | Date: March 07, 2026

Sub: Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways to mitigate the impact of geopolitical disturbance in the Middle East

Dear Member,

The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (Ports Wing), Government of India, has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) vide No.PD-24015/33/2026-PD-III dated 6 March 2026 ([copy enclosed](#)) for Major Ports to address issues arising due to the ongoing geopolitical disturbance in the Middle East. The SOP aims to facilitate trade, minimise disruptions to cargo movement, and support exporters whose consignments may be affected.

Key highlights of the SOP are as follows:

- Ports will hold regular meetings with stakeholders such as shipping lines, exporters, terminal operators, customs authorities and other agencies to monitor the situation and address concerns.
- Each port will appoint a Nodal Officer (Single Point of Contact) available 24x7 to address trade-related issues.
- Issues raised with the port will be resolved within 24 hours, and where coordination with other agencies is required, action will be completed within 72 hours.
- Ports may allow storage of Middle East-bound cargo as transshipment cargo during the affected period.
- Additional storage space may be allotted, wherever required, for cargo affected due to the crisis.
- Ports may facilitate berthing of ad-hoc vessels for dropping or picking up Middle East-bound transshipment cargo.
- Export cargo lying at the port may be allowed 'Back to Town' movement in coordination with Customs.
- Perishable cargo will be given priority handling to prevent deterioration.

-- Priority may be given to export cargo returning from the Middle East due to disruption.

-- Ports may facilitate additional bunkering capacity wherever feasible.

-- Ports will coordinate with agencies such as Customs and DGFT for smooth implementation of the above measures.

-- Requests from trade for reduction, waiver or remission of port charges such as reefer plugging charges, storage rent, vessel change charges etc. may be considered on a case-to-case basis.

This SOP is applicable to Middle East-bound cargo and vessels affected due to the ongoing geopolitical situation in West Asia and will remain in force until further orders.

Members are requested to take note of the above measures and may approach the concerned port authorities or designated nodal officers in case of any operational issues relating to cargo destined for the Middle East.

Regards,

Dr. Siddhartha Rajagopal
Executive Director

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