Imports Bounce Back

Sea routes recover but heavy industry, vehicles and raw materials bear deep scars

- Saudi Arabia increased supply via road links.
- Vehicles, metals and industrial inputs took the heaviest hits.

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

Trade began to recover in April and May after war shut the Strait of Hormuz, snarled sea and air routes and left Bahrain with an estimated BD694 million import gap over three months.

Imports rose to BD287.7 million in April and BD373.2 million in May, up almost 69 pc from the March low, as shipping lanes reopened and freight routes returned to use.

The rebound followed a collapse from BD523.1 million in February to BD221.1 million in March, a fall of 57.7 pc, as industrial goods, raw materials, vehicles and sea-borne cargo struggled to reach the Kingdom.

May imports remain below pre-war levels

The May figure was still about 29 pc below the average for January and February, when imports stood at BD527.8 million and BD523.1 million.

Average monthly imports from March to May fell to BD294 million, against BD525.4 million before the crisis. The gap left the market with about BD694 million less in goods over the three months than it would have received at earlier rates.

The shock was the worst to hit Bahrain's trade since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, when the current account posted a BD1.223 billion deficit and goods imports fell by 17.8 pc.

Long-distance suppliers hit hardest

Countries reliant on long sea routes suffered the steepest falls. Imports from China dropped by 57.4 pc, while those from Australia fell by 81.6 pc, Japan by 69.9 pc and the United States by 50.9 pc.

Imports from the UAE were down 35.2 pc.

Saudi Arabia moved in the other direction. Imports from the kingdom rose by 18.2 pc against the pre-war average as firms turned to road links and shorter Gulf routes.

Freight traffic across the King Fahd Causeway helped keep goods moving into Bahrain while long-distance shipping was hit.

Heavy industry bears the damage

Heavy industry bore much of the damage. Imports of vehicles and parts fell by 72.8 pc, raw materials and metals by 74.9 pc, and mineral fuels and oils by 62.5 pc.

Machinery imports dropped by 54.4 pc, while electrical equipment fell by 40.1 pc. Iron ore imports sank by 75.3 pc, from a monthly average of BD19.9 million before the crisis to less than BD5 million between March and May.

Aluminium oxide imports, a key input for manufacturing, fell by over 52 pc. Aircraft engine parts dropped by 78.2 pc, from BD24.3 million to BD5.3 million.

Medical supplies hold up

Medical supplies proved far more resilient.

Imports of medicines prepared for retail sale rose by 29.7 pc, while immunological products and medical sera increased by 41.5 pc. Diagnostic and laboratory reagents climbed by 46.2 pc.

The figures show that drug and healthcare supplies kept moving even as much of Bahrain's industrial trade was hit by the closure of shipping routes and the sharp break in regional supply lines.

The Hormuz Crisis in Numbers

- March low: BD221.1m – down 57.7pc from February's BD523.1m
- Recovery: Imports hit BD373.2m in May – up 69pc from March
- Three-month gap: BD694m less in goods than pre-war rates
- Hardest-hit supplier: Australia (-81.6pc), Japan (-69.9pc), China (-57.4pc)
- Worst-hit category: Vehicles & parts (-72.8pc); raw materials & metals (-74.9pc).
- Bright spot: Saudi imports rose 18.2pc via King Fahd Causeway road links
- Resilient: Medicines up 29.7pc; medical sera up 41.5pc

Reshaping Key National Bodies

Reconstitutes boards overseeing development banking, elderly care, and government service evaluation

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Bahrain Economic Development Board, has issued three royal edicts today reconstituting the leadership of major national institutions.

In Edict (1) of 2026, HRH the Crown Prince reconstituted the Board of Directors of Bahrain Development Bank (B.S.C.), appointing Ghassan Ghaleb Abdulaal as chairman. The seven-member board includes Amna Ali Al Arrayedh, Hani Hussain Redha, Aysha Mohammed Abdulmalik, Yousef Mohammed Al Nafiee, Manal Shawqi Al Bayat, Marwa Khalid Al Saad, and Tameem Salman Al Mousawi. Members will serve a three-year term.

National Elderly Committee

Edict (31) of 2026, issued on a proposal by the Minister of Social Development, reconstitutes the National Committee for the Elderly. The 12-member committee draws representatives from key government bodies including the Ministries of Interior, Information, and Justice, as well as the Social Insurance Organisation, Primary Healthcare Centres, the Supreme Council for Women, and several civil society organisations. Members serve a three-year renewable term and will elect a deputy chairperson at their first meeting.

Government Services Panel

Edict (32) of 2026 reconstitutes the Government Service Centres Evaluation Committee, placing it under the chairmanship of the Chief Executive of the Information and eGovernment Authority (iGA). The 10-member panel includes senior officials from the Civil Service Bureau, Ministry of Finance, National Communication Centre, and the Institute of Public Administration, alongside three appointed members. The committee's mandate runs for four years, renewable for a further term.

All three edicts take effect from the date of issuance and will be published in the Official Gazette.

Moves to Preserve Historic City

Urban planning chief hails project as model for heritage-led development

A construction site of Muharraq Development Phase One

TDT | Manama

Eng. Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Khayyat

Urban Planning and Development Authority (UPDA) has reaffirmed its commitment to preserving the historical and cultural identity of Muharraq City, with its CEO describing the ongoing development project as a benchmark for heritage-driven urban renewal.

Engineer Ahmed Abdulaziz Al-Khayyat said the project is being carried out in accordance with a Royal Decree by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, directing the preservation of Bahrain's historic buildings and cities, the revival of Isa Al-Kabeer Palace, and the cultural restoration of Muharraq. It also aligns with directives from His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to activate the city's executive development plan.

Al-Khayyat praised the project's advanced progress, calling it an integrated model that balances heritage conservation with modern development needs. He said the initiative would boost Muharraq's appeal to residents, visitors, and investors, while reinforcing its standing as one of Bahrain's most significant historic cities.

Budget Rubber Takes Over

Chinese Tyres Take 80% of Bahrain Market

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

• Approximate cost of a full set of four Chinese tyres	BD100
• Approximate cost of a full set of four Japanese tyres	BD400
• Rise in raw material costs passed on to buyers by some factories	5–7%
• Warranty period on some Chinese tyres	1 year
• Warranty period on Thai tyres	3 years
• Warranty period on Japanese tyres; maximum recommended tyre lifespan by some makers	5 years

Chinese tyres have seized about 80 pc of Bahrain's car tyre market, with a full set costing roughly a quarter of the price of Japanese rivals as drivers turn to cheaper brands. Khalid Nasser, a tyre shop owner in Souq Waqif, said Japanese and South Korean makes had once led sales but Chinese products now account for four out of every five purchases.

Price is driving the shift. Four Japanese tyres can cost about BD400 (BD100 each), while a full Chinese set can be bought for around BD100.Nasser said over 80 pc of customers now ask for Chinese tyres, with sales climbing during summer as heat and heavy road use lead drivers to replace worn sets.

He also rejected claims that Bahrainis cross into Saudi Arabia in search of cheaper tyres. The flow, he said, now runs the other way, with Saudi drivers coming to Bahrain to buy them.

Shipping charges, factory costs and the price of raw materials all shape retail prices. Nasser said some factories had raised raw material costs by between 5 and 7 pc, passing the increase on to buyers. He dismissed talk of counterfeit tyres in the local market. Products from Japan, China, Thailand and Taiwan come from different factories and are sold as genuine goods, he said, adding that fake products were usually linked to spare parts rather than tyres.

Japanese tyres remain among the best for quality but also carry the highest prices. Drivers who cover shorter distances often choose cheaper sets that meet their needs for a limited period, Nasser said.

All tyres brought into Bahrain must clear checks by the relevant watchdogs before they can be sold. Buyers are also paying closer attention to the country of manufacture and production date.

Recommended tyre life differs by maker. Some companies allow up to five years from the production date, while other products carry a lifespan of one or two years, depending on the tyre, storage and use. Warranty terms also vary. Some Chinese tyres come with one year of cover, Thai tyres with up to three years and Japanese tyres with up to five.

Nasser said the life of a tyre depends as much on driving and care as it does on build quality.

The Gulf Standardization Magazine, published online by the Gulf Standardization Organization, urged drivers to check tyre pressure often and keep it at the level listed in the vehicle handbook. Checks should be made while tyres are cold. It also advised drivers to rotate tyres in line with the maintenance schedule, avoid changing pressure while tyres are hot and use only the sizes and types named by the car maker.

Tyres should not be fitted to damaged or poorly repaired rims, it said. Drivers were also warned against overloading vehicles, which raises tyre heat, speeds up wear and increases the risk of failure.

The magazine urged buyers to check production dates and choose recently made tyres.