

Keeping Bahrain supplied — at a price



Hassan Ebrahim, MP



Hesham Al Qassab, Shura Council member

Importers Switch Routes as Freight Costs Rise

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain kept essential goods moving during disruption to key sea lanes, but longer routes pushed up freight costs and delivery times, with small businesses bearing much of the pressure.

Importers switched routes and sent shipments on longer road journeys when maritime routes were disrupted, helping keep food and other essential supplies reaching the kingdom.

But the detours came at a cost, with higher freight bills, longer delivery times and greater pressure on small and medium-sized importers that have

less capacity to absorb sudden increases in expenses.

MP Hassan Ebrahim, a member of Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee, said ports, transport operators, logistics companies, government bodies and businesses worked together to keep supplies moving.

"Our ports, transport network and logistics sector worked together, alongside government bodies and businesses, to keep essential goods flowing into Bahrain," he said.

He said disruption along major sea lanes had tested Bahrain's supply lines and shown how quickly trade can be affected when ships are delayed or

forced to change course.

Bahrain was able to rely on its ports, logistics network and road link with Saudi Arabia, while wider Gulf co-operation provided traders with additional options for bringing goods into the kingdom.

However, Mr Ebrahim said smaller importers could be particularly vulnerable when cargo is delayed or freight costs rise. Unlike larger companies, many have less room to absorb sudden expenses or maintain large stocks.

The disruption has prompted calls for Bahrain to keep its emergency supply measures ready for future shocks, includ-

ing wider sourcing of goods, larger strategic stocks and alternative land, air and sea routes.

Hesham Al Qassab, a member of the Shura Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee, said the answer did not necessarily require new legislation.

Instead, existing laws, rules and procedures should be tested to determine how effectively they work during a crisis and what changes may be needed in their implementation, he said.

He pointed to Law No. 10 of 2022 issuing the Maritime Law, which covers shipping, ports, cargo movement, international maritime transport and port security.

"What we have seen in the Strait of Hormuz and Bab Al Mandab shows why we need to buy goods from a wider range of suppliers, build up strategic stocks and keep alternative land, air and sea routes ready for use when they are needed," Mr Al Qassab said.

He said Bahrain should know before a crisis how much stock is available, where alternative supplies can be sourced, how much additional traffic its ports can handle and how quickly shipments can be redirected.

He also called for closer co-ordination between ports, customs, trade bodies, food-supply authorities and businesses so decisions can be

taken quickly when shipments are delayed.

Gulf states should also work more closely on supply routes, he said, giving importers multiple options to move food, raw materials and other essential goods when one route is disrupted.

Mr Al Qassab said small and medium-sized businesses also needed support when import costs suddenly increased.

He called for faster customs clearance, simpler emergency procedures and earlier information on alternative routes, along with short-term finance or guarantees for importers facing sudden increases in freight costs.



Bahrain steps up Gulf parliamentary coordination in Tajikistan

TDT | Manama

Bahrain led a Gulf parliamentary coordination meeting in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, while also holding talks with Tajikistan's Deputy Speaker Mafsuma Muini to strengthen bilateral parliamentary ties.

MP Ahmed Sabah Al-Salloom, Bahrain's representative of the presidency at the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, chaired the Gulf meeting on the sidelines of the assembly's Standing Committee on Cultural and Social Affairs. The meeting focused on closer coordination among Gulf legislative councils and aligning positions at Asian and international parliamentary forums. Participants also discussed joint parliamentary action and co-operation in support of GCC objectives. The Bahraini dele-



gation also met Ms Muini, who heads Tajikistan's delegation to the assembly. The two sides discussed stronger parliamentary cooperation, better communication between legislative institutions and opportunities for economic and cultural partnership.

They stressed the role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening Bahrain-Tajikistan relations and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

The Bahraini delegation included Shura Council member Dr Abdulaziz Hassan Abal, MP

Bader Saleh Al-Tamimi and Engineer Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Sisi Al-Bouainain, Secretary-General of the Council of Representatives and Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Division.

The Asian Parliamentary Assembly committee is due to discuss cultural diversity, protection of Asian heritage, ICT-driven integration, health justice, anti-corruption efforts and the role of women parliamentarians, as well as religious dialogue and cooperation against the smuggling of cultural materials.



Muharraq port payment probe sought

● **Boat owners were asked to pay fines into a personal account**

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Boat owners at Muharraq Port were allegedly asked to pay government fines into a personal account on a money-transfer app, prompting a call for an inquiry into how the payments were collected and transferred to state accounts.

Muharraq Municipal Council chairman AbdulAziz Al Naar urged the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture to investigate the payments and clarify their legal and financial basis.

"Government fines should be paid through official payment channels and under government financial rules," he said,



AbdulAziz Al Naar, Chairman of Muharraq Municipal Council

calling for records showing who received the money, how much was collected and where it went.

Mr Al Naar also questioned the practice of fining boat owners who have used the port for more than 20 years but have been unable to formally register their vessels.

He said registration was opened to only a limited number of owners before being closed, leaving some with no

alternative place to keep their boats.

Mr Al Naar said Marine Resources should provide suitable berthing arrangements and called for fair enforcement, clear registration rules and official payment channels for all fines.

He had previously raised concerns about conditions at Muharraq Port, including poorly maintained boats, vessels being kept in unsuitable locations and unclear records of boats and their owners.

He also questioned why land leased by Marine Resources to an investor years ago remains fenced off and unused despite the shortage of space and services at the port.

Mr Al Naar said the site could help organise the port and provide additional space for boat owners.

"Enforcing the law does not mean ignoring people's rights," he said.

Kingdom calls for responsible AI and wider access to technology

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has called for wider access to technology, stronger digital infrastructure and responsible artificial intelligence governance as countries prepare for an AI-driven future.

The call came during the 19th ministerial meeting of the Global Governance Group (3G) in New York, held under the theme "Building an AI-Ready State" on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly.

Hatem Abdulhameed Hatem, Head of the Organisations Sector at the Ministry of Foreign



Hatem Abdulhameed Hatem, Head of the Organisations Sector at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Affairs, represented Bahrain at the meeting.

In Bahrain's intervention, Mr Hatem highlighted the role of the 3G in bringing the views of

different countries to the Group of Twenty (G20), particularly on economic and technological issues.

He stressed that countries need greater access to technology and stronger capabilities to benefit fully from AI, backed by investment in digital infrastructure, human capital and skills development, as well as responsible governance.

Mr Hatem also highlighted Bahrain's AI initiatives, including its national policy, work on a dedicated strategy and adoption of the GCC's guiding charter on AI ethics.