

W Asia conflict: Jaishankar reaches out to GCC nations

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India has over the last few days continued to reach out to the leaderships of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with External Affairs Minister (EAM) S Jaishankar visiting Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait, and slated to be in Oman later this week.

New Delhi is also in contact with the Iranian authorities to secure safe passage for at least nine tankers laden with oil and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) awaiting transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Nearly a million Indians live and work in West Asia, and the region is key to India's energy security.

The outbreak of hostilities between the United States (US) and Iran on Wednesday morning could impact efforts to resume fuel shipments via the Strait of Hormuz, and also make the safety of ships and sailors uncertain. Six vessels headed for destinations including India attempted to cross the Strait of Hormuz just hours after Tuesday's strikes. According to reports, at least one Indian-flagged super-tanker, the Lila Vadinar, reversed course after reaching the tip of Oman's Musandam Peninsula.

On Wednesday, the US revoked a licence authorising the sale of Iranian oil in retaliation for what it said were Tehran's attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz, and launched missile strikes on Iran. Tehran retaliated with strikes on Bahrain and Kuwait. The crossfire came during the funeral for Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that concludes on Thursday. He was killed on February 28 in a US-Israeli strike.



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah

PHOTO: PTI

Jaishankar will be in New York on July 13 to launch India's official campaign for the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) tenure 2028-29. Ensuring the safety of its seafarers stranded near the Strait of Hormuz is a priority for India. At least three ships with Indian seafarers were attacked by the US military in June in which one Indian was killed. It had led to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) summoning the US Chargé d'Affaires Jason Meeks twice within 48 hours last month.

On Wednesday morning, Jaishankar met Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, and discussed bilateral ties between the two countries. In a social media post, Jaishankar thanked the Kuwaiti Crown Prince for sharing his perspec-

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tives on developments in the Gulf. Jaishankar also met his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and discussed the latest regional and international developments. On Tuesday, the EAM met Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Hamad Suleiman Mashaan Al-Mashaan.

Jaishankar was in Bahrain on Tuesday, where he met its Deputy Prime Minister Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, and discussed the situation in West Asia.

MRPL cancels West Asia vessel charter

Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) has cancelled a vessel charter it had booked for loading crude oil from Iraq, two shipping sources with knowledge of the matter said.

One of the people said MRPL has cited "technical reasons" for not going ahead with the chartering of the Aframax tanker Jasmin Joy.

It was not clear whether the chartering failed due to heightened tension in the Strait of Hormuz, the sources said.

REUTERS

He also met Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and PM Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. He thanked the King for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the Indian diaspora in Bahrain. Jaishankar also met Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani.

In Qatar earlier this week, Jaishankar met its Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. The two reviewed bilateral cooperation in energy, trade, investments, connectivity, security, and people-to-people ties, and "explored new opportunities for deepening our strategic partnership", Jaishankar said in a social media post. The Qatari leader shared his assessments on the West Asia conflict and its impact with Jaishankar.