

Four Point Plan chalked out by the department of Commerce to deal with Blockage of Suez Canal

(Topic: India and world)

In News: A giant container ship was stuck in Egypt's Suez Canal for nearly a week now, blocking way for other ships to pass. At present, the cargo ship has been successfully refloated in the Suez Canal.

A Panama-flagged ship, The Ever Given, that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, ran aground in the narrow canal that runs between Africa and the Sinai Peninsula. Authorities have been making all possible attempts to free the vessel and reopen the waterway, which is very crucial for global shipping.

According to news reports, the blockage of the canal has resulted in a massive maritime traffic jam, causing **delays in global shipment chain**. According to official figures, some 19,000 vessels passed through the canal last year. Insurance company Allianz estimated that each day of the blockade was costing between \$6-10 billion (€5-8.5 billion).

Prioritisation of cargo: FIEO, MPEDA and APEDA will jointly identify cargo particularly perishable cargo for priority movement and work with the shipping lines for the same.

Freight Rates: CSLA assured that the freight rates as per existing contracts will be honoured. A request has been made to the shipping lines to maintain stability in freight rates during the period of this crisis. It was noted that the situation is temporary and is unlikely to have a long-lasting impact.

Advisory to Ports: Once the blockage is over, it is expected that some bunching may take place, especially at the ports of JNPT, Mundra and Hazira. Ministry of Ports, Shipping and waterway assured to issue an advisory to these ports so as to gear up arrangements and ensure efficient handling during the forthcoming busy period.

Re-routing decisions: Shipping lines were advised through CSLA to explore the option of re-routing of ships via the Cape of Good Hope. It was pointed that such re-routing usually takes 15 additional days' time.

Launch of the U.S. India Artificial Intelligence (USIAI)

(Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation)

Research, technology in artificial intelligence is being promoted and implemented in the country through a network of 25 technology hubs working as a triple helix set up under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS).