build-up.

One would rightly conclude that every effort made to significantly grow remittance figures is a strategic move that adds considerable

to mainstream the NRM diaspora through a constitutional amendment to the NRM Constitution as far back as 2006.

As part of these progressive

stipulation of offices a person holding dual citizenship is not qualified to hold. This was a commendable step that halted

particular challenge

Don't panic over Iran war: What you need to kno

AGA SEKALALA

As someone who spends his days running a family manufacturing enterprise in Uganda and representing thousands of manufacturers nationwide as chairperson of the Uganda Manufacturers Association (UMA), I have watched the recent events in the Gulf with deep concern. What is happening thousands of kilometres away is already touching the lives of ordinary Ugandans in ways that are immediate and personal. My goal today is simple: to lay out the facts clearly so that households and businesses alike can understand what is happening, prepare sensibly, and avoid unnecessary alarm.

In March and April 2026, military strikes targeted major petrochemical complexes across Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and parts of the wider Gulf region. Key facilities hit include Iran's Asaluyeh (South Pars) and Mahshahr zones, Saudi Arabia's Jubail petrochemical complex, and Qatar's Ras Laffan industrial city. These are not small plants. Together, they account for a very large share of the world's supply of ethylene, polyethylene — including the high-density polyethylene (HDPE) used every day — and polypropylene, the basic building blocks for plastics and packaging.

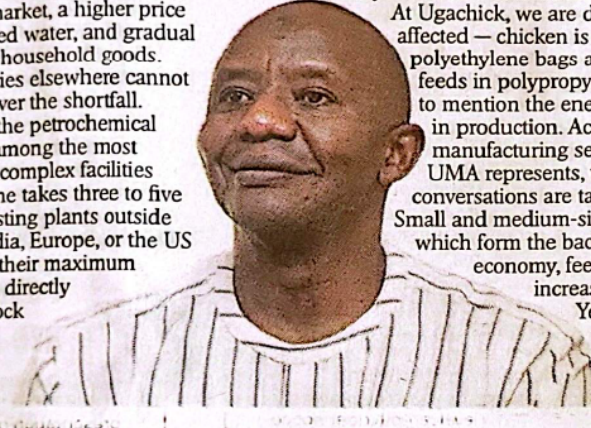
Uganda does not import these materials directly from the Gulf, yet the impact is felt because of how global supply chains actually work. Consider a long, specialised production line stretching across continents. Crude oil and natural gas from the Middle East are processed in these giant, highly specialised complexes into raw petrochemicals. Those materials are then shipped to converters in Asia, Europe, or elsewhere, turned into plastic resins, loaded onto vessels bound for Mombasa, and finally transported inland to Uganda by road. When one critical link in that chain is damaged, the pressure travels the entire length. That is precisely what we are seeing now.

The numbers tell the story plainly. Spot prices for HDPE — the plastic used for milk sachets, water bottles, cooking oil containers, detergent packs, and shopping bags — have roughly doubled in recent weeks, moving from around $900 per tonne to $1,800 per tonne. Polypropylene production facilities, which supply the material for yoghurt pots, bottle caps, food containers, and some cosmetics packaging, have also been badly affected. These are not abstract figures. For manufacturers, they translate directly into higher raw-material costs. For families, they mean a slightly more expensive sachet of milk at the market, a higher price for packaged maize flour or bottled water, and gradual increases in the cost of everyday household goods.

People naturally ask why factories elsewhere cannot simply increase production to cover the shortfall. The answer lies in the nature of the petrochemical industry itself. These plants are among the most capital-intensive and technically complex facilities ever built. Constructing a new one takes three to five years and billions of dollars. Existing plants outside the Gulf — whether in China, India, Europe, or the US — are already operating close to their maximum safe capacity. Many of them rely, directly or indirectly, on the same feedstock streams that have now been disrupted. Restarting damaged facilities requires detailed safety inspections, repairs to pipelines, utilities and control systems, and in some cases months of careful commissioning. There is simply no quick solution available.

Logistics add another layer of pressure. Insurance costs for vessels operating near the conflict zone have risen sharply. Some shipping lines are choosing longer routes around Africa to avoid risk, adding days at sea and thousands of dollars per container. Port congestion has increased. For a landlocked country such as ours, every extra day and every additional shilling in freight cost is felt twice — first at Mombasa and then again on the long road or rail journey to Kampala, Mbale, or Gulu. Fuel and LPG prices have also risen because the same regional instability affects crude oil flows and refining. Higher transport costs flow directly through to bodaboda fares, taxi rides, and the price of goods moving from farm to market.

None of this is cause for panic. Global markets are resilient. Alternative supplies are already moving from other regions, and some producers are drawing down stockpiles. Industry analysts expect the tightest conditions to ease over the coming months as repairs progress and shipping patterns stabilise. However, the recovery will not happen overnight, and prices are likely to remain elevated for some time.



At Ugachick, we are directly affected — chicken is packed in polyethylene bags and poultry feeds in polypropylene bags, not to mention the energy consumed in production. Across the wider manufacturing sector that the UMA represents, the same conversations are taking place. Small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the backbone of our economy, feel these cost increases most acutely.

Yet I remain convinced that awareness itself is a powerful first step. When households understand why pri are moving, they can budget with grea confidence. When businesses see the b picture, they can plan rather than react.

For now, the best response is straightforward: buy what you need, avoid panic buying, and support local manufacturers who are working hard to keep shelves stocked despite these glob pressures.

Looking further ahead, events such as these reinforce a truth long discussed at the association: greater self-reliance in basic manufacturing serves Uganda well. Diversifying supply sources, investing thoughtfully in domestic capacity — incl an efficient and well-managed refinery — improving recycling and material efficie are not abstract policy goals. They are practical ways to shield everyday life wh distant shocks arrive.

The Gulf conflict serves as a stark reminder that Uganda operates within a interconnected global economy, where a strike on a distant petrochemical plant ca swiftly alter the cost of a milk sachet on the Ugandan breakfast table. By grasping these links, we shift from reactive surprise to proactive preparation. While prices may ease as the situation stabilises, the enduri lesson demands clear-eyed awareness and steady, practical planning at home — our surest defence. We, therefore, urge both the Government and private sector leader to prioritise policies that bolster domestic manufacturing resilience, streamline supp chains, and drive inclusive economic growth, turning global vulnerabilities into opportunities for Uganda's prosperity.

The author is the chief execu director of Ugachick and chairper of U

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