

Sri Lanka introduces four-day work week to conserve fuel amid Middle East war

Oil and Gas

Tue 17 Mar 2026 at 10:23am



People have been queuing up in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to buy petrol due to concerns over fuel supply amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran. (Reuters: Thilina Kaluthotage)

In short:

Sri Lanka has introduced a four-day work week to conserve fuel to prepare for a prolonged war in the Middle East.

The government is also suspending all public ceremonies and asking civil servants to work from home where possible to limit fuel use.

What's next?

The shorter work week will also apply to schools and universities and will remain in place indefinitely.

Sri Lanka has announced a four-day work week to conserve its scarce fuel reserves as it prepares for a prolonged war in the Middle East, officials say.

The Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway through which some 20 per cent of global exports pass in peacetime, has been effectively closed by Iran in retaliation for US and Israeli attacks, now in their third week.

Sri Lanka's commissioner-general of essential services, Prabath Chandrakeerthi, said state institutions would operate only four days a week starting on Wednesday, local time.

The shorter work week will also apply to schools and universities and will remain in place indefinitely.

"We are also asking the private sector to follow suit and declare every Wednesday a holiday from now on," Mr Chandrakeerthi told reporters after an emergency meeting chaired by President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

"We must prepare for the worst, but hope for the best," Mr Dissanayake told senior officials, according to one who attended the meeting.

Read more about the Iran war:

- [What you need to know about Iran today, with Matt Doran](#)
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Mr Dissanayake said essential services, including hospitals, ports and emergency services, would continue to operate as usual.

The government is also suspending all public ceremonies and asking civil servants to work from home where possible to limit fuel use.

Sri Lanka imports all of its oil and also buys coal for electricity generation.

Fuel rationing began on Sunday, limiting each motorist to 15 litres of petrol or diesel per week, while public transport was allocated up to 200 litres.



At the height of its economic crisis in 2022, Sri Lanka faced a massive fuel shortage for months that sparked huge protests. *(Reuters: Thilina Kaluthotage)*

Officials said the country's petrol and diesel reserves would last nearly six weeks, but they warned that any disruption to fresh supplies could severely affect the island.

Sri Lanka buys refined petroleum products from Singapore, Malaysia and South Korea, while crude oil for its Iran-built refinery is sourced from the Middle East.

The government has warned that any escalation in fighting in the Middle East and a prolonged war could seriously undermine its efforts to emerge from the economic meltdown of 2022.

AFP

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