

Iran says 'neglect' was behind the explosion of the country's largest container port, death toll rises to 70



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Iran's interior minister said the negligence was one of the factors causing the massive explosion and fire at the country's largest container port, with the death toll rising to at least 70 people

Iskandar Momini said that the explosion, which occurred on Saturday at the port of Martyr Rajai in Bandar Abbas, and also injured more than 1,000 people, resulted from "shortcomings, including non-compliance with safety precautions and neglect

He added that "some individuals who are considered responsible" were summoned for investigation

Customs authorities said an imported shipment broke out of the fire and exploded, while the Ministry of Defense denied foreign reports that claimed it was a shipment containing a chemical used as rocket fuel

The director of the crisis department in the province of Hormuzgan, Mehrad Hassanzadeh, said on Monday that the firefighting efforts at the port were "nearing completion

For his part, the governor of Hormuzgan, Mohammad Ashuri Tziani, said that the clean-up operations of the port could continue for several more days, and it may take one to two weeks before the situation returns to normal there

Tziani estimated that about 1,500 hectares (equivalent to 3,700 acres), or about two-thirds of the site's area, were severely damaged by the explosion

The customs department said, according to the ISNA news agency, that the shipment that caught and exploded had not been officially registered or declared before the incident

On Sunday, the CEO of the company that operated the affected area, Sina Marine and Port Services Development, a port and marine services development company, blamed a "recurring" and catastrophic error related to the false declaration of dangerous goods

Iran's Defense Ministry denied reports that the explosion was caused by the improper handling of a shipment of sodium perchlorate, a solid used as fuel in ballistic missiles

"There were no and no shipments of fuel or goods of military use imported or exported in the vicinity of the incident," the ministry's spokesman, Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik, said on Sunday, accusing foreign media to publish "false news

Ambre Intelligence, a private offshore risk consulting firm, told the Associated Press that the port received a shipment of sodium perchlorate last month, and that the explosion was apparently "the result of mishandling of the shipment

The New York Times also quoted an unnamed person with links to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards as saying that it was sodium perchlorate that exploded