

# 97 Ships Stuck in Ice Near St. Petersburg

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The icebreaker Mudyug leading the bulk carrier Federal Danube as men fish in the Gulf of Finland on Tuesday. **Dmitry Lovetsky**

ST. PETERSBURG — Icebreakers have been called in to free dozens of ships that became trapped in ice in the Gulf of Finland near St. Petersburg last week.

The administration of St. Petersburg's port said at least 97 ships were still waiting for help on Tuesday, down from 160 ships two days ago.

The eastern Gulf of Finland has not seen such thick ice since 1992, according to the Federal of Sea and River Transportation Agency. In some places the ice is more than a meter thick.

Most of the trapped ships are cargo vessels, but some are passenger ferries. Many have been trapped for at least several days.

Among the ships freed over the weekend was a ferry that had been stuck for six days with 12 people on board, including a pregnant woman. The ferry runs between a port near St. Petersburg and the Kaliningrad region.

The Princess Maria ferry running between St. Petersburg and the Finnish capital, Helsinki, has been suspended since March 9, but was due to resume its operation on Wednesday, ferry operator St. Peter Line said.

The federal agency said 10 icebreakers, including the nuclear-powered Vaigach based in Murmansk, were leading the ships to open water in caravans.

Andrei Kovalyov of Rosmorport, a state company overseeing seaports, said passenger ferries and ships with hazardous cargo were being given priority.

He said the situation could improve within three weeks if weather conditions were favorable.

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