

Iran's Annual Revenues from South Pars Hit \$56bln - Official



TEHRAN (FNA) - Iran has considerably increased the annual revenues that it gains from the South Pars gas field in the Southern parts of the country, a senior trade official announced.

"The annual revenues of Iran's South Pars gas field for the country amounts to \$56 billion as value of its daily production hits \$155 million," Managing Director of Iran's South Pars Gas Complex Company Massoud Hassani said on Friday.

South Pars produces 50% of Iran's natural gas today, the gas field's managing director said Thursday.

He noted that over 50 percent of Iran's gas is produced in South Pars, and said, "The South Pars Gas

Complex is responsible for exploiting the different phases of the South Pars Gas Field."

In August, Customs Director General of the Pars Special Economic Energy Zone (PSEEZ) Khodadad Rahimi announced that Iran is exporting products of its South Pars refineries to Asian, European, African and American nations.

"We are exporting the products of South Pars to one American and six European countries," said.

He also pointed to Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique and Kenya as major African destinations of South Pars products, and said, "China, Japan, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Pakistan and

the Philippines are among the Asian buyers South Pars products."

Rahimi referred to Mexico as the American destination for South Pars products, and said, "Russia, Ukraine and Turkey also are among the European destinations of the energy zone."

PSEEZ was established in 1998 for the utilization of South Pars oil and gas resources and encouraging commercial activities in the field of oil, gas and petrochemical industries.

The South Pars gas field, divided into 28 phases, is located in the Persian Gulf on the common border between Iran and Qatar. The field is estimated to contain 14 trillion cubic meters of gas and 18 billion barrels of condensates.

China Offers Enhanced Cooperation as Russia Struggles

BEIJING (Bloomberg) - China offered enhanced economic ties with Russia at a regional summit this week as its northern neighbor struggled to contain a currency crisis.

"To help counteract an economic slowdown, China is ready to provide financial aid to develop cooperation," Premier Li Keqiang said at a Dec. 15 gathering in Astana, Kazakhstan. While the remark applied to any of the five other nations represented at the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization group, it was directed at Russia, according to a person familiar with the matter who asked not to be named as the plans weren't public. Any rescue package for Russia

would give China the opportunity of exercising the kind of great-power leadership the U.S. has demonstrated for a century -- sustaining other economies with its superior financial resources. President Xi Jinping last month called for China to adopt "big-country diplomacy" as he laid out goals for elevating his nation's status.

"If the Kremlin decides to seek assistance from Beijing, it's very unlikely for the Xi leadership to turn it down," said Cheng Yijun, senior researcher with the Institute of Russian, Eastern European, Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. "This would be a perfect

opportunity to demonstrate China is a friend indeed, and also its big power status."

Russia isn't in talks with China about any financial aid, said Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for President Vladimir Putin. He said he didn't know if China is preparing to offer aid. China's Foreign Ministry, asked about assisting Russia, said the country is ready to work with all members of the SCO group to strengthen economic cooperation.

One-time Cold War ally China already proved a help to its neighbor embroiled in tensions with the U.S. and European Union earlier this year, signing a three-decade, \$400 billion deal to buy Russian gas.

Iran Mercantile Exchange's Weekly Trade Hits \$213.5mln, Copper Gains High



Kayhan Intl Economic Desk

TEHRAN - Over 353,000 tons of various commodities with total value of \$213.5 million were traded in Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) trading floor, in which the copper gained the highs in terms of value (76%) and volume (% 412) during 12 to 18 Dec.

"In the local and export trading floor of IME over 168,000 tons of versatile commodities with total value of \$1103 million were

traded, IME international affairs reported.

Other commodities which were traded: 99,000 tons of steel sections, 50,000 tons of iron ore, 14,000 tons of copper, 3,500 tons of aluminum, 100m tons of concentrate molybdenum, 400m tons of coke, 15m tons of precious metals concentrate and 2Kg of gold bar were traded.

In the oil-related and petrochemical trading floor of IME, total volume of 184,000 tons of

with the total value of 124.5 Million USD. In this trading floor, also more than 85,000 tons of bitumen, 23,000 tons of polymer products, 58m tons of VB, 2,000 tons of Lube-cut, 14,000 tons of chemical products, 1,470m tons of sulfur, 240m tons of insulation and 70m tons of gas and feeds.

In the agricultural trading floor of IME, 990m tons of maize, 525m tons of sugar, 205m tons of barley and 15m tons of meal were traded.

Swiss Central Bank Imposes Negative Interest Rates

BERN, Switzerland (AP) - Following the fallout of the slide in the Russian ruble, Switzerland sought Thursday to prevent the Swiss franc from breaching upper limits imposed on the currency by introducing negative interest rates on commercial bank deposits.

The move forces commercial banks to pay to deposit their francs with the Swiss National Bank — usually they get a small interest rate for doing so.

It's a step that the European Central Bank has introduced, too, though its motivation is to encourage banks to lend to households and businesses in order to shore up the economic recovery in the 18-country eurozone.

For the Swiss authorities, the desire is different. It's to prevent the Swiss franc from

appreciating too much. That can hurt the country's exports and weigh on the economy. As a result, the SNB introduced a rate of minus 0.25 percent on sight deposit account balances of more than 10 million Swiss francs (\$10.4 million).

The SNB said demand for safe investments — the Swiss franc is widely considered one of the main safe haven assets in the world — has increased over the past few days in light of the collapse of the Russian ruble, which has lost almost half its value since January. On Tuesday, at one stage, it was down 20 percent.

"Rapidly mounting uncertainty on the financial markets has substantially increased demand for safe investments," SNB President Thomas Jordan told a news con-

ference in Zurich. "The worsening of the crisis in Russia was a major contributory factor in this development."

The move appears to be working, at least in the short term. The euro is 0.3 percent firmer, at 1.2043 francs in the wake of the bank's announcement.

Jane Foley, senior currency strategist at Rabobank International, said the drop in food and oil prices and rise in deflation risks justified the action.

"On almost all measures the Swiss franc is a strongly overvalued currency," she said.

The SNB, headquartered in the Swiss capital Bern, emphasized that it is also prepared to purchase foreign currency in unlimited quantities and to take further measures, if required.

European Stocks Could Post Strongest Week in a Year

LONDON (IB Times) - European shares could log their strongest weekly gain in a year this week, buoyed by strong handovers from Asia and from Wall Street.

The benchmark Stoxx Europe 600 was trading 0.16% lower to 338.51 points on 19 December. The pan-European index was poised for a weekly rise of 3%, which will be its strongest such advance since late December 2013, according to FactSet data.

Elsewhere, Britain's FTSE 100 was trading 0.49% higher. France's CAC 40 and Germany's DAX 30 were trading 0.27% lower and 0.31% lower respectively.

Spain's IBEX 35 and Italy's FTSE MIB were trading 1.11% and 1.25% lower respectively. Barclays analysts said in a note: "Risk sentiment is ending the week on a stronger footing after a poor start. Market expectations for ECB QE add to the Fed's upbeat message on US growth and stabilization in Russia."

Earlier in the day, Japan's Nikkei 225 share average finished 2.39% higher at 17,214.0 points after the Bank of Japan ended its last policy meeting of the year by leaving its monetary policy unchanged.

The BoJ has re-committing to a massive stimulus campaign that will see it print yen to buy government bonds.

The central bank also offered a positive view of the world's third largest economy. In China, the benchmark Shanghai Composite finished 1.67% higher at 3,108.60.

Australia's S&P ASX finished 2.45% higher at 5,338.60 while India's S&P BSE Sensex ended 0.90% higher at 27,371.84.

On Wall Street, indices finished higher on 18 December as investors cheered comments by the US Federal Reserve, the world's most powerful central bank.

The Fed has said that it will remain "patient" on the timing of increasing US interest rates.

Chrysler to Recall About 288K Ram Pickup Trucks

DETROIT (AP) - Chrysler is recalling about 288,000 older Ram pickup trucks in North America and elsewhere because the rear axle can seize or the drive shaft can fall off.

The recall covers Ram 1500 pickups from the 2005 model year.

Chrysler says in documents posted Friday by U.S. safety regulators that the rear-axle pinion nut can come loose. That can cause problems that make the trucks spin out of control.

The recall comes after an investigation by the National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration that began in June.

The agency found 15 complaints, including seven drivers who reported that the wheels locked at speeds over 50 miles per hour. Chrysler says there have been three crashes and one injury due to the problem.

The recall includes nearly 257,000 trucks in the U.S., another 22,000 in Canada, 8,800 in Mexico and 400 outside North America.

The affected trucks were made from Jan. 28, 2004 to Aug. 3, 2005, according to the docu-

ments.

In one complaint to NHTSA in February 2013, a pickup driver wrote that he was on an interstate highway when the drive shaft disconnected and the truck began to spin.

"It was five seconds of terror that I thought would surely end in disaster," the driver wrote. When the truck stopped it was blocking an entrance ramp, and the driver had to drag it to the shoulder in speeding traffic, the complaint said. Drivers who file complaints are not identified in NHTSA's database.