

4 Million Barrels of Oil Head for Europe

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran will load 4 million barrels of crude oil on tankers destined for Europe in the coming 24 hours, a senior official was quoted as saying on Saturday, including 2 million barrels to be bought by France's Total.

"In the coming 24 hours, 4 million barrels of crude oil will be loaded onto 3 tankers destined for Europe," Rokneddin Javadi, managing director of the National Iranian Oil Company, was quoted as saying by the Shana news agency.

"Of those 4 million barrels of crude, 2 million barrels are assigned to France's Total, and 2 million barrels have been bought by two companies in Russia and Spain," he added.

Kayhan

International



Fisheries Deal Signed With Norway

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran and Norway have signed an agreement to produce 5,000 tonnes of saltwater fish through cage culture method in southern Iranian island of Qeshm.

According to Iranian media, the agreement was signed on Friday night by chairman of board of directors of Qeshm Rivas Company, Mohsen Nateq, as the Iranian side of the agreement. Nateq said implementation of the first phase of the project, with the capacity of producing 1,000 tonnes of saltwater fish through cage culture method has already started on Qeshm Island with the participation of the foreign side.

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Viewpoint

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

NATO, Syrian Refugees, Warships

Tehran, Melting Pot of Cultures During 34th Fajr Intl. Theater Fest.

Iran's Tavasoli Nominee for Best Women Goalkeeper of World

"Terrorists in Syria Get New Missiles From Foreign Backers"

President: Forex Rate Must Be Unified

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iran must unify multi-tiered foreign exchange rate and cut lending interest rates as part of post-sanctions plan to prop up the economy, President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday.

"Forex rate must be unified next year (starting March 21) so that stability in the market will be bolstered and corruption will be stopped," Rouhani told a banking forum.

He stressed the necessity of cutting lending interest rates, saying: "After the administration curbs inflation and [cuts it to] a single-digit rate, high banking interest rate would be incorrect and will harm the economy."

Rouhani said Iranian banks have to step up their efforts in favor of national economy now that international sanctions have been lifted on Iran. Interest rates offered by Iranian banks are set at 20% for long-term deposits and at lower floating rates for short-term accounts.

FM Zarif: Up to Syrians to Decide Assad Future

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said on Saturday the Syrian people must decide about the future of President Bashar al-Assad.

Zarif made the remarks while speaking to reporters in the German city of Munich in response to earlier comments by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir about Assad's future and the political situation in Syria.

"A political solution will be possible with the presence of Assad. Neither we nor they (Saudi Arabia and the U.S.) can make a comment in this regard," Zarif said at the end of his visit to Germany, where he delivered a speech at the 52nd Munich Security Conference (MSC).

"A decision about the future of Syria must be taken by the Syrian nation. People have the right to express their views and this decision only rests with the Syrians," he added.

On the eve of the Munich talks, Kerry told The Washington Post that in case of lack of seriousness by Russia and Iran for the resolution of the crisis in Syria, "then there has to be consideration of a Plan B."

He added that "Plan B" would "lead to a coalition against (Daesh) and also to support the opposition against Assad."

The Saudi foreign minister also told CNN in Munich that if the Syrian political process fails,

Saudi, Turkey Plan Invasion of Syria

ANKARA (Dispatches) -- Ankara says Turkey and Saudi Arabia could launch a ground operation in Syria, adding the kingdom is also sending jets to a Turkish base.

"If there is a strategy, then Turkey and Saudi Arabia could enter into a ground operation," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted Saturday as saying by the Yeni Safak and Haberturk newspapers.

Cavusoglu signaled Ankara had initiated the plan for what he characterized as "the fight against Daesh."

"It is Turkey that is making the most concrete proposals," he said.

In December, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Riyadh for talks with Saudi King Salman as well as crown prince Muhammad bin Nayef and deputy crown prince Muhammad bin Salman who is seen as the real ruler.

Cavusoglu said Saudi Arabia is also sending planes to the Turkish base of Incirlik which is already being used by the US, France and Britain for air raids inside Syria.

"They (Saudi officials) came, did a reconnaissance of the base. At the moment it is not clear how many planes will come," Cavusoglu said.

"They said 'If necessary we can also send troops'. Saudi Arabia is showing great determination in the fight against terror in Syria," said the Turkish minister.

Saudi Arabia and Turkey both support militants fighting to topple Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

On Friday, militants said they have received new supplies of Grad missiles from their foreign supporters in the face of recent losses against the Syrian army.

Asked if Saudi Arabia could send troops to the Turkish border to enter Syria, Cavusoglu said: "This is something that could be desired but there is no plan."

"Saudi Arabia is sending planes and they said 'If the necessary time comes for a ground operation then we could send soldiers'," he added.

His comments came after President Assad told AFP in an exclusive interview published on Friday that he would recapture the whole of Syria and keep "fighting terrorism."

Last Saturday, Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem said Syria would resist any ground incursion into its territory and send the aggressors home "in coffins."

"Any ground intervention onto Syrian land without the agreement of the Syrian government is an act of aggression...and we regret that those (who do so) will return to their countries in coffins," he said.

Iran and Russia have also warned against the deployment of foreign ground forces into Syria, calling it dangerous which could lead to permanent war.

"All sides must be compelled to sit at the negotiating table instead of unleashing a new world war," Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev told Germany's Handelsblatt newspaper.

Turkish forces on Saturday shelled a Syrian airbase and a village captured by Kurdish fighters from militants in recent days in northern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported.

A Kurdish official confirmed the shelling of Menagh air base in the northern Aleppo countryside, which he said had been captured by the Kurdish-allied Jaysh al-Thuwwar group rather than the Kurdish YPG militia.

Army Plans to Liberate Raqqa

The Syrian army intends to advance into Daesh-held Raqqa province having captured positions at the provincial border of the terrorist stronghold, a Syrian military source said on Saturday.

A move into Raqqa province would reestablish a foothold for Damascus in a region where it has had no presence since August 2014, and complicate any attempt by Saudi Arabia to send ground forces to the area.

The military source who was briefed on the matter said the operation had been going on for a number of days. The army had captured several positions from Daesh at the provincial border between Hama and Raqqa in the last two days.

"It is an indication of the direction of coming operations toward Raqqa," he said.

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'Air Pollution Kills 5.5 Million Each Year'

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- Air pollution kills more than 5.5 million people around the world each year, with over half of those deaths occurring in fast-growing China and India, researchers said on Friday.

And the number of premature deaths will continue to climb in the years ahead unless more aggressive measures against pollution are adopted, scientists warned the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference in the U.S. capital.

Air pollution is the fourth highest risk factor for death globally and by far the leading environmental risk factor for disease, said Michael Brauer, a professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Population and Public Health in Vancouver, Canada.

Air pollution ranks behind high blood pressure, diet and smoking as the fourth greatest risk factor for fatalities worldwide, according to the Global Burden of Disease study, done by the Institute for Health Metrics.

Reducing air pollution is an incredibly efficient way to improve the health of a population, said Brauer.

China and India account for 55 percent of yearly global deaths from air pollution. Some 1.6 million people died of air pollution in China in 2013, while India saw 1.4 million deaths.

In China, burning coal is the biggest contributor to poor air quality -- and pollution from coal was found to have caused 366,000 deaths in 2013, said Qiao Ma, a PhD student at the School of Environment at Tsinghua University in Beijing. She projected that air pollution will cause anywhere from 990,000 to 1.3 million premature deaths in 2030 unless more ambitious targets are introduced.

"Our study highlights the urgent need for even more aggressive strategies to reduce emissions from coal and from other sectors," said Ma.

In India, the main culprit was burning wood, dung and biomass for cooking and heating. India needs a three-pronged mitigation approach to address industrial coal burning, open burning for agriculture, and household air pollution sources, said Chandra Venkataraman, professor of Chemical Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, in Mumbai.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines, pollution should be restricted to a daily particulate matter of 25 micrograms per cubic meter.

In February, Beijing and New Delhi typically see daily levels at or above 300 micrograms per cubic meter -- or 1,200% higher than WHO guidelines, researchers said.

More than 85% of the global population lives in areas where the World Health Organization Air Quality Guideline is exceeded.