

France's Imports of Oil From Iran Jump in Jan.



The platform of Iran's Lavan oil field in the Persian Gulf.

TEHRAN (Press TV) - Iran has reported a major rise in exports of crude oil to France in January - an announcement that comes as the country is already expanding the list of its European oil clients.

Iran's Ministry of Petroleum in a press release as reported by the domestic media announced that Iran's oil exports to France over the past month had increased by 70,000 barrels per day (bpd) to reach 180,000 bpd. The figure showed an increase of 61 percent compared to December 2016.

The French energy giant Total handles the bulk of imports of crude oil from Iran. Last year, it sealed a deal with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) to import at least

160,000 bpd of Iran's oil.

Total was among the first European companies to sign an oil purchase deal with Iran after the removal of sanctions against the country early last year.

Several other European companies that also sealed post-sanctions deals to buy oil from Iran include Royal Dutch Shell (The Netherlands/Britain), Saras and Iplom (Italy), Repsol (Spain) and Hellenic Petroleum (Greece).

The statement by Iran's Ministry of Petroleum further added that Iran's exports of crude oil to Italy had seen a major drop of 130,000 bpd in January and reached 100,000 bpd. It put the blame for the plunge on the periodical overhaul operations in Italian refineries.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in a report last week said that Iran's oil production had reached 3.77 million barrels per day (m/d) - most of which is exported.

On the same front, NIOC Managing Director Ali Kardor told reporters in Tehran that Iran's oil exports are expected to reach as high as 2.3 m/d by the end of March.

On Friday, Reuters reported that Belarus's Bel Oil was the latest European client that had joined the list of the European clients of Iran oil.

The company, Reuters added, had purchased 80,000 tons - equal to 600,000 barrels - of Iranian Light and Heavy crude oil from the NIOC for loading in February.

NIOC, SINOPEC Hold Talks on Upstream Cooperation

TEHRAN (Shana) - Senior executives from the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec Group) on Sunday met to discuss avenues for furthering cooperation in upstream projects.

NIOC Chief Ali Kardor and Wang Yupu, Chairman of Sinopec Group, attended the meeting held in Tehran. "NIOC's priority is signature of

deals under the new framework of oil contracts," said Kardor in the meeting.

Highlighting the long-lasting history of the two companies' cooperation in oil projects, the official said enhancing recovery of oil from reserves and transferring the latest technologies are NIOC's top priorities for cooperation with foreign partners the time being.

"Inking 20-year-long deals under the framework of newly-devised contracts will set the ground for Iranian developers to learn from the technologies transferred to the country by foreign investors," he added.

The NIOC chief also invited Sinopec to a tender that will be held for development of Azadegan oilfield in the near future.

Iran Running 7% of World Drilling Rigs



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iran is in possession of nearly 7% of the world's oil rigs, a senior Iranian oil official has said.

Roknoddin Javadi, deputy petroleum minister for supervision over hydrocarbon reserves, told an international drilling congress on Saturday that 7% of the world's drilling rigs are currently operating in Iran's oil and gas industry.

He said the drilling industry in Iran is moving forward at an

acceptable speed, saying the industry plays an integral part in developing the country's oil and gas industry.

He said there are over 2,000 rigs operating in the world of which Iran owns over 140 ones.

Digging 500 Wells Crucial for Reaching 4.7mbd Output

Meanwhile, Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Ali Kardor says Iran will need to drill at least 500 wells to reach the

output envisaged by the 6th five-year development plan of the country to 2022.

The plan puts the country's total crude oil output at 4.7 million barrels per day.

Addressing the 4th Iran International Drilling Congress, Kardor said it would be crucial for the country to develop the upstream sector of its petroleum industry under various forms of contracts.

He said the country's crude oil output will reach 4 million barrels by mid-April.

The official said NIOC, one of the world's biggest oil companies, will start implementing stipulations of the 6th development plan by March.

The plan also puts Iran's natural gas output at 1.3 billion cubic meters per day, requiring 135 drilling rigs to be added to the current 143 operational rigs for this purpose.

"Many of the rigs are outdated and cannot ensure realization of the development plan's purposes, therefore NIOC would welcome importing state-of-the-art rigs to the country," the CEO added.

Total Determined to Develop South Pars Phase 11

TEHRAN (Fars) - French energy giant, Total, is determined to develop phase 11 of the supergiant South Pars Gas Field and has started financing 15 million dollars for carrying out the first phase of the project to develop the phase, a senior Iranian oil official says.

Ali Kardor, the Managing Director of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), has said that Total is about to publish a text in which it will ascertain it has not changed its plans regarding development of the project.

Referring to a recent report by media quoting Patrick Pouyanné, Total CEO, about his company's decision to develop the project, Kardor said, "The Total CEO has not announced his company would fully follow American stances and we are currently producing a joint statement regarding the issue."

Total says it follows international regulations, NIOC chief added. "This is a different issue from the sanctions' snapback which will not take place all at once. The U.S. might take stances but that does not mean the sanctions can be put back in place. This is an issue international companies are already aware of."

Total has signed a Heads of Agreement (HoA) with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) for the development of

phase 11 of South Pars, the world's largest gas field. The South Pars 11 project (SP11) will have a production capacity of 1.8 billion cubic feet per day, or 370 000 barrels of oil equivalent per day. The produced gas will be fed into Iran's gas network, wrote Total's official website.

Total will operate the SP11 project with a 50.1% interest alongside Petropars (19.9%), a 100% subsidiary of NIOC, and the Chinese state-owned oil and gas company CNPC (30%).

Under the terms of the HoA, NIOC and the project partners will conduct exclusive negotiations to finalize a 20-year contract in accordance with the technical and economic terms established in the HoA, within the framework of

Iranian Petroleum Contract (IPC) recently approved by the Iranian parliament.

In parallel, Total will launch engineering studies and a call for tender process so that construction contracts can be awarded immediately upon signature of the final agreement.

The SP11 project will be developed in two phases. The first phase, with an estimated total cost of around 2 billion dollars equivalent, will consist of 30 wells and 2 well head platforms connected to existing onshore treatment facilities by 2 subsea pipelines. At a later stage, a second investment phase, involving the construction of offshore compression facilities, will be launched once required by the reservoir conditions.



Kyrgyz Agriculture Minister in Tehran to Discuss Bilateral Ties

TEHRAN (FNA) - Kyrgyz Agriculture Minister Murashev Nurbek Murpazylzhanovich arrived in Tehran on Sunday to discuss mutual cooperation with his Iranian counterpart Mahmoud Hojjati.

Murpazylzhanovich was heading a high-ranking delegation during his four-day stay to Tehran.

The visit of Kyrgyz agriculture minister takes place at the official invitation of his Iranian counterpart.

During his four-day stay, the Kyrgyz agriculture minister will also explore avenues for cooperation and will visit a number of animal husbandry centers, processing, finishing and feed industries as

well as Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute.

Extra-territorial cultivation, joint ventures for production of chemical fertilizers, construction of greenhouses and creation of drip irrigation systems are among areas of cooperation between the two countries.

U.S. Shale Gas No Threat to Iran's Petrochemical Industry

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Marzieh Shah-Dayee on Sunday said she does not perceive U.S. shale gas as menace to the country's petrochemical industry.

"American shale gas cannot be

deemed a threat to development of Iran's petrochemical industry for at least a decade," Shah-Dayee said.

She said that due to the available 10-year plans in the Iranian industry, most of the investments

will be made on the basis of gas feedback.

Earlier, a senior official in Iran's Research Institute of Petroleum Industry (RIPI) said the country enjoys vast shale gas reserves in the western province of Lorestan.

IMF Grants Mongolia \$440mn Loan as Part of \$5.5bn Bailout

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - Mongolia reached an initial agreement with the International Monetary Fund for a three-year program that includes a \$440 million loan package as part of a \$5.5 billion bailout to help the north Asian country with looming debt repayments.

"The Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and bilateral partners including Japan and South Korea are expected to provide up to another \$3 billion in budget and project support, while the People's Bank of China is expected

to extend its 15 yuan billion (\$2.2 billion) swap line with the Bank of Mongolia for at least another three years," the IMF ahs said in a statement. "The total external financing package will thus be around \$5.5 billion."

Economic growth in Mongolia slowed to 1 percent last year as commodity prices fell and growth slowed in China, the main buyer of the nation's copper and coal exports. The country also saw foreign investment collapse after a dispute with Rio Tinto Plcover the Oyu

Tolgoi copper mine.

The Extended Fund Facility (EFF) will support the government's plan to address balance-of-payment pressures and also help the government repay looming debts, including the Development Bank of Mongolia's \$580 million bond repayment due in March.

This marks the sixth time since 1990 that the IMF has bailed out Mongolia, the most recent a stand-by agreement in 2009-2010, according to an e-mail from IMF spokesman Keiko Utsunomiya.