

Iran Wants no Customs Hurdles with Russia

TEHRAN (Press TV) - Iran has called for joint efforts with Russia to remove the "customs hurdles" which it says are obstructing the expansion of trade between the two countries.

Iran's Minister of Communication and Information Technology has been quoted by the Russian media as saying that he plans to raise this issue together with others in his upcoming meetings with the related Russian officials in Moscow and Astrakhan.

"We are interested in developing relations between Iran and Russia. We should pave a way for this, should ease visa regime, get rid of customs hurdles, ease online banking," Russia's ITAR-TASS news

agency has quoted Vaezi as saying. The Iranian minister was talking to the reporters after meeting Astrakhan Region Governor Alexander Zhilkin.

"I will personally try to resolve several issues at talks today and tomorrow in Astrakhan and Moscow. One of these issues is creating 'green corridors' for Iranian goods. And I hope we will reach an agreement," he noted.

Vaezi, who co-chairs Russian-Iranian commission on trade and economic cooperation, is in Astrakhan to take part in the business forum "Russia-Iran: trade and economic and investment cooperation," ITAR-TASS added.

Russia announced in March that it is taking the required measures to establish "green corridors" on its Caspian coasts to receive agricultural products from Iran.

Russian Deputy Agriculture Minister Sergei Levin was quoted by the media as saying that the ports of Makhachkala and Astrakhan are geared up for the purpose as Russia is pushing through its efforts to find new sources of food supplies amid spat with the West and Turkey.

The green corridors are expected to simplify customs procedures and expedite the formalities for customs clearance and document formalization.

Oil Falls Close To Three-Month Low as Oversupply Weighs

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Oil prices fell close to three-month lows on Wednesday after U.S. industry data showed weekly oil stocks declined by less than expected, feeding into concerns over persistent oversupply dragging down prices.

Global benchmark Brent crude LCOc1 was on track for the first monthly loss since January and the largest of 2016. Futures traded 51 cents down at \$44.36 a barrel by 1045 GMT.

U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude CLc1 was trading down 22 cents at \$42.70 a barrel, close to a three-month low of \$42.36 reached on Tuesday.

"Today's weakness is just part of the general belief that the market is oversupplied," said Tamas Varga, oil analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates.

Weekly industry data from the American Petroleum Institute late on Tuesday showed that U.S. crude stocks fell by 827,000 barrels in the week to July 22, well short of the 2.3 million barrel draw that had been expected.

Closely watched U.S. government oil stocks data will be published at 1430 GMT on Wednesday.

"Falling gasoline stocks and a renewed decline in

U.S. oil production would contribute to stabilizing oil prices," said Carsten Fritsch, commodities analyst at Commerzbank.

A firmer dollar .DXY has also weighed on oil prices over recent weeks. A stronger U.S. currency makes dollar-denominated commodities such as oil more expensive to buy.

Other analysts said they expect prices to fall further in the short term as oversupply persists while demand growth stutters.

"My view is that oil prices will find a low between \$39 and \$42 per barrel over the coming weeks," said Ric Spooner, chief market analyst at CMC Markets.

"After that, however, we are coming closer to seeing a balanced market again," he added, saying that \$50-\$60 a barrel would represent such supply and demand balance.

Eldar Saetre, chief executive of Norwegian state oil producer Statoil, said he expects the market to fall into balance over the course of this year.

"We see clear signs that we are on our way to a balanced oil market," he said.

BP Profits Hit by Lower Oil Price

LONDON (BBC) - Second-quarter profits at oil giant BP have almost halved from a year earlier as the company suffered from lower oil prices and weak refining margins.

Underlying replacement cost profit for the quarter fell to \$720m (£550m), down 44% from \$1.3bn a year earlier.

BP also said it had "drawn a line" under its liabilities from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster.

Earlier this month, the energy giant that the final bill for the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico would be \$61.6bn.

In April 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, killing 11 workers and causing an oil spill that became the worst environmental disaster in US history.

BP said it had taken a further charge of \$5.2bn in the quarter to cover liabilities from the disaster. Including these charges and other items, BP reported a \$2.2bn loss on a non-underlying replacement cost basis, compared with a \$6.6bn loss a year earlier.

The company also announced another cut to its planned investment budget for 2016 to "below \$17bn".

BP chief executive Bob Dudley said: "Compared with a year earlier, the underlying second-quarter result was impacted by lower oil and gas prices and significantly lower refining margins, but this



was partly offset by the benefit of lower cash costs throughout the group as well as lower exploration write-offs."

He added that the company expected "the external environment to remain challenging", but added that "we are delivering significant improvements to the business that will stick at any oil price".

On Monday, oil prices dropped to a three-month low, hit by rising concerns that a global oversupply of both crude and natural gas will dampen prices.

US crude fell to \$43.11 a barrel, its lowest level since April, while Brent crude dropped to \$44.75.

BP chief financial officer Brian Gilvary said: "We continue to reset our capital and cost base and are

moving steadily towards our aim of rebalancing organic sources and uses of cash by 2017 in a \$50-55 per barrel oil price range."

Richard Hunter, head of research at Wilson King Investment Management, said: "The sigh of relief emanating from BP HQ is almost palpable as the Gulf of Mexico spill is finally consigned to the history books.

"This is not to say that the challenges are over, not least of which is an underlying oil price still markedly short of the level which would provide comfort for the company."

BP's second-quarter profit was slightly below analysts' expectations, and in early trading the company's shares were down 1.8%.

Iran's Housing Market and Construction Tech

TEHRAN (Press TV) - After three years of stagnation in Iran's housing market, it is picking up; though slowly. Meanwhile, the country has progressed a lot in applying new civil construction technologies.

According to latest estimates on average some 50% of household incomes go to housing across the country. People in Iran, take different factors as contributing to the extortionate prices in the real estate market. Some people blame the housing stagnation on the anticipations prior to JCPOA where the majority had no desire to buy or sell. Some other believes that is because of the realtors. To resolve this problem, various governments have implemented various plans, among which, was the "Mehr Housing" project or "Social Housing" plan. Iran has embarked into importing and applying new civil

construction technologies which not only speed up the process of construction, but also cut on the final price of a house.

A recession hit the Iranian housing sector 3 years ago and led to a huge fall in buy and sell opportunities to their lowest level. The profits made from the same sector in the years prior, which at times had even hit 300%, suddenly took a steep nosedive, in a way that over a 3 year period, it bottomed at less than even 20%. This situation made a lot of people take out their money from real estate and put it elsewhere where there's more interest such as the banks.

The Mehr Housing Project was a vision and mission of the Ahmadinejad government era. The current administration of president Rouhani, found the mega project a major contributing factor to inflation and excessive money stock

and thus had it scrapped. Most industrial and economic projects, appreciate the tremendous value of time. Prefabricated construction projects are essentially a way in which productivities boosted when it comes to energy and time thus saved as well.

Utilizing fiber-reinforced concrete (FRC), Un-plasticized Polyvinyl Chloride (UPVC) material and specifically Light Steel Framing (LSF) technologies in new constructions, have in recent years, not only made building walls and floors, thinner, that is lighter, but has made them that much stronger and certainly that much more resilient to preventing any waste of energy. Moreover the low cost in transporting and erecting these material, has generated a great deal of interest in such fast-paced pre-fab building projects in the past 15 years especially in Iran.

Iran to Triple Gas Exports to Armenia

TEHRAN (Press TV) - Iran says it plans to increase its exports of natural gas to Armenia from the present volume of 1 million cubic meters per day (mcm/d) to 3 mcm/d within the next few years.

Iran's Petroleum Minister Bijan Zanganeh has been quoted by the media as saying that the rise will take place before 2019.

Zanganeh told reporters after a meeting with the visiting Armenian Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Levon Yolyan in Tehran that the planned increase in Iran's gas exports to Armenia follows a request from Yerevan to the same effect.

He added that Iran has temporarily already increased exports to Armenia to 3.5 mcm/d. This, Zanganeh said, follows an announcement by the country that it has come across problems in a pipeline through which it imports gas from Russia and that it needs to fill the missing volumes through increased imports from Iran, IRNA reported.

Exports will return to the normal level of 1 mcm/d within the

next 40 days once the problems over the Russian pipeline are removed, added the Iranian minister.

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Deutsche Bank Threatens Deeper Cost Cuts as Profits Dive

BERLIN (BBC) - Deutsche Bank has warned further cost cutting might be needed as profits tumbled in the second quarter amid low interest rates and volatile markets.

Net profit at Germany's biggest lender fell 98% to €20m (£16.7m), compared with €796m for the same period in 2015.

Chief executive John Cryan said: "If the current weak economic environment persists, we will need to be yet more ambitious in the timing and intensity of our restructuring."

Revenues were down 20% to €7.4bn.

Mr Cryan, a British banker who took the helm at Deutsche last year, has embarked on an overhaul and has previously warned restructuring costs are likely to peak this year.

The impact of the shake-up was seen in restructuring charges of €207m and a writedown of €285m on its asset management business.

Deutsche Bank's value has nearly halved since the beginning of the year, with its shares having fallen 43%.

In June, the International Monetary Fund said that of the banks deemed large enough to pose a threat to the financial system should things go wrong, Deutsche Bank was the riskiest.

European Stocks Rise, Asia Lifted by Japan Stimulus

NEW YORK (AFP) - Stocks rose in Europe and Asia on Wednesday while the yen sank against the dollar, after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said his government would present a \$265 billion stimulus package to reflate the Japanese economy.

The larger-than-expected figure helped lift Tokyo stocks 1.7 percent and Asian shares to one-year highs. It was unclear how much would be spent to boost growth directly but analysts said the package put pressure on the Bank of Japan, meeting on Friday, to take steps to ease monetary policy.

Wall Street looked set to open higher, with Dow Jones and S&P 500 futures up about 0.2 percent SPc1 ESc1 1YMc1

The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.6 percent, led higher

by the auto .SXAP and luxury sectors on a busy day of company earnings. LVMH rose 7.5 percent after its fashion and leather sales beat forecasts.

However, Deutsche Bank dropped 4.5 percent after announcing sharply lower second-quarter revenues as low interest rates and volatile markets weighed on the business. Chief Executive John Cryan warned deeper cuts may be needed.

Britain's FTSE 100 index .FTSE gained 0.4 percent. Germany's DAX index .GDAXI rose 0.8 percent and has recouped all losses incurred since Britain's June 23 vote to leave the European Union.

Chinese stocks, however, had their weakest day in six weeks on worries about new regulatory restrictions.