Non-Oil Exports From Iran's Western Border Up 90%

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - **Iran nearly has doubled its non-oil exports from a western border crossing over a four-month period in the current year as compared with last year's corresponding period.**

Iran's export from Siranband border crossing in the western province of Kordestan was increased by 90 percent during March-May period as compared with llast year, head of Baneh Customs Office Saeed Sanjabi said.

He reiterated that some $11.5 million worth of goods have been exported to the Iraqi Kurdistan region over the four-month period that shows a 90-percent growth compared to last year's figure which stood at $6.1 million.

"Cement, glass, pumice, plastic products, and various fruits were among the main goods exported from Siranband border crossing," Sanjabi said.

He underlined that connecting the customs system in Baneh to the country's customs system network played a significant role in facilitating export to the Iraqi Kurdistan region, the official said.

According to Sanjabi, exports from the border area are expected to reach four million dollars per month after clearing up some infrastructure obstacles.

Baneh, with a population of 158,000, lies west of Sanandaj the provincial capital of Iran's Kordestan province.

Neka Port Gets First Oil Swap Cargo in 7 Years

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - **Oil and gas explorer Dragon Oil has shipped a cargo of oil from Turkmenistan to a port in northern Iran, apparently resuming a swap scheme which the Islamic Republic halted in 2010.**

The Russian-flagged VF Tanker-20 discharged around 6,000 tons of Turkmen origin crude oil at a terminal in the Caspian port of Neka on Aug. 3, reports said.

According to Azerbaijan's Trend news agency, citing an unnamed source in the oil and gas market, the voyage was the second by VF Tanker-20 this month to Neka for the discharge of oil from Turkmenistan.

The source said Dragon Oil was loading the third crude oil cargo aboard another vessel operated by the Russian tanker company, but it was not clear whether the shipment was headed to Iran.

There was no immediate explanation from Iranian or Emirati sides. Neither was it immediately clear whether the loadings marked an official resumption of the swap deal.

Dragon, which is owned by Dubai-based Emirates National Oil Company (Enoc), used to ship the crude it produces from its offshore development in Turkmenistan to Neka and receive crude produced by Iran at Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf.

The company moved about 80 percent of the crude it pumps from its 44,000-45,000 barrels per day field through the swap deal, with the remaining 20 percent marketed through Baku in Azerbaijan.

Dragon diverted all export volumes to Europe via Azerbaijan and Russia, which required paying higher transit fees, when the Iran route was closed down.

The swap arrangement was halted during the tenure of former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as authorities questioned its economic merits.

Their successors, however, decided in 2016 to resume the scheme with Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan – all among the littoral states of the Caspian Sea.

Yet, the plan has got into a slow start, with the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) repairing and renovating the storage and terminal facilities in Neka.

The average daily swap was 90,000 bpd in 2009, which Iran planned to raise to 300,000 by 2015. Iran also charged the partners with a transit fee which totaled $880 million between 1997 and 2009, according to the local media.

In May, Iranian officials said they had received more than $4 billion from Enoc as part of the UAE retailer's settlement of its debts owed to Iran for pre-sanction oil and gas purchases.

Iran's Supreme Audit Court, which monitors the ministry of petroleum's deposits into the state treasury, said that the Central Bank of Iran had received the total amount of $4.1 billion as part of Enoc debts over the purchase of gas condensate.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has given Iran an opportunity to position itself as a major transit route for the Caspian energy. However, plans for building a pipeline to take the region's oil and gas to the Persian Gulf have been shelved amid US opposition.

Iran Ranks 1st in Sturgeon Production

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - **Deputy Minister of Agricultural and head of Iran Fisheries Organization Hassan Salehi has said Iran ranked first in the world in production of trout and sturgeon.**

"Over the previous Iranian calendar year (ended March 20), Iran took a major step in the fisheries sector by realizing a production of nearly 1.1 million tons of aquatic species," the official said.

Salehi reiterated that of the overall output, 54 percent pertained to fishing in the sea and mainly free waters while the remaining 46 percent resulted from farming fishery products given the country the top position in this regard.

He said that the country gained a good position in the industry last year with exports of 120,000 tons of fishery products and revenue of $412 million.

"Over 400 processing centers are currently active in various fishery sectors like canning, powder production and packaging giving way to creation of 220,000 direct jobs," Salehi added.

He underlined that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) had played an important role in the Iranian fishery industry, and said, "Russia restricted imports from Europe and the U.S. in retaliation for their sanctions creating an invaluable market for Iranian products."

The official reiterated that Iran still needs to work on establishing proper infrastructure for meeting demands of foreign buyers like Russia, and said, "Today Russians are putting a demand for 100,000 tons of Iranian fishery products, shrimp in particular."

The official further underscored that Iran has a low per capita consumption of about 10 kilograms while the global average stands at 20kg; "in a bid to boost people's health, the current per capita needs to rise by producing processed products".

Istanbul to Host Iran Solo Exhibition in Oct.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – **An exhibition of Iranian products and goods is planned to be staged in the Turkish city of Istanbul in late October, according to the Iranian Embassy in Turkey.**

The Iran Solo Exhibition will open on October 25 and last until October 28, the commercial attaché of the embassy, Hamid Zadboum has announced.

It will be launched after an official ceremony with senior Iranian and Turkish officials in attendance, he said.

Iranian companies active in various sectors, including oil and gas and petrochemicals, automotive and spare parts, aerospace industries, wood and cellulose industries, metal industries, food industry, agricultural products, mining and mineral industries, construction materials, ceramic tiles, household appliances, cultural products And arts and crafts, banking, transportation, tourism, free zones and textile industries, are expected to participate in the exhibition.

Russia's Recovering Economy Fears U.S. Sanctions Chill

LONDON (Financial Times) - A week after President Donald Trump grudgingly approved fresh U.S. sanctions against Russia, domestic companies and foreign investors are struggling to make sense of their exact consequences — but they already see enough to fear the longer-term chilling effect on an economy starting to recover after two years of recession.

Even those sceptical of the sanctions' true reach are concerned by the threat as guarded investors reassess their exposure to Russia. "This is another political move intended to poison the atmosphere of revival that has been spreading here," said a senior executive at a Russian mining and metals group, who warned of slower growth even while insisting that the sanctions were "unenforceable and pure fantasy".

Growth reached an annual rate of 2.5 per cent in the second quarter, the fastest in almost five years. "The recovery is definitely taking place, and the background is that the economy has adjusted to the lower oil price and the sanctions imposed in 2014," said Chris Weafer, a senior partner at Macro Advisory, a Moscow-based consultancy. "This year and next, the new sanctions should not throw the recovery off track. But to keep going, growth needs much higher levels of inward investment, and the new sanctions regime puts that at a severe risk."

Last year Russia received $12.9bn in foreign direct investment, making it the third-largest recipient of FDI in Europe after the UK and France, according to fDi Intelligence. Russian companies had also stepped up domestic investment, attracted by industrial policy incentives and a weak rouble that increased their competitiveness.

Fixed asset investment started growing year on year in April after shrinking for more than three years. Financial investors had also started viewing Russia more favorably.

By mid-2015, a year after the 2014 sanctions, "risk managers in western banks took the view that the situation had stabilized and legal risks had come down sufficiently", said Christopher Granville, a managing director at TS Lombard, pointing to funds raised by companies including Norilsk Nickel, Metalloinvest and Evraz.

Many corporate executives were further soothed by what appeared to be the Trump administration's friendlier approach towards companies doing business in Russia. While the Obama administration leaned on U.S. companies to stay away from Russia's biggest economic conference in St Petersburg and discouraged U.S. banks from dealing in Russian government bonds, such moves stopped under Mr Trump.

That sense of comfort is now gone. The new U.S. law tightens restrictions on lending to certain state banks and energy companies, expands energy sanctions and bars the president from relaxing sanctions without approval from Congress.

It requires sanctions against those who participate in corrupt privatization projects, and those involved in undermining cyber security. Beyond that, the law authorizes the Trump administration to impose a range of additional sanctions: against companies involved in pipeline development in Russia, and against state companies in rail, metals and mining.

The U.S. treasury is also required to report early next year what impact it expects were it to apply sanctions to Russian government debt. "The law has got a lot of threats hanging in the air," said Alexis Rodzianko, president and chief executive of the American Chamber of Commerce in Moscow.

"This administration isn't going to act on the authorizations or enforce existing sanctions," said Richard Nephew, a fellow at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University who worked on sanctions policy in the state department until 2015.

According to the Russian Central Bank, non-residents held 30.7 per cent of total federal government debt as of June 1 — up from only 3.7 per cent in January 2012. The proportion is above 50 per cent in bonds issued last year and this year, and even higher — more than 70 per cent — in bonds with a maturity above seven years, according to Standard & Poor's. "This is driven by the very high interest rate differential between the Russian Federation and the rest of the world," said Karen Vartapetov, director at S&P Global Ratings.

Trump Outbursts Wipe $1 Trillion Off Markets

TEHRAN (Press TV) – **U.S. President Donald Trump's brinkmanship in the escalating tensions with North Korea has taken a heavy toll on global markets, wiping $1 trillion off the value of shares worldwide.**

US. stocks on Friday ended with their worst weekly loss since March after Trump ratcheted up his fiery rhetoric, saying in a tweet: "Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded" against North Korea.

A day earlier, the Standard & Poor's 500 index posted its biggest single-day drop in nearly three months following Trump's warning to unleash "fire and fury" if Pyongyang continued its nuclear weapons expansion.

North Korea responded to the threat with a promise to land missiles near the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam.

Nervous traders have scrambled to take refuge in traditional safe havens such as gold, silver, bonds, Japanese yen and Swiss franc, dampening interest in risk assets such as equities and industrial commodities.

Gold has risen to its highest level in almost two months, while the Swiss franc has powered against the U.S. dollar and seen its biggest one-day gain against the euro in more than two and a half years.

The yen has also registered its biggest weekly gain since May against the dollar amid speculation that investors of Japan, as the biggest creditor nation, would repatriate their funds should a war break out.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday warded off - at least for now – the prospect of massive losses on the Wall Street market after stressing that there was "no imminent threat of war" and that Americans could "sleep well at night."

However, his boss's unpredictable behavior is unlikely to leave nervous traders pacified and the market doldrums may persist.

On Friday, an MSCI index of stocks across the globe posted its largest weekly drop since the week before Trump won the U.S. presidential election in November.

Trump's outbursts have chiefly affected Asian markets, with the tense mood dragging shares in the continent lower.